

**Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting**

Cabinet – 15 December 2025

**Report Title**

Rotherham Employment and Skills Strategy

**Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?**

Yes

**Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report**

Andrew Bramidge, Strategic Director of Regeneration and Environment

**Report Author(s)**

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**Ward(s) Affected**

Borough-wide

**Report Summary**

The current Rotherham Employment and Skills Strategy was adopted in 2019. Since the adoption of the Strategy the social, economic and policy contexts have changed significantly, including changes in the work, health and skills landscape following the pandemic, changes in Government policy, and the development of a new South Yorkshire Skills Strategy.

Reflecting these changes, a proposed new Employment and Skills Strategy, covering the period 2026-31, has been produced for the Rotherham Together Partnership.

The new Strategy will contribute to the delivery of the South Yorkshire Skills Strategy but also identifies the key challenges and priorities that are specific to Rotherham and proposes a new focus for the co-ordination of activity in Rotherham.

**Recommendations**

That Cabinet:

1. Endorses the formal adoption of the Rotherham Employment and Skills Strategy 2026-31.

2. Notes that the Rotherham Employment and Skills Board is tasked with overseeing the delivery and monitoring of the Strategy and with reporting on progress to Cabinet and the Rotherham Together Partnership (RTP) on an annual basis.

### **List of Appendices Included**

Appendix 1 Draft Rotherham Employment and Skills Strategy 2026-31  
Appendix 2 Part A – Initial Equality Screening Assessment  
Appendix 3 Part B – Equality Analysis Form  
Appendix 4 Carbon Impact Assessment

### **Background Papers**

[Rotherham Employment and Skills Strategy 2019-25](#)

[South Yorkshire Skills Strategy 2024](#)

[Get Britain Working White Paper, November 2024](#)

[Data dashboard](#)

### **Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel**

None

### **Council Approval Required**

No

### **Exempt from the Press and Public**

No

## **Rotherham Employment and Skills Strategy**

### **1. Background**

- 1.1 Rotherham's current Employment and Skills Strategy is for the period 2019-25. The social, economic and policy contexts have changed significantly during that period. The post-pandemic period saw changes in hybrid working, increased awareness of mental health, and rising levels of economic inactivity. Technological changes such as artificial intelligence and increasing automation, together with demographic shifts and global instability, have driven changes in the wider economy and in the outlook for employment and skills.
- 1.2 In response, the Government has proposed national policy initiatives including Skills England, the Get Britain Working White Paper, and the Modern Industrial Strategy. Regionally, the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (SYMCA) has developed a new Skills Strategy, along with the Pathways to Work programme which the Council is supporting and implementing to change the employment support system so that it better supports people back into work.
- 1.3 To respond to these changes, this report proposes a new Employment and Skills Strategy for Rotherham covering the period 2026-31 (included at Appendix 1). This work is underpinned by a detailed data analysis setting out the current baseline for employment and skills in Rotherham.

### **2. Key Issues**

#### **Development of the Employment and Skills Strategy 2026-31**

- 2.1 The Strategy is founded on the production of a new Data Dashboard which provides key metrics for Rotherham. Based on the data and evidence, an analysis was produced describing the implications for Rotherham and that in turn informs the case for intervention.
- 2.2 A review of policies, strategies and documents for Employment and Skills was undertaken to inform the development of the Strategy. In particular, the Strategy aims to align with the objectives and funding coming through the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (SYMCA) and therefore the new Strategy demonstrates how Rotherham will contribute to the delivery of the stated missions in the South Yorkshire Skills Strategy.
- 2.3 The Rotherham Employment and Skills Strategy contains three Missions which respond to the local priorities emerging from the analysis and reflect Rotherham's particular opportunities and challenges. There are key roles to be played by a range of partners to address these missions, particularly for employers who have a central role to play not only as the beneficiaries of a skilled workforce but as active investors in the development of their employees.

### **Mission 1 – Supporting people into work**

Rotherham partners will work together to create more opportunities for good work and support more residents to participate in the labour market, so people can prosper and realise their potential. This mission focuses on addressing disparities in the labour market to ensure that residents in all communities have the opportunities and support they need to progress *towards* work, *into* work and remain *within* work.

### **Mission 2 – Improving core skills for employment**

Together, Rotherham supports residents to access lifelong learning opportunities and advance within their chosen careers through equipping them with the knowledge and skills they need to enter and progress in work. This mission seeks to ensure that everyone can access the education, training and competencies they need to prosper and grow.

