



# YOUNG PEOPLE STRATEGY

YOU(TH) MATTER



Greater Birmingham  
& Solihull  
Local Enterprise Partnership

## 1- FOREWORD

At Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership (GBSLEP)'s mission is to drive forward inclusive economic growth. We have been doing this for the last 10 years working in partnership with the public, private and education sectors. Our unique triple helix structure that brings together key leaders from across the region means we can quickly identify where investment is needed and act rapidly to changing circumstances.

Young people are the future of our region. Yet, they are among those most heavily impacted by the effects of the pandemic. Recognising this, GBSLEP is focusing on how we, with our partners, can help our future generations.

Covid-19 has affected all of us in different ways - we all have our own experiences to share and stories to tell but some parts of our society have borne the brunt of national lockdowns and the economic downturn. The pandemic has had a devastating effect on our young people. A recent study by the Princes Trust found 41 % of young people aged 16-25 felt their future goals seemed 'impossible to achieve'. In Birmingham, where we have one of the youngest populations, youth unemployment in some of the most deprived wards is nearing 20%. We need to act now.

Our Young People Strategy will leverage GBSLEP's role as an agitator, commissioner, and enabler to put You(th) at the heart of what we do. We will advocate for young people and highlight the need to support them through our partners. We will direct resources to areas of our work that directly benefit young people and we will encourage our partners to direct their resources towards activities that benefit our young people. We see our young people as a strength. Equipped with the right opportunities, the right conditions, and the right support they can play a fundamental role in the economic recovery of our region and our country.

As you read GBSLEP's Young People Strategy – You(th) Matter - we ask you to step forward and support us in our mission to create opportunities for young people and put them at the heart of decision making. As employers, partners, parents, teachers, community workers, friends, and family – we all have a role to play. Let us collaborate and work together to ensure our young people can emerge from this pandemic with the right skills to help build economic recovery and a robust future for themselves. Most of all, let's give them hope.

**Sophie Drake, GBSLEP (Greater Birmingham & Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership) Board Director for Young People**

## 2 – AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

GBSLEP has developed this Young People Strategy in response to the well-documented challenges currently affecting young people aged 16-30 in the GBSLEP area. Data shows not only a worsening of pre-pandemic challenges in areas such as unemployment and skills, but also a dramatic increase in mental health issues loss of confidence in the future among young people

The overall Aim of the Strategy is to:

*To direct GBSLEP resources towards creating opportunities for young people in the GBSLEP area and to influence partners in delivering this strategic goal. This will be done by engaging young people in the decisions that impact their future and expanding their skills to work towards a career of their choice.*

We will work towards three main objectives which reflect the role GBSLEP plays.

1. As an **AGITATOR** we will raise the profile of the issues affecting young people and the need to address these.
2. As a **COMMISSIONER** we will direct GBSLEP resources towards activity that benefits young people by delivering against the Young People Strategy's key themes of:
  - Form your Future
  - Play your Part
  - Strengthen your Skills
  - Create your Career
3. As an **ENABLER** GBSLEP will work with partners to direct their resources towards activity that benefits young people's involvement in the local community and economy.

We will adopt five key principles in the Young People Strategy

- Collaborate and partner with the existing initiatives designed for young people.
- Develop an action plan, with a focus on ACTION

**Use our unique triple helix structure of bringing business, education and local government together to make joined up decisions..**

- Use data to shape our Young People's Strategy and to measure how it is impacting young people.

### 3 STRATEGY THEMES

Through our Young People Strategy, GBSLEP will use our funding and resources to deliver targeted interventions with real outcomes for young people. At the same time, GBSLEP will encourage partners to commit to targeted and demonstrable support across areas including work experience, apprenticeships, health, housing, and procurement.

Our focus is on four themes. We will use themes to inspire young young people to grow and gain independence so they can and fulfil their potential through employment and by playing an active role in communities.

The themes are:

#### **THEME I - FORM YOUR FUTURE**

***Creating physical and virtual places where young people are stimulated to shape their future and the world around them.***

The pandemic has particularly hit young people's aspirations and mental health. The Prince's Trust Tesco Youth Index' stark findings show that:

- 36% of young people surveyed say they have "lost hope" for the future.
- 41% of young people believe their future goals now seem "impossible to achieve" (50% of those surveyed from poorer backgrounds).
- 38% of young people feel they will "never succeed in life" (48% of those surveyed from poorer homes).

These findings indicate a crisis in mental health and confidence, that we cannot afford to ignore.

