Apprenticeship Growth Plan 2018 - 2020

LIVERPOOL CITY REGION
COMBINED AUTHORITY

Liverpool City Region
Local Enterprise Partnership

The Apprenticeship Hub
Liverpool City Region

European Union
European Social Fund
Ensuring that our residents and young people in particular have the right skills for the modern workplace is vital both for their futures and the country’s future economic prosperity. High quality apprenticeships are key to making that happen. We have a proud history of apprenticeships in the Liverpool City Region and value highly the opportunities and benefits they offer to individuals, businesses and the local economy.

Apprenticeships are however going through a period of significant change and whilst we understand and are sympathetic with the aims of the apprenticeship reform, they are clearly not currently achieving the goal of getting more people and businesses engaged with apprenticeships. We believe that without local intervention to mitigate some of the impact of reforms, there is a risk that apprenticeship numbers will be far fewer than the City Region’s economy requires.

The Combined Authority has commissioned this Apprenticeship Growth Plan to create the right environment to grow the volume and breadth of apprenticeships available locally. Consultations during the development of the Growth Plan have underlined the level of local commitment to making apprenticeships work, however it is clear that there has never been a greater need for collaborative action and local investment to stimulate apprenticeship demand from both employers and learners. We need to support Colleges and providers to better respond to local skills needs and support more employers to understand and access high-quality and relevant provision.

The Combined Authority’s ambitions for apprenticeships remain high and despite current difficulty in maintaining previous levels of apprenticeship starts our longer term aim is to achieve programme growth. We believe that the reforms and in particular the apprenticeship levy could work better with greater local flexibility and we will continue to champion the skills needs of the City Region as part of ongoing devolution discussions.

This Growth Plan demonstrates our readiness to take action and our desire to play a greater role in influencing and creatively responding to policy that affects our employment and skills ambition. We are clear in our asks of Government, including allowing any underspend of the apprenticeship levy to be retained and used locally, and are firm in our belief that collectively we have the knowledge and ability across the City Region to ensure as many of our residents and businesses as possible benefit from the power of apprenticeships.
Executive Summary

Introduction

The Liverpool City Region Combined Authority views the Apprenticeship Growth Plan as a key document that will develop collective action, galvanise and promote collaborative activity by Colleges and training providers and ensure a co-ordinated approach to driving forward apprenticeship delivery over the next three years.

The Liverpool City Region Apprenticeship Growth Plan signals the continued importance of apprenticeships to the City Region, residents and the employers who drive our local economy. The Plan aims to improve the way the apprenticeship system and reforms work for the City Region and sets out a vision for apprenticeship growth through:

- Increasing the volume of apprenticeships opportunities available;
- Expanding the diversity of frameworks and standards available to residents and employers;
- Improving an apprentice’s ability to progress to higher qualification levels including degrees; and
- Developing a higher standard of quality for apprenticeships offered and delivered.

The Apprenticeship Growth Plan has been developed in direct response to the Liverpool City Region Area Review of Post-16 Education and Training that reported on 10th January 2017. The Area Based Review recommended an ‘apprenticeships growth plan to drive forward targets for an expansion of the breadth and volume of apprenticeships’. The Apprenticeship Growth Plan has been developed in conjunction with employers, stakeholders, local authorities, colleges and independent training providers and offers a truly collaborative approach to ensuring a greater alignment between the demand for and supply of high quality apprenticeships.

Our aspiration is to deliver 20,000 apprenticeships per annum by 2020.
What we are trying to achieve

The Combined Authority recognises that the apprenticeship sector is undergoing a period of significant reform. Early indications are that this reform has significantly reduced apprenticeship take-up on a national and local level. It is therefore a difficult time to deliver apprenticeship growth, however, without local intervention to mitigate some of the impact of reforms, there is a risk that apprenticeship numbers will be far fewer than the City Region’s economy requires. The Combined Authority is therefore committed to developing the apprenticeship programme and provides this Growth Plan as a clear vision for the City Region, which is to:

Increase the volume, breadth & relevance of apprenticeships across the Liverpool City Region enabling more employers and learners to access and benefit from apprenticeships.

This Growth Plan is a call to action for stakeholders across the City Region to work together under a shared ambition to grow and develop the apprenticeship programme and create the right environment for apprenticeship success. Our aspiration is to deliver:

20,000 apprenticeships per annum by 2020

We will ensure the Apprenticeship Growth Plan is a living, breathing document which will be refreshed regularly to ensure our aspiration and actions reflect local needs and remain the right ones to enable growth. The Combined Authority will continue to adapt and respond to new policy developments and will use the Apprenticeship Growth Plan to help monitor progress in comparison to national and other City Region’s progress, stimulating the market and implementing enabling actions where necessary to support local successful delivery.
Key Challenges

The Combined Authority recognises that it is a difficult time to deliver apprenticeship growth and through consultation in the development of this plan have identified a number of key challenges that without collective and collaborative action could inhibit programme delivery. These include:

- The impact of apprenticeship reform;
- Apprenticeship awareness and understanding amongst employers;
- Falling 16-18 apprenticeship participation alongside demographic changes;
- A misalignment between employer demand and the availability of provision;
- The technical skills gap across Liverpool City Region compared to national averages; and
- The complexity in navigating and fragmentation of the national and local skills system.

Priorities for Growth

The Apprenticeship Growth Plan sets out the key priorities for action which will address local growth challenges, tackle key areas of market failure and build on the strengths and opportunities that already exist.

Priority 1: Developing better data analysis and availability across the City Region to inform programme and curriculum planning;

Priority 2: Stimulating employer demand for apprenticeships;

Priority 3: Supporting more individuals to follow apprenticeship skills progression routes;

Priority 4: Extending the breadth and delivery of high-quality apprenticeships;

Priority 5: Creating the right environment for apprenticeships to develop.
Key Actions to Drive Growth

Consultation with employers, Colleges, providers, constituent Councils and other key stakeholders has enabled the development of a range of actions which will enhance the delivery of apprenticeships across the Liverpool City Region. The key actions to drive apprenticeship programme performance locally include:

• The Combined Authority will continue to lobby Government as part of ongoing devolution discussions to retain unallocated levy funding within the Liverpool City Region;

• The Combined Authority will seek to commission a capacity building fund via European Social Fund (ESF) to support colleges and providers based in the City Region to establish provision of new Standards, test new markets or deliver different sector subject areas than they have previously delivered to City Region residents to enhance the breadth of provision available locally; and

• The Combined Authority will seek to commission, via ESF, a Quality Improvement Fund, providing a package of support for Colleges and providers to improve the quality of apprenticeships.

