



**STOCKPORT**  
METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

# DRAFT Skills Plan

awaiting work on design of look and feel as well as tone. Commissioned photography to bring alive and refine the case studies.



# Introduction

Our One Future Plan is clear "Stockport is an ambitious place undergoing a spectacular transformation". However, we are "not immune from the big challenges of our times. The life chances of too many of our children are determined by where they live and Stockport is ageing more quickly than any other borough in Greater Manchester. It is also a borough that is becoming more diverse."

This Skills Plan is vital to achieving our One Stockport Ambitions, it sets out our overarching vision, ambition and priorities for our skills system for the next three years. It is a partnership plan with a shared borough-wide vision and shared ambitions which can only be achieved through harnessing the skills, knowledge and shared resources across services in the public, private and third sector.

The plan reflects the shared partnership priorities from our One Stockport Borough Plan and One Stockport: One Future; and is aligned with other key strategy documents including the Stockport Council Plan, Stockport Economic Plan and Stockport Schools Strategy. Our partnership wide commitment to have a relentless focus on 'fair and inclusive' – making a 'Stockport a great, diverse place to live, where everyone can thrive' runs through the plan. Moreover, the plan seeks to develop and implement Greater Manchester's ambitions through local delivery, putting Stockport at the forefront of their plans.

**This Skills Plan is key to securing to a more productive, sustainable, inclusive, and diverse local economy that is growing and which benefits everyone.**

## **What we're trying to achieve**

Our overarching vision is to create a local skills system that supports accessible, fair and inclusive opportunities for all our residents to learn the skills they need to achieve their ambitions and improve their life chances, whilst also ensuring businesses and other organisations have access to the skills and expertise they need to thrive.

### **We will do this by achieving 5 Big Ambitions these are: -**

- i. The Best Schools – to work in partnership to ensure we have the very best schools, colleges and training providers with everyone included in their success
- ii. Best post 16 offer – to ensure there is choice and high-quality opportunities available to all
- iii. Best support for businesses
- iv. Best place to work
- v. Everyone skilled to work

### **The role of the Skills Plan in bridging our ambitions for People and Place**

- Our Skills Plan has a pivotal role in bridging our ambitions for People and Place
- The past decade has seen significant transformation and success across our borough from a reputation for leading edge regeneration to being at the forefront of public service reform. Our strong partnerships, robust economic growth and ambitious regeneration agenda, a fresh energy in our town centre and award winning digital innovation have been cornerstones of our work so far.
- We have been recognised regionally and nationally as ‘the feel good capital of Greater Manchester’ and Stockport appeared in the Times newspaper list of the best places to buy your first home.
- However not everyone is sharing in Stockport’s success. We know that times continue to be hard for many people and that our borough is a place of stark inequality. For too many people, work is unfairly rewarded, and a high number of children continue to live in poverty. Persistent inequality means that the life chances of many residents are caught in a cycle of multiple disadvantage.

# AMBITION ONE: The Best Schools with everyone included in their success

## Why it's a priority

**A fair, inclusive, and resilient Borough:** Our ambition is closely tied to improving the quality of life for all residents. Education is a powerful tool for social mobility and plays a significant role in reducing inequalities within the community. Educational excellence supports our vision of creating a fair, inclusive, and resilient Borough where everyone has the opportunity to succeed.

**Economic Growth and Development:** Stockport must equip its future workforce with the necessary skills and knowledge to meet the demands of the local and global economies. This linkage is crucial for attracting businesses that depend on skilled labour and for fostering innovation. Our high-quality schools make Stockport attractive to potential residents and investors, contributing to economic growth and stability.

## What this means

Our ambition to have the best schools is intrinsically linked to Stockport's Schools Strategy which outlines:

- Every school working in partnership with others
- The best teachers and school leaders
- The best environments and provision that enable and facilitate learning
- A commitment to inclusivity and equality in educational achievement
- A broad base of education and learning options with strategic intent in all aspects of curriculum development

## What will we do

Create the conditions excellent school leaders need to deliver the best schools

- Ensure all schools are in a formal partnership with a least one other school
- Restructure our delivery of our services
- Make a commitment to collaboration, working together and holding each other to account
- Strategic and proactive approach to fluctuations in pupil numbers
- Through Stockport Family, offering the earliest support to children and families

## Success Measures

- Improved attendance, with specific focus on SEND and cared for pupils
- Sufficient capacity across our school estate for all pupils regardless of their needs or aspirations



# Case Study: Marple Hall School

**Marple Hall School**, part of the Helix Academies Trust, is a shining example of Stockport's ambition for our Schools. This high-performing community secondary school serves over 1550 students aged 11 to 16 and is respected by its community and the wider school estate for its commitment to quality teaching, inclusivity, and excellent outcomes.

## **Broad curriculum and academic excellence**

Marple Hall consistently achieves high standards in education, with outstanding GCSE results and a robust curriculum that prepares students for future academic and career success. The school's motto, "Better Never Stops," reflects its commitment to continuous improvement and high expectations for all students.

## **Inclusivity and Support**

Marple Hall emphasises inclusivity, ensuring that every student, regardless of background, ability, or need, receives the support they require to succeed. The school have created environments within the school that make a seemingly large school feel smaller and nurturing, allowing their most vulnerable pupils to build positive relationships with fellow pupils and staff, to create areas of refuge, support, and understanding. The outstanding provision Marple Hall offer enables more pupils to stay in a mainstream school who would ordinarily have needed a more specialised setting.

