Transferable Skills

Research to capture aspects of the Transferable skills landscape across York and North Yorkshire

A Report by Annabel Jelley and Tokos Solutions on behalf of York & North Yorkshire Local Enterprise Partnership

April 2022

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. York and North Yorkshire Local Enterprise Partnership (Y&NY LEP) commissioned Annabel Jelley and Nada Tokos to undertake research into the following:

   Activity 1: the extent to which employers understand and embed transferable skills into recruitment practices and the techniques they use to identify transferable skills and,

   Activity 2: to assess the extent that providers offering publicly funded employability and skills programmes are delivering support that enables participants to identify and articulate the value of their own transferable skills.

2. Transferable skills apply to all professions, occupations and job roles, and are important to support career and job changes. They can generally be defined as:

   - **Technical:** including digital skills.
   - **Communications:** verbal, listening, writing and technological communications.
   - **Critical thinking:** including analytical and problem-solving skills.
   - **Multi-tasking:** including time-management, organisational skills and adaptability.
   - **Teamwork:** including people skills and ability to work with diverse people to achieve goals and drive productivity.
   - **Creativity:** this tends to result from a combination of all the other transferable skills and includes the ability to generate new ideas, find solutions, think outside of the box.
   - **Leadership:** this also tends to result from a combination of all the other transferable skills but has an additional focus on the ability to lead, coach, motivate and encourage others to realise their full potential.

3. Our background research revealed that long standing and deep-seated structural issues in the workforce have been laid bare by recent economic shocks such as the pandemic and the UK's exit from the EU. As traditional jobs in sectors important to Y&NY are in decline and new jobs are being rapidly create, it is critically important to explore how people already in the workforce can migrate to new jobs swiftly and efficiently. Identifying and effectively utilising transferable skills is a major key to solving this problem.

4. Our research involved:

   - Background literature research to set a context for the report and consultations.
   - Telephone or online video interviews with 33 representatives from 25 employers, stakeholders and business support organisations.
   - Collation and analysis of findings.
   - Making ten recommendations to the LEP for it to consider when planning for future skills activities.

5. Several themes emerged from our discussions with consultees which have a significant impact on the understanding and use of transferable skills including:

   - The impact of the predominantly small and micro business base across Y&NY.
   - Existing skills challenges in Y&NY affect recruitment practices.

1

- Economic shocks have intensified existing workforce issues.
- Lack of understanding among businesses and individuals of transferable skills.

6. The research reports key findings against **Activity 1**. These include:

- Effective recruitment practices used by businesses in Y&NY place a premium on transferable skills. These include simplifying job descriptions, reviewing person specifications to highlight transferable skills and changing the language used in job adverts to attract a more candidates.
- Understanding and recognising transferable skills is often more important for a candidate trying to get a job, rather than the employer.
- For individuals who have not worked before and may have multiple barriers to employment, support is needed to help them identify what their transferable skills are, how to articulate them, and how to present them in CVs.

7. The research reports key findings against **Activity 2**. These include:

- Transferable skills are embedded into much provision, largely under the descriptor of 'employability' and personal development skills.
- Publicly funded training provision have transferable skills embedded in the courses and this is a key contributor to their success.
- Key support workers and embedded Information Advice and Guidance (IAG) are important mechanisms in much of the current provision, to improve better understanding of each learner/candidate's transferable skills and help to match them to employment opportunities.

8. We identified ten recommendations to the LEP for it to consider when planning for future skills activities. These include:

   a. Provide practical support to businesses to change their recruitment practices, to enable them to consider transferable skills and change recruitment expectations.

   b. Target support to those in low wage, low skilled jobs or in occupations or roles which are at risk of automation to enable them to build confidence in their own portfolio of transferable skills, and to be able to promote them to employers.

   c. Promote good practice in recruitment using transferable skills to enable employers to widen their pool of applicants.

2

CONTENTS

3

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The York and North Yorkshire Local Enterprise Partnership (Y&NY LEP)'s local Skills Advisory Panel (SAP) activities are coordinated by its Skills and Employability Board. The DfE is working closely with all LEP area SAPs to support them to develop their understanding of local skills issues based on robust evidence, formulate skills priorities and design and deliver action plans to address these.

1.2 This report is one of a suite funded by a DfE Grant to support Skills and Employability Boards (or their equivalents) across all LEP and Mayoral Combined Authority (MCA) areas and which now have SAP status in line with DfE guidance.

1.3 The main purpose of the research was to:

- Assess the extent to which employers seek to identify from job applicants, transferable skills, and how these are embedded across the recruitment process; and the techniques employers or recruiters used to identify transferable skills.
- Assess the extent that providers offering publicly funded employability and skills programmes are delivering support that enables participants to identify and articulate the value of their own transferable skills.