• The Combined Authority will explore alternative sources of funding for the Apprenticeship Hub to provide greater stability and allow the Apprenticeship Hub to take the lead on the implementation of the Apprenticeship Growth Plan;

• The Combined Authority will launch an Apprenticeship Pledge to gain commitment from public and private sector employers, Colleges and providers and other stakeholders to apprenticeship growth;

• The Liverpool City Region Local Enterprise Partnership will facilitate greater employer engagement in the planning and delivery of apprenticeships;
An Ambition for Growth

There are key economic and social challenges that Apprenticeship delivery can support the Combined Authority to address. Employment rates are less favourable locally than national levels, attainment levels at 16 are persistently below national averages as is the proportion of residents without qualifications. Apprenticeships are part of the solution to closing the gap – they are vital to realising the Liverpool City Region’s ambition for economic growth and are the key driver to improving the skills of local residents whilst in work and later in life without the risk of personal debt. Apprenticeships remain a fundamental tool in addressing skills needs that will improve the productivity of local employers in line with the ‘People’ section of the Industrial Strategy.

The Apprenticeship Growth Plan should be read alongside the Liverpool City Region Skills Investment Statement 2018/19, the Single Growth Strategy and the Skills Strategy and forms part of a suite of documents that aim to improve skills and productivity levels across the City Region. This plan sets out a clear vision for how Liverpool City Region can drive forward apprenticeship growth and achieve expansion of the breadth of sectors, ability to progress to higher qualification levels and volume of apprenticeships available locally.

The Apprenticeship Growth Plan has been developed in direct response to the findings of the Liverpool City Region Area Based Review of Post-16 Education and Training, which recommended an ‘apprenticeship growth plan to drive forward targets for an expansion of the breadth and volume of apprenticeships’ to ensure that we can maintain and grow our apprenticeship offer.

The Liverpool City Region Apprenticeship Vision

To increase the volume, breadth and relevance of apprenticeships across the Liverpool City Region enabling more employers and residents to access and benefit from apprenticeships.

The Apprenticeship Growth Plan aims to ensure that apprenticeship provision reflects the changes in Government funding priorities for apprenticeships and expectations for employer co-investment, future demands and our local contribution to national targets. The Apprenticeship Growth Plan has been developed in conjunction with employers, stakeholders, Colleges and independent training providers and offers a truly collaborative approach to ensuring a better fit between the demand for and supply of high quality apprenticeships.

Our aspiration is to deliver 20,000 apprenticeships per annum by 2020
A plan to drive Apprenticeships

This Apprenticeship Growth Plan is a call to arms for stakeholders across the City Region to collaborate through a shared ambition to grow and develop apprenticeship delivery locally. It will focus the activity of all those who have a role to play in the learning and skills sector and through the achievement of an aspiration to deliver:

20,000 apprenticeships per annum by 2020

The Combined Authority will take the recommendations developed as a result of consultations with stakeholders to inform how resources are invested to support apprenticeship growth including European Social Funds and future Single Investment Fund Skills Capital priorities, ensuring we maximise opportunities to support the supply and demand of apprenticeships in the City Region. Through the actions resulting from the Apprenticeship Growth Plan the Combined Authority will demonstrate and lead a shared commitment with constituent Councils and other key stakeholders to develop the Apprenticeship programme and continue to champion the skills needs of the Liverpool City Region as part of ongoing devolution discussions with Government, informing our lobbying position over unspent levy.
Apprenticeships have undergone an unprecedented period of reform over recent years and the Combined Authority understands that rapid and concurrent changes in policy have had a huge bearing on the sector’s ability to deliver all aspects of apprenticeships. Policy changes have impacted programme design, delivery requirements, employer funding and time requirements; early indications are that apprenticeship numbers have dropped, particularly in many of the sectors that the City Region has traditionally employed. However, apprenticeships remain important as can be seen from the positioning of apprenticeships within the wider context of the Government’s Industrial Strategy and vision for Technical Education.

There has therefore never been a greater need for a localised collective and collaborative plan for enabling growth in the volume, diversity of frameworks and standards and progression routes available to employers and learners. The Apprenticeship Growth Plan actions are designed to minimise College and provider risks associated with large-scale reform, prevent market failure in the short term and to further facilitate Colleges and providers to take advantage of the new opportunities presented by the funding and policy reforms. The actions also aim to support more employers to articulate their skills requirements, improve their understanding of apprenticeships and increase the number of employers benefitting from high-quality, relevant apprenticeship delivery.

The Changing Policy Context

Apprenticeships have long been at the heart of Government skills policy. In December 2015 the Government set out their ambition of achieving 3 million apprenticeship starts across England by 2020. There has, since then, been a succession of national policy publications including the Post-16 Skills Plan (2016) and the Public Sector Apprenticeship Targets Regulations (2017) together with full re-procurement of apprenticeships by the Education and Skills Funding Agency all of which fundamentally transform the apprenticeship system. More specifically recent changes include:

- An apprenticeship levy for employers with a payroll of over £3m;
- The routing of apprenticeship funding through a digital account;
- Introduction of degree level apprenticeships;
- Employers with over 50 staff co-investing 10% of the cost of training;
- Flexibility for employers to negotiate the price of apprenticeships within set bands;
- The enforced requirement for 20% off the job training; and
- The introduction of new standards and independent end point assessment.
The challenge for Liverpool City Region is to develop a renewed local apprenticeship infrastructure that supports Colleges, providers and employers to harness the advantages of policy changes and reduce the risks of change, whilst reforms to programme, funding and content are embedded.

Historically the introduction of new apprenticeship policy has always had an adverse impact on the performance of the programme e.g. the extension in minimum lengths of stay to 12 months and the removal of programme led apprenticeships; however, the scale of the most recent reforms and the resulting impact is unprecedented. Post reform, between May and July 2017 apprenticeship starts decreased nationally by 61% compared to the previous year (noting the 47% increase in the quarter prior to the introduction of the reforms). The decline in starts compared to prior years has continued with the August to October 2017 period showing a 26% reduction totalling a combined reduction of 41% since the introduction of apprenticeship reform.

Employers with over 50 staff co-invest 10% of the cost of training

Nationally we are seeing greater reductions in apprenticeships at Levels 2 and 3 with an expansion of apprenticeships at higher levels which, whilst positive in meeting the higher level skills agenda, could present further challenge if there is a significant reduction in lower level apprenticeship opportunities. We therefore need to minimise any unintended consequence on social mobility and ensure the continued availability of apprenticeships which act as entry routes into employment.

