



## SKILLS FOR JOBS – SUMMARY OF OUR RESPONSE

In our response to the ‘Skills for Jobs’ White Paper we welcome Government’s recognition that the skills gap is one of the major threats to the UK’s future economic prosperity, as well as being at the heart of our collective ambition to build back better in the post-pandemic world.

A pipeline of people with the right skills to meet demand in the labour market is essential. Research in the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough region has shown that there are skills shortages at all levels and that the number of hard to fill vacancies for professionals in the Cambridge region is much higher than nationally, especially in the Life Sciences sector<sup>1</sup>.

In this context our response seeks to inform Government’s implementation of its policy ambitions and offer opportunities where industry in Cambridge can collaborate with all tiers of Government to play a major role in doing so.

Our headline responses to the white paper are that:

- Government is absolutely right to recognise that it is necessary to “move on from previous underestimations of further and technical education and reinforce its pivotal role as a pathway to a bright future.” Cambridge Ahead has long advocated for a **greater recognition of the integral part that technical careers play** in the Cambridge economy, and the vast array of exciting and rewarding roles available through these educational pathways.
- The proposed shift to a **“whole-school” approach to career education** is welcomed and responds directly to the case that has been made over the last year by Cambridge Ahead and local partners. We set how we believe Government can act to **achieve this ambition through innovative Cambridgeshire and Peterborough plans, to strengthen dedicated professional resource for career education in schools and colleges, and to create new curriculum to career links between teachers and employers.**
- **Proposals to make funding simpler, predictable, and more autonomous for FE are welcome** – the FE sector should be closely involved as details for achieving this are developed by Government.
- **Local coordination and control of skills provision is the most effective route to establishing strong connections with the world of work.** Schools, colleges, local authorities, and employers are best placed to understand local labour markets and tailor provision accordingly. We therefore welcome proposals for “Local Skills Improvement Plans” to support closer interaction between employers, colleges and local authorities – and support the proposal made for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough to be a trailblazer area for this policy and to pioneer the new College Business Centres. **Government should see these trailblazers as opportunities to test the benefit of devolving greater powers and funding for skills.**

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<sup>1</sup> RAND 2018, [Skills demand in the Cambridge area: Attracting and retaining skills](#)