



Oldham Works: Employment and Skills Strategy 2025 - 2030

Unlocking skills, opportunity
and growth for every resident
and business.



Oldham
Council

1. Introduction

- 1.1** There is a lot of optimism and ambition in Oldham. The Oldham employment and skills landscape is changing for the better. Following years of challenges from the pandemic and recent cost of living crisis, Oldham's economy is emerging to meet new opportunities.
- 1.2** HM Government has set out a plan to “kickstart economic growth”. The Government is committed to increase devolution of decision making and funding to secure local impact with local growth deals driving a sectoral focus which will be articulated through a national and Greater Manchester Local Industrial Strategy. This will be underpinned by investment from the new National Wealth Fund that will provide over £7bn investment as well as a further £2.5bn British Jobs Bonus fund – which will target growth in innovation and jobs in manufacturing and green technologies. This aligns with the vision for Oldham and neighbouring developments such as Atom Valley.
- 1.3** Oldham has many sectoral strengths within the manufacturing (semiconductors, automated payment systems and food), green technologies (solar and vehicle) and the health innovation (Cancer care and diagnostics) sectors alongside an emerging growth in digital and cyber security opportunities. The Borough has significant growth in construction following investment from the Council.
- 1.4** As elected Members it gives us great pleasure to champion the partnership working that will deliver this strategy and lead to progressive growth and the creation of good jobs for our residents.



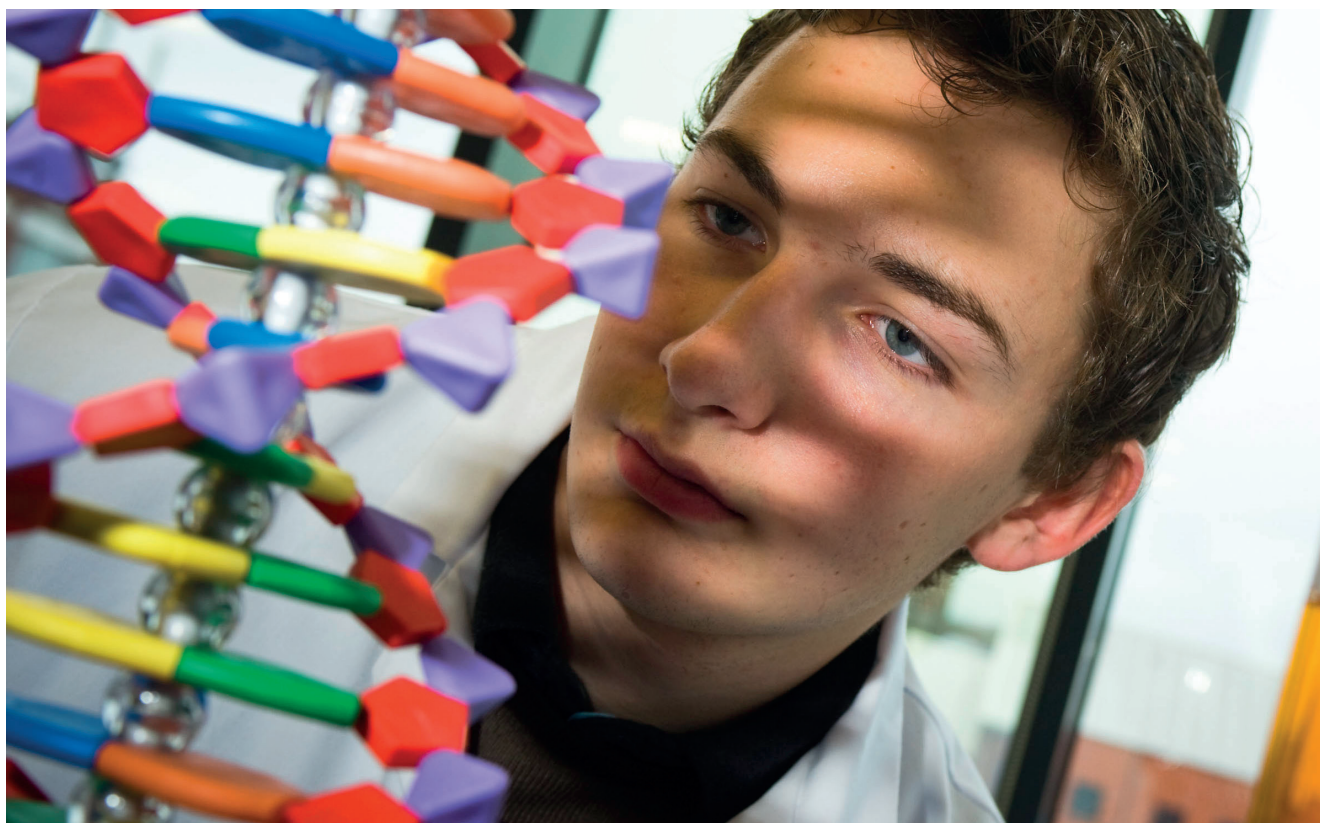
Cllr Arooj Shah
Leader of the Council and Cabinet
Member for Growth



