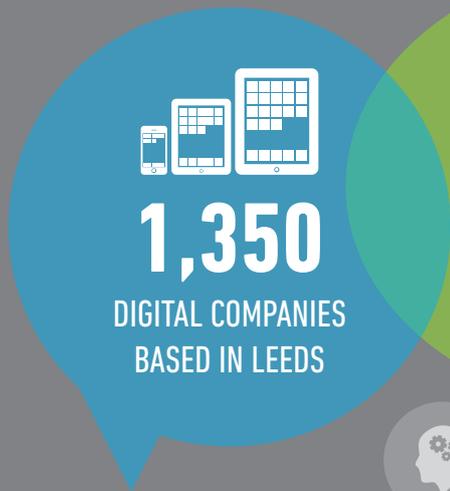




# THE LEEDS DIGITAL SKILLS ACTION PLAN



## INTRODUCTION

Currently there are over 1,350 digital companies based in Leeds who employ over 10,000 people ranging from freelance coders to national companies such as Sky and KPMG. Leeds has the highest amount of scale-up digital companies outside the South East and our city region has already outstripped Bristol and Manchester for employment growth in digital and creative industries. This is a positive story we should be proud to tell.

However, one of the consequences of a rapidly growing digital sector is the danger that demand from employers will outstrip supply. This is the situation Leeds faces, and can be encapsulated in the fact that there are currently 640 vacancies for mid-level tech jobs in the city, and increase of over 50% in the last six months.

The city wants to retain graduates from our high quality universities within the digital sector in Leeds, and we want to attract graduates to the city from other parts of the UK, and internationally. We also want businesses to invest here, and to do so there needs to be confidence about the calibre and depth of the talent pool they can recruit from.

The Leeds Digital Board asked a number of employers and education providers, supported by Leeds City Council, to form a Digital Skills Working Group to identify how to address some of these issues. The Leeds Digital Skills Action Plan is the outcome of those discussions, and sets out actions to be taken by partners to drive growth through creating and promoting entry points to the sector to local, national and international talent, and improve connections between employers and education to ensure supply meets demand.

The actions that follow are set out under both of the above headings, with colour coding used to indicate whether implementation is planned for the short, medium or longer term.

**DRIVING GROWTH THROUGH CREATING AND PROMOTING ENTRY POINTS TO THE SECTOR TO LOCAL, NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL TALENT**

The immediate pressure on the digital sector is the number of vacancies for primarily skilled roles, a number which is growing. These need to be filled to safeguard economic growth and prevent companies moving elsewhere, both outcomes that have a direct impact on the city’s economic health.

Leeds has a large graduate and student base and the city region boasts 12 higher education institutes, a large number of colleges, apprenticeship schemes and a skilled workforce. While there are some longer term issues around the number of young people coming through the education system, and the relevance of the skills they are taught in preparing them for entry to the sector, our short term priority is to drive growth through creating (where appropriate) and promoting entry points to the sector to local, national and international talent.

Actions include:

- The Leeds Digital Careers Fair
- The London Digital Careers Fair
- The Leeds Digital Graduate Scheme
- New Apprenticeship Standards
- A Digital Skills UTC

ACTION: THE LEEDS DIGITAL CAREERS FAIR AT THE FIRST DIRECT ARENA	
RATIONALE	With 640 current vacancies in Leeds the fair will bring together key employers in the sector with students, graduates and job seekers to connect supply to demand. The date is before half term and runs between 12pm and 7pm in order to maximise the amount of people attending. It is also on the same day as the Manchester Talent Fair to increase northern promotion.
OUTPUTS	Take up of the 40 available stands will be measured alongside feedback from employers. Attendees are asked to pre-register and basic footfall data will be calculated to measure attendance. A post event survey will measure the impact with the attendees and gauge if there is a need to re-run the event in future. Impact of the marketing and communications strategy will also be measured.
TIMETABLE	Promotion and marketing, November 2015 – January 2016 Evaluation, February 2016
PARTNERS	Promotion and staging is through Herd. Employers, education providers (HE/FE/WBL) are promoting and attending. LCC, Leeds Beckett University & Tech North are providing support.
FUTURE	Key aim is for the careers fair to become an annual event. A further event is planned be held in London to attract a new pool of potential employees and promote Leeds as a digital city (see below).
RESOURCES	The careers fair has been funded through sponsorship/in-kind contributions/sale of stands and exhibition collateral. A 2017 event is expected to require a diminished sponsorship value – c. £15k as the event becomes mainstreamed and prioritised by employers.