## **Collaboration**

The Helix Academies Trust, whilst still small, fosters our ambition of creating formal partnerships between schools, aimed at sharing best practices and resources to enhance educational outcomes. This partnership has enhanced the educational experience through better curriculum planning, shared resources and collaborative projects, reinforcing the vision within the trust.

## **Leadership and Governance**

The leadership team at Marple Hall, led by Headteacher Joe Barker, focuses on creating a supportive and challenging environment that encourages both student and staff development. Strong governance from the Helix Academies Trust ensures accountability and strategic direction, aligning with the broader goals of Stockport's education and economic plans.

# AMBITION TWO – The Best Offer Post-16

## Why it's a priority

**A Fair, Inclusive, and Resilient Borough:** By providing a diverse range of educational and training pathways, we can cater to the varied interests and talents of our young people, ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to succeed. This commitment to inclusivity helps reduce social inequalities and supports the Borough Plan's goal of creating a resilient community where all residents can thrive.

**Workforce Preparedness and Skills Development:** The Economic Plan highlights the necessity of a workforce equipped with the skills needed for high-demand sectors. A robust post-16 education system, offering both academic and vocational routes, ensures that students can pursue careers that align with their interests and the needs of the economy. This alignment is essential for developing a skilled workforce ready to meet current and future challenges.

**Promoting Innovation and Entrepreneurship:** By offering programs that support creative thinking and practical skills, we empower young people to develop new ideas and start their own businesses. This entrepreneurial spirit is vital for a dynamic and growing economy, aligning with the Economic Plan's goal of fostering a vibrant business environment.

## What this means

- The best teachers, tutors, and leaders
- The best environments and provision that enable and facilitate learning at all levels
- The best careers advice and guidance
- A strategically aligned broad, comprehensive, and high-quality offer with sufficient capacity providing positive choice to all learners
- Strong links with industry and higher education

## What we will do

As a strategic leader and facilitator

- Coordinate and collaborate with partners to grow and diversify their offerings
- Continue to enhance industry and stakeholder partnerships improving relationships, commissioning, and information and advice
- Facilitate improvements to access into post-16 education and training, prioritising care for children, children with SEND, and other vulnerable groups

## Success Measures

- Alignment between Stockport's LSIP and the education and training offer Stockport offers
- Sufficient capacity in education and training opportunities for all learners with specific focus around entry level and functional skills

# Case Study: Future skills through leading technology

Stockport College, a key institution within The Trafford College Group, illustrates the ambition of providing the best post-16 education offer through its innovative programs, strong industry links, and inclusive and cutting-edge learning environments

- £27M New campus development in Cheadle opening September 2026. This will be the first sustainable campus expanding the Technical education offer including, T Levels, Health, Early Years.
- Over £1m has been invested in green and digital innovative learning environments. Delivering green accredited and non-accredited courses to support the Regional and National green skills gap and agenda, providing a critical skill boost that will benefit employers, individuals, and the wider economy.
- Immersive learning environments, providing students in active, hands-on education. This innovative approach transforms traditional learning by incorporating modern technology, real-world scenarios, and interactive teaching methods, ensuring that students are well-prepared for their future careers.
- The Cyber Lab at Stockport College is a cutting-edge facility dedicated to providing students with hands-on experience in cybersecurity and digital forensics. This specialised lab is designed to simulate real-world cyber environments, offering an immersive and practical learning experience for students pursuing careers in IT security. Focused on cyber security and software development. The Cyber Lab is equipped with state-of-the-art hardware and software.
- New clinical suite featuring The Atomarge Table, a cutting-edge anatomical visualisation tool that allows students to explore the human body in great detail. It provides 3D interactive models of human anatomy, enabling students to study complex structures and systems with precision. This technology supports interactive learning by allowing students to manipulate and dissect virtual anatomical models. This hands-on approach helps deepen their understanding of human anatomy and physiology

# AMBITION THREE - Best Support for Business

## Why it's a priority

- Skills investment is one of the biggest drivers in raising business productivity - Stronger, resilient and more enterprising & productive businesses generate quality jobs which are better paid, sustainable and accessible for the benefit of all our residents
- Not everyone is sharing in Stockport's success equally
- Businesses need support to respond positively to global issues, such as climate change and the growth of AI - harnessing the opportunities for economic growth in new ways

## What does it mean - Businesses will have:

- Access to a greater talent pool of skilled people
- Stronger relationships with Colleges and other Skills providers to co-design curriculum and qualifications to meet the needs of their businesses and the local economy
- Skills commissioning reflects the needs of local businesses
- A skills system that is easy to access and navigate for businesses

## What will we do - Work with partners such as Trafford & Stockport College Group to:

- Align AEB and other funded skills provision to increase pathways into growth sectors, particularly for more economically disadvantaged groups e.g Construction Hub in MDC area & Green Economy
- Support access to digital, management and leadership skills training for businesses
- Provide regular drop-in support for businesses, such as 'The Work Shop' to access skills and other business support
- Develop a Work & Skills Triage, as a Single Point of Contact for businesses, employees and residents for navigating skills support
- Regular business forums considering skills issues to influence commissioning and delivery
- Hold a Pledge Event to support links between Business & Education Providers
- Support In-Work Skills Progression through a dedicated team