We want young people to **FORM YOUR FUTURE** in digital and physical spaces and GBSLEP is working with partners to deliver this.

Digital communications channels are an important way for young people to connect and participate with the world around them. During national lockdowns they became even more important, helping young people to build virtual communities. It is vital for us to reach young people through these online and digital platforms. At the same, as we emerge from the pandemic, 'in person' events are resuming in sport and culture and they will play a critical role in re-engaging young people with each other and society

GBSLEP has invested in major cultural and sporting venues such as the Midlands Arts Centre, the Birmingham Rep, the new performance spaces at B Music and sporting space at the Alexandra Stadium. We are also working with organisations in towns and local centres, Business Improvement Districts and organisations in our Birmingham Enterprise Zones to deliver economic recovery. Our Young People Strategy we will ensure that our current and future investments incorporate what is important to young people and what services or facilities they need.

GBSLEP and our partners have also identified the need for tailored career guidance and advice to support young people in shaping their future in line with their specific and diverse abilities, talents, interests, and ambitions – all in the context of the local economy. We will work with our partners in business, education and local government to deliver this.

## **THEME II – PLAY YOUR PART**

***Putting young people at the heart of discussions and decisions that affect them by enabling them to take an active role in their communities.***

Too often, decisions and plans are made ‘for young people’ rather than ‘with young people’. Their voices are not heard, especially those that come from underrepresented communities. The Young People Strategy recognises that young people’s wishes will be better reflected if they are involved in decision making that affects their life, community and future.

GBSLEP already has a Board Director for Young People, and we are engaging with the Young Combined Authority who have attended Board meetings. We will build upon this by bringing a young advisor onto our Pillar Boards and Sub Boards to take part in discussions and decisions that affect our strategic direction, the way we use our funding and resources. Will give young people the opportunity to **PLAY YOUR PART**.

We will also fulfil our role as an agitator by encouraging our partners to consider how young people can be part of the decision-making process in their own organisations.

## **Theme III - STRENGTHEN YOUR SKILLS**

***Helping young people to develop skills and abilities to be the best they can be.***

GBSLEP’s skills programme is already aimed at developing a workforce that has the right skills for the local economy, both now and in the future. The GBSLEP Skills and Apprenticeship Hub is a single point of access where employers and learners find opportunities to fill and find jobs, apprenticeships and training, from entry level through to degree level qualifications.

We are being supported, through the European Social Fund (ESF), to expand our Skills and Apprenticeship Hub’s reach and offer. This will involve tailoring the needs and ambitions of employers to young people from both academic and vocational backgrounds.

We will take into consideration that for some young people , staying in formal education is a preferred option until the economy and labour market recovers from the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. We also recognise that other young people may want help in finding work experience, apprenticeships or setting up a business. GBSLEP will work with our partners in business, local government and education to support Young Enterprise in our local area. We want to give young people the support to **STRENGTHEN YOUR SKILLS so they can achieve their full potential**.

## **THEME IV - CREATE YOUR CAREER**

***Creating opportunities for young people to take part in the world of work through employment, work experience, apprenticeship, or enterprise.***

Shaping a career path is a challenge at any time, and even more so right now, as we come out of the pandemic and unemployment is high. Good careers advice **can make** a positive difference to a young person’s life but navigating career choices can often be overwhelming and complex. We recognise that good careers advice will balance a young person’s personal circumstances whilst at the same time considering the demands and types of jobs needed in the local economy.

A young person will rarely make decisions in isolation which is why we propose to involve ‘personal influencers’ (such as parents or partner) in the advice and guidance process. We feel this is likely to make the careers guidance experience more meaningful and beneficial and will help ‘personal influencers’ understand the demands of the economy vis-à-vis a young person’s preferences. GBSLEP will therefore work with partners to explore a more tailored advice and guidance provision, both in the digital space as well as in a face-to-face format.

Work experience placements, apprenticeships, and subsidised employment such as jobs in the government’s Kickstart scheme, offer invaluable entry positions for young people. GBSLEP will continue to work with partners to deliver high-quality work experience opportunities, apprenticeships and kickstart placements. This may include short-term opportunities for young people in specific sectors such as hospitality.

At this time of high unemployment, becoming self-employed and setting up an enterprise may be a suitable option for many talented young people. GBSLEP will work with its partners to explore a specific Young Enterprise support programme at a time when digital technology has enabled trade to move online

We will also highlight the value of volunteering which can bring tremendous benefits to young people’s confidence, mental health, outlook, as well as adding value to a CV. This is good for all young people, but particularly for those who are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET), or for those who face other disadvantages. GBSLEP will continue to work with partners such as the Commonwealth Games, the Prince’s Trust and grassroots organisations to attract young people into volunteering. Whatever their choice, we want young people to **CREATE YOUR CAREER**.

