

Consultation on the Industrial Strategy: WorldSkills UK Response

1 WorldSkills UK welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Government's consultation on its Industrial Strategy. WorldSkills UK is all about helping young people go further, faster in their careers; helping them gain the skills that employers need most. Through skills competitions and experiential careers advice we aim to help young people from all backgrounds get the best start in both work and life. Our extensive interaction with young people, schools, colleges, independent training providers and businesses places us at the centre of the debate on how to ensure policies are developed to deliver the best possible outcomes for young people.

1.1 We believe this is the right time for the Government to be developing an industrial strategy and welcome the joined up approach in the Green Paper between future economic need, improved careers advice and technical education for young people. A post-Brexit UK will need to ensure that its skills base has the depth and quality to compete globally, attract inward investment and boost trade. The only way we will get there is by ensuring our young people have the training and career opportunities they need to become the productive workforce of the future.

1.2 One of the key determinants of the Industrial Strategy's success will be our ability to ensure high quality home-grown skills. We are supportive of the Government's current approach and proposals. The increasing focus on apprenticeships has been a positive development. Apprenticeships offer young people excellent opportunities to build greater expertise in their chosen careers and learn skills that will benefit them throughout their working lives. Similarly, the Sainsbury Review and Skills Plan for England place a new focus on technical education and offer clear routes for young people around which to build career decisions. The establishment of Institutes of Technology (IOT) in England will also help to encourage more young people to develop the skills the economy needs most: within the higher levels of STEM subjects.

1.3 In this response we set out how we believe WorldSkills UK can support delivery of a successful Industrial Strategy, including by:

- Boosting experiential careers advice to help all young people achieve their potential
- Developing world-class standards in STEM and technical education through skills competitions
- Leveraging our unique international-to-local platform to showcase the best of UK skills

2 Boosting experiential careers advice to help all young people achieve their potential

2.1 WorldSkills UK believes that the single biggest improvement that could be made to the quality of careers advice, enabling confident and informed choices, is the greater adoption of experiential learning models. This is vital in developing the youth talent pipeline for key sectors identified in the industrial strategy. Giving young people greater access to experiential careers advice will better prepare them for their working lives.

2.2 The Skills Show – the nation's largest skills and careers event – is the premier UK platform for experiential careers advice. It is a major showcase for skills and hundreds of employers across key sectors of the economy are present to engage young people, parents and educators about the career opportunities available. It has actively engaged thousands of young people every year since 2012 – and it works. We know that over half of young people consider an apprenticeship after attending the Show. There is an equally powerful impact amongst educators. Immediately after the Show 97% planned to engage in some form of follow up activity; three months later fully 99% had taken part in

one follow up action. This includes 90% of educators who had encouraged young people to consider a technical education route. Similarly, parents are influenced by what they see and hear – 80% were likely or highly likely to undertake some follow up activity; 73% cited researching technical careers¹. The Show's model, built around 'have a go' activities, top class expert advice and heavily featuring skills competitions, is unique – there is nowhere else in the UK that engages young people in this way. It is especially powerful for encouraging interest in apprenticeships since it allows young people to envisage their potential 'career journey' across a range of industries, including engineering, creative, digital, construction and retail. At The Skills Show, a young person has the opportunity to hear from an apprentice about how their life has changed since taking that route; they can experience, interactively, what an apprenticeship might be like in a workplace in the full range of skills; and they can see those skills being applied to national standards through the skills competitions. This '360' perspective is only possible at an event with the scale and scope to deliver it. It's why The Skills Show is so successful and why apprenticeships have become an integral part of its offer. Speaking at The Skills Show, Apprenticeship and Skills Minister, Rt Hon Robert Halfon MP, said: 'This is the most important date in the skills calendar. This is the best of the UK – this is the future of our country right here'.

2.3 We are working with the Careers & Enterprise Company on a programme called Skills Champions which has helped to raise the prestige of apprenticeships, technical and professional education in careers advice cold spots – reaching nearly 3,000 students, across Tees Valley, Stoke on Trent and Staffordshire, Greater Manchester, London, South East England and Cornwall. The programme has been operational since May 2016 and has achieved a tremendous impact in schools, as evidenced by feedback from students and teachers. For students, 76% said hearing from a Skills Champion has made them feel inspired and motivated, with a further 76% saying they now know more about technical skills based careers than before. Fully 100% of teachers are either satisfied or very satisfied with their experience of the session, whilst 91% are likely or far more likely to encourage young people to consider pursuing technical skills based careers and education.

2.4 WorldSkills UK therefore supports the development of a comprehensive, national careers strategy and is working with the Department for Education on their proposals to demonstrate the benefits of experiential learning models and how these can be adopted more widely. A successful careers strategy should have a strong focus on social mobility. Through our experience in developing hundreds of young people via skills competitions, we can point to how our model of experiential learning has transformed young people's lives.