## Success Measures

- Growth in number of businesses and improved business survival rate
- Rising Employment rate



# Case Study: Supporting growth in Apprenticeships

Stockport College,

*Placeholder [Apprenticeship recruitment is ongoing. We have worked with 91 Stockport registered businesses and placed 129 Stockport residents into apprenticeship employment. 30% are Construction apprenticeships, 15% are Teaching assistants, and 14% Are Gas and Plumbing.] – full case study being provided by Tracey Wood*

**GMACS:** [Meet The Greater Manchester Careers and Apprenticeships Service | About GMACS](#) provides a wealth of information for young people on Careers options, sectors to work in and how to access Apprenticeships, including opportunities to apply for live Apprenticeship vacancies. GMACS helps young people explore and design their next steps before leaving school and after. The site brings together different stages of the career planning process. It helps students navigate the choices open to them and showcases what Greater Manchester can offer. The site also provides a direct way to find out about and apply for courses, jobs, and apprenticeships.

**Stockport Post-16 Week & Digital Prospectus:** Each October, Stockport Council commissions a digital online Post-16 Week. This includes an interactive Post-16 Prospectus [16+ Digital Prospectus 2023/4 \(stockport-jobsmatch.co.uk\)](#) designed to help students, teachers, parents and carers understand the qualification and training pathways available after finishing secondary school. Promoting Apprenticeships forms a key element of that including online sessions with employers that have recruited Apprentices, and hearing from Apprentices themselves about their positive experiences of this as a Career Pathway

**Greater Manchester Apprenticeship Levy Matchmaking Service:** Facilitates funding Levy transfers to create more apprenticeship opportunities across the city region

Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) commissioned the Growth Company to develop and deliver an online apprenticeship Levy Matchmaking Service that ensures as many levy payers (public and private sector) as possible transfer unspent funds to non-levy payers negating the need for them to pay the 5% co-investment costs.

With Levy paying organisations now able to transfer up to 50% of their funds to other employers there was a need to make this as simple a process as possible for both parties to ensure maximum levy investment is retained in GM,

Employers large and small can register on this website [About the Project | GM Levy Matchmaking Service \(levymatchfinder.co.uk\)](#) to transfer or receive funds from their apprenticeship digital accounts covering the training costs of a specified apprentice.

# AMBITION FOUR - Best Place to Work

## Why its a priority

Stockport is a growing economy, with exciting major regeneration projects. However, with the Borough being one of the most polarised LA areas in the country, it is crucial that all citizens feel they have economic opportunity locally, through good quality well paid employment or the support to start a business. **Fair and Inclusive is one of four priorities in Stockport Economic Plan, a Plan which provides the vision, ambition, ownership and leadership for the actions in the Skills Plan.**

## What does it mean


Our ambition to be the best place to work is intrinsically linked to our Economic Plan **priorities**, in that we strive to achieve:

- Stockport to be recognised as a locality with many employers that are signed up to the Greater Manchester Good Employment Charter and / or Real Living Wage Foundation accredited, and actively working to these principles
- Skills investment and progression in the workforce is seen as a key element of being a 'Good employer'
- Employers are committed to opportunities for groups facing greater economic disadvantage e.g. People with SEND, Care Experienced
- **A rising employment rate and falling rate of workless households**

## What will we do – **We will deliver key Economic Plan actions and new emerging priorities, including:**

- Provide dedicated support to employers to become GM Good Employment Charter members or Real Living Wage accredited
- Ensure Employment & Skills Agreements are developed with Developers / Contractors for all major new developments
- Support 'Good Employment' principles to be in place in all significant procurement activity via Social Value clauses
- In-Work Progression Programme & WorkWell to support people to sustain and prosper in employment
- Single point of contact /trriage for accessing Work & Skills support for residents and employers
- **Provide a monthly 'one stop' drop in for business start up support at Meseyway Innovation Centre – 'The Work Shop'**

## Success measures

- Major increase in the number of businesses signed up to the GM Good Employment Charter
-  Average wage rates in Stockport workplaces is above GM average
- Case studies of employers utilising skills and employment programmes to support recruitment from priority groups