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ACTION: THE LEEDS DIGITAL 'BOOTCAMP'	
ACTION	We will encourage training providers to introduce short intensive courses in the format of a "Digital Academy" or "Boot Camp" to get people job-ready for the digital sector.
RATIONALE	Some of the sector's short term recruitment issues could be tackled through the creation of rapid throughput 'bootcamp' courses, accessible by young people/school leavers, those already employed in the sector, and those looking to retrain and enter the sector from careers elsewhere (e.g. armed forces personnel).
OUTPUTS	Scoping delivery model and funding issues, May 2016 Provision of a programme addressing, Sep 2016 Volumes of people entering courses and being hired, December 2016
TIMETABLE	Pilot programme to launch July 2016
PARTNERS	Education providers, funding bodies (LCR Skills Fund).
FUTURE	Detailed scope of demand, costings and firming up collaboration.
RESOURCES	Potential for funding from LCR LEP Skills Service

ACTION: THE LONDON DIGITAL CAREERS FAIR	
RATIONALE	Promoting the opportunities available in the digital sector in Leeds offers the potential to widen the talent pool and start to attract a new workforce to Leeds. It will also help promote the opportunity of basing a business in Leeds to potential investors.
OUTPUTS	Take up of the 40 available stands will be measured alongside feedback from employers. Attendees are asked to pre-register and basic footfall data will be calculated to measure attendance. A post event survey will measure the impact with the attendees and gauge if there is a need to re-run the event in future. Impact of the marketing and communications strategy will also be measured.
TIMETABLE	Promotion and marketing, Summer 2016. Careers fair - September, 2016.
PARTNERS	A dedicated partner will be engaged to promote and deliver the fair, with the support of LCC. Employers to commit resources to attend.
ACTIONS	Gauge appetite from employers following Leeds Digital Careers Fair Development of a business plan and
RESOURCES	Sponsorship to support promotion, marketing, and event costs, will be required from both public and private sector partners (estimate £30,000)

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ACTION: DEVELOPMENT OF THE LEEDS DIGITAL GRADUATE SCHEME	
ACTION	We will encourage training providers to introduce short intensive courses in the format of a "Digital Academy" or "Boot Camp" to get people job-ready for the digital sector.
RATIONALE	This will improve the skills gap within Leeds by providing opportunities for students and graduates, school leavers, apprenticeships and those wanting to retrain. Numerous courses can be developed for each group.
OUTPUTS	Detailed discussions with education providers and other training bodies such as Iron Yard to continue. A clear understanding of the requirements of providers is needed and help from companies to make courses more job focussed. The creation of a pilot programme to .....
TIMETABLE	Pilot programme to launch July 2016
PARTNERS	Education providers, LCC, key employers and private sector training companies such as Iron Yard.
FUTURE	Detailed scope of demand, costings and firming up collaboration.

ACTION: PROMOTING NEW APPRENTICESHIP STANDARDS TO EMPLOYERS	
RATIONALE	New apprenticeship standards for digital sector roles are now becoming available, and offer another entry route for the sector which are likely to be very appealing to young people in particular. The implementation of the Apprenticeship Levy (in 2017) will also be stimulus for large companies to invest more in apprenticeships.
OUTPUTS	New standards being deployed by Leeds employers Providers reporting number of local people starting apprenticeships
TIMETABLE	Ongoing as new standards emerge (commencing Jan 2016)
PARTNERS	Education providers Employers Tech Partnership
FUTURE	Consideration of need for further standards to be developed.