The Combined Authority understands the issues and challenges faced by the skills sector. The Apprenticeship Growth Plan will therefore be a living, breathing document which will be refreshed regularly to ensure the actions remain relevant. The Combined Authority will continue to adapt and respond to new apprenticeship policy developments and will use this plan to help take advantage and de-risk the need for change, stimulating the market and supporting Colleges, providers and employers to adapt and develop.
A Priority for the City Region

The City Region has a strong history of apprenticeship delivery and the programme has grown year on year since 2014/15. In 2016/17, 18,580 individuals started their apprenticeship journey and over 9,500 individuals annually complete their apprenticeship. This was however before apprenticeship reform and we have seen a reduction in apprenticeship starts in recent months.

The Combined Authority is ambitious in its aspirations for apprenticeships across the Liverpool City Region. The Liverpool City Region makes a significant contribution to national delivery accounting for approximately 3.6% of England’s total apprenticeship starts. The Combined Authority is committed to continuing the important role played by the City Region in delivering the national target, however the Combined Authority is equally committed to ensuring the City Region delivers the right apprenticeships for local economic and learner needs and as such has developed a series of supporting aspirations, which look to extend the depth, range and level of delivery in addition to volume growth.

Growth Plan - Supporting Ambitions

- To maintain the volume of 16-18 apprenticeships measured as the proportion of the annual cohort entering an apprenticeship route.
- To expand the breadth and relevance of provision, increasing the range of frameworks and standards available through local provision.
- To support and improve the quality of apprenticeships delivered locally.
- To increase the proportion of starts at advanced and higher/degree level apprenticeships.
The Apprenticeship Growth Plan builds on existing commitments and aspirations across the City Region and takes into consideration the recommendations of the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Scrutiny Panel, who undertook a comprehensive review of apprenticeships in 2016. In addition, in 2016 the Liverpool City Region Apprenticeship Hub published its five-year strategy which cemented the commitment of partners to growing the number of apprenticeship starts particularly at higher and degree level, increasing the proportion of completions, improving the relevance of the local offer and ensuring that apprenticeships are viewed as a high-quality option by all. These sentiments were echoed and built upon in the Metro Mayoral manifesto and remain the relevant ambitions for the City Region, although as part of a revised approach in light of the recent reforms and changing apprenticeship landscape.

The Liverpool City Region Area Based Review made a number of key recommendations which inform this growth plan, including increasing apprenticeship delivery by General Further Education College by 50%, the creation of a Careers Hub and refocusing the Apprenticeship Hub to take a more strategic approach.

The Combined Authority has consulted employers based within the City Region on the current skills gaps they face and their future skills through the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Employer Skills Survey 2017. The Combined Authority has also worked with delivery organisations and strategic partners to understand Colleges and training providers’ challenges in meeting these skills needs through the development and consultation on a Skills Investment Statement for 2018/19, a longer term Skills Strategy and through consultation on the Apprenticeship Growth Plan.

Liverpool City Region has the opportunity through devolution to establish and exercise greater control over expenditure on skills and training. The Combined Authority will continue to make a strong case to Government to provide further powers and flexibilities associated with apprenticeships, including retaining unspent levy funds from local employers and testing new models of delivery for apprenticeships.

In 2016/17, 18,580 individuals started their apprenticeship journey.
It is recognised that the impact of Apprenticeship reforms and changes in the market has created a difficult time to deliver apprenticeship growth. This plan identifies the key challenges that without collective and collaborative action could inhibit programme delivery and future growth. These are:

- The impact of apprenticeship reforms;
- Apprenticeship awareness and understanding amongst employers;
- Falling 16-18 apprenticeship participation and local demographic impacts;
- An imbalance between employer demand and the availability of provision;
- The issue of low attainment of English and maths at age 16 compared to national averages in some areas;
- The technical skills gap that exists across Liverpool City Region; and
- The complexity and fragmentation of the local skills system.

The Apprenticeship Growth Plan explores the specific aspects of the socio-economic, demographic and policy context in relation to the City Region’s aspiration for apprenticeship growth and outlines the key actions Colleges and training providers, partners and stakeholders, and the Combined Authority will take as a result.

**Apprenticeship reforms are impacting delivery**

Overall apprenticeship delivery across the Liverpool City Region in 2016/17 continued to hold steady compared to previous years and despite the uncertainty created by apprenticeship reforms starts increased by 1.4%. This was in contrast to both the regional and national trend where volumes of apprenticeship starts fell by 2.0% and 3.7% respectively.

However, whilst apprenticeship reforms could be seen to still be in their infancy, the scale of the immediate impact on apprenticeship starts across the City Region cannot be underestimated. Nationally the number of new apprenticeships has fallen by 41% since their introduction and whilst the initial decline of 61% between May to July 2017 could be seen as the sector responding negatively or taking time to adjust to the reforms, the decline has continued in the first quarter of 2017/18.

Historic data and recruitment patterns are therefore no longer a robust indicator of future apprenticeship delivery and the information is not yet available to establish a true understanding and new equilibrium of apprenticeship performance post-reform. Providing an accurate baseline and potential trajectory for apprenticeship delivery will be a key aspect of a planned Apprenticeship data dashboard for the City Region.
Feedback from local⁵ and national providers⁶ helpfully provides greater clarity on the current impact of reforms both on apprenticeship starts and employer behaviour, including:

- There is still a level of confusion over the reforms from an employer perspective;
- The reinforced requirement for employers to pay staff time for 20% off the job training is significantly impacting on apprenticeship take up in some sectors where this is not the traditional method of delivery;
- Many employers from sectors that have traditionally made in-kind rather than financial contributions to Apprenticeship delivery are now required to make a cash co-investment of 10% of training costs; they do not yet recognise the economic benefit of apprenticeships and as a result may not commit to future starts; and
- Levy-paying employers are taking time to reflect and develop their spending plans.

All these factors could be contributing to the recent drop in Apprenticeship starts compared to this time last year and have a detrimental effect on the viability and capacity of the provider base locally in some sectors if the trend of falling starts is sustained.

As a result of the changes to the programme the Combined Authority has considered its aspirations for growth over the 3-year lifetime of this plan and set a final year target for 2019/20. The Combined Authority will continue to monitor local apprenticeship performance in comparison to national outcomes to gain a deeper understanding of the impact that reforms and any further changes are having on local apprenticeships volumes.

Collectively local Colleges, training providers, local authorities and stakeholders need to produce and share information and intelligence from a wide range of sources to develop a collective understanding of apprenticeship delivery and ensure the solutions and actions we take are the right ones.

The Combined Authority will invest in an Apprenticeship Data Dashboard and will review the Apprenticeship Growth Plan on a bi-annual basis to check that actions set out in the Apprenticeship Growth Plan are having the desired impact. This will draw out apprenticeship starts and completions and if possible will also identify the separate completion rates between the NVQ and Maths and English elements of the apprenticeship. The progression rates from apprenticeships into work or further study remain strong in the City Region and ongoing progression tracking will also be included within the data dashboard.

