

## WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE?

# INVEST IN SKILLS & DECENT WORK

“Our skills system is complex. We must work through this to develop local solutions which assist in building a workforce that has the technical and employability skills required in a modern and future economy.”

## THE CHALLENGE

The UK economy is characterised by employability and technical skills deficiencies, particularly those required for the fourth industrial revolution.

Employment is also becoming increasingly precarious, with challenges around pay and insecure contracts alongside a proliferation of poor employment practices. There is also much to improve within the localised skills system.

### A MODERN INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

An industrious country recognises that state action and public investment is required for sustainable industry. The government has started to acknowledge this and adopted more of a state interventionist drive. This is welcome and needs acceleration and augmentation. In particular, we need greater spatial and redistributive drive to an industrial strategy – where addressing inequalities is at the core and recognises that developing industrious people and places (and not just cities) is the goal. This will require rebuilding a viable economic base in some places, investing in deficient physical and social infrastructure and appreciate that human potential is the basis to resilient growth. This approach would also serve to cool the effects of rapid growth in some areas, where infrastructure is already overly burdened and where diseconomies such as pollution, are on the rise.

### LOCALISED SKILLS

Skills provision has been highly centralised and confusing for too long, not allowing the flexibility for localised approaches that are sensitive to the local system of places, people and the economy. Skills provision should be provided through localised system models; framed through effective relationships between providers, businesses and individuals.

### IMPROVE THE DIVERSITY OF EDUCATION AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Over many years Higher Education (university/academic), has gained more prestige than the Further Education (vocational/technical) sector. The lack of ‘parity of esteem’, has hindered the development of a diverse, plural and forward-looking skills base. Therefore, we need a skills funding regime which works on stimulating better informed demand profiles, now and in the future, with more learner and employee based funding, affording more flexible and creative skills delivery.

## EMPLOYABILITY AND SKILLS FOR ALL

Employability skills should begin at Year '0', through a sustained investment into early years, and should continue beyond formal education, to include in-work progression, support for older workers and those with multiple barriers to employment. Localised mechanisms for career and in work progression are central to this.

## WORKPLACE PROTECTION

Local economic development has had a recent tendency to see workforces as a cost, where labour market flexibility - this translates to zero hours contracts and the weakening of terms and conditions - is a means to competitiveness. However, a labour market is something which needs to be respected and nurtured over the long term. We need an acceleration of place-based employment charters, with commensurate protection of union rights and employee terms and conditions.

## A REVOLUTION IN SMALL BUSINESS AND GRASSROOTS ENTERPRISE

Our economies are going through rapid change, as technology shakes up traditional roles and opens up new ways of working. Economic policies tend to focus on big business while employment is shifting towards small, self-employed solutions and micro-businesses. We require more of a focus on small business. Furthermore, a wide variety of social sector organisations and enterprises are involved in locally-rooted approaches to the creation of sustainable jobs/enterprises and skills training. We must nurture creativity and empowerment in work and harness new technologies and innovations.

# FIND OUT MORE >>>

## BUILD COMMUNITY WEALTH

[Harnessing the wealth of anchors](#)  
[The importance of procurement to local economies](#)  
[Harnessing the potential of business](#)  
[The role of the VCS in thriving places](#)

---

## ENABLE A SOCIALLY JUST DEVOLUTION

[Forging a good local society](#)  
[The local double dividend](#)  
[Good city economies](#)  
[Real deal on devolution](#)

---

## FUND DECENT PUBLIC SERVICES FOR ALL

[Austerity eroding public service](#)  
[Ease back on the cuts](#)  
[What happens after austerity?](#)  
[Transforming through cooperation](#)  
[Addressing the health divide](#)  
[Facilitating health outcomes through partnership working](#)

---

## INVEST IN SKILLS & DECENT WORK

[What a modern industrial strategy should look like](#)  
[Different ways of tackling worklessness](#)  
[Living Wage and the role of local government](#)

---