



TUC

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of work for good

WMCA Industrial Strategy Consultation

A TUC Midlands submission

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Foreword

For decades we have been making the case that we need an active industrial strategy both for the UK and for our region. For too long the West Midlands has failed to punch its weight and capitalise upon its historic strengths. Short termism, under investment, neglect and a failure to tackle entrenched deprivation and grow the industries of tomorrow means that we have, over the last thirty years, failed to produce enough of the great jobs that we need to give all our citizens job security, opportunity and a rewarding and prosperous future.

But, just because we haven't grasped the nettle in previous decades does not mean we shouldn't now. Indeed, its exciting times for our region with the opportunities provided through devolution and HS2. We simply must ensure that our industrial policy works to use these developments in a fashion that helps to support people from deprived backgrounds into rewarding work. Tackling this entrenched deprivation is not only a moral imperative but an economic one. As a region we simply cannot afford not to maximise the skills and talents of all our citizens.

We desperately need the investment in infrastructure to grow. Our rail, road, bus and tram networks all need significant improvements. We need to deliver significant housing infrastructure and we must support our thriving industries through a focus on skills and R&D.

A key plank of our strategy must be to deliver a great jobs agenda – great jobs, better pay, more opportunities for all. From this strategic focus do all other policies and interventions follow. Living standards have stagnated for too long and too many people are struggling to make ends which is acting as a drag on the economic competitiveness of the region. Smart use of levers such as public procurement can go a long way to delivering the better pay the region needs. And, in so doing, driving the wage-led growth we need to secure a more sustainable and equitable economic base for our region in the years ahead.

An industrial strategy that looks to secure the investment in our physical assets, our business base and in our people is much needed and provides a potential road map to a brighter future.

We can't wait for great jobs to arrive. We have to make them a reality and I look forward to working with the WMCA and the mayor to make these world class ambitions a reality.



Lee Barron

TUC Midlands Regional Secretary

Skills and Learning

TUC Priorities

Invest in skills, create learning opportunities and provide progression routes for all people currently in work

Increase the supply of high-quality routes into work and training for young people and those outside the labour market

Empower people to adapt to structural changes in the local economy that may arise from new technology, automation and transition to low-carbon economy.

Issues and evidence

Invest in skills and create learning opportunities and progression routes for the current workforce

The WMCA industrial strategy will be operating in the context of a significant retrenchment in the provision of training and skills across the country. Many of the skills challenges faced in the WMCA region are driven by national policy decisions, such as cuts to Further Education (FE) funding, and the Adult Skills Budget, too, has been cut by two fifths since 2010. In basic skills, England is the only country in the OECD where 16 to 24-year olds are 'no more literate or numerate than 55- to 64-year-olds'. It is therefore more important than ever that the WMCA use the powers they have over skills policy to invest and ensure this delivers the number and type of skills that meet the needs of the current and future workforce.

A core objective of the WMCA's industrial strategy should be to address the low levels of participation in learning by adults and to drive up the number of employers investing in training and providing time off to train.

The total number of adult learners fell from 4 million in 2005 to about 2.2 million by 2016. Most of this decrease was driven by falls in the number of learners taking low-level qualifications. According to the 2017 Employer Skills Survey conducted by the government, one third of UK employers did not train any of their staff in the past year and 38 per cent of workers received no training. Employer investment in continuing vocational training per employee in the UK is half the EU average and investment in training and learning per UK employee fell by 13.6 per cent per employee in real-terms between 2007 and 2015.

There are some examples of good practice that addresses forthcoming skills needs resulting from major infrastructure projects. We welcome the establishment of the high-speed rail national college and the HS2-TUC Framework Agreement, which includes several important principles in support of boosting skills and apprenticeships as high-speed rail is rolled out.

These agreements, which should include clauses to support upskilling, high-quality apprenticeships and a focus on the local workforce, can be replicated on a regional and local level when commissioning significant infrastructure projects.