Cllr Mohon Ali
Cabinet Member for Education
and Skills

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1** Following the deep dive into the functioning elements of the economy by the Oldham Economic Review, a new Employment and Skills Board was created which has brought together all the key agencies that can support the ambition to dramatically increase the economic prosperity of our residents and to narrow the gap in outcomes between the most and least well off in the borough.
- 2.2** The Employment and Skills Board has reviewed key quantitative datasets, alongside National and sub-regional policies and has agreed to publish this document, Oldham Works: Our Employment and Skills Strategy. The strategy is focussed on the following priorities:
- Mission 1** – Pathways to prosperity - Influence supply of skills and employment support
- Mission 2** – Building a Future Ready Oldham - Support the creation of new curriculum areas and skills platforms to bridge the supply/demand divide
- Mission 3** – Future Focussed, Business Driven - Develop demand from employers to create increased productivity and higher value jobs.
- 2.3** The strategy offers a bold, collaborative framework to enhance skills, employment, and economic opportunity in Oldham. Through strategic investment, stronger partnerships, and sector-focused delivery, it aims to build a future-ready, inclusive, and resilient local economy. It builds on locally defined activity, embedded within community and business facing activity whilst support a city region growth agenda.
- 2.4** The Board is committed to publishing an annual action plan which will set out progress against each mission and will report on progress made and areas to deliver change.



3. Oldham Works Three Missions

Mission 1 – Pathways to prosperity

This mission aims to drive up improvement in post 16 and adult skills levels, with a primary focus on improving attendance and retention and achievement, securing the right type of provision and raising ambition. It aims to improve employment outcomes, with a specific focus on reducing economic inactivity to support the Get Britain Working white paper ambition for 80% employment rate (c. 15,000 additional residents into sustained employment).

The action plan will secure 3 key objectives:

i. Increased choice:

- Ensure access to skills training by improving Maths and English attainment at primary and secondary school
- Finalise existing plans to introduce new post 16 provision following outcomes of DfE decisions.
- Sports Town – Develop proposal to create new sports related education and skills provision, supporting access to health and sports related jobs.
- Work with existing provision to diversify the offer including development of clear sectoral pathways, linked to the MBacc Gateways (*see Mission 2*).

ii. Increased targeted provision:

- Develop the multi-agency Youth Hub – in preparation for Get Britain Working Youth Guarantee
- Develop the DWP Economic Inactivity Trailblazer – which will form the template for connecting Live Well to Work Well in Oldham
- Cyberfirst programme: The Council will continue to support the delivery of the CyberFirst programme in advance of the roll out of the national “TechFirst” scheme.

iii. Increased transition support and raising ambition

- Young Persons Careers Fair - different approaches to improving access to high quality information, advice and guidance will be piloted. This will include working with GMCA to pilot the MBacc 8 Gateways model.
- Implementing plans to support transition at 16 and 19.

Success measures:

- Reducing the level of young people Not in Education, Employment and Training to statistical neighbour average by 2030.
- Reduce the number of 18-21 year olds that are unemployed (aligned to Youth Guarantee) to 8.5% by 2030.
- The Council will also publish an annual sufficiency report, tracking new provision and monitoring the number of places provided.

3. Oldham Works Three Missions

Mission 2 – Building a Future Ready Oldham

The Government has promised “deeper devolution” to Combined Authorities with a focus on local growth plans underpinned by Local Industrial Strategies. The Council has been successful in securing 5 key projects within the GM Local Growth Plan pipeline which will unlock public sector investment. These proposals all have a sectoral focus linked to the GM Local Industrial Strategy which will support jobs growth for Oldham and Greater Manchester (these include Sports Town, Northern Roots, Oldham Town Centre, Chadderton, Beal Valley plus Stakehill as part of Atom Valley).