1.4 The context for this research (explored in greater detail in section 2) is set against the background of rapid technological change impacting on businesses and jobs in all sectors and compounded by significant economic shocks to the local labour market and to the wider national and global skills picture.

1.5 These include the UK's exit from the European Union and the COVID-19 pandemic, which have in many ways accelerated existing transformations taking place in the workforce.

1.6 It is important to note the timing of this research, which took place as the Omicron variant of the COVID-19 pandemic was causing rapid disruption to the economy, workplaces and people's daily lives on top of almost two years of prior disruption caused by the virus.

1.7 The interviews we conducted were inevitably shaped by the circumstances of the current time. Organisations have adapted to the challenges of the pandemic both in terms of dealing with the day-to-day operations (such as remote working and learning, flexible working and greater use of technology to simplify work practices) and in terms of taking steps to plan for a post-pandemic future (such as strengthening resources to help workers and students with mental health difficulties).

4

2. CONTEXT

2.1 Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic there were already seismic shifts taking place in the UK economy. The pace of technological change has been accelerating for decades and the impact felt across all sectors of the workforce. Businesses are adopting technological solutions to traditional occupations and more and more jobs are being lost to automation.

2.2 However, this is balanced by the creation of new jobs. These new jobs offer opportunities for attractive salaries and advancement but require different skills. Those displaced from traditional occupations may not have the right skills for new ones so this research seeks to establish the extent to which people displaced from existing jobs gain the skills needed to transfer to new roles.

2.3 Often the jobs which are the first to be automated are those occupied by people with lower qualifications, which means that those displaced from these positions have fewer options for alternative employment.

2.4 In the retail sector, for example, the rise of online shopping has caused significant changes to the workforce with a reduction in actual physical shop premises that require fewer staff. The decline of the high street was already well underway prior to the twin economic shocks of the UK's exit from the European Union and the pandemic. Retail chains which had been a feature of our highstreets for generations folded, causing large scale redundancies. Individuals leaving the retail industry are therefore seeking jobs in new sectors but do not necessarily understand where opportunities lie or the sort of occupations that may be open to them with their existing skills set.

2.5 The impacts of the UK leaving the European Union and the COVID-19 pandemic have intensified and accelerated the changes already underway.

2.6 There are other factors at play such as the aging demographic in York & North Yorkshire which is exacerbating skills shortages in key sectors such as health and social care, engineering and construction. In these sectors the average age of the workforce is high (e.g. 19.5% of engineers currently active in the workforce are due to reach retirement age by 2026[1]).

2.7 At the time of writing the labour market post-pandemic is buoyant with record numbers of vacancies across a range of sectors. Industries which were struggling to recruit prior to the EU exit and the pandemic are now experiencing severe staff shortages.

2.8 As this report will reveal later on, these market shifts have radically altered the way in which some companies view their workforce and this has engendered significant changes in working practices.

2.9 There are also ways in which transferable skills can help develop the emerging sectors for this area. The YNYLEP's COVID-19 recovery plan Greener, Fairer, Stronger and Skills Strategy 2021-26 both set out the importance of the green economy and the ambition towards a carbon negative region by 2040 An estimated 3 million 'green' jobs are expected to be in demand or created in the UK across a range of sectors.

---

[1] ECITB Engineering Today The Supply and Demand for Engineers in the UK 2018

5

2.10 York and North Yorkshire cannot rely on young people to train in the new skills which will be required as there simply are not enough of them to fill the vacancies. Those who are already in the workforce may well need to consider transferring from other sectors and retrain to fill these gaps.

What are transferable skills?

2.11 The YNYLEP has published several reports recently which indicate the importance of transferable skills as a solution to skills gaps and shortages in the York and North Yorkshire workforce.

2.12 The Local Labour Market Analysis 2021 refers to a number of "generic" skills across occupations and sectors that are in high demand from employers, including communication and organisational skills, attention to detail, planning, teamwork, collaboration and creativity and problem solving.

2.13 The Reskilling and Upskilling Report published in 2021, stresses the importance of transferable skills for people seeking work or occupational change.

2.14 Transferable skills apply to all professions, occupations and job roles, and are important to support career and job changes. They can generally be defined as:

- **Technical:** including digital skills.
- **Communications:** verbal, listening, writing and technological communications.
- **Critical thinking:** including analytical and problem-solving skills.
- **Multi-tasking:** including time-management, organisational skills and adaptability.
- **Teamwork:** including people skills and ability to work with diverse people to achieve goals and drive productivity.
- **Creativity:** this tends to result from a combination of all the other transferable skills and includes the ability to come up with new ideas, findi solutions, think outside of the box.
- **Leadership:** this also tends to result from a combination of all the other transferable skills but has an additional focus on the ability to lead, coach, motivate and encourage others to realise their full potential.