Key Actions:

- The Combined Authority will increase its data analysis capacity and develop a Data Dashboard of local Apprenticeship outcomes;
- The Apprenticeship Hub will undertake a further review of apprenticeship performance data including 2017/18 programme performance to inform post-reforms trend analysis;
- The Greater Merseyside Learning Provider Federation will be requested to commission an annual survey of members to monitor apprenticeship participation post reforms; and
- The Apprenticeship Hub will review the relevance and impact of actions within the Apprenticeship Growth Plan on a bi-annual basis.
Too many employers still do not understand or engage with apprenticeships

Apprenticeships provide opportunities for business and individuals and almost 90% of employers who use apprenticeships as a way to develop their workforce believe that their business has benefited. Whilst apprenticeship reforms aim to put employers in the driving seat, either in determining which College or provider they select through employer routed funding or developing the content of new standards, feedback gathered locally demonstrates that many employers either don’t understand what the changes mean for them or simply don’t know where to go for support.

Apprenticeship recruitment by non-levy paying SMEs is vital to Liverpool City Region’s ability to continue to contribute a proportionally larger volume of starts per capita to the national target of 3 million apprenticeship starts by 2020 than other City Regions. Circa 99% of the 49,125 business units across Liverpool City Region are SMEs. If future Government strategy for apprenticeships is to meet the majority of the 3 million targeted apprenticeship starts by 2020 through large levy paying employers, this would put recruitment and delivery of apprenticeships in Liverpool City Region at a disadvantage due to our large volume of SMEs.

SME engagement in apprenticeships without a local National Apprenticeship Service presence presents a particular engagement challenge for local stakeholders, Colleges and training providers due to both the scale and diversity of the local small and medium sized enterprises. The City Region has fewer large levy-paying employers compared to many other city region areas; there are however approximately 400 levy-paying employers with employment bases within the Liverpool City Region. Renewed and enhanced efforts to create new relationships with un-engaged local levy paying employers could maximise local levy paid starts and support levy paying employers to invest in apprenticeships.

A large proportion of the City Region’s workforce (22.5%) is employed by public sector bodies. As large levy paying local employers this provides the City Region with a significant new market opportunity for growth in apprenticeship starts. Government expects the Public Sector to increase its contribution to apprenticeship starts albeit at a time of austerity to a minimum of 2.3% of their workforce being an apprentice at any one time. Public sector employers will also require support to develop their internal training policies and external procurement systems to enable greater volumes of apprenticeship starts for both their existing workforce and to determine whether new recruitment could be advertised as an apprenticeship. The Apprenticeship Growth Plan therefore proposes a segmented approach to employer engagement by employer type in developing new markets that will enable new apprenticeship starts.
The Liverpool City Region has seen significant growth in the proportion of people in employment over the last five years and a corresponding fall in unemployment. Employers are however reporting greater difficulties in recruiting skilled staff, demonstrating a tightening in the labour market. If the City Region is to maximise its economic potential, workforce development will need to include employers’ recruitment of new young apprentices and supporting those who are economically inactive into work with training. Measures will also need to be taken to re-train the existing workforce, as retirement age increases, potentially through a mature apprenticeship route.

Collaboratively, stakeholders will need to support employers including those employing under 50 people; non levy paying (those contributing 10% to training costs); levy paying; and public sector; to understand the economic and social benefits of recruiting and developing their workforce through apprenticeships. Apprenticeships need to become the default mechanism and funding route for effective workforce development solutions for employing new staff and training existing staff.

To facilitate this Colleges, training provider and stakeholders including the Apprenticeship Hub and local authorities will need to showcase the advantages of recruiting young people and adults who may initially not be perceived to have the skills required and investing in their skills development to be the talent of the future.

Key Actions:

- The Apprenticeship Hub will develop a market segmented marketing campaign and employer toolkit to raise apprenticeship awareness;
- The LEP will facilitate improved employer engagement and promotion of apprenticeships;
- The Combined Authority will work in partnership with constituent Councils and the National Apprenticeship Service to support levy paying employers understand how apprenticeships could benefit their business; and
- The Combined Authority will work with local authorities and other public sector bodies to help deliver the 2.3% target
16-18 apprenticeship numbers are falling

Apprenticeship starts volumes for 16-18 year olds in 2015/16 were comparable (4,200) to the previous year’s 4,160 starts in 2014/15. However, 2016/17 data shows a sharp fall in numbers to 3,730 equating to a 10.9% reduction compared to 2.9% in the North West and 7.8% nationally. This means that over 450 fewer young people aged 16 to 18 started an apprenticeship in Liverpool City Region than in the previous year; recent data indicates the downward trend is continuing in 2017/19.

Contextually the demographics of 16-18-year-old cohort in the City Region is declining year on year; this will have a long-term impact on the working age population, the labour market and the numbers of young people engaging in apprenticeships and study programme starts in the local FE sector. This decline in residents aged 16-18 is more significant in Liverpool City Region than elsewhere. The volume of 16-18 aged residents in Liverpool City Region is not expected to return to 2014 levels until 2028, 4 years later than the North West and five later than in England.

Whilst a fall in the volume of 16-18 year olds apprenticeship starts in the City Region may have been expected due to a declining local cohort, apprenticeship starts as a proportion of the 16-19 cohort has also seen a reduction from 8.1% in 2015/16 to 7.4% in 2016/17. This means a lower proportion of the cohort are choosing the apprenticeship route. Partners are reporting an increase in young people being encouraged to stay on at school and inconsistency in access to information, advice and guidance on apprenticeships for young people. Apprenticeship numbers are increasing at degree levels showing apprenticeships are a valuable alternative to university; however, we need to ensure consistency in the way the apprenticeship route is promoted to young people as for many students this would provide a more effective and less costly way to achieve their career aspirations.

Prior to apprenticeship reforms the training of 16-18-year-old apprentices was free at the point of delivery to employers, with Government contributing all of the training costs. This effectively provided an incentive alongside a £1,500 recruitment incentive for employers who were new to recruiting young apprentices. Post reforms employers are expected to either pay the entire training cost through the levy or a 10% contribution if they employ over 50 staff. Employers may now be reluctant to take on a 16-18 year-old, who may be seen as not being job ready in comparison to recruiting older, more experienced candidates.