# Case Study: Construction Skills Academy

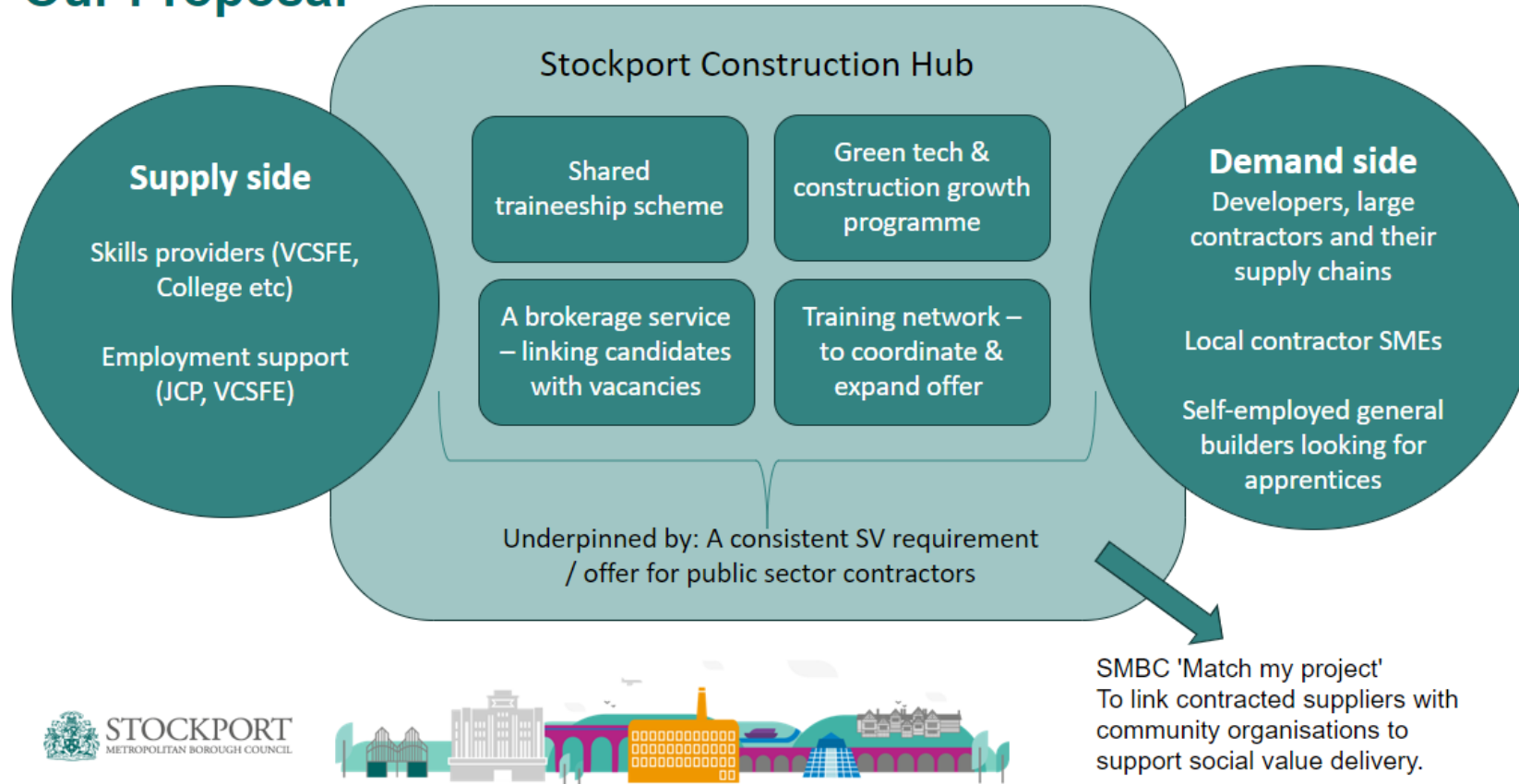
Stockport's £1bn regeneration programme is a key economic driver, with substantial construction investment creating thousands of jobs over the next decade. The MDC-led Task and Finish group which developed the proposals presented a vision for harnessing this investment to:

- Bring about a step change in the number of construction skills and employment opportunities for local people.
- Create inclusive skills pathways for local people to secure good jobs in the sector.
- Drive investment into local construction firms that specialise in environmentally sustainable methods and technologies.

To deliver this vision the group developed proposals for four key work packages (described below), underpinned by the following guiding principles:

- Driving investment into our local jobs and skills infrastructure to ensure maximum long-term impact for local people
- Putting inclusion and accessibility for all at the heart of our approach
- Accelerating the transition to net zero and capturing the benefits of this for Stockport people and businesses
- A consistent approach to social value delivery for public construction projects

# Our Proposal



Our intention is for the One Stockport Construction Hub to be a sustainable initiative capable of harnessing time limited construction investments to drive long term positive change in employment and skills outcomes in Stockport. Sustainable funding will be crucial to realising this goal. However, to enable us to test and prove the model, we proposed to run a pathfinder year, funded through a combination of grant funding and voluntary contractor contributions with activity subject to an evaluation.

# AMBITION FIVE - Everyone ready to work

## Why it's a priority

**Community Empowerment and Social Mobility:** Ensuring everyone is ready for work promotes social mobility by providing residents with the means to improve their economic status. This is particularly important for marginalised groups, including those with SEND, Care Experienced, young people, and the long-term unemployed. By removing barriers to employment and offering tailored support, Stockport can create a more inclusive and empowered community.

**Economic Resilience:** This means that Stockport can better withstand economic fluctuations and changes in industry demands. By continuously developing the skills of its workforce, and developing the talents of all, the Borough can adapt to new economic challenges and opportunities, ensuring long-term economic stability.

## What does it mean

- The best careers advice and guidance with tailored support and guidance for vulnerable groups
- Our residents to possess core skills that support and enable a lifelong learning mindset
- Capacity, breadth, and choice within supported employment/internships that lead to careers
- The best entry level and occupational entry education and training offer
- Alignment with industry needs and expectations, strategic alignment to Local Skills Improvement Plan

## What will we do

As a strategic leader and employer

- Exemplify values that underpin equality, diversity, and inclusion
- Exemplify best practice and provide supported employment opportunities that can lead to careers for vulnerable groups
- Leverage influence over partners to grow capacity and choice in supported employment opportunities
- Support our vulnerable young people into education, training or work placements

## Success Measures

- Reduction in the number of young people not in education, training, or employment
- Increase in the number of supported employment placements across Stockport