This strategy will support the development of a sectoral focus with the creation of clear pathways, aligned to the MBacc programme and the GM Local Industrial Strategy. The key sectors within the local growth plans are:

- Advanced manufacturing (Atom Valley with a focus on sustainable materials).
- Construction and Green Tech (including Town Centre, district heat network, Northern Roots, Beal Valley)
- Health and Social Care (including SportsTown)
- Hospitality, creative/arts and digital sector (linked to Town Centre)
- Logistics (Stakehill, Chadderton and Hollinwood)

The action plan will secure six key objectives:

- i. Create gap analysis of required skills currently not available in Oldham with a focus on key sectors linked to the GM Local Skills Improvement Plan.
- ii. Work with FE Colleges to develop line of sight career pathways for key sectors to support Information, Advice and Guidance – supporting T-levels, V-levels, Apprenticeships and adults learners.
- iii. Support the development of Sports Town programme as a key enabler of sports and health related skills and employment provision.
- iv. Actively promote MBacc development with partners
- v. Integration of innovation and productivity skills to support the business growth offer.
- vi. Develop progression pathways onto vocational pathways for adults

Success measures:

- Increased understanding of the 7 MBacc Gateways.
- Increased take up of level 2 and level 3 Adult Skills funded vocational provision.
- Increased achievement of level 2 and level 3 courses.

3. Oldham Works Three Missions

Mission 3 – Future Focussed; Business Driven

The Government has a stated ambition (2024 A Partnership for Growth) that businesses need to play an active role in increasing productivity and securing “Growth everywhere” and “Making work pay” by “kickstarting a skills revolution”. However, this is against a backdrop where adult skills provision has declined by 70% since the early 2000s and the average number of workplace training days has decreased by 19% since 2011.

Mission 3 aims to drive up engagement with the private sector to secure investment in skills, research and development and innovation/machinery (including AI) to create good quality, well paid jobs. The Board will maximise its influence to secure access to Innovate UK/Research and Technology organisations to support the business sector to grow. The Council will use its influence to secure supply chains focussed on key sectors namely sustainable materials (Atom Valley) and Green Tech (Oldham Council).

The action plan will secure 3 key objectives:

i. Improved business engagement:

- Promotion of business facing assets such as the FE college digital innovation hub
- Develop agreements with partners such as the Growth Company to engage with local and sub-regional companies to stimulate employer involvement in skills and innovation
- Partners will collaborate to develop a branded marketing campaign
- Public sector partners will utilise social value commitments to create placements including for key cohorts (economically inactive residents, care leavers and residents with learning disabilities) as well as creating work related experiences for apprenticeships and T-level courses.

ii. Showcasing the Business community:

- The Board will create and support events that promote local and sub-regional businesses to key audiences. This will include delivering programmes such as the Brian Cox Great Horizons event, development of careers related show case events, sponsorship of business facing events, promoting pride in the local business community.

iii. Wider Partnership activity:

- Development of framework agreement for business engagement
- Work with GMCA and Atom Valley board to examine supply chain opportunities with a locally targeted response
- Alignment between Live Well and Work Well programmes, supporting the VCSFE sector with public and private sector relationship management.

Success measures: The Board will review and update the action plan with key milestones which support the progression of the above objectives. Success measures will include:

- Increased engagement with local and regional business community
- Increased offer of placements for apprenticeships, T-levels and supported internships/intermediate labour market programmes.
- Increase in demand for work-based skills delivery.
- Increase in economically inactive residents moving into sustained employment
- Sub-regional agreement on curriculum offer for employers.

4. Implementing the Plan

The Employment and Skills Plan is a partnership document requiring leadership from partners across organisations in Oldham that support this agenda to enable its successful implementation.

Board members are committed to the plan and as representatives of the employment and skills ecosystem will become the mechanism for activity. The action plan assigns lead organisations to each priority area who will be responsible for the delivery and updates to the action plan.

Almost all investment in employment and skills support is from Government bodies who are accountable for service delivery but not at a local level. Through having a strong, co-operative and partnership approach, the Council is confident that it can work with funders to either pilot new approaches or to agree locally devolved implementation plans.



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