The devolution of parts of skills policy to Mayoral Combined Authorities in 2019/20 creates significant opportunities for local leaders to widen access to education and training for low-waged workers. The WCAA could build on the existing government pilot that fully funds courses to learners aged over 19 who earn less than £15,736 a year (higher in London with the Mayor linking the threshold to the London Living Wage), which applies to both full and part time workers.

The WMCA should also explicitly champion FE as a key component in the educational infrastructure of the region. Whilst recognising the strength in HE that the region is rightly proud of, the FE infrastructure across the WMCA has been under severe pressure in recent years. Any skills strategy will inevitably have a strong reliance on FE and we need to do more in the West Midlands to support this sector.

The draft industrial strategy refers to the creation of employer-led taskforces, for each of the priority sectors, to drive curriculum and skills provision that meets employers' needs. While this may help businesses in the short term, there need to be a balanced approach that takes into account not just the immediate needs of employers, but also the longer-term aspirations around social mobility and skill development. The taskforces would be better balanced through a social partnership approach.

Increase the supply of high-quality routes into work and training for young people and those outside the labour market

Access to skills, training and good jobs are particularly important for young people and those outside the labour market. In general, young workers are disproportionately affected by wage stagnation, concentrated in low paying jobs, lacking access to the skills development to get on in work, especially vulnerable to insecure work and are less likely to have union representation or be part of a collective bargaining agreement at work than older workers.

The TUC continues to have concerns about the poor-quality of too many apprenticeships and the exploitation of some young people who embark on an apprenticeship. Whilst a good apprenticeship is an excellent means of developing a career for many young people, participating in a poor-quality placement is likely to damage their confidence and career prospects. In addition, there is a large amount of evidence showing that certain groups - including women, BAME groups, and disabled people – do not get fair access to the best apprenticeships.

Areas should make a commitment to high quality apprenticeships and to take forward measures to widen access to education and training for low-waged workers. We welcome the commitment of the WMCA to sign the TUC Apprenticeship Charter, which ensures every apprenticeship has purpose, is paid fairly, with high-quality learning and training elements and access to trade unions.

Access to an effective career's advice and guidance service, bespoke to the local economy and skills, can help young people and those furthest away from the labour market enter good-quality work. Decision makers should look at how to develop an accessible advice and guidance system for the WMCA region, including high quality information about local opportunities, that effectively links skills progression and sustainable careers.

The WMCA and constituent LEPs should work in partnership with schools to ensure that education, skills and employment strategies work together to ensure smooth, accessible pathways for all young people to move into high-quality work and promote understanding among students in schools and colleges about future job opportunities specific to the region. This should include means to ensure that the T-Level curriculum in local schools and colleges is fit for purpose, ensuring that school and college leavers are equipped with relevant skills but also common workplace skills that provide the ability to enter and progress in the world of work.

As part of the wider agenda of tackling entrenched deprivation school outreach work target schools in these communities to both encourage students to continue with their education and to outline the potential good job opportunities available to them across the WMCA.

The WMCA and LEPs should also work with unions and local training providers to ensure that young workers engaged in apprenticeships are provided with information, advice and guidance on employment rights and other aspects of work that help them progress at work.

Support workers to adapt to structural changes in the local economy

Decision makers across the WMCA area must ensure provisions to support and upskill workers to respond to new technologies, automation and changes to ways of working as part of their strategic skills plan. This is especially true if today's jobs in higher polluting industries are to be replaced over time with jobs in greener sectors.

The OECD has argued that 14 per cent of workers in developed countries may see their jobs being "entirely restructured ... or significantly downsized" while another 32 per cent of jobs will face considerable change in the way they are delivered. Those most at risk as a result of this change will be those workers who receive little training from their employer and face barriers to adult learning, including low basic skills and lack of time off to train. The UK Commission for Employment and Skills assesses those occupational groups most at risk and with a predicted net fall in jobs as administration/secretarial, skilled trades, process, plant and machine operatives. It is essential that a local industrial strategy has measures in place to anticipate change, jobs at risk and provide the retraining and careers advice that enables workers to cope with this transition.