# Case Study: Supported Employment

- Within the council we are running several new early careers schemes, including:
  - **Work experience** - 21 placements over the last few weeks, with a new comprehensive induction programme and guidance for managers on safeguarding, health & safety and more. Insight from 2024 will support us to grow this further in 2025
  - **Jumpstart** – for care leavers providing paid opportunities in work as well as guidance in developing their CV and applying for jobs. Recognised by PPMA as the 2024 winner of Best Inclusion & Diversity Initiative
  - **Supported Internships** – in partnership with Pure Innovations, providing work placement opportunities within the council and in partner organisations including TfGM. 6 interns graduated at an event on 11<sup>th</sup> July and the next cohort of 11 will start in September



Jumpstart



Best Inclusion & Diversity Programme / Initiative

WINNER



# Case Study

Our work placements schemes are leading to long-term opportunities:

## Emily

- Care leaver, started on a Jumpstart placement
- Joined Estates team on lvl 3 apprenticeship
- Team have coached and nurtured her in her role
- Provided with work wear, PPE and support
- Just turned 21 – flourishing in work and at home



# Next Steps

Whilst the Council has a vital role in shaping, defining and driving forward this Skills Plan, its delivery will be led by **our strong network of colleges and training providers**.

The Council is committed to act as a Borough wide strategic leader to enable and drive systemic improvements, provide constructive challenge, and to hold partners to account.

Our Priorities in delivering and governing the plan include:

- Creation of a detailed annual delivery plan that sets targets, actions and milestones for delivery of the plan.
- Creation of an index of the indicators identified in this plan to track progress and act accordingly.
- Maintain a productive partnership of stakeholders.
- Working to align Skills Plan priorities to emerging funding opportunities created by central government and other funding agencies.



## Appendix 1 – detailed analysis of challenges and opportunities

Our Borough stands at an exciting juncture, poised for growth and equality. We are committed to harnessing the resilience, agility, and ingenuity of our residents, businesses, and anchor institutions to build a brighter future. The challenges we've faced through Covid-19 have only strengthened our resolve and revealed new opportunities for innovation and community strength. Our collective actions over the next decade will set the stage for a vibrant and thriving Borough, benefiting generations to come.

### Populations and Demography

Local partners have a role to play in tackling inequality. Stockport is the 8th most polarised Borough in England in terms of deprivation (out of 317 local authorities) and borough-wide averages mask acute and highly localised challenges. Source: Economic Plan

Stockport's population is older than other many other areas in England.

- The population aged 16-39 accounts for 47% of people in Stockport compared to 50% in England.
- Similarly, the working age population (aged 16-64) accounts for 60% of people in Stockport compared to 64% in Greater Manchester and 62% in England.
- The working age population has also remained relatively stagnant over the last decade, with -1% change since 2010 in Stockport compared to 4% across Greater Manchester and 3% nationally.
- The population aged 0 to 15 accounts for 20% of Stockport's population, which is slightly below Greater Manchester (21%) but above the national average (19%).
- On average, men die 11 years earlier in our most disadvantaged community compared to our most prosperous area, and there is a significant difference in how early people start to experience life limiting illnesses.

As with many of our other demographics, the age of the population is not consistent across the borough. In parts of Stockport town centre residents are up to 22 years younger than some of the borough's suburbs such as Windlehurst. The average age mirrors Stockport's deprivation patterns – with the most deprived neighbourhood's typically having the lowest median age.

Mapping the education attainment of learners in secondary schools for English and Maths shows that the lowest levels of attainment are located in the areas with highest deprivation, whereas schools in Cheadle Hulme and Bramhall have over 80% of pupils achieving the equivalent of grade C or above in both English and Maths.

Stockport has the second lowest child poverty rate of all GM Borough's after Trafford. Despite this, one in four children (25.4%) live in poverty after housing costs. The highest concentration of child poverty is in Brinnington, Stockport town centre and Reddish.

Disadvantaged<sup>1</sup> children and young people living in Stockport on average achieve lower grades at GCSE than our children and young people with Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) according to attainment 8<sup>2</sup> data.

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<sup>1</sup> Disadvantaged pupils are those who were eligible for free school meals (FSM) at any time during the last six years and children looked after (in the care of the local authority for a day or more or who have been adopted from care).