Case study: Social mobility through skills competitions: Rianne Chester and Danny Hoang

Rianne and Danny were members of Team UK at WorldSkills Sao Paulo 2015. Team UK is a group of young people who are the best of our national skills competition champions. They undergo intense technical and mindset training to represent the UK in European and global skills competition finals, which are held in alternating years.

Rianne, like so many of the young people who make it through to Team UK, was educated at her local state schools and FE college, completing her training at Warrington Collegiate. She won the gold medal and award for the highest overall score at the Brazil competition – the first UK competitor to do so. As Rianne says: 'Being involved with WorldSkills has changed my life completely. Before I started competing I was working in a salon and now I have my own business and I am looking to expand'.

Danny's parents came to the UK from Vietnam and China in 1980. They opened up their own takeaway in Erith which gave Danny his interest in cooking. After studying at Westminster Kingsway, he decided to pursue a full-time career as a chef. Not only did he come away from the Brazil competition with a Medallion of Excellence but he was crowned Young National Chef of the Year shortly afterwards. He now works at a top restaurant in New York but his ambition is to open his own restaurant near to where he grew up in Greenwich. Danny is living proof of his own mantra: 'You don't have to go to university to be smart'.

¹ WorldSkills UK (2017). Independent evaluation of The Skills Show 2016.

2.5 The need to break down gender barriers in careers advice remains paramount. The gender divide in careers destinations is stark. Currently women are less than a quarter of the workforce in four of the five most in-demand industries. In 2016 there were an estimated 462,000 women working in STEM jobs (19%); if there was gender parity that number would be 1.2 million. In addition, women are particularly underrepresented in the roles and industries identified as likely to see the most job openings in the future, such as in computing services (16%), architecture (10%), specialist construction (8%) and construction (13%)². WorldSkills UK research shows that parents are keen to break down gender barriers: no less than 93% said they would support their child pursuing a career not traditionally associated with their gender (e.g. female engineer) – and 95% are aware of the need for more skilled females³. More female role models will help to challenge and change perceptions and we are working with our partner network to support change.

Case study: Breaking down gender barriers: mechanical engineering student Betsy Crosbie

The former pupil of Calderglen High School in East Kilbride was selected to represent Team UK after winning a silver medal at the national finals held at The Skills Show in 2015. Competing at EuroSkills Gothenburg 2016, she was the only female from across Europe to compete in her category of Mechanical Engineering Design and was awarded a Medallion of Excellence. Betsy was positive about her experience and is determined to help more young women follow in her footsteps: 'I got quite a lot of attention for being the only female in my category, but hopefully in the coming years there will be more females in that part of the competition'.

3 Developing world-class standards in STEM and technical education through skills competitions

3.1 Perhaps the most important aspect of the development of technical education to get right is to ensure the delivery of high quality standards to help businesses in key sectors compete with the best globally. Standards matter for young people – and their parents – as they need to have the confidence that in taking a technical route they can achieve the same high quality career prospects that the more established university route is shown to deliver. They matter to governments across the UK, as the acid test of whether policy has been a success will be the quality of training that has been received. For employers, standards matter as through the apprenticeship levy they will be making a significant financial investment; this can reap important benefits if apprentices are properly equipped to undertake the skilled vacancies that businesses increasingly need to fill.

3.2 Clear, simple and relevant standards will underpin the quality of the technical education system, so we need to ensure that they encourage world-class delivery and performance. WorldSkills UK manages a set of standards that underpin our skills competitions. According to the National Audit Office, 62% of apprenticeships started during the period 2010-2015 were at level 2⁴. At WorldSkills UK, we have developed hundreds of apprentices to perform their roles at the world-class level by preparing them for the international WorldSkills competition up to levels 5 and 6.

3.3 The Sainsbury Review and Skills Plan for England provide the organising focus to take competition standards to the next level. In response to skills gaps faced by the country, STEM- and IT-focused sectors will be given priority. In response we are realigning our skills competitions to address these industrial strategy needs. New competitions are being developed in specific areas such as cyber security, health and social care, rail, and environmental sustainability, where gaps have been identified, and in areas where there is demand from potential partners. Furthermore, WorldSkills UK is involved in the development of IOTs. We recognise the potential for them to act as high quality hubs for STEM skills. We stand ready to collaborate with providers to attract students, encourage curriculum innovation and provide CPD for teaching staff based on our expertise in careers advice and achieving world-class standards in STEM.

² SMF (2016). Jobs of the future.

³ WorldSkills UK (2016). Survey of 1,500 parents.

⁴ NAO (2016). Delivering value through the apprenticeships programme.

3.4 The assessment processes that our skills competitions use are already helping employers in STEM sectors develop their apprenticeship structures. Amongst this group are some of the UK's multinational employers, a prime example of which is Toyota. They are using their apprentices' participation in WorldSkills UK competitions and development programmes to drive up their own training to a world-class standard. The adoption of WorldSkills UK competition standards in technical training programmes can inspire apprentices to develop skills beyond competence. WorldSkills UK believes that our standards can make a significant contribution to the development of high quality technical education.