Analysis by the Centre for Progressive Policy provides details on the numbers of jobs at risk by local authority with some, such as Sandwell in the West Midlands, with over 34 per cent of total employment in this category. Over half of the local authorities identified as 'high risk' according to the CPP were in the north of England and the Midlands.

The National Retraining Partnership, with £100m funding for the pilot programme before full roll out planned for 2022, is a new approach bringing the government, CBI and TUC together at

a national level to develop a dynamic approach to retraining that will incorporate careers advice and retraining opportunities for groups of workers in parts of the economy most exposed to the risk. Working with local Skills Advisory Panels, the NRP will be able to coordinate responses to redundancy and closures but also to proactively map the local economy and offer retraining to workers in line with the skills needs of the new economy.

Skills Advisory Panels (SAPs) will be integrated into MCAs and LEPs in order to map local skills needs and inform the local industrial strategies. The government's industrial strategy white paper states that the SAPs will engage "local actors, including businesses and education providers, to determine local growth priorities". The TUC believes that the social partnership approach taken to the NRP at a national level should be reflected at the regional and local level so that unions are engaged and able to inform the work of the SAP and the NRP. SAPs should be used to map skills and learning needs in their broadest sense, identifying the obstacles that people in work face in accessing training and development and working with employers to address them.

Unions are well placed to support this work through their role in negotiating learning agreements in the workplace, brokering skills support, facilitating access to workers in emergency closure and redundancy situations and help proactively engage members employed at risk sectors.

Union Learning demonstrates long-term success in boosting workers' skills. Four-in-ten (80 per cent) of those who've undertaken union learning develop skills that they can transfer to a new job, and 62 per cent believe that their new skills make them more effective at their current role.

Recommendations

Through the promotion of employment charters, the intelligent use of procurement and advocacy and soft powers, metro mayors and other local political leaders – working in partnership with LEPs and trade unions, should ensure that the industrial strategy has a core aim of driving up employer engagement in training, with a view to increasing:

- the number of employers providing workplace training
- engagement with unions on the learning and skills agenda, including the use of workplace learning agreements negotiated with relevant trade unions
- the number of employees provided with time off to train

Ensure local skills strategies are aligned with infrastructure and investment decisions and employment and training opportunities are secured for local communities through intelligent procurement and the use of framework agreements such as those used for the London Olympics and HS2 should be used to make sure that the best local training and development opportunities, including apprenticeships, are established across supply chains.

The social partnership approach taken to the NRP at a national level should be reflected in the industrial strategy so that unions are engaged and able to inform the work of the Skills Advisory Panels and the National Retraining Partnership at the local and regional level.

Both the WMCA and local authorities should sign the TUC Apprenticeship Charter and work with LEPs to engage employers to ensuring every apprenticeship has purpose, is paid fairly, with high-quality learning and training elements and access to trade unions.

Infrastructure

Priorities

Increase infrastructure investment to enable us to compete with other advanced economies.

Maximise job and training opportunities and secure quality employment standards on infrastructure projects, through the use of framework agreements developed with unions, as seen at Olympics 2012 and HS2.

Use a social partnership approach to ensure infrastructure meets community need, supports connectivity and inclusive growth.

Key issues / evidence

The TUC has long campaigned for increases in infrastructure spending across the same broad categories as those set out in the Green paper, i.e. digital and communications, transport, and water and flood defences. We would also stress the paramount need for housebuilding, including for social accommodation.

There are several obvious benefits from such initiatives:

- immediately supporting both aggregate demand and the allocation of demand, in particular reducing reliance on the household sector
- the provision of more high-quality work
- supply gains from improved infrastructure
- the social benefits of useful initiatives irrespective of specific supply gains.