Findings from the Employer Skills Survey 2017 and feedback from providers evidence an increase in the number of young people who are not ready for an apprenticeship, who have not attained English and maths skills at school, experience social issues, learning difficulties and, in particular, mental health needs, which prevent them from easily accessing apprenticeship opportunities at age 16. In addition, the take up of Traineeship opportunities across the City Region is low, with the programme being perceived as unattractive by young people due to the lack of any form of wage or bursary support.

Therefore, to maintain the volume of 16-18 apprenticeships delivered the City Region will need to increase the proportion of local residents aged 16 to 18 entering apprenticeships by informing and advising more young people of the benefits of the apprenticeship route and ensuring high-quality progression pathways are available for those who are furthest away from the apprenticeship entry point. There is extensive provision in place for young people funded through mainstream and European sources, and support available through local Councils to provide advice. The feedback from local Councils is that this could beneficially be extended by providing additional wraparound support to ensure that young people are helped to stay in and progress through the provision they engage with. We will build on the work of the Special Educational Needs & Disability Task and Finish Group to address & meet the needs of SEND post-16 learners in the City Region.
Collectively the City Region’s Apprenticeship stakeholders need to promote inclusivity and equality of apprenticeship opportunities and take positive action to encourage and support more employers and learners to engage with apprenticeships from diverse backgrounds and needs. This includes ensuring specific support is in place for young people with additional needs (such as care leavers or those with special educational needs) through the additionally commissioned support. This will enable young people to be helped to address the barriers that they face and provide a more equal landscape and position for them to secure apprenticeships.

The Combined Authority will build on the excellent work already undertaken by the Apprenticeship Hub and others in engaging with schools, young people and their parents, extending networks of Young Apprentice Ambassadors and Employer Ambassadors and advocates who can inspire others to think about apprenticeships more positively and engage with the programme.

There is also a need to improve the promotion of apprenticeship opportunities within schools. The introduction of the Gatsby Good Careers Benchmarks® to schools through the National Careers Strategy® provides the basis for this. The revised statutory guidance to schools on careers provision¹⁰ that followed this now requires schools to allow access to students to receive information and publicity on apprenticeships.

**Key Actions:**

- The Combined Authority will seek to commission additional wrap-around support (including mentors) for 16-18 year olds at risk of being NEET from European Social Fund and local match funding. This will include targeted support for those with additional needs;

- Partners will establish a centralised approach to apprenticeship Careers Education, Information, Advice & Guidance through the Liverpool City Region Careers Hub;

- The Apprenticeship Hub will continue to extend the Liverpool City Region Young Apprentice Ambassador Network to raise the awareness of apprenticeships with schools and young people;

- The Combined Authority will develop a Liverpool City Region Apprenticeship Portal to simplify and enhance access to apprenticeship vacancies; and

- The Combined Authority will ask Government through devolution discussions for access to unspent Apprenticeship Levy funding to develop a Traineeships bursary for 16 to 23 year olds as a progression route to Apprenticeships.
There is latent demand in the system for apprenticeships with potential for greater alignment between employer demand and College and training provider supply

Historically apprenticeship delivery in the Liverpool City Region has been concentrated in a small number of high volume employment sectors\(^\text{11}\), with high levels of replacement demand and sectors where apprenticeships are the recognised route of career development. National data and the results from the Greater Merseyside Learning Provider Federation Provider Survey (November 2017) indicates that the apprenticeship reforms are having a variable detrimental impact across sectors aligned to employers’ willingness and ability to co-invest in the cost of training and the requirement for apprenticeships to include 20% of paid time for off the job training.

Demand has remained buoyant in sectors where traditionally delivery models involve day release, such as construction, hairdressing and engineering; however, the health and social care sector has seen apprenticeship numbers fall significantly with many employers perceiving apprentices as too costly for their business.

At the same time, the Combined Authority Employer Skills Survey 2017 reports that employers in Liverpool City Region experience a larger workforce skills gap (21%) than nationally (14%). Businesses not currently employing apprentices cited a number of factors including the lack of relevant provision, lack of resources and the lack of suitable candidates.

Encouragingly of the over 1,800 businesses that responded to the Combined Authority Employer Skills Survey 2017, 24% reported that they will probably recruit apprentices in the next twelve months and 14% indicated that they planned to upskill their existing workforce through apprenticeships in the coming year.

Collectively apprenticeship stakeholders including Colleges and training providers need to work collaboratively to diversify apprenticeship provision to meet the demand of employers in new markets in order for the City Region to maximise the skills needed for future economic growth. The Combined Authority is committed to supporting locally based Colleges and providers to increase the breadth of apprenticeships available and will use this Growth Plan to inform the commissioning of any future skills capital funding. The Combined Authority will also encourage the development of apprenticeship standards, working with employers to develop new apprenticeship pathways in key growth sectors, learning from the work already undertaken in the Maritime sector\(^\text{12}\).
In order for apprenticeships to become even more valued by employers and learners they must be of the highest quality. All age-all level achievement rates for the Liverpool City Region, whilst close, are below the national average and there are sectors and areas of learning where clear improvement is required, from both an individual institutional level and collectively. Over half of Colleges based within Liverpool City Region have at the time of publication of this Plan been graded as ‘requires improvement’ or lower by Ofsted for apprenticeships and a number of independent training providers are no longer delivering locally having lost their contracts due to Ofsted considering their provision inadequate. The Combined Authority is keen to support Colleges and providers in these circumstances with additional support as well as helping good providers become outstanding.

Whilst the quality of apprenticeships is the responsibility of individual institutions, there are collective actions we can take to help drive quality improvement and support providers to adapt to new markets and learner requirements. Equally there is a need for College and provider collaboration to provide peer support and review to collectively improve the quality of provision delivered within Liverpool City Region. The Combined Authority will help to de-risk the development of new standards within new markets and new areas of learning that meet local employer demand at a time when providers are focusing on enhancing the quality of existing programmes.

Key Actions:

• The Combined Authority will seek to utilise ESF to support the development of new Apprenticeship standards that support local employers needs for Colleges, training providers and Universities based within the City Region;

• The Combined Authority will seek to establish a capacity building fund, via ESF, to support providers to move into new sectors and areas of learning thereby enhancing the breadth of Apprenticeship provision available locally;

• Local stakeholders will collectively support employers to better articulate their specific technical skills needs through the Growth Hub, LEP Sector Boards and Provider Curriculum Networks;

• The Combined Authority will seek to commission, via ESF, a Quality Improvement Fund, providing a package of support to improve the quality of apprenticeship delivery for locally based Colleges and providers; and

• The Apprenticeship Hub will promote the breadth and diversity of apprenticeships to demonstrate how they can help address a wide range of skills gaps.