### **Mission 3 – Delivering a workforce for sustainable economic growth**

In partnership, Rotherham is committed to developing, attracting and retaining a skilled workforce to create a thriving, inclusive economy, enabling Rotherham's employers to effectively compete and grow. This mission seeks to ensure that Rotherham's workforce has the skills they need to respond to the needs of a changing economy and seize opportunities as they arise, whilst also responding to the needs of businesses.

- 2.4 For each Mission, the Strategy highlights a range of existing and planned activities (including those relating to employment support which the Pathways to Work approach will bring together as a single system) to ensure that these continue to deliver for Rotherham residents and businesses. These include:
- The Economic Inactivity Trailblazer and the Health Growth Accelerator
  - Adult Skills Fund
  - Employment Solutions, Ambition and Advance
  - Workwell, Working Win and Connect to Work
  - South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (SYMCA)  
Apprenticeship Hub Skills Bank funding to support employers with the cost of training their workforce
- 2.5 There has been a partnership approach to the development of the Strategy. The employment and skills landscape is very much cross-sector and the Council works, as a member of the Rotherham Together Partnership with a wide range of partners in a very complex system – schools and colleges, employers and businesses, Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), the voluntary sector and private sector providers. Further details of the engagement with partners is included in section 4 of this report.
- 2.6 Recognising the cross-cutting nature of interventions, the Strategy groups these together under three themes to describe a joined-up approach to delivery that ensures that each theme contributes to multiple missions, creating synergy and amplifying impact:

- Capacity Building and Coordination – laying the foundations for effective delivery through joined-up provision and employer engagement by strengthening systems, partnerships and processes.
- Developing Interventions and Strategy – focuses on designing targeted, evidence-based solutions informed by research and stakeholder insight.
- Delivering Bespoke Solutions –translates groundwork into tailored, high impact responses to local challenges and opportunities.

2.7 Interventions cover a broad range of activities but for each theme a priority action for Rotherham has been identified:

1. **Joined up and tailored provision for 16-24 year olds:** A programme of tailored provision for 16–24-year-olds targeting those most at risk of worklessness.
2. **A workforce investment plan for Rotherham:** Work with employers to produce workforce development plans, delivering sufficient numbers of suitably skilled and qualified staff and for them to provide quality, sustainable employment, with progression opportunities.
3. **A Work Ready Placement Programme:** Provide sector specific training to individuals and support placements directly with employers who have identified hard-to-fill vacancies

### 3. Options considered and recommended proposal

- 3.1 Do not endorse the proposed Strategy - . As a major partner in the Rotherham Together Partnership, the Council's endorsement is critical to the credibility and delivery of the strategy. The Council has taken a leading role within the Rotherham Together Partnership in consulting with a wide range of partners and facilitating a collaborative approach to assessing data, evidence and labour market trends, and to developing the strategy. A decision not to endorse it could undermine the shared commitment to its implementation and weaken the Council's leadership role in shaping the borough's future workforce. **This is not recommended.**
- 3.2 Endorsing the proposed Employment and Skills Strategy (2026–2031) would provide an up-to-date, evidence-based framework to guide collective action on employment and skills across Rotherham that links to the South Yorkshire Strategy and the main policies of the Get Britain Working White Paper. The strategy has been developed through a robust process, including detailed analysis of current and projected labour market data, and engagement with partners. It reflects shared priorities and sets out a clear direction for collaborative delivery. As a key partner in the Rotherham Together Partnership, the Council's endorsement would demonstrate leadership and commitment, helping to secure buy-in from other stakeholders and ensuring the strategy has the credibility and momentum needed for successful implementation. **This is the recommended option.**

#### **4. Consultation on proposal**

4.1 A wide range of Stakeholders have been consulted during the development of the Strategy. These were through a number of workshops and through face-to-face meetings with certain major stakeholders, including:

- Members of the Rotherham Together Partnership
- Business Growth Board – including SYMCA, DWP and training providers including Rotherham and North Notts College (RNN)
- Employment and Skills Board
- Humanitarian and Community Group
- Voluntary and Community Sector through Voluntary Action Rotherham (VAR) and also consulting individual organisations
- Chamber of Commerce
- Residents through a number of workshops

#### **5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision**

5.1 Responsibility for implementation of the Strategy, and monitoring of its impact, sits with the Employment and Skills Board of the Rotherham Together Partnership (RTP), with support from officers from Rotherham Council's Rotherham Investment Development Office (RiDO).