2.15 There are potential longer-term outcomes for this research which include greater employer awareness and increased demand for related business support. It sets out to give greater clarity on the sort of support needed for businesses and individuals so that they can use transferable skills to support the existing workforce, plan for the future workforce and enhance individual's prospects in the labour market.

2.16 An area that was a particular focus of the research was the extent to which transferable skills are important for vulnerable or disadvantaged people. The issues outlined above highlight the challenges felt by the workforce as a whole but these can adversely impact to a greater extent on those with additional barriers or disadvantages. These can be many and varied including individuals with leaning difficulties and/or disabilities, ex-offenders, drug or alcohol misuse, caring responsibilities, long-term unemployment, economic inactivity, low prior skills attainment and other factors such as poor housing or health issues.

The future

2.17 Research suggests low skilled, low pay occupations in sectors such as retail and hospitality are most at risk of becoming obsolete due to automation. These sectors account for 18 per cent of the workforce in the LEP area (data from NOMIS) and is therefore a significant area of concern.

2.18 The NESTA/JP Morgan report 'Mapping Careers Causeways; Supporting Workers At Risk'[2] uses open source big data and algorithms to predict the sorts of jobs that are at risk of automation and sets out the sorts of transferable skills that workers can cultivate to secure jobs which are less likely to become automated. These include management skills, communication skills, information analysis and evaluation skills and skills related to compliance with guidelines, standards and legislation. In short, the 'human' skills that machines cannot emulate.

2.19 Reports published in the last few months show that there are stark and unexpected issues in the labour market which means that many workers may not have the requisite transferable skills to obtain work in an alternative sector. The EMSI and City & Guilds Group report 'Missing Millions'[3] exposes the stark lack of training over the past five years across thousands of businesses. It highlights, for example, that only 53% of workers have had training in the last 3 years and a third had had no training whatsoever in the last 5 years. The research also revealed that those who are part time are least likely to have benefitted from training. As more women than men tend to be in part time employment, this will impact on them to a greater extent.

2.20 In summary, there are a number of long standing and deep-seated structural issues in the workforce that have been laid bare by recent economic shocks. With the pace of change accelerating, causing traditional jobs to decline and new jobs to be rapidly created, it is critically important to explore how people already in the workforce can migrate to new jobs swiftly and efficiently. Identifying and effectively utilising transferable skills is key to solving this problem.

---

[2] The NESTA/JP Morgan Report by Karlis Kanders, Jyldyz, Cath Sleeman and Jack Orlik can be found here https://media.nesta.org.uk/documents/Mapping_Career_Causeways_01_G2XA7SI.pdf

[3] The EMSI and City & Guilds Group Report 'Missing Millions' published in Jan 2020 can be found here https://www.cityandguildsgroup.com/-/media/cgg-website/documents/cg-missing-millions-web-single-page-pdf.ashx?la=en&hash=CB473E2661C0EBEAEAFF77B1E3A831E531208262

7

3. KEY FINDINGS

3.1   Several themes emerged from our discussions with consultees which have a significant impact on the understanding and use of transferable skills.

The impact of the Y&NY business base

3.2   Firstly, the business base of the area is predominantly small and micro in size. This means that the level of resource and expertise available for HR processes may be limited. It therefore follows that small businesses, in general terms, may be less likely to adopt forward-thinking and inclusive recruitment practices.

3.3   It must be said, however, that small businesses already benefit from being aware of the fact that their employees have valuable transferable skills as they are often called upon to 'wear several hats' and adapt to the job in hand, therefore demonstrating and developing such skills.

3.4   However, other small businesses often benefit from being more agile and flexible in their approaches to recruitment, using innovative methods of attracting staff and demonstrating a willingness to take on individuals who have a more rounded skill set.

Existing skills challenges in Y&NY affect recruitment practices

3.5   Secondly, the existing challenges of skills shortages, rurality and the ageing population of York and North Yorkshire has an impact on the uptake of transferable skills in recruitment practices. Some businesses we interviewed had been tackling challenges such as these for many years. This meant that they were further along in their journey to the adoption of more progressive and innovative recruitment practices because they had to be. It is interesting to note that all of the businesses we interviewed reported that they were facing recruitment challenges.

3.6   We know for example, that a large food manufacturing company in Ryedale has had staff shortages in its processing plant for many years. It started to use new approaches to attract staff by targeting the parents of school age children and reducing shift patterns to fit around childcare. In being less prescriptive about the skills requirements of new staff than it had been previously, this business was able to use applicants' transferable skills and build on them with training on the job.

Economic shocks have intensified existing workforce issues

3.7   Thirdly, the existing challenges of finding skilled staff in some key sectors has been intensified by the UK's exit from the EU (e.g. migrant labour leaving the agriculture and food manufacturing sectors) and the pandemic (e.g. hospitality sectors being adversely affected by multiple lockdowns in which food and drink businesses were forced to close for long periods). Those businesses that managed to attract and keep staff before, found that they could no longer do so.

