



**Oldham**  
Council

## **Report to Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

### **The Digital Sector: Workshop to review apprenticeships across Oldham and the offering of digital apprenticeships by the Council - outcomes.**

**Portfolio Holder:** Cllr S. Mushtaq (Cabinet Member for Education and Skills) & Cllr S Akhtar (Cabinet Member for Employment and Enterprise)

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**14<sup>th</sup> June 2022**

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## **Purpose of the Report**

The Committee requested a report to support the discussion to develop a workshop to address issues relating to the development of the digital sector in the town, the review of apprenticeships across Oldham and the offering of digital apprenticeships by the Council, as raised in a Youth Council Motion to Members.

Consideration would relate to both the Employment, Work and Training and the Youth/Young People 'themed'/significant issue considerations.

This report is an update to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee following the workshop. The workshop was delivered by officers to the Youth Council on Wednesday 23 March 2022.

## **Recommendation**

The Committee is recommended to consider the report and, in particular, the key issues at paragraph 3, and to agree the Key Recommendations that

- a careers session is delivered to Barrier Breakers (a Youth Service run group for young people with SEND) in conjunction with Newbridge Academy Group and Positive Steps to directly respond to the highlighted inclusivity issues for pupils with SEND;
- the findings contained in this report are shared with Director of Education and the wider Education Leadership Team, Oldham Learning and OASHP (Oldham and Secondary Heads/Principles) or discussion; and
- Oldham Working and Workforce Development arrange to review with the Youth Council their comments regarding the scrutiny issue raised in respect of their presentations.

## 1 Background

- 1.1 The Committee proposed that a meeting would give initial consideration to proposals for a workshop involving Committee Members, the Youth Council and relevant officers (as agreed by the former Overview and Scrutiny Board in September 2020), to address issues relating to the development of the digital sector in the town, the review of apprenticeships across Oldham and the offering of digital apprenticeships by the Council, as raised in a Youth Council Motion to Council.
- 1.2 Consideration would relate to both the Employment, Work and Training and the Youth/Young People 'themed'/significant issue considerations.
- 1.3 A report was provided to the Committee in January 2022 that contained an overview of the current position in relation to the digital sector, digitalization as a cross sector issue and the core skills platforms that are operating to support young people and sets out topics for a workshop.
- 1.4 This report is an update on the workshop that was delivered to the Youth Council and recommendations for the Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committee to consider.

## 2 Current Position

- 2.1 The workshop was delivered to the Youth Council on Wednesday 23 March 2022. The workshop was structured to deliver two presentations, "A review of apprenticeships across Oldham and the Employment landscape now and in the future" delivered by Jonathan Phillips from the Get Oldham Working Team and "Digital Apprenticeships within the Council" delivered by Jack Armstrong from the Workforce Development Team. The presentations were followed by a feedback session where officers asked the Youth Council to consider the following questions:
  - Have we answered the original question?
  - Is there any more information you want on this issue?
  - After what you have heard today, what do you think are the barriers to young people taking up these offers?
- 2.2 Overall, the majority of the Youth Council were satisfied we responded appropriately to their motion. However, there were some members who did feel that whilst an overview of the issue was provided, there was a lack of scrutiny on the work to date.
- 2.3 When we discussed what additional information the Youth Council felt they required, the range of responses and requests for information were diverse but had one defining theme. Most of the responses were questions that could and should be answered by quality careers education and careers advice from a suitably qualified careers advisor whilst in school.

A common theme was that young people felt they were unable to make an informed decision about apprenticeships/T levels or other work-based pathways due to several reasons including:

- lack of information/awareness during school, particularly around T levels and a misunderstanding that these qualifications are a longstanding option they were not aware of, when they were introduced in 2021 for a small number of subjects with a view to build and grow each year to wider sectors
- lack of understanding of the pathways available before young people take subject options (access to careers education/advice earlier)

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- pressure from parents to pursue an academic route
  - peer/parent influence, that all other pathways other than A levels are an inferior option
  - confusion around qualification levels and if certain qualifications meet entry requirements for Higher Education

2.4 The Youth Council highlighted the barriers they feel young people face taking up the offers discussed at the workshop. They discussed the stigma from peers and parents to take a particular pathway, the schools influence on pathways (those with 6<sup>th</sup> forms), lack of information and awareness of the offers available and a lack of inclusivity for those with SEND and how they access the pathways.

### **3 Key Issues for Overview and Scrutiny to Discuss**

3.1 Officers attending the workshop perceived that our young people had not been able to access sufficient careers advice to ensure they were making the right choices in relation to their career choices for the future.

3.2. Careers statutory guidance was issued to schools and colleges by the DfE in March 2015 (updated July 2021) and clearly sets out the expectations from schools to deliver high quality careers education which provides young people with the skills, knowledge and encouragement they need to get the most out of their desired career path.

3.3 It is worthy of note that the pandemic has severely impacted schools, FE providers and career's services ability to provide quality careers education, recruit and establish links with local employers for work placement opportunities, schools and colleges were unable to host careers fairs which would showcase all pathways available to young people and the national communications plan for the new T-level qualification was scrapped to provide covid coverage.

### **4 Key Recommendations for Overview and Scrutiny to Consider**

4.1 Deliver a careers session to Barrier Breakers (a Youth Service run group for young people with SEND) in conjunction with Newbridge Academy Group and Positive Steps to directly respond to the highlighted inclusivity issues for pupils with SEND

4.2 Share findings with Director of Education and the wider Education Leadership Team, Oldham Learning and OASHP (Oldham and Secondary Heads/Principles) for discussion

4.3 Get Oldham Working and Workforce Development arrange to review with the Youth Council their comments regarding the scrutiny issue raised in respect of their presentations

### **5. Links to Corporate Outcomes**

5.1 The topic links to a Youth Council Motion. It also links to the Creating a Better Place plan

### **6 Additional Supporting Information**

6.1 N/A

### **7 Consultation**

7.1 N/a

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## 8 Appendices

8.1 None

### Background papers

The following papers were referred to in the preparation this report

- Department for Education statutory guidance “Careers guidance and access for education and training providers: Statutory guidance for schools and guidance for further education colleges and sixth form colleges. July 2021“

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1002972/Careers\\_statutory\\_guidance.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1002972/Careers_statutory_guidance.pdf)

- Report to Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 20<sup>th</sup> January 2022 “The Digital Sector: Developing a workshop to review apprenticeships across Oldham and the offering of digital apprenticeships by the Council”

[Youth Council Digital Sector Workshop.pdf \(oldham.gov.uk\)](#)