#### **6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications**

6.1 The cost of producing the Strategy is £25k. As part of the £3m SYMCA Feasibility Fund revenue grant allocation, an indicative £30k has been given to cover this cost, however an Officer Decision will need to be approved in order to allocate this formally, as per the grant's delegation.

6.2 The resource implications of the actions contained within the strategy have been categorised into low, medium and high value based on financial ranges; high value being greater than £500,000. Further work is needed to understand whether these estimates are accurate, whether there will be any costs attributable to the Council and how these will be funded. The implementation of any actions within the Strategy will be carried out within existing budgets, or they may be actions by other organisations at no cost to RMBC. Approval of this Strategy does not provide approval to spend on anything not already approved and budgeted for.

- 6.3 There are no direct procurement implications arising from the recommendations detailed in this report.

## **7. Legal Advice and Implications**

- 7.1 There is no statutory duty to produce an Employment and Skills strategy however to do so means that the Council is able to fulfil the requirements of the Get Britain Working White paper and other related policies as set out in the report and appended Policy. Further, the adoption of such a Strategy and the content of that Strategy is consistent with the Council's duties under the Skills and Post-16 Education Act 2022, such as providing data and insight into local employment market needs and skills gaps.
- 7.2 Other than the above, there are no direct legal implications arising from the adoption of the Strategy. Each project and workstream referred to within the Strategy will need appropriate legal considerations to be taken into account at the time of the relevant decision-making and implementation.

## **8. Human Resources Advice and Implications**

- 8.1 There are no direct Human Resources implications arising from the recommendations detailed in this report.

## **9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults**

- 9.1 The Strategy will focus on assisting young people in accessing both training and employment. NEETs have been identified as a major priority, especially those at risk of falling into long term worklessness and the proposed activity will have a major beneficial impact on this group.

## **10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications**

- 10.1 Both an Initial Equality Screening Assessment and a Full Equality Analysis have been completed and are attached as Appendices 2 and 3.

## **11. Implications for CO2 Emissions and Climate Change**

- 11.1 A Carbon Impact Assessment has been completed and is attached as Appendix 4. Direct carbon impact is expected to be moderate due to increased building energy use and transport emissions associated with a growing economy. Impact is primarily indirect as a result of increasing levels of economic activity and as a result delivering broader economic growth. Managing and mitigating the carbon impact of growth is outside the scope of this Strategy and will be reliant on wider policies and measures in place.

## **12. Implications for Partners**

- 12.1 It is expected that a wide range of partners will be involved in the delivery of the Strategy. These include:

**Employers** - have a central role to play — not only as beneficiaries of a skilled workforce, but as active investors in the development of their employees. Their commitment to upskilling, training, and creating inclusive opportunities is essential to achieving the strategy's ambitions

**Rotherham and North Notts College (RNN)** – main training provider and recipient of Adult Skills Fund grant funding from SYMCA.

**Voluntary Action Rotherham** – the need for learning to be delivered in our communities, has been identified as essential, especially within the more deprived neighbourhoods.

**SYMCA** – oversee majority of the funding programmes, which will support delivery of the Strategy.

**Barnsley and Rotherham Chamber of Commerce** – essential that the Strategy meets the requirements of local businesses with regard to the numbers, skills and work readiness of their potential workforces.

- 12.2 These partners are all members of the Employment and Skills Board, which will have responsibility for overseeing delivery of the Strategy.

### **13. Risks and Mitigation**

- 13.1 That there is insufficient funding to support the activity needed to deliver the Strategy.

**Mitigation:** Work closely with SYMCA and other local authorities to access and maximise all available funding.

- 13.2 That the Strategy does not identify all relevant risks and priorities.

**Mitigation:** There has been wide consultation on producing the Strategy. Its impact will be monitored on a 6-monthly basis and a review of the strategy will be undertaken every 2 years.

### **14. Accountable Officers**

Simeon Leach, Economic Strategy and Partnerships Manager



Approvals obtained on behalf of Statutory Officers: -

	<b>Named Officer</b>	<b>Date</b>
Chief Executive	John Edwards	28/11/25
Strategic Director of Finance & Customer Services (S.151 Officer)	Judith Badger	25/11/25
Assistant Director of Legal Services (Monitoring Officer)	Phil Horsfield	25/11/25

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