With interest rates still at historic lows, these schemes are a good investment for the public sector. Fiscal rules should recognise that the multiplier gains of such work are likely to outstrip the costs of implementation in the first place.

The UK's continued lag in infrastructure spending provides a challenging context for the WMCA's industrial strategy. The TUC has welcomed the 'National Productivity Investment Fund' of £23bn introduced in the 2016 Autumn Statement, but even with this spending, government investment as a share of the economy will be lower in this Parliament than it was in the last. Comparing spending across OECD countries (on a national accounts basis), UK government investment of 2.6% of GDP ranks 20 out of the 27 countries for which data are available. The Office for Budgetary Responsibility has this rising to only 2.7% by 2020, which will leave the UK ranking unchanged (assuming other countries' shares remain constant). The WMCA's industrial strategy provides an opportunity to harness central government funding and to lever private investment to drive greater infrastructure spending and target it more effectively on local need. But in addition, all partners involved in the WMCA industrial strategy should work together to make a stronger case to central government for greater funding and support for infrastructure investment going forward.

The National Productivity Investment Fund provides opportunities to support the development of infrastructure in the region that promotes connectivity, regeneration and new physical assets – supporting both supply side measures but also driving up demand in the local economy through the multiplier and employment effects. However, too many projects of this kind fail to meaningfully engage with local communities and more needs to be done to enable unions, civil society, community groups and others to help design and shape projects that meet need as defined by those communities in a way that provides real improvements in the wellbeing of those communities.

With major projects like Heathrow T5, the London Olympics and HS2, framework agreements developed with unions can ensure that the infrastructure projects can deliver great jobs, skills and access for local employment and training opportunities. And aligned with an intelligent procurement strategy, government can also use these projects to offer opportunities to businesses along the supply chain.

The Memorandum of Understanding signed between the Olympic Delivery Authority, delivery partner CLM and construction unions on the construction of the London Olympic Games infrastructure committed contractors to promote high quality employment standards, including adherence to relevant national collective agreement, direct employment, trade union access, the promotion of local labour and training initiatives and effective partnership between unions, contractors and delivery partners on securing safety and wellbeing of all those working on the project.

Similarly, the framework agreement signed by unions and HS2 commits to a shared purpose of promoting the best employment standards and industrial relations, recognising national agreements, using direct employment, promoting opportunities in disadvantaged communities, paying the real Living Wage where applicable, investing in workforce development and training, ensuring world class health and safety standards and promoting positive relations with trade unions.

Infrastructure and regeneration projects do not provide these outcomes without agreement and commitment between all partners and, without such agreements, opportunities for using regeneration and investment as a driver for inclusive growth will be missed.

The WMCA should use HS2 as a key vehicle for releasing greater connectivity both across the WMCA and the wider midlands region. Improving connectivity across the midlands region is essential in unlocking growth potential. The present transport network is creaking and a significant brake on growth. Moreover, in delivering greater connectivity the bus network must not be overlooked. An ambitious road, rail, tram and bus programme should be a cornerstone of the industrial strategy.

Recommendations

WMCA, LEPs and other local actors should work together to articulate the need for greater government investment in infrastructure and define what works best for those areas.

The WMCA and LEPs should work with community and workforce representatives to ensure that infrastructure and regeneration is delivered in a way that meets genuine need and

enhances wellbeing in those communities – not just in terms of identifying the infrastructure that meets that need but in shaping the way it is constructed and delivered in a way that maximising community benefits. Consultation at the outset, through the local industrial strategy for example, is welcome but this must be an on-going process that provides a feedback loop from communities and the workforce to the relevant delivery partners, to relevant local authorities and LEPs.

All infrastructure projects, including house building, should include framework agreements that maximise employment and training opportunities for local people and deliver great jobs, employment standards and positive industrial relations.

Dynamic and smart state intervention in support of inclusive growth

Priorities

Use social value commissioning and procurement to support great jobs, local employment and skills initiatives, apprenticeships, equalities and other social and environmental criteria.