3.8   The result of this was that businesses began to cast their net more widely and seek candidates with a positive work ethic and willingness to learn as opposed to joining the business fully competent. The qualities businesses cited as being important included having a change mindset, being curious and willing to learn Some businesses have even gone as far as to recruit solely on values rather than expertise.

8

Lack of understanding of transferable skills

3.9 Finally, a general point across the board is that businesses are behind where they need to be when it comes to understanding and utilising transferable skills. Many we spoke to were still trying without success to attract people using traditional methods and were unable to recruit suitable candidates, or indeed any candidates at all.

3.10 If York and North Yorkshire is to grow its economy in the way it aspires to, especially in its desire to capitalise on its expertise and assets in the agri-food sector and 'green' agenda, the pace of change of embracing transferable skills must accelerate rapidly.

Activity 1

To assess the extent to which employers seek to identify from job applicants, transferable skills, and how these are embedded across the recruitment process; and the techniques employers or recruiters used to identify transferable skills.

Employer perspective

3.11 According to our sample of consultees, there are a number of specific differences in the embedding of transferable skills in recruitment practices. Rather than just being a result of purely geographical barriers such as rural isolation and poor transport links, this may be a result of a number of factors impacting on the business which could all influence its choice of recruitment practices and the extent to which it embeds transferable skills.

3.12 For example, in many areas of York and North Yorkshire the majority of businesses are small and micro and this means that they are less likely to have a dedicated HR function. In-house HR expertise is likely to increase the chances of transferable skills being embedded as the processes are managed by those with professional expertise.

3.13 Employers that are struggling to recruit are increasingly examining how job roles are described and enhancing them to be more attractive to potential candidates. Changes include:

- Simplifying job descriptions to broaden the scope of potential candidates.
- Reviewing person specifications to highlight transferable skills.
- Changing the language used in job adverts to attract a more diverse range of candidates.
- Prioritising generic transferable skills such as communication skills rather than specific qualifications.

3.14 Some businesses are helping young people to develop transferable skills through work experience placements. This approach, in addition to helping young people to be more aware of employment opportunities, career pathways, and the types of skills needed for different roles, also enables employers to develop potential recruitment pathways. This is key in sectors where there are recruitment difficulties.

3.15 Internal promotion into management roles tends to be based on transferable skills developed on the job. Employers are increasingly using this approach and offering those that have progressed into management roles in this way opportunities to formalise their progression through leadership and management training. It helps to

9

avoid costly and potentially unsuccessful recruitment processes, whilst also providing continuity for the business and career progression for the individual.

3.16 There is evidence from businesses in York and North Yorkshire that good recruitment practices place a premium on transferable skills e.g. Marshall Advanced Composites which is located in Kirkbymoorside, North Yorkshire and manufactures composite products for the aerospace and defence industry. This company uses a variety of practical assessment tools aimed at demonstrating transferable skills such as problem solving, ability to follow instructions and working to schedule.

3.17 Similarly, the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) has a dual role to play in this area. It is a membership organisation which champions and supports small business and is well placed in this capacity to promote transferable skills among its members. Businesses may, however, require additional help or training to tailor these practices to their particular needs (including identification of their specific transferable skills needs), and then embed them into their processes (with appropriate testing).

3.18 In addition to this, the FSB is an employer in its own right with over 200 employees across the country. It has adopted a suite of practices to determine candidates' transferable skills and tailors the recruitment process to the job role. Methods of testing in innovative ways include verbal reasoning tests, scenario planning, sample assignments and psychometric testing.

3.19 For businesses in sectors which are rapidly expanding and changing (such as the tech industry) the expectations for skilled staff are changing. The pace of change is so rapid that people gaining current qualifications are often out of date by the time they seek employment. Tech businesses are therefore seeking more self-taught developers who are motivated to teach themselves new skills.

3.20 The professional recruiters we interviewed reported that the impact of market forces on the current job market (i.e. too few people with the right skills to fill vacancies across multiple sectors) is requiring employers to adapt to circumstances which have not been the norm in the past. Examples include:

- Individuals using transferable skills (such as customer service and communication) to change jobs for better pay and conditions. This may be detrimental to some sectors as people leave to pursue a career in a new sector e.g. people leaving hospitality for better terms and conditions of the retail sector. The pay is similar, but the working conditions are better with guaranteed breaks, more sociable hours and more flexibility. The result of this is that sectors such as hospitality and food manufacturing are having to examine the job roles, pay and conditions to compete with better alternatives in other sectors.
- People looking for a new job are now more interested in other factors such as the sustainability credentials of a company, its social impact and the culture than simply pay and the detail of the role itself. More people are looking for flexibility in the hours they work, other benefits such as more holiday entitlement, and working from home.
- To tackle gender inequalities in sectors with a male dominated workforce, businesses are advised to look at the language used in job adverts. Language can be inadvertently skewed towards attracting male applicants. To increase female

10

applicants different wording for the same attributes can be emphasised. The 'tone' of the advert is important to attract applicants from diverse backgrounds.