#### **4 BUILDING ON WHAT WE HAVE**

Securing a positive future is a complex and enormous challenge which we need to address urgently. GBSLEP has a unique triple helix partnership structure which brings partners in business, local government and education together to make targeted decisions informed by on the ground intelligence. We will leverage our existing relationships to build upon the work we are already doing as well as seeking new opportunities both within our organisations and with partners. .

We have already mapped out how our GBSLEP work is impacting young people through our skills and employment work. This work has also identified the rich and diverse range of activities. Below is a list of work that is planned or underway:

##### **FORM YOUR FUTURE**

**Cultural Places** - investment in key cultural places such as the Dance Hub, the Birmingham Rep, the Hippodrome, Symphony Hall, and the MAC Arts Centre to improve facilities where young people can come together and get involved with culture and arts.

**Solihull Careers Hub** - resource for the Solihull Careers Hub, supporting careers education in schools.

**Birmingham Education Partnership** - delivering inspiration through the Careers Hub annually, covering sector-based activity and Labour Market Information for schools.

**Speakers for Schools** - delivering inspiration and virtual work experience.

## PLAY YOUR PART

**Generation 22** – providing an alternative route for young people to make the most of the Commonwealth major sporting events coming to Birmingham in 2022 by offering volunteering or training opportunities. This project is currently at contracting stage.

**Youth Card Pilot** - A pilot youth focused card that offers discounts incentives and a route into work experience.

## STRENGTHEN YOUR SKILLS

**Digital Innovators** - creating real world work experience opportunities and skills development.

**Skills and Apprenticeship Hub** – Training needs Analysis and advice for businesses and individuals.

**Ahead Partnership** - Delivering Business Professional and Financial Services inspiration in schools, with a potential to widen out.

**Energy Systems Catapult** - Partnership working for low carbon skills, including curriculum development.

**Sector Analysis** - Providing benchmarking and deep dives on Labour Market Information for use in schools

## CREATE YOUR CAREER

**The GB Ladder Skills Academy** - supporting apprentices who are at risk of redundancy or not completing their qualification to finish their course.

**Apprenticeship Transfer Levy** - GBSLEP to transfer unspent levy funds to businesses that have overspent levy or do not have levy to cover training costs.

**Prof Tech Academy** – developing skills for the Business Professional and Financial Services sector focusing on shortage areas and career planning.

**Enterprise Events** - support for those wanting to set up a business, including young people.

**Virtual Graduate Fair** - Linking SMEs with a regional group of universities.

**Sector - Industry Partnership** - Health tech peer support group and potential apprenticeship training agency.

Mapping the wider regional landscape is undertaken by colleagues in the West Midlands Combined Authority, with whom we will work together to ensure different partners and interventions work together to build a bigger impact.

## **5 – CALL TO ACTION**

With our Young People Strategy, we will reach out to businesses, organisations and people we work with who have a responsibility and an interest in the future of young people in the area. We will explore what they can do to support the aims of this strategy.

Specifically:

We will engage and ask partner organisations (including those involved in our investment programmes) to share what they already do or plan to do, and how we can work together to ensure young people benefit from investments made.

We will reach out to organisations representing young people (16-30), to shape our actions and to seek their help in making local young people aware of the support initiatives and the opportunities that are available.

We will approach employers within our network to ask them to consider what they can offer young people in their local area.

## **6 – MEASURING IMPACT**

In addition to the measurement of contracted outputs for our specific programmes of activity, we will also work with WM REDI to undertake an evaluation of the impact of this strategy over the next 6 months. We will look to measure:

- Apprenticeships by level and sector
- Kickstart position by sector
- Work experience placement by sector
- Skills (RQF levels 2, 3 and above)
- Engagement after a period of not being in employment and education
- Job safeguarded
- Job created

We will seek to gather data from the organisations and people who have taken part in activities we fund and deliver, to inform overall lessons learnt. We will collect and process these data in accordance with GDPR regulation, and they may include:

- Age range
- Ethnicity
- Registered disability and self-declared disability
- Post code and distance to work
- Care-leaver or not
- Having been out of education and employment and if so, how long?
- Having received free school meals?
- Care responsibilities (e.g., for child, parent, or partner)
- Barriers to engagement or employment (e.g., commuting time or cost)