24% of businesses surveyed stated that they will probably recruit apprentices in the next 12 months
Over the last 10 years, employers in Liverpool City Region require increasingly higher skilled roles, with Level 4 occupations growing at a greater rate than recorded nationally. 48% of employers recently surveyed in the City Region reported a number of specific technical skills gaps, most acutely in IT, manufacturing and construction. Employers also reported a need for leadership and management skills to be improved.

Colleges and training providers have responded accordingly with fewer Level 2 Apprenticeship programmes and growing volumes of advanced and higher-level apprenticeships in line with the Government and local ambitions, but this comes at an opportunity cost of training older workers rather than dedicating apprenticeship supply resources to younger apprentices in lower level roles. In 2016/17 the proportion of Apprenticeship starts which were Level 2 reduced to 51.3% from 55.2% in 2015/16. The trend for increasing apprenticeships at Level 4 and above continues with a 33.06% increase in 2016/17 starts in the City Region compared to 29.68% in the North West and 32.71% nationally.

A technical skills gap still exists

The qualification and resultant skills levels of residents in the City Region has increased in recent years; however, significant gaps remain at all levels compared to national averages. Lower progress earlier in life key at age 16 is an inhibitor in many cases to the progression into advanced technical and higher-level skills in the immediate years after school age. Attainment of Level 3 by age 19 is much lower in Liverpool City Region than national rates as a result. The impact of lower Level 2 attainment through school and the need to repeat English and maths qualifications between the ages of 16 to 18 impacts on apprenticeship delivery and likely success and the age at which Liverpool City Region residents may progress to advanced and higher Technical Qualifications.

The growth of apprenticeships and Technical Education options for Liverpool City Region residents is key to delivering the advanced and technical qualifications required for economic growth. The opportunities for students to develop the technical skills that employers need are lost between the ages of 16 and 18 whilst students ‘catch up’ on English and maths and gain their first Level 2 qualifications in too many cases in Liverpool City Region. The City Region does not benefit from increases in Level 2 attainment for residents between the ages of 16 and 19 and whilst the FE sector is clearly adding value, this is not sufficient to counteract the below average, earlier in life, lower attainment of City Region residents.
The challenge is to continue to expand into new markets for higher level apprenticeship starts whilst maintaining employer interest and College, training provider and University capacity to deliver starts of young apprenticeships at intermediate levels. The City Region’s employers also need to continue to expand apprenticeship take up at advanced and higher levels, including degree level apprenticeships if the local economy is to keep pace with other City Regions nationally. The role of Higher and Degree level apprenticeships also needs to be more clearly defined as a progression route from technical education as part of local preparations for further policy changes resulting from the Government’s Post-16 Skills Plan and Industrial Strategy. There is a need to ensure that that provider capacity is in place locally to meet this need from employers for higher level and degree training.

**Key Actions:**

- The Apprenticeship Hub will broker relationships between FE and HE providers to support the development of progression pathways to higher and degree level apprenticeships;
- The LEP will utilise its Sector Networks to shape and inform technical curriculum development;
- The Apprenticeship Hub will work with employers to generate opportunities at higher and degree level, promoting vacancies through the UCAS Degree Finder and promote local opportunities that appear through UCAS for degree level apprenticeship vacancies through a local portal; and
- Colleges and training providers will set out their individual plans for growth as part of the context of Adult Education Budget outcome agreement discussions.

48% of employers recently surveyed in the City Region reported a number of specific technical skills gaps, most acutely in IT, manufacturing and construction.
The Liverpool City Region Apprenticeship Hub has operated since 2011 and is a prime example of the close collaborative and partnership work that exists within the City Region. The Apprenticeship Hub is not however a formalised entity and has historically been reliant on short-term, outcome-driven funding to operate. Previous grants and funding has supported the Hub to take forward a range of promotional activities, however the lack of sustained resources impedes its ability to be the strategic owner of the vision for apprenticeships in the City Region and a body that can monitor and check progress against that vision. Historically the National Apprenticeship Service (NAS) local team supported the Hub from a technical perspective and ensured alignment to national campaigns and activities. This has now lessened following a retraction of local activities from NAS.

Collaboratively stakeholders including the Combined Authority will seek to ensure that the Apprenticeship Hub is better resourced and enabled to be more strategically focused. The Combined Authority will explore alternative funding sources to enable the Hub to lead aspects of the plan’s delivery and play a monitoring role that will inform, stimulate and drive qualitative and quantitative growth in apprentices across the City Region. The medium term ambition is for the Apprenticeship Hub to align to the structures of the Combined Authority to offer greater stability and cross organisational working with the LEP, Growth Hub and other bodies—however the activities of the Hub will continue to be overseen by a strong and independent Board, with representation from key stakeholders and organisations across the FE sector including employers.

The local skills system is complex and fragmented

Consultations with Colleges, training providers, local authorities, employers and partners in the drafting of the Apprenticeship Growth Plan has underlined the level of local commitment to making apprenticeships work for individuals, businesses and the local economy. Apprenticeships are embedded as a key method of developing the local workforce that underpins growth within the key strategic skills documents for Liverpool City Region. However, the apprenticeship landscape is complex and responsibility for the apprenticeship agenda does not rest with a single organisation.

Increasingly local Colleges and training providers will be expected to collaboratively work together to progress reforms and maximise local apprenticeship outcomes and their links to technical education. The Apprenticeship Growth Plan is an enabling document that supports the Skills Investment Statement 2018/19 and the longer term Liverpool City Region Skills Strategy and provides the foundations for the deeper level of collaboration required.
A local co-ordinating body is necessary to encourage and promote collaborative efforts to deliver apprenticeships and will inform and prioritise areas for action, helping to ensure the successful delivery of local apprenticeship policy and informing future devolution asked relating to this area of work. The Apprenticeship Hub will ensure a co-ordinated approach to commissioning, aligning the use of funding related to apprenticeships working to the Combined Authority and Employment and Skills Board. The Apprenticeship Hub and the activities within this growth plan will inform local investment decisions including future ESF investment, and the use of Skills Capital budgets relating to apprenticeships.

The Combined Authority will continue to lobby government for greater influence and flexibilities regarding unspent apprenticeship levy funding including the flexibility to retain apprenticeship levy funding in the locality, to ensure we maximise local investment in apprenticeship delivery infrastructure.