3.21 Businesses are often reactive to recruitment needs rather than proactive with workforce planning. This includes paying more attention to existing staff, their current benefits, training, and opportunities for advancement. Adopting a more strategic view of recruitment may mean that businesses need to recruit fewer new staff to solve their labour shortage.

3.22 Businesses need to think more creatively about what they offer if they cannot compete on pay. This is a common challenge for small and micro businesses. Selling the benefits of working for a small company may be a more successful tactic than trying to attract staff on salary alone.

Individual perspective

3.23 Understanding and recognising transferable skills is often more important for a candidate trying to get a job, rather than the employer. In order to be considered for a vacancy the applicant needs to articulate how they fit specific criteria in person specifications, especially if they have no previous experience in a particular job role or sector. This may be made more difficult by employers overly complicating job criteria and using unnecessary jargon that potentially dissuades some candidates from applying.

3.24 It is a challenge for people to effectively market their transferable skills if they have little experience of job hunting. This applies to new entrants to the job market at any age or those who are mid-career but have not changed occupation for a long time.

3.25 People lacking in knowledge or understanding of the transferable skills they possess, need support to gain confidence and expertise in presenting their transferable skills to potential employers. For those with significant barriers, such as people with learning difficulties and or disabilities, the level of such support may be high.

3.26 Help for young people to utilise their transferable skills is different to those already in the workforce because they do not have the employment track record that many older people have. IAG providers for this age group, however, are well versed in helping young people gain clarity of the skills they already possess (through life experiences, volunteering and hobbies, for example) so that they can promote themselves to prospective employers. Many online resources are available for this purpose including national resources which can be found here: National Career Service Skills Assessment.

3.27 For individuals who have not worked before and may have multiple barriers to employment, support is needed to help them identify what their transferable skills are, how to articulate them, present them in CVs and how to use them to identify which jobs are a better fit than others. Programmes such as Action Towards Inclusion operate on a key worker model which gives participants one-to-one support to move closer to the job market or get a job. This support is critical to help individuals improve their understanding of their transferable skills.

Case Study

Chopsticks[4] (North Yorkshire) Ltd is an organisation in Northallerton which supports people with learning difficulties and disabilities to conduct meaningful and fulfilling work in a real workplace. Chopsticks produces wood fuel products such as kindling, woodchip and biomass fuel. The social enterprise manufactures rustic garden ware furniture to order, upcycles and re-purposes previously unloved items in ChopShed, the organisation's community inclusive workshop.

Work Team Members are supported to work in this environment and progress in their personal development (including with respect to transferable and employability skills). The organisation operates as a Community Benefit Society, is a registered exempt charity and also delivers day care services on behalf of North Yorkshire County Council.

The model offered by Chopsticks gives an opportunity for people with learning difficulties and disabilities to be supported to thrive in a workplace setting which is busy, safe, fulfilling and operates as a mainstream business.

Staff who support the Work Team Members need a unique skills set because they are required to care for and support the Work Team members and also have the wood manufacturing, machinery maintenance or forklift truck driving skills required in the workshop.

There are a number of transferable skills which are tracked and progress is measured. For those who are ready, NCFE entry level qualifications in Employability Skills and Occupational Studies are achieved.

Templates for vocational profiling and measuring progress are used. These are a variation of a model used by the British Association for Supported Employment.

KEY FINDINGS – Activity 2

Assess the extent that providers offering publicly funded employability and skills programmes are delivering support that enables participants to identify and articulate the value of their own transferable skills.

3.28   Transferable skills are embedded into much provision, largely under the descriptor of 'employability' and personal development skills.

3.29   The Education Development Trust, the prime National Careers Service contractor for York and North Yorkshire was the only organisation consulted which specifically delivered activities focused on helping individuals to identify, articulate and match their transferable skills to available jobs. Support includes skills assessments and dedicated workshops. However, the Government's Kickstart programme, supported by a range of

---

[4] More information about Chopsticks can be found here https://www.chopsticksnorthyorkshire.co.uk/

12

organisations, was also cited as an initiative that helped young people in particular to gain and identify transferable skills.

3.30 Publicly funded training provision such as apprenticeship provision, Adult Education Budget-funded courses such as FLEX (which is provision for hard-to-reach unemployed people delivered by Askham Bryan College), and Princes Trust provision all have transferable skills embedded in the courses. According to our consultation, this practice is long standing and seen as intrinsic to the success of the programmes.