Use both insourcing and commissioning and procurement to help deliver world class public services and shape key parts of the local foundational economy.

Promote local economic growth through using procurement to support local business, voluntary organisations and other enterprises.

Ensure that the WMCA and local authorities work closely with LEPs to target funding through City Deals, Local Growth Fund and the forthcoming Shared Prosperity Fund in a way that supports the creation of great jobs and high quality employment standards in line with local industrial strategy objectives.

Key issues and evidence

Effective industrial strategy needs the support of smart and dynamic state at a national, regional and local level. This may be through:

- growing and shaping economies through levers such as commissioning, procurement, planning and regulation
- influencing businesses and other stakeholders through soft powers and the advocacy role of local political leaders
- addressing market failure.

In their report *The New Municipalism*, APSE shows how “councils have the capacity to intervene in local economics, to deliver social change and contribute to the building of sustainable communities ... councils can pro-actively intervene in local markets in ways that reduce uncertainties and risks, while setting out with communities strategic visions or signposts for future development in local markets”.

This might take the form of addressing market failure. For example, there are now over 150 local authority housing companies set up to plug the gap in housing provision created by the failure of the private sector to build sufficient affordable housing. Birmingham Municipal Housing Trust works with contractors to directly build housing and has delivered twice the number of new homes originally anticipated, becoming the largest homebuilder in Birmingham with 25 per cent of the market.

Through their purchasing power, councils and other anchor institutions in the region, including NHS providers and HE institutions, have significant leverage to both grow and shape local economies.

The government's industrial strategy green paper described how public procurement can be used strategically to support key sectors, technology and innovation, stating that "the public sector spends around £268bn per year, equivalent to 14 per cent of GDP. Used strategically, government procurement can encourage innovation, competition, and investment in skills. US agencies and initiatives like the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) and the Small Business Innovation Research programme have shown how strategic procurement can drive innovation and the creation of new technology businesses".

Procurement can also be used to direct public money into local communities, to grow local enterprises and supporting the foundational economy, ensuring that public spending maximises impact in the local community. Many are now familiar with the model of community wealth building employed by local authorities like Preston, where a strategic approach to public spending by the local authority and other partner organisations has led to a significant increase in investment in the local economy. Six local institutions in Preston signed up to a community wealth building project that saw spending in Preston increase from £38m in 2013 to £111m in 2017. And while it is reasonable to question the displacement effects of this strategy in neighbouring areas, it is important to note that spending by Preston Council with enterprises based in Lancashire rose from £292m to £486m in the same period.

Through the use of social value clauses, public procurement can also help shape local economies, promoting fair pay, good jobs, skills and other social and environmental criteria that benefit local communities.

From the introduction of Best Value procurement in the late 90s, through to the Public Services (Social Value) Act, public procurement legislation in Wales and Scotland and the latest iteration of the EC Procurement Directives through the Public Contracts Regulations 2015, there have been several attempts to reboot public procurement and move towards strategies that seek to enhance a broader set of social value objectives. In 2017, the Crown Commercial Service published new guidance on placing social value at the heart of public procurement, requiring "buyers of public sector services to consider whether there are related social, economic or environmental benefits that can be delivered through the contract"

However, as research by Social Enterprise UK demonstrates, uptake is patchy and inconsistent. They found that only 24 per cent of local authorities have a social value policy, about a third of all councils routinely consider social value in their procurement and commissioning and that where councils score social value when scrutinising tenders, the score is typically between 5 and 10 per cent of the overall points awarded.

However, there is good practice. In Greater Manchester, the Mayor is about to launch an Employment Charter with a view to securing employer commitment to a range of quality employment standards. Initiatives such as Unison's 'Ethical Care Charter' and Children England and the TUC's 'Declaration of Inter-dependence' have provided ways of codifying good social value practice through voluntary agreements that can be adopted by councils. Evidence shows

that their application can have a positive impact on employment standards and value for money. And local authorities, including Cambridge, Brighton, Lewisham, York and Manchester have used contracts to increase uptake in the real living wage.