**Key Actions:**

- The Combined Authority will champion apprenticeships, launching an Apprenticeship Pledge to gain commitment to apprenticeship growth;
- The Combined Authority will explore alternative sources of funding for the Apprenticeship Hub to provide greater stability and allow the Apprenticeship Hub to take the lead on the implementation of the Apprenticeship Growth Plan;
- The Combined Authority will seek to align the commissioning of funding streams to drive apprenticeship diversity, breadth and growth; and
- The Combined Authority will continue to lobby government for increased flexibilities to retain unspent apprenticeship levy funding within the City Region to support apprenticeship growth and investment in local apprenticeship delivery infrastructure;
Priorities for Growth

The Apprenticeship Growth Plan has through comprehensive consultation identified five themes for action which will address key apprenticeship challenges and tackle key areas of market failure post reforms. The actions build on the strengths and opportunities that exist in the City Region and the actions Colleges, training providers, stakeholders and partners believe are currently contributing to supporting delivery of the programme.

**VISION**

To increase the volume, breadth and relevance of apprenticeships across the Liverpool City Region, enabling more employers and learners to access and benefit from apprenticeships

**Growth Challenges**

- Apprenticeship reforms are impacting delivery
- Too many employers still do not understand or engage with apprenticeships
- 16-18 apprenticeship numbers are falling
- There is a current misalignment between employer demand and provider supply
- A technical skills gap still exists between LCR compared to national qualification averages
- Local skills system is complex & fragmented – opportunity for greater alignment

**Action Themes**

- **Priority 1**
  
  Developing better LCR apprenticeship data
- **Priority 2**
  
  Stimulating employer demand for apprenticeships
- **Priority 3**
  
  Supporting more individuals to follow apprenticeship skills progression routes
- **Priority 4**
  
  Supporting and extending the delivery of high-quality apprenticeships
- **Priority 5**
  
  Creating the right environment for apprenticeships to develop
Conclusion

Our vision for this Apprenticeship Growth Plan is to increase the volume, breadth and relevance of apprenticeships across the Liverpool City Region enabling more employers and learners to access and benefit from apprenticeships.

Growth Plan - Supporting Ambitions:

- To maintain the volume of 16-18 apprenticeships measured as the proportion of the annual cohort entering an apprenticeship route.
- To expand the breadth and relevance of provision, increasing the range of frameworks and standards available through local provision.
- To support and improve the quality of apprenticeships delivered locally.
- To increase the proportion of starts at advanced and higher/degree level apprenticeships

To deliver our ambition we will:

- Champion apprenticeships across the Liverpool City Region
- Enhance the availability and use of accurate and timely data
- Align the use of locally commissioned funding
- Continue to lobby Government as part of devolution discussions to retain unspent levy funds locally

What we will ask of our partners:

- We need colleges, independent training providers and universities to showcase to employers the advantages of recruiting new apprentices and expand and diversify their delivery of high quality apprenticeships
- We are asking employers to help us understand their current and future skills needs and provide apprenticeship opportunities
- We will look to the Apprenticeship Hub to extend the network of apprentice and employer ambassadors, ensure consistency of message and the celebration of success
- We are asking the LEP to help raise awareness of apprenticeships with employers and support employers to engage with programme delivery and planning

Our aspiration is to deliver: 20,000 apprenticeships per annum by 2020, with appropriate milestones for growth in annual delivery up until this point.
The actions within the Liverpool City Region Growth Plan have been developed following consultation and review with key partners and stakeholders and build on the collective commitment to securing growth. The collaborative approach to action will maximise the plan’s impact; as such all organisations have a key role to play in its implementation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Key Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Liverpool City Region LEP           | • Host a series of events for levy-paying employers to raise awareness of apprenticeships and maximise levy spend  
• Support employers to better articulate their specific technical needs through the Growth Hub and LEP Sectors Boards |
| Colleges, Independent Training Providers & Universities | • Monitor apprenticeship capacity and programme delivery on an annual basis  
• Establish a multi-agency working group to plan and implement actions to increase participation by learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities  
• Support employers to better articulate their specific technical needs through Curriculum Networks  
• Set out their individual plans for growth as part of the Adult Education Budget outcome agreement discussions – increasing delivery at advanced and higher levels and aligning curriculum to employer need  
• Work collaboratively to develop progression pathways and enhance the apprenticeship offer available locally |
| Combined Authority                  | • Increase its data analysis capacity and develop an apprenticeship Data Dashboard of local  
• Continue to lobby Government to improve access to relevant and up to date apprenticeship related data from across departments  
• Champion apprenticeships, launching an apprenticeship pledge as part of a City Region marketing campaign  
• Work in partnership with constituent Councils and NAS to support levy paying employers to understand how apprenticeships could benefit their business  
• Work with local authorities and other public sector bodies to deliver the 2.3% target  
• Seek to commission additional wrap-around support for 16-18 year olds (to add to that already provided through local Councils) at risk of being NEET from ESF and local match funding  
• Work with constituent Councils and partners to establish a centralised approach to apprenticeship Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance through the LCR Careers Hub |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Key Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Combined Authority continued**   | • Develop a LCR Apprenticeship Portal to simplify and enhance access to apprenticeship vacancies  
• Ask government through devolution discussions for access to unspent apprenticeship levy funding to develop a Traineeship bursary for 16-23 year olds  
• Seek to utilise ESF to support the development of new apprenticeship standards that support local employer needs for Colleges and providers based in the City Region  
• Seek to establish a capacity building fund, via ESF, to support providers to move into new sector areas and enhance the breadth of provision available  
• Seek to commission, via ESF, a Quality Improvement Fund, providing a package of support to improve the quality of apprenticeship delivery for locally based Colleges & providers  
• Consider alternative sources of funding for the Apprenticeship Hub to provide greater stability and allow the Apprenticeship Hub to take the lead on the implementation of the Apprenticeship Growth Plan  
• Develop a commissioning strategy which supports the drive for apprenticeship diversity, breadth and growth  
• Continue to lobby government for increased flexibilities to retain unspent apprenticeship levy funding within the City Region to support growth and investment in local apprenticeship delivery and infrastructure |
| **The LCR Apprenticeship Hub**     | • Undertake a further review of apprenticeship performance data including 2017/18 programme performance to inform post-reform trend analysis  
• Review the continued relevance and impact of actions within the Growth Plan on a bi-annual basis  
• Ensure the newly commissioned Skills for Growth Agreements contain intelligence to support apprenticeship planning  
• Develop a segmented marketing campaign and employer toolkit to raise apprenticeship awareness  
• Develop a network of Employer Ambassadors to strengthen business to business advocacy of apprenticeships  
• Continue to extend the LCR Apprentice Ambassador Network to raise awareness of apprenticeships with schools and young people  
• Continue to promote and celebrate apprenticeships through the publication of case studies and an annual Graduation Ceremony  
• Deliver a series of Skills Shows – culminating in a large scale event during the International Festival for Business  
• Work with employers to generate apprenticeships at higher and degree level, promoting opportunities through the UCAS Degree Finder |
### Priority 1: Developing better data analysis and availability across the City Region to inform programme planning