3.31 Key support workers and embedded Information Advice and Guidance (IAG) are important mechanisms in much of the current provision, to improve better understanding of each learner/candidate's transferable skills and help to match them to employment opportunities. However, it should be noted that in many programmes that are employment outcome focused, transferable skills may not feature in the support, especially if an employer simply wants candidates who are willing to work in the sector and have a positive attitude.

3.32 The focus of employers that are engaged on workforce development programmes is to upskill their staff to work in their own organisations, not necessarily to help individual learners to progress in their career. Therefore, transferable skills do not tend to be discussed. Most skills delivery will, however, embed the development of transferable skills.

3.33 There is a greater emphasis on gaining experience in sectors that unemployed individuals had not previously worked in, and where vacancy rates are high. This is helping to both develop and recognise transferable skills in individuals, thus supporting them to move into new career pathways.

13

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Promote the benefits of recruitment using transferable skills criteria e.g. problem-solving skills and communication skills, rather than focusing on traditional criteria such as qualifications or experience.

4.2 Promote good practice (processes and systems) in recruitment to enable employers to widen their pool of applicants. This includes helping businesses to recognise which transferable skills are relevant for a particular job role, and the use of appropriate language in their job adverts, job descriptions and person specifications.

4.3 Promote progressive methods of recruitment using culture, values and ethos of the company rather than traditional pay rates and benefits i.e. its attractiveness to the candidate rather that the businesses being prescriptive about the attributes it requires in prospective employees.

4.4 Segment the promotion of appropriately timed and differentiated support for transferable skills development, based on various stages in a career, e.g. young people starting their career journey and who are unlikely to have any work experience, may need support with organisational skills or timekeeping; those returning after a break in employment may need, for example, digital skills development support.

4.5 Provide practical support to businesses to change their recruitment practices, to enable them to consider transferable skills and change recruitment expectations.

4.6 Encourage businesses to be proactive about workforce planning rather than recruiting like-for-like on a purely needs basis. This could include training for strategic workforce planning to not only make the most of their existing workforce but recruit new staff in the most progressive ways possible.

4.7 Target support to those in low wage, low skilled jobs or in occupations or roles which are at risk of automation to enable them to build confidence in their own portfolio of transferable skills, and to be able to promote them to employers.

4.8 Improve IAG for the existing workforce and tailor it to local needs through existing partnerships, community organisations, or by trusted intermediaries.

4.9 Target support to address gender inequalities in sectors where a more equal balance of men and women may help solve recruitment issues e.g. construction and engineering.

4.10 The scope of this research did not include a focus on older workers, but this could be considered for further investigation. This is a significant issue with respect to an ageing workforce in highly skilled occupations or sectors. Retired highly skilled professionals may be able to return to the workforce in different sectors using transferable skills which are important for economic growth in York and North Yorkshire (e.g. food manufacture, low carbon, 'green', railtech or agritech). For example, an engineer who retires from a front-line role could redeploy to become a tutor or teaching assistant in a college. Older workers provide a wealth of transferable skills in sectors which are important to York and North Yorkshire.

5. CONSULTATION METHODLOGY

5.1   The research was undertaken by Annabel Jelley, supported by Nada Tokos of Tokos Solutions, between October 2021 and January 2022.

5.2   Our approach included the following:

5.2.1   Background desk-based research to set a context for the report included policy, strategy and planning documents alongside data and interventions from the LEP and Government, National Careers Service, Careers Enterprise Company, EMSI, Burning Glass Technologies, NESTA and local CEIAG providers.

5.2.2   Identification of key stakeholders in consultation with the LEP. We sought stakeholders who actively worked with businesses as intermediaries or as providers, and therefore understood the recruitment issues facing employers and strategies for effectively addressing these.

5.2.3   Identification of employers, through referrals, discussions at events and our own research and networks. We sought to focus on those sectors in York and North Yorkshire facing the most acute recruitment challenges (e.g. hospitality, health & social care, food manufacture) and those seeking to expand their workforces to support growth in digital, low carbon and wider "green" products and services. (e.g. construction, engineering). Part way through the consultations we started to engage with HR specialists and recruitment agencies to give a greater level of understanding of the issues and how these were being addressed through innovative practices.

5.2.4   Conducting in depth consultations singly or in groups using telephone or video calls to establish the extent of transferable skills understanding and identification in recruitment and in skills development activities.

5.2.5   Conducting additional research such as interviewing stakeholders with experience and expertise relating to recruitment. These included HR professionals and recruitment experts.

6. ORGANISATIONS CONSULTED

33 representatives from the following organisations were consulted.