3.5 If we accept that we want the Industrial Strategy to have quality at its core, it could be useful for further work to include more on the international aspects of raising standards and identifying world-class benchmarks. As Brexit becomes a reality, an increasingly global focus will be needed. This will be particularly relevant to the many businesses trading across the continents. With WorldSkills UK's strong track record and direct experience of working at international level and on global standards, we are ideally placed to advise on how international standards can be used to strengthen and improve home-grown skills. Of particular importance here are WorldSkills UK's Experts. These are the volunteer professionals who work at the cutting-edge of their disciplines and train the young people who take part in our competitions to take on – and beat – the world's best. They are an excellent example of the Industrial Strategy's ambition for experts to get more involved in the drive to raise standards. Our Experts possess a wealth of knowledge and expertise that is unique within the country. This expertise could be supported further to ensure the continued development of the continuum from Foundation right through to Degree Apprenticeships, ensuring that they keep ahead of their global equivalents. WorldSkills UK Experts stand ready to contribute to the Institute for Apprenticeships' Route Panels, which will play such an important role in ensuring apprenticeship and technical education standards achieve the quality levels necessary to deliver the skills Global Britain needs for the future.

4 Leveraging our unique international-to-local platform to showcase the best of UK skills

4.1 The UK is part of WorldSkills, a global organisation responsible for skills competitions. A central part of WorldSkills' remit is to organise the biannual WorldSkills Competition. This brings together over 70 competing nations with the aim of identifying the world's best in the full range of skills. At the most recent international competition in Brazil (WorldSkills Sao Paulo 2015), the UK achieved its best ever result – finishing seventh overall in the medal tables and ahead of France and Germany. 82% of the UK team achieved world class standards. Fully 60% of the team were apprentices, with a comparable number in 2013. Achievement at the international level is the ultimate representation of the WorldSkills UK model. Our gold, silver and bronze medallists – a majority of whom are apprentices – can truly claim to have achieved and exceeded world class standards. Widespread media coverage, including national BBC TV coverage, helps raise the profile of apprentices and demonstrates to a new generation the opportunities that are there to be grasped.

4.2 The next competition takes place in Abu Dhabi this October and we are working with the Department for International Trade in order to use our participation to provide a platform for discussions with international partners about the benefits of doing business in the UK and showcasing the high quality of our young skilled workforce. It takes place in a key region where the demand for investment opportunities is strong and the UK's pitch is highly persuasive. Leveraging our international reach is a key part of how we are contributing to the Government's vision of a Global Britain.

4.3 As a UK-wide organisation, WorldSkills UK has a significant footprint in each of the four nations, which allows us to offer tailored solutions to economic and productivity challenges based on national need. The Skills Show is held in Birmingham every November and we have been commissioned by the Careers & Enterprise Company to deliver projects across England to improve young people's careers advice and guidance. Scotland is the UK leader in skills competitions with City of Glasgow College and New College Lanarkshire claiming the top spots at the most recent national finals. In Wales, the Welsh Government has officially recognised the role that competitions play in driving up apprenticeship standards and quality by committing to further participation as part of its apprenticeship

policy⁵. Similarly, in Northern Ireland, the Executive has committed to greater use of skills competitions as part of its strategy to drive up standards in further education⁶.

4.4 The increasing move towards greater devolution of powers and responsibilities to local and regional communities in England, especially through city region mayors and combined authorities, necessitates dynamic local approaches. In particular, the local labour market's needs have to be presented in a way that is engaging and attractive to young people. WorldSkills UK believes that there is an important role for 'have a go' activities and skills competitions in this regard. There is the opportunity for schools, colleges, businesses and other local partners to work together to design activities/competitions that both meet a labour market need and engage young people in wanting to pursue a future career. We very recently (March 2017) delivered an event – Choices – in partnership with the Careers & Enterprise Company in Greater Manchester that brought this to reality. Choices, held at Trafford's EventCity, reached over 10,000 people across two days, engaging with over 100 employers. It featured skills competitions, interactive have a go activities, live apprenticeship and other job vacancies, spotlight talks from industry experts and careers advice and guidance. There is strong support from key local stakeholders to take the model further. Similar events are planned this year in Northampton and Peterborough.

WorldSkills UK annually engages hundreds of employers, some 100,000 young people, 80% of colleges, training providers and governments and administrations across the UK. We have ambitious plans to extend our reach and impact further. The UK Industrial Strategy sets a robust framework to ensure WorldSkills UK can help contribute to improving careers advice and driving higher quality in training standards to drive economic growth, improve productivity, attract inward investment and boost international trade.

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⁵ Welsh Government (2017). Aligning the apprenticeship model to the needs of the Welsh economy.

⁶ Northern Ireland Executive (2016). Further Education means success: The Northern Ireland strategy for further education.