We will improve the availability and use of relevant apprenticeship data to help develop our collective understanding of apprenticeship delivery and the impact of reform. We will enhance the range of management information available internally & to partners, making data-driven and evidence-based refreshes to the growth plan and actions, helping others to understand how to respond.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ref</th>
<th>Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>The Combined Authority will increase its data analysis capacity and develop a Data Dashboard of local apprenticeship outcomes; this will include starts and completions (both NVQ and Maths and English)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>The Apprenticeship Hub will undertake a further review of apprenticeship performance data including 2017/18 programme performance to inform post-reform trend analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>The GMLPF will be requested to commission an annual survey of members to monitor apprenticeship participation &amp; capacity post reform</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>The Apprenticeship Hub will review the continued relevance and impact of actions within the Growth Plan on a bi-annual basis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>The Combined Authority will continue to lobby Government to improve access to relevant and up to date apprenticeship related data from across departments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>The Apprenticeship Hub will ensure the newly commissioned Skills for Growth Agreements contain intelligence to support apprenticeship planning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Priority 2: Stimulating Employer Demand for Apprenticeships

We will improve employer awareness of apprenticeships, promoting the economic and social return on investment to businesses across the City Region. We will strive to ensure consistency of message during times of change, providing additional brokerage support to maximise the opportunity that co-investment and the apprenticeship levy brings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ref</th>
<th>Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>The Metro Mayor and Combined Authority will champion apprenticeships, launching an Apprenticeship Pledge to gain commitment to apprenticeship growth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>The Apprenticeship Hub will develop a segmented marketing campaign and employer toolkit to raise apprenticeship awareness, tackle occupational gender stereotypes, and increase BAME representation in apprenticeships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>The Combined Authority will work in partnership with constituent Councils and NAS to support levy paying employers to understand how apprenticeships could benefit their business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>The Combined Authority will work with local authorities and other public sector bodies to meet the 2.3% target</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>The Apprenticeship Hub will develop a network of Employer Ambassadors to strengthen business to business advocacy of apprenticeships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>The LEP will host a series of events for levy-paying employers and in partnership with the Hub will support them to maximise the use of their levy fund</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Priority 3: Supporting more individuals to follow apprenticeship skills progression routes

We will encourage more young people to choose apprenticeships through the provision of high-quality information, advice and guidance. We will ensure individuals in the City Region understand how to access opportunities and promote a wide range of apprenticeship vacancies. We will ensure that innovative and engaging pathways are available for those who need them to progress.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ref</th>
<th>Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>The Combined Authority will seek to commission additional wrap-around support for 16-18 year olds at risk of being NEET (to add to that already provided through local Councils) from ESF and local match funding: this will include specific work with those young people who are furthest from the labour market and have specific barriers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>Partners will establish a centralised approach to apprenticeship Careers Education, Information, Advice &amp; Guidance through the LCR Careers Hub</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>The Apprenticeship Hub will further extend the LCR Apprentice Ambassador Network to raise awareness of apprenticeships with schools and young people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>The Combined Authority will develop a LCR Apprenticeship Portal to simplify &amp; enhance access to apprenticeship vacancies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Priority 3: continued...

Ref | Action
--- | ---
3.5 | The GMLPF will establish a multi-agency working group to plan & implement actions to increase participation by learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, building on the expertise and work of the SEND Task & Finish Group
3.6 | The Combined Authority will ask government through devolution discussions for access to unspent apprenticeship levy funding to develop a Traineeship bursary for 16-23 year olds
3.7 | The Apprenticeship Hub will continue to promote and celebrate apprenticeships through the publication of case studies and an annual Graduation Ceremony
3.8 | The Apprenticeship Hub will deliver a series of Skills Shows – culminating in large scale event during the International Festival for Business

Priority 4: Extending the delivery of high-quality apprenticeship opportunities

We will work collectively to diversify the range of apprenticeships available to meet the skills needs of employers, supporting more providers to offer apprenticeships at advanced and higher level. We will help more employers articulate their specific needs and create a better fit between supply and demand for apprenticeships.

Ref | Action
--- | ---
4.1 | The Combined Authority will seek to commission via ESF support for the development of new apprenticeship standards that support local employer needs for Colleges & providers based in the City Region
4.2 | The Combined Authority will seek to commission a capacity building fund to support providers to move into new sector areas & enhance the breadth of provision available
4.3 | Local Stakeholders will support employers to better articulate their specific technical needs through the Growth Hub, LEP Sectors Boards and Provider Curriculum Networks
4.4 | The Combined Authority will seek to commission, via ESF, a Quality Improvement Fund, providing support to improve the quality of apprenticeship delivery for locally based Colleges & providers
4.5 | Colleges and training providers will set out their individual plans for growth as part of the Adult Education Budget outcome agreement discussions
4.6 | The Apprenticeship Hub will broker relationships between FE and HE providers to help develop progression pathways
4.7 | The Apprenticeship Hub will work with employers to generate apprenticeships at higher and degree level, promoting opportunities through the UCAS Degree Finder

Priority 5: Extending the delivery of high-quality apprenticeship opportunities

We will develop the local capacity and infrastructure to support the development and growth of apprenticeships. We will simplify the local skills system, creating greater alignment between funding streams and enhance the existing collaboration between organisations.

Ref | Action
--- | ---
5.1 | The Combined Authority will champion apprenticeships, launching an apprenticeship pledge to gain commitment to apprenticeship growth
5.2 | The Combined Authority will explore alternative sources of funding for the Apprenticeship Hub to provide greater stability and allow the Apprenticeship Hub to take the lead on the implementation of the Apprenticeship Growth Plan
5.3 | The Combined Authority will develop a commissioning strategy which supports the to drive for apprenticeship diversity, breadth and growth
5.4 | The Combined Authority, will continue to lobby government for increased flexibilities to retain unspent apprenticeship levy funding within the City Region to support growth and investment in local apprenticeship delivery and infrastructure

Endnotes

4. Liverpool City Region Area Review Final Report, January 2017
5. Greater Merseyside Learning Provider Federation Survey September 2017
6. AELP National Conference October 2017
8. Good careers guidance, Gatsby Foundation 2014
9. Careers Strategy: making the most of everyone’s skills and talents, Department for Education, December 2017
10. Careers guidance and access for education and training providers, Department for Education, January 2018
11. 61% of LCR apprenticeship starts in 2016/17 were in Business Administration & Law and Health, Public Services & Care – SFR Provisional Data, Geography Data Pack, October 2017
12. Maritime Superskills ESF Project – Liverpool John Moore’s University