Organisations Consulted to date
Stakeholders/providers
Better Connect
Askham Bryan College
Calderdale College
City of York Council Economic Development
Education Development Trust (National Careers Service provider)
Federation of Small Businesses Area Manager for YNY
Jobcentre Plus/DWP
Pro Development
Ryedale District Council
Scarborough Borough Council
TECH Nation
The Opportunity Centre
West and North Yorkshire Chamber of Commerce
York and North Yorkshire LEP
York and North Yorkshire Growth Hub
York Learning
Employers
Dixon Walter
GB Recruitment
Marshall Advanced Composites
Pavers Shoes
William Birch & Sons
KD Recruitment
Federation of Small Businesses (National Head Office)
White Horse Cleaning Services
Chopsticks Charity - Supporting Adults with Disabilities

16

7. GLOSSARY

Adult Education Budget (AEB)	AEB-funded learning aims to engage adults and provide the skills and learning they need to progress into work or equip them for an apprenticeship or other learning. It enables the provision of more flexible tailored programmes of learning, which may or may not require a qualification, to help eligible learners engage in learning, build confidence, and/or enhance their wellbeing.
AEB Entitlement	ESFA funded AEB includes support for four legal entitlements to full funding for eligible adult learners. These entitlements are set out in the Apprenticeships, Skills and Children Learning Act 2009, and enable eligible learners to be fully funded for the following qualifications: • English and maths, up to and including Level 2, for individuals aged 19 and over, who have not previously attained a GCSE grade 4 (C), or higher, and/or • First full qualification at Level 2 for individuals aged 19 to 23, and/or • First full qualification at Level 3 for individuals aged 19 to 23 • Essential digital skills qualifications, up to and including Level 1, for individuals aged 19 and over, who have digital skills assessed at below Level 1.
Adult Learning and Skills Service (ALSS)	North Yorkshire County Council's service responsible for community learning provision.
Community Learning (CL)	Helps people of different ages and backgrounds gain a new skill, reconnect with learning, pursue an interest, and learn how to support their children better, or prepare for progression to more formal courses / employment.
COVID (-19)	Global pandemic, affecting the delivery of learning with ongoing impact on a range of factors such as teaching practices, mental health and access to resources.
Education, Skills and Funding Agency (ESFA)	Accountable for funding education and skills for children, young people and adults. ESFA is an executive agency, sponsored by the Department for Education.
Entry Level	The first and most basic level on Ofqual's Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF) which structures the different levels of learning in education. Divided into three (Entry Level 1,2 and 3 with 3 being the most difficult), these levels are the most basic form of education and often provide and introduction to a subject. Level 1 is the next level up. There are 8 Levels in total.

Functional Skills	Applied practical skills in English, maths and ICT that provide the learner with the essential knowledge, skills and understanding to enable them to operate effectively and independently in life and work.
Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG)	Support and activities that help individuals to gain information about opportunities open to them about learning or work. Adult provision is delivered through the National Careers Service, and typically provided by training providers alongside their provision.
Institute of Technology (IoT)	A government-supported initiative aimed at increasing technical skills in the labour market and workforce. IoTs are collaborations between further education (FE) providers, universities and employers. They specialise in delivering higher technical education (at Levels 4 and 5) with a focus on STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) subjects. York College leads the Yorkshire and Humber IoT, working with 7 Further Education Colleges across York, North Yorkshire and East Riding, along with the University of Hull and York St John's University.
High Performance Work Practices (HPW)	A general approach to managing organisations that aims to stimulate more effective employee involvement and commitment in order to achieve high levels of performance.
ITPs	Independent Training Providers.
Leadership and Management (L&M)	Typically covers a wide range of learning and levels, including change management, team building, coaching, communications and motivating people.
Learner Support	Learner support relates to help the learner might need with any personal issues, and/or general advice and guidance such as financial support, transport or childcare.
Learning Support	Learning support enables providers to meet the financial costs of putting in place reasonable adjustments for learners with an identified learning difficulty and/or disability.
Non-Regulated Learning	Learning which is not subject to awarding organisation external accreditation in the form of a regulated qualification. It may be designed, delivered and certificated by a provider or another organisation. Community learning typically falls into this category.
Pre-Entry Level	Qualifications that are aimed at learning at a more basic level than the lowest Entry Level on the RQF and serve to progress learners onto Entry Level provision.

Reskilling	Reskilling is the process of learning new skills so an individual can do a different job in, for example, a completely different occupational area, or of training people to do a different job.
Skills Gaps	When existing employees within an organisation are not fully proficient in their job and are not able to make the required contribution to the achievement of business or public service objectives.
Skills Shortages	Where there are vacancies that are hard-to-fill due a lack of candidates with the required skills.
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths.
Transferable Skills	Skills and abilities that are relevant and helpful across different areas of life: socially, professionally and throughout education. They are 'portable skills' and include Technical; Communication, Critical Thinking, Multitasking, Teamwork, Creativity and Leadership.
Upskilling	Upskilling is the process of learning new skills or of teaching new skills within existing occupations.
York Learning	City of York Council's service responsible for adult and community learning provision.