Furthermore, governments in Wales and Scotland have used a combination of legislation and voluntary codes to push social value procurement more effectively than Westminster. The Code of Practice for Ethical Employment launched in March 2017, developed in partnership with unions and public service employers, places an expectation on all public sector organisations, businesses and third sector organisations in receipt of public sector funding to sign up to a code of practice that promotes decent jobs, a living wage and protects against blacklisting and other forms of exploitation. The Procurement Reform (Scotland) Act 2014 goes much further than the Public Contracts Regulations enforced in England and Wales, requiring all public bodies to have a procurement strategy in place that supports community benefits, the living wage and the economic, social and environmental well-being of the local area.

Lessons could be learned from the Welsh Government, which has highlighted the potential of procurement policy in its programme for government, 'Taking Wales Forward'. This programme will run from 2016 until 2021. The Welsh Government will pilot a 'Better Jobs, Closer to Home' project, designed to create employment and training hubs in areas of high economic deprivation. The Wales TUC campaigned specifically for such a project. The Welsh Government has also pledged to continue to improve procurement policy, including community benefits.

We would welcome a more dynamic approach from political leaders at a national and local level, including through the WMCA, to achieve a fundamental change in the way social value is promoted through public procurement in order to protect and promote decent employment standards and broader economic and social objectives, including spreading good practice from devolved administrations in Scotland and Wales.

Proposals

The WMCA and other local political leaders should work with commissioners and decision makers across the public sector – including the health service and local government – to promote, implement and monitor a more dynamic approach to social value procurement in support of great jobs and inclusive growth, including best practice from devolved governments in Wales and Scotland.

This should include the use of voluntary agreements and charters, including employment charters, in order to promote high quality service, decent employment standards and protect against exploitation of the outsourced workforce and supply chain.

The WMCA and other local political leaders should work with other anchor institutions in the region to coordinate strategic procurement spending in support of the local economy.

The creation of great jobs and the promotion of high quality employment standards should form a core part of the local industrial strategy and, as such, should be a key measurable outcome through the financial support co-ordinated by combined authorities, local authorities

and LEPs through City Deals, the Local Growth Fund and the forthcoming Shared Prosperity Fund.

Additional Submission

The UCU union has provided detailed comments on the draft industrial strategy with particular regard to inclusive growth. The comments are so detailed that they have been reproduced in Appendix 1 and we urge the WMCA to give due regard to the comments provided by UCU.

Addressing inequalities by promoting inclusive growth

TUC priorities

Tackle discrimination and other barriers that prevent all communities from accessing great jobs, skills, equal pay and progression.

Harness the benefits that diverse communities bring to local economies to support inclusive economic growth.

Boost productivity and high performances businesses, by ensuring all workplaces support good health and well-being and are free from harassment and bullying.

Issues and evidence

There are significant differences of outcome in relation to recruitment, retention, progression, pay and access to skills across all protected equalities groups.

Too many deprived communities across the region have suffered from poor job and life opportunities. A key goal for the WMCA should be in working to deliver innovative programmes and provide access to decent jobs and training to tackle entrenched deprivation.

This is not only an injustice to those groups of workers but it has a negative impact on the local economy, hampering productivity, preventing businesses from accessing the widest possible talent pool and suppressing income and aggregate demand.

This can be a result of discrimination but also structural barriers arising from a wide range of factors in the workplace and wider society, including lack of accessible spaces, inflexible working patterns, lack of social infrastructure such as childcare facilities and support for vulnerable groups and a failure to connect disadvantaged communities with areas of employment opportunity.

The WMCA should promote greater equality and diversity through all parts of the economy, working with community organisations, unions and employers to identify and address the barriers that some communities face.