ACTION: DEVELOPMENT OF THE LEEDS DIGITAL GRADUATE SCHEME	
RATIONALE	A number of employers have expressed an interest in developing a bid for the creation of a UTC to specialise in digital and tech skills. This would form part of a broader suite of mechanisms designed to address entry points to the sector.
OUTPUTS	UTC bid developed and submitted BID approved and UTC developed
TIMETABLE	Scoping and bid by October 2016 Approval process, curriculum development and recruitment, 2017/2018 Launch, Sep 2018
PARTNERS	University partner, Baker Dearing Trust, employers, schools.
RESOURCES	LCC – labour market intelligence, schools liaison Financial input from employers to support development of bid, time to develop/present bid, recruit Principal, develop curriculum

**IMPROVING CONNECTIONS BETWEEN EMPLOYERS AND EDUCATION TO ENSURE SUPPLY MEETS DEMAND**

While creating and promoting entry routes to the sector, both to alleviate short term pressures and to develop a more robust supply of skilled individuals, is vital, we need to look beyond these entry points and work to improve the dialogue between employers and education providers to ensure supply more appropriately meets demand.

This means creating targeted interventions to ensure that employers and education providers are better connected, giving employers the opportunity to inform the development of provider offers, and providers the opportunity to inform their offer with what employers really need. It also involves making better connections between employers and the education system to drive an increase in young people, especially women, entering the digital and tech sector, with work experience and work placements a vehicle to enthusing them about the opportunities on offer.

- Actions include:
- Co-design of skills provision through a Skills Summit
- Improve careers advice in schools, business engagement with schools, and inspire young people to enter the sector
- Support the extension of Code clubs to all Leeds primary schools

<b>ACTION: CO-DESIGN OF SKILLS PROVISION THROUGH A SKILLS SUMMIT</b>	
RATIONALE	Employers regularly complain that the skills system is not providing them with potential employees that have the appropriate technical skills, as well as basic competences around team working, communication/presentation, problem solving and so on. A Skills Summit will bring employers and education providers together in a focused, mediated environment to constructively challenge each other, and to set a framework for future collaboration at a level much more sophisticated than before.
OUTPUTS	Creation of new provision for both entrants to the sector and those wishing to upskill Enhancements to existing provision Improved approaches to work placement (HE) and work experience (FE/schools)
TIMETABLE	Meetings between education providers and employers Spring 2016.
PARTNERS	Education providers (including schools), LCC, key employers and private sector training companies such as Iron Yard.
FUTURE	LCC to broker periodic meetings to refresh approach.

**ACTION: IMPROVE CAREERS ADVICE IN SCHOOLS, BUSINESS ENGAGEMENT WITH SCHOOLS, AND INSPIRE YOUNG PEOPLE TO ENTER THE SECTOR**

RATIONALE	<p>The quality of careers advice is patchy, and is not always well-informed about opportunities in the digital sector. This has a long term effect on the talent pool available in Leeds. If we were to improve careers advice, making young people more aware of all the opportunities then they will be more likely to choose a career in tech, with a particular focus on attracting girls into the sector.</p> <p>Alongside careers advice there is also an opportunity to provide stronger links with digital businesses that could offer work experience placements, mentoring in schools, sponsorship or could include classes in schools.</p>
OUTPUTS	Detailed discussions with education providers and other training bodies such as Iron Yard to continue. A clear understanding of the requirements of providers is needed and help from companies to make courses more job focussed. The creation of a pilot programme to .....
TIMETABLE	<p>Scoping of existing careers IAG with an emphasis on digital sector.</p> <p>Development of materials and IAG advisor upskilling on the sector, including teacher CPD.</p> <p>Engagement of employers with schools</p>
PARTNERS	Schools, LCC, key employers, LCR Enterprise Advisers, Careers and Enterprise Company.

**ACTION: SUPPORT THE EXTENSION OF CODE CLUBS TO ALL LEEDS PRIMARY SCHOOLS**

RATIONALE	Code clubs are a great way to get young children interested in tech and have wider benefits beyond learning to code. Problem solving and logical thinking skills are useful for a range of other disciplines including maths. Code clubs are also a great way to get girls interested in tech at an early age.
OUTPUTS	<p>Code clubs operational in all primary schools across Leeds.</p> <p>Employers involved in delivering code clubs in all primary schools.</p>
TIMETABLE	<p>Meetings between education providers and employers Spring / Summer 2016.</p> <p>Increasing Code Clubs across Leeds – 2016/2017</p>
PARTNERS	Primary schools, LCC, key employers, Code Club.