APPENDIX

York and North Yorkshire (YNY) LEP Transferable Skills Research – Consultation format for one-to-ones

The primary purpose of this research to improve the LEP's understanding of employer awareness of the value of transferable skills and how to identify them in the recruitment and selection of employees.

The LEP also wishes to ascertain the extent to which publicly funded employability programmes in Y&NY support their clients to identify and communicate these invaluable skills to their clients.

The importance of transferable skills in the labour market is well documented. Y&NY LEP's Labour Market Analysis 2021 refers to a number of skills across occupations and sectors that are in high demand from employers, including communication and organisational skills, attention to detail, planning, team work, collaboration and creativity and problem solving.

This research will therefore make a critical contribution to the LEP's awareness of the local Transferable skills landscape and assist the LEP and partners' efforts to continually enhance the range and scope of transferable skills provision and support across YNY.

Research activities will focus on:

1. An assessment of the extent to which employers:
   - Seek to identify applicants' transferable skills and how the value ascribed by employers to these skills is embedded across their recruitment processes (Job descriptions, personnel specifications, advertisements, assessment criteria, applications and interviews) *and*
   - Can deploy effective techniques to identify at application and interview stage applicants' transferable skills to support advertised job roles and wider business operations.

2. An assessment of the extent to which providers offering publicly funded employability and skills support for the workforce activities across the Y&NY LEP area are delivering elements that support participants to identify and articulate the value of their transferability skills.

The research will be conducted by Annabel Jelley and Nada Tokos.

The published Report will be one of a suite funded by a DfE Grant to support Skills and Employability Boards (or their equivalents) across all LEP and Mayoral Combined Authority (MCA) areas and which now have Skills Advisory Partnership (SAP) status in line with DfE guidance.

Section 1: Format of discussion

45-60 minutes at a time to suit consultee.

Background information about consultee business/organisation

Introduction to transferable skills.

20

Questions based on understanding of transferable skills and those that are most relevant amongst Y&NY employers.

Aim is to get open and honest views about the local transferable skills landscape.

Emphasis on what transferable skills are valued and embedded in workforce planning, and how this is reflected within recruitment and skills provision.

Section 2a   Organisational Information

Type of provider:

Summary of provision aimed at raising employability skills:

Role of interviewee:

Overall organisational structure i.e. do you have a HR department/or lead for staff development?

Section 2b   Transferable Skills

Exploration of awareness and understanding of transferable skills.

They are skills that apply to all professions, occupations and job roles, and are important to support career and job changes. Those involved in the skills and employability agenda cite between 5 and 7 types of transferable skills, but generally they can be defined as:

- Technical: including digital skills.
- Communications: Verbal, listening, writing and technological communications.
- Critical thinking: including analytical and problem-solving skills.
- Multi-tasking: including time-management, organisational skills and adaptability.
- Teamwork: including people skills and ability to work with diverse people to achieve goals and drive productivity.
- Creativity: this tends to result from a combination of all the other transferable skills, and includes ability to come up with new ideas, finding solutions, thinking outside of the box.
- Leadership: this tends to result from a combination of all the other transferable skills, but includes ability to lead, coach, motivate and encourage others; and getting the best out of them.

1. Confirmation of overall focus /objectives of the project – i.e. who is delivers to, what are the outputs/outcomes (getting people into jobs, moving people towards employment)

2. To what extent are transferable skills featured in your programme?

3. How do you identify transferable skills in potential candidates?

4. How do you support participants on your programmes to identify transferable skills?

21

5. To what extent do your learners understand their transferable skills and can articulate them?

6. What activities do you do to support participants to understand and describe their transferable skills? (e.g. prep for CV building, IAG support, training packages)

7. How relevant or successful is it to moving learners on their learning journey?

8. Does your organisation use data or evidence to support the programme? E.g. use of job search data to identify sought after skills, LMI, skills research.

Section 2c   Identifying and articulating transferable skills across sectors

1. To what extent do you identify transferable skills as important for people to migrate between sectors? E.g. from retail into hospitality or to fill vacancies in sectors with many vacancies (HSC)

2. Do you have a focus on priority sectors in terms of priority skills? E.g. LEP priorities, STEM, care.

3. To what extent do you support people to change from one sector to another using transferable skills? How do transferable skills help with this?

4. What recruitment challenges do you have for any particular roles, if any? Please describe them.

5. To what extent are transferable skills 'tiered' i.e. a distinction of levels of skills required within transferable skills

6. Are there any areas of innovation and good practice that you use to develop transferable skills?

7. What other support measures could enable you to better develop and embed transferable skills in your programmes?

Section 3   Mop Up

Summarise main points.

Any areas that the consultee would like to raise that haven't been covered.

Where relevant, check if business is amenable to be used as a case study to showcase embedding transferable skills in recruitment and staff development processes.

Give contact details and gain permission to contact consultee again should clarification be required.