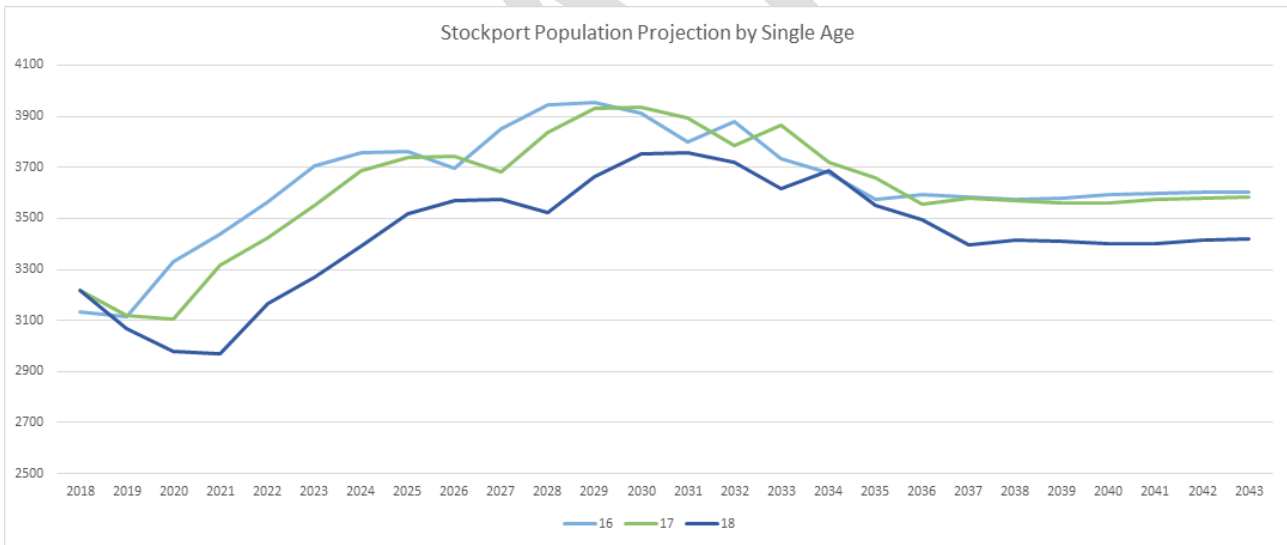
<sup>2</sup> An Attainment 8 score is a measure published annually showing the average academic performance of a secondary school. It is calculated by adding together pupils' highest scores across eight specific school subjects. While these

*A good example is a child who is behind in their reading at five years old. That child is seven times more likely to be behind in their maths when they are seven and 11 times more likely to be behind in their maths when they are 11. If you take a child who gets to secondary school not reading at the level you want at secondary school—we think there will be more of those this year—only one in 10 of those children go on to achieve a good clutch of five GCSEs. It is not something you can pick up later. You get this compounding deficit, and you get compensatory learning.*

EXCERPT FROM PUBLIC SERVICES COMMITTEE: THE ROLE OF PUBLIC SERVICES IN ADDRESSING CHILD VULNERABILITY, WITNESS EVIDENCE FROM SIR KEVAN COLLINS.

**Forecasted demand**

The ONS population estimates forecast that the 15-19yrs population in Stockport will grow by 8.8% by 2030, DfE projections estimate that growth in this population could be as much as 12.7% whereas GP registrations of all school age pupils in Stockport indicate that growth is around 11.1%. GMCA are currently estimating the Greater Manchester populations of the same age will grow by 11.4% in the same period.



Actual and forecasted numbers of 16, 17 and 18 year olds by academic year – Source: Public Health

In terms of Stockport residents attending Stockport schools, we know the number of pupils leaving KS4 and entering the post-16 skills system has/will be approximately:

Academic Year	Total Cohort	No SEND	Identified as having SEND	EHCP
2019	2892	2360	532	234
2020	3067	2393	674	289
2021	3116	2431	685	268

numbers are not made publicly available on a pupil-by-pupil basis, scores taken from across a school year group are averaged to produce a school's overall score.

2022	3254	2531	723	336
2023	3473	2523	950	373
2024	3570	2658	912	319
2025	3669	2663	1006	341
2026	3576	2629	947	310
2027	3665	2660	1005	345
2028	3858	2891	967	345*
2029	3845	2965	880	295*
2030	3828	2941	887	330*

Actuals and forecasts for pupils entering the post-16 skills system, (\* may have significant variation due to policy and practice changes relating to the assessment of EHCPs) Source: SMBC pupil forecasting model

Of our pupil population in Primary and Secondary schools, 17.92% had a special educational need or disability compared with 16.8% based on a mean average of CIPFA nearest neighbours. 5.33% of pupils had an Education Health Care Plan in comparison to 4.2%, whilst 12.63% had their needs met through SEN Support in comparison to 12.6%.

Autism; Social, Emotional, and Mental Health (SEMH); Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN); and Moderate Learning Difficulty (MLD), represent the four biggest areas of growth in the past five years. SEMH specifically bucks national trends, whereby nationally SEMH numbers have risen to 1 in 5 children having a primary need of SEMH, in Stockport 1 in 4 children have a primary need of SEMH. This equates to approximately 396 more pupils with SEMH in Stockport than another typical authority in England.

### **Post-16 education, training, or employment – Access, visibility, and awareness**

Of all learners that left KS4 in July 2022:

- Approx. 91% remained in full-time education;
- Of the above who remain in full-time education, approx. 32% attended provision outside of Stockport (68% access places in Stockport);
- Approx. 1% entered training ;
- Approx 4% started an apprenticeship;
- Approx 3% were not in any kind of education, employment, or training, the vast majority of these learners have some form of identified vulnerability.

The national rise in learners leaving KS4 in coming years will affect choice and availability of places across provision external to Stockport and as such we must look at how we can create more places, above that of anticipated population growth, to provide choice and opportunity for those learners who would ordinarily have sought places outside of Stockport but who cannot secure a place.

We must plan on the assumption that as much as 80% of Stockport learners in full-time education will need to access a place in Stockport – this equates to approx. 472 additional places (3845 pupils forecasted to leave KS4 in 2029 minus 3254 pupils leaving KS4 in 2022 multiplied by 80%) compared with 2022 by 2028. This is equivalent to an uplift of 14% and equates to an additional small sixth form campus.

