

Education and Skills Commission - A Doncaster deal for young people:

An Independent Commission shaping an education and skills system that works for Doncaster

Background

Doncaster has an unprecedented range of emerging economic opportunities and subsequent employment growth. Our businesses, schools, colleges and public services need to work together in new and different ways to take advantage of these opportunities.

Our partnership ambitions are becoming bolder and perspectives are broadening. The vision is for Doncaster, as an integral part of the South Yorkshire City Region, to be one of the most rapidly improving boroughs in England. Central to this is supporting all residents, and especially our young people, to be well placed to take advantage of these emerging opportunities.

Defining the Challenge

We perceive a challenge on three levels:

- Our learning and skills system needs to be fit for purpose to support young people to gain from imminent new investment and employment growth;
- A learning and skills system that more readily adapts to economic and societal change; and
- Expanding the learning and skills sector of the local economy to become a driver of local economic growth in its own right.

Why establish an Independent Commission?

An independent Commission has been established, consisting of leaders in their respective fields, to work with local partners to begin the process of meeting these three challenges and helping us to design the future. We are charging the Commission to speak to all interested and concerned parties about what a world class learning and skills system might look like, setting out what a new 'pathway to employment' for all young people might look like and what needs to change to make it happen.

The Commission will be asked to work within the context of the strategic aims and objectives as set out in the Team Doncaster Partnership Charter, informed by national government policy and the emergence of English devolution through the Sheffield City Region and the Northern Powerhouse; its work will be guided by the vision and objectives of The Elected Mayor of Doncaster and informed by our Borough Strategy.

The Opportunity and the Challenge

We need to use these opportunities to help us achieve the vision for Doncaster by shaping an education and skills system that works for the people and businesses of the borough.

Our ambition is to create a working 'system' between schools, businesses and public services that ensures opportunity for all. This must be informed by a thorough exploration of what a world class 21st century learning and skills system can look like in Doncaster – not just in terms of structures and institutions, but also the different methods and approaches to learning. We will also ask the Commission that it also looks at the potential future role of public services in relation to the economic and education and skills challenges.

A Consultative Approach

We expect the voices of young people and their families, educators, businesses and wider stakeholders to be heard. We expect the Commission to adopt an approach that uses traditional face to face meetings alongside new forms of engagement such as social media. It will take evidence from as wide a range of sources as is feasible, through a mixture of open and closed sessions. Most of all the Commission will listen, eliciting views and experiences that are real, meaningful and relevant. It will ensure that all contributions are respectfully considered.

Commissioners

The Commission will consist of a Chair, Vice Chair and 3 leading experts. Each will have relevant national and international expertise and reputation.

The work of the commissioners will be informed by a standing Reference Group that will support the Commission to interpret and sense check evidence. It will act as a sounding board for the Commission, including 'soft testing' new ideas and recommendations and help to ensure that other stakeholders contribute to the process. The Reference Group will be independently chaired and convened.

Remit to the Commission

The Commission is requested to bring forward a report in two parts – the first an analysis of the current system and identification of opportunities, followed by a second report setting out a series of recommendations around setting the conditions for the future. We expect the commission to cover the following lines of enquiry, but are open to explore these further once the Commission is established.

Phase 1 – Analysis and Consultation

The Existing System: The Commission will analyse the effectiveness of the existing system, its performance across all areas of attainment, the impact of transition between phases and the outcomes of this for young people. In short, are the appropriate conditions present to respond to future demand?

Witness Evidence: In both closed and open sessions and through new media we want to explore the challenges in more depth with those most affected by the current system. We are especially interested to hear a wide range of views around attitudes to education, the relationship between deprivation, low attainment and subsequent labour market disadvantage. Also we want to explore issues around aspiration, optimism and resilience, attitudes to and readiness for work, barriers to achievement as a young person and what might work better. We want to hear from schools as to how radical changes in national education policy such as the academy programme have changed their approach, outlook and plans for the future.

Assets and Opportunities: We want the Commission to explore what assets already exist and how we might build upon them to take full advantage of the opportunities coming our way. Working with the Reference Group, we would want the Commission to highlight best practice and illustrate how it can be scaled across the system. We also need to get the balance right between apprenticeships/further education and entry to university and the prospects of eliminating Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET). In the context of a changing economy where might we wisely invest to get the maximum return, both socially and economically. We will ask the Commission to draw our attention to education systems across the world that are doing remarkable things in adapting to the economic and social challenges of the 21st Century to help us think about the future. We want the Commission to assess the effectiveness of competition and collaboration in Doncaster with a view to identifying future options.

Barriers: Emerging out of this analysis we would want the Commission to look at the barriers that obstruct Doncaster capitalising on emerging opportunities. We would expect the Commission to comment on structural issues, co-operation between key sectors, attitudes, culture and values, relationships, use of economic and social assets.

This will prepare for Phase 2 of the report where the focus is on creating the conditions for the future.

Phase 2 – Findings and Recommendations

In Phase 2 of the Commission's report we want a focus on 'creating the right conditions' for the future and recommendations as to the best way to achieve them. This might include findings and conclusions; series of principles that can underpin future relationships between school and businesses; a set of propositions that will guide future changes/investment; a descriptor of a future

'pathway to work' for young people; the role of enterprise and business start-up for young people; implications for existing curriculum and pedagogy; new approaches to governance; addressing cultural and attitudinal challenges; concrete proposals around potential structural changes (i.e. the role of schools/colleges); and future role of public services, in particular the local authority.

Specific Requirements of the Commission Report

The Commission is asked to report directly on the following issues within a national, regional and local legislative and policy context:

- A series of propositions emerging out of evidence gathered. The Council and its partners will consider the Commission report and then decide how to respond.
- The Commission will use existing evidence wherever possible for example building on the Area Based Review that is currently taking place across the Sheffield City Region.
- The contribution of such proposals to the key aims of Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council, *Team Doncaster* and, in particular, how they would support local plans.
- What level of change would young people, families, institutions and businesses likely support?

The Commission is also directed to be forward looking, identifying emerging international and national trends that will impact on the lives of young people here in Doncaster.

Consultees

The Commission will take and consider evidence from groups and individuals, including recent substantial consultative evidence, that exists within the borough. This will be submitted to the Commission and it will be for the Commission to draw its own conclusions in this respect and decide to what extent this influences their line of questioning and evidence gathering.

We set out below an indicative list of consultees but emphasise point the centrality of engagement with employers, schools and colleges, health partners, police and the voluntary and community organisations and faith institutions and organisations, elected representatives; schools and colleges (governors, staff, heads, students); businesses and business representatives; young people and their families; residents; decision makers; wider public services (ie: police, health, emergency services); voluntary and community groups; commissioned providers; charitable organisations; faith institutions and groups; appropriate government agencies; and trade union representatives.

Timelines

The Future Doncaster Commission was announced on 20th November 2015, with initial activity planned to commence in February 2016, with the production of an outline report in May 2016 and concluding with a final report in September 2016.