

3.1.4 Skills in Bradford district

Context

Skills were identified as a transformational priority for the District in the first Sustainable Community Strategy the Big Plan which covered 2008 - 2011. Raising educational attainment so all children and young people can achieve their full potential and developing skills for work have been highlighted as transformational priorities in the Sustainable Community Strategy for 2011 - 2014.

Why are skills a transformational priority for the district?

Skills are associated with the economic competitiveness and the move to a higher waged, less service dependent knowledge based economy.

A skilled district will provide a more responsive workforce, able to respond to economic shocks and changes in the sectoral mix of the district. Not up-skilling the district could result in:

- Low wage economy.
- Increased economic and social deprivation.
- A dependency on low skilled jobs.
- A drag on the economy.
- Impact on potential investors.

National and local targets

The relevant local and national targets for skills are:

- NI79: Increase in number achieving a level 2 qualification by the age of 19.
- NI117: Reduction of 16-18 year olds who are not in education, employment or training.
- NI163: Increase in proportion of population aged 19-64 males, 19-59 females qualified to NVQ level 2 or higher.
- NI164: Increase in proportion of population aged 19-64 males, 19-59 females qualified to NVQ level 3 or higher.

Relevant strategies and local documents

- Economic Strategy for Bradford District 2007 - 2020
- Bradford District Employment and Skills Strategy, May 2011
- The Big Plan 2008 - 2011: the Sustainable Community Strategy for Bradford District

What do the data tell us?

Following an improvement in overall skills levels over the past few years, the 2010 data highlights a significant retrenchment, contrary to the regional and national trends which showed continued improvement in skills levels. The proportion of Bradford's working age population with no qualifications increased significantly and the proportion qualified to level 4 or above fell significantly. This adds to the challenge for Bradford to upskill its residents given its prior skills deficit with the regional and national figures.



Highest qualification held by adult population aged 16-64

	Bradford		Yorkshire & Humber %	England %
	Number	%		
Qualified to at least level 4	65,800	20.1	26.4	31.1
Qualified to at least level 3	122,000	37.4	47.4	50.7
Qualified to at least level 2	178,000	54.5	64.2	67.0
Without a qualification	59,900	18.3	12.8	11.1

Source: Annual Population Survey Jan-Dec 2010, Nomis

Summary of priorities

The Employment and Skills Strategy sets out a number of priorities for action. These include:

- Facilitate an increase in the number of business start-ups.
- Work with employers to ensure local needs are reflected in skills planning and prioritised for funding.
- Increase access to courses in basic skills in general and pre-entry ESOL in particular.
- Retain graduates in the District in greater numbers.
- Stimulate demand for employment opportunities, e.g. increasing the number of apprentices in the district.
- Co-ordinate the delivery of informal and formal Adult Learning to maximise the development of engagement activity into learning, lower level skills and progression.

The agenda for employment and skills in the District has been set with the publishing of the Employment and Skills Strategy in May 2011. Produced in consultation with partners, the strategy will be 'owned' by the Employment and Skills Board who will be tasked with driving action towards the achievement of the five objectives outlined in the Strategy. The Strategy also highlights a number of priorities, some of which are summarised above. Underneath that, the Employment and Skills Partnership brings together the providers, for example colleges, funding agencies including the Skills Funding Agency and key partners such as the Chamber of Commerce and the Voluntary and Community sector to shape the system, ensure alignment and deliver the objectives of the Strategy. There is a general understanding that partners are being asked to do more for less and there is therefore a need to work together more closely and co-ordinate their activities to achieve greatest impact.

There are a lot of changes to the employment and skills landscape being rolled out nationally, and to help smooth the transition and to respond to some of the priorities highlighted in the Employment and Skills Strategy, the council allocated £1.5m in its 2011/12 budget to be spent on activities relevant to this agenda. Commissioning of the Transition Fund was completed in September 2011, and 8 projects will be funded in total, 4 external and 4 internal. Projects will run until either March or September 2012.

The majority of the funding has been allocated around four main themes:

- (i) Tackling youth unemployment through intensive employability support and work experience;
- (ii) Increasing access to low level ESOL and basic skills courses for those seeking employment in the District;
- (iii) Increasing graduate employment and graduate retention through provision of paid internships and opportunities to secure sustainable graduate level employment
- (iv) Equipping sole traders and micro-businesses with the skills and knowledge they need to grow and take on additional staff.

There is a strong correlation between employment and general health and wellbeing, so upskilling the population of Bradford is key to ensuring people are suitably equipped to secure meaningful employment.