Careers education, information, advice and guidance is provided in schools, across key stages, and is supported by The Gatsby Benchmarks which are:

- A stable careers programme
- Learning from careers and labour market information
- Addressing the needs of each student
- Linking curriculum learning to careers

- Encounters with employees and employers
- Experience of workplaces
- Encounters with further and higher education
- Personal guidance

The quality of support for young people can vary and schools would benefit from support in working towards the Quality in Careers Award. The Quality in Careers Standard is the national quality award for careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG) in secondary schools, colleges and work-based learning.

Anecdotally we know that the quality of the careers advice available in our secondary schools is variable depending on the school you attend. We also know that a number of secondary schools have outsourced their careers advice resulting in little or no direct interaction between local employers, post-16 providers, or school leaders is taking place. As such no meaningful advice can be given, no curriculum development can occur, and there is no feedback mechanism or responsibility taken in terms of the role the school has in preparing the pupil for a productive life.

Stockport Council's Education and Careers Advice Service (ECAS) target those young people in year 11, who are most in need of support, to ensure a positive transition into education, employment and training. Those identified possess either an EHC Plan, are in receipt of SEN support, are children in care, or who are for other reasons at risk of becoming NEET. They are targeted in all Stockport mainstream schools and PRUs and receive one to one bespoke support to transition into the next phase of their life.

The increase in pupil numbers generally and those who have some form of SEND, has put a significant strain on post-16 provision in local colleges and training providers who are reporting on-going waiting lists for young people to access their provision. The impact of Covid has also exacerbated anxiety and mental health issues with young people; this is also a contributory factor in the increase in NEET numbers locally, as well as reduced attendance in secondary phase education which will compromise the achievement of skills and qualifications in young people. Whilst it is clear that increased capacity is needed generally in the system, specific capacity and resource is needed at foundation level, level 1 and 2 courses. Consideration also needs to be given as to how the post-16 system engages with and prioritises the placement of disadvantaged learners. In a competitive market for places it is these learners that will be at the back of the queue and potentially without any form of provision, particularly if they have not achieved level 2 maths and English.

Students who are not inclined towards traditional academic subjects often face a curriculum that does not cater to their needs, interests or skill sets, which in some cases is leading to disengagement and can compromise their educational outcomes. However, the existing education system may not fully support or nurture this divergence in interests, which can impact their overall educational journey and future career prospects.

The low uptake of technical education pathways seen nationally, particularly in digital, health and healthcare science emphasises the need for more cohesive and integration among schools, post-16 providers, and employers. This points to 1. a lack of awareness and value perception; these technical education pathways are not as well-promoted, understood, or valued as traditional academic routes, leading to fewer students choosing these options, 2. insufficient career advice and guidance; Students and parent/carers alike have not been receiving enough information about the benefits of technical education and how it aligns with viable career opportunities, 3. disconnect between education/training providers and employers: any kinds of gap between the skills taught in technical courses and the actual needs of employers diminishes the attractiveness and perceived value of these pathways.

## **Work experience or career exploration**

There is a crucial distinction between traditional work experience and creating engaging workplace interactions that excite young people about future careers. Work experience programs have historically focused on placing students in a work environments to observe and occasionally assist in daily tasks. However, this traditional approach may not always effectively engage or inspire young students, especially if the work does not align closely with their interests or is not presented in an engaging way.

Young people – particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds – have reported that they want more. They want to learn and practice skills like speaking and listening and want a greater focus on the practicalities of applications for jobs. Employers, for their part, still talk of skills gaps and of young people ill-prepared for the realities of the workplace.

Careers Education: Now and Next was compiled and published by the Careers and Enterprise Company giving the most clear-eyed view of the challenges facing the country as it seeks to build its future workforce. The data shows clearly how the improving careers system in England can help. When it comes to work experience however, the evidence argues for reinvention.

For businesses, it's about moving away from a rigid view of two weeks of work experience, for which the opportunity has disappeared in too many secondary schools. Instead, there needs to be an ongoing, meaningful relationship with schools and colleges, capturing imaginations as soon as young people enter secondary school.

For schools and colleges, it's about embedding this activity in the curriculum, focussing on the skills that young people will find useful whatever industry or sector they set their sights on. It's also about seeing work readiness as a key part of school life. In the mainstream not at the margins.

Linked to the Gatsby benchmark's, career exploration has the potential to engage and inspire however as outlined already, individualised careers advice, information and guidance (for student and parent/carer) needs to be better and focussed of the interests and talents of the student. Furthermore cohesion and integration between students, education/training institutions and employers needs to be better.

Beyond, fairs, presentations, open days, career exploration in schools does not have to be transactional and instead may be subtly represented through curriculum development/enrichment, integrated technology, project-based learning, and employer/student mentorship programmes.

## **Recruitment, Retention, and Future Skills**

Workforce problems persist across public services, from loss of experienced staff to high turnover and vacancies. . The government's focus has been on recruiting more staff: 50,000 more nurses, 6,000 more GPs and 20,000 however, this approach is welcome and necessary however new recruits will only ever make up a minority of total workforces, and take time to acquire the knowledge, experience and organisational memory that makes public services tick.

Public service effectiveness depends therefore on keeping existing workforces skilled, motivated – and, crucially, in post.

Key drivers for retention difficulties include:

- Public sector pay ;
- High Workloads;
- Cost of living including housing and childcare;
- Some key roles involve unsociable hours;

- There can be limited avenues in some roles for development and progression.

Nationally a partially effective workforce strategy, deployed in recent years, is for teachers;

The Department for Education operated a demand-led teacher workforce model to calculate the number of teacher and training places that are needed. This model was linked to an overall strategy for recruitment and retention and used to evaluate the impact of those policies at a national level where sufficient information is available to do so. There have been huge successes in this work however there remain shortfalls across certain subject areas which have not been filled in recent recruitment rounds.

Similar initiatives have been implemented for nursing and for policing and we would welcome a broader national strategy for all public sector jobs.

We need to examine as a group what local levers are available to grow, develop, and attract the very best talent to Stockport.

Whilst there are issues which can only be resolved through national government policy, there is a lot we can do locally to address these challenges. One such local lever is scaling the childcare offer in Stockport. Access to affordable childcare is a major barrier to parents and carers, particularly women being able to work, study and train. The cost of childcare can be a barrier to employment for single parent households, most of whom are female. In many cases, and especially for single mothers, the cost of childcare outweighs their wages, making it financially restrictive for mothers to return to work. From April 2024, eligible working parents of 2-year-olds can access 15 hours childcare support. By September 2025, most working families with children aged between 9 months and 5 years old will be entitled to 30 hours of childcare support.

The LA has a statutory duty to Secure sufficient childcare, so far as is reasonably practicable, for working parents, or parents who are studying or training for employment. The Statutory guidance requires us to have consideration of:

- Supply and demand for places across the Borough;
- The state of the local labour market including the sufficiency of the local childcare workforce;
- The quality and capacity of childcare providers.

Put simply, to scale capacity where demand outstrips supply, there needs to exist an available workforce, that workforce needs to have a depth of knowledge and experience, and childcare providers need to have sufficient quality and capacity to absorb and mitigate an uplift in workforce (and inevitable dilution of knowledge and experience in a setting). If the workforce does not exist, and/or is not of sufficient quality, and/or the providers expanding don't have sufficient quality and capacity to absorb the impacts of increased workforce then scaling will be limited and/or quality of provision will be impacted.

We have yet to see the impact of scaling activity of childcare places across Stockport. As such this could be a risk to work and skills in the future.

More broadly across all sectors (public and private), Stockport has the highest number of recruitment difficulties in the public sector compared with other GM authorities, with 79% of businesses reporting they struggled to recruit staff. Stockport's employers especially had problems recruiting 'professional / managerial' roles, as 43% of them reported that getting people for these roles presented a challenge. This was followed by 'skilled and technical' (38.7%), 'clerical' (23.2%) and 'unskilled and semi-skilled' (14.1%). Notably, recruitment problems for every role were greater in Stockport compared to the Greater Manchester average.

The hardest-to-obtain technical skills from candidates were 'specialist skills/knowledge to

perform the role' and 'knowledge of products/services offered by their organisation' with 46.3% and 45% of businesses reporting these. These two skills areas exceeded the others by far. In third and fourth place came 'advanced IT skills' (16.2%) and 'basic IT skills' (15.3%).

Regarding soft skills, 'ability to manage own time and prioritise own tasks' (33.3%), 'sales' (31.5%) and 'managing own feelings or the feelings of others' (29.6%) were the most difficult to find in candidates. 'IT skills' (both advanced and basic) and 'sales' were identified as being in short supply more often in Stockport than in Greater Manchester.

The training courses with highest demand in Stockport were 'basic functional skills for business' (33.6%), 'digital marketing' (31.4%) and 'sales & business development' (30.5%). Other popular training courses were 'business leadership & management' (30%) and 'specialised functional skills for business' (25.9%). Compared to Greater Manchester, businesses in Stockport were substantially more interested in 'digital marketing' courses and less interested in the 'soft skills' and 'business leadership and management' courses.

The below table shows a sample of occupations by total number of vacancy postings in Stockport from 2017 – 2022. Source: Adzuna.

<b>Vacancies</b>	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Social Care worker	1702	1845	1757	2246	3048	2546
Customer service advisor	1686	1442	1050	336	1054	1297
General nurse	1623	1325	1350	1318	1214	1015
Mental health nurse	880	779	622	359	NO DATA	NO DATA
Administrator	654	447	524	342	710	884
Teacher	NO DATA	NO DATA	255	NO DATA	NO DATA	565
Teaching assistant	NO DATA	NO DATA	470	426	718	835

Diversifying Stockport's economy is vital for future resilience. A potential lack of business dynamism and poor survival rates risks undermining Stockport's recent growth. Despite hosting a micro-business dominated economy, there is a lack of evidence of an entrepreneurial start-up culture. Existing employment specialisms are forecast to decline, making economic diversification an urgent necessity. Key employment sectors such as manufacturing, and utilities are forecast to shrink by over 5,000 jobs by 2040. Current trends around automation in key sectors, such as logistics and distribution, further strengthens the need for diversification, and there is an opportunity to harness and grow green economy technologies and businesses. *Source: Economic Plan*

The Council has declared a climate emergency. Issues of congestion, air quality and the carbon footprint of our buildings and business activities need to be addressed if we are to meet regional and national net zero targets. Greening our borough also represents an economic opportunity. The development of skills to support the 'green economy' is a key priority. In addition to supporting climate adaptation, we will enable businesses and residents to take advantage of new opportunities in the green economy. Supporting businesses to help make the necessary adaptations to achieve net zero targets are part of the Economic Plan. *Source: Economic Plan*