Recommendations

The WMCA and local authorities can help tackle some of the barriers to employment, fair pay and progression by (a) ensuring all their employment and commissioning practice is in line with the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty and (b) use commissioning and procurement powers to ensure businesses in the region adhere to the principles of the duty and provide employment and training opportunities to disadvantaged groups of workers.

The WMCA and LEPs should work together to map inequalities in employment, skills, pay and progression outcomes across the local economy, working with employers, unions and community organisations to identify structural barriers and devise and implement plans to overcome them. This could include:

- working with employers and unions to provide information, advice and guidance for all employers, particularly SMEs, and workers to understand better the benefits of diversity to the local economy and the means available to tackle discrimination and structural barriers
- investing in and support social infrastructure that enables disadvantaged groups from entering the labour market, including childcare and support for victims of domestic violence
- working with employers and unions to (a) addressing barriers to high-pay, high-productivity jobs through addressing training, labour supply, recruitment and retention and (b) address poor employment practice in those sectors of the economy where disadvantage groups are over-represented in employment
- promote greater reporting of gender, BAME and disability pay gaps in businesses and organisations

The WMCA and LEPs should provide effective outreach and capacity building to ensure that all communities, particularly under-represented groups, are able to access information, meaningfully feedback and inform the local industrial strategy.

Sectoral interventions

Priorities

Promote sectoral initiatives that bring employers, unions and political leaders together to support productivity improvements and better jobs in key sectors.

Support development of high skill, high productivity jobs, through (a) supporting strategic industries in the region and (b) supporting new sectors, including low-carbon technologies.

Drive up productivity, pay and conditions in the low paid sectors and support great jobs in the 'foundational economy'

Key issues and evidence

Sectoral approaches need to focus on two key challenges:

- Expanding the supply of high skill, high value jobs
- Improving productivity, pay and conditions in those sectors where there is furthest to catch up.

Increasing the supply of high skill, high value jobs

The TUC represents Trade Unions across our world leading sectors, including the automotive industry, life sciences, financial services, and the creative industries. We want to see these sectors thrive and grow, offering more good jobs with decent terms and conditions. The draft industrial strategy could do more to emphasise the world class products delivered by manufacturers across the WMCA.

In 2017, the TUC Midlands published a 'Cultural manifesto' outlining how the WMCA can deliver for the cultural sector in the WMCA region. Decision makers at the WMCA should work with unions working in the creative industries to look at implementing the recommendations contained within the plan.

Strategic employers in the region have a key role to play in supporting productivity and growth, providing high paying employment in sectors that promote significant GVA in the local economy. They also have a leading role to play both as a direct employer of large numbers of local people and through their extended supply chains.

The WMCA, other local political leaders and LEPs should work with strategic employers to ensure that investment and purchasing decisions have a positive impact on jobs and supply chains across the region. And that strategic companies are supported to ensure that they are able to benefit from largescale government procurement and infrastructure projects.

The WMCA and LEPs should establish boards based around key priority growth sectors identified in the local industrial strategy that could bring social partners together to look at

opportunities for growth, resilience of the sector and the key employers within it, local labour supply, development of robust supply chains in the local economy, education and training that enables local people to access the skills required for key sectors, provision of workforce development and training, pay and conditions and career progression.

The Grand Challenges set out in the national industrial strategy present opportunities for innovation and the development of a new economy, but this also comes with risk. The WMCA industrial strategy should set out what measures the WMCA and others can take to de-risk the transition to a new economy. For example, this might take the form of providing match funding that underpins or levers in research and development and supports knowledge transfer. But it could also mean different approaches to commissioning services or local planning, providing longer term and more sustainable contracts to social providers that enables them to innovate and invest in the workforce, or the protection or provision of appropriate commercial and industrial spaces. All these measures should consider how to de-risk the position of those workers employed in these sectors.

While we cannot predict the future, we should be able to identify new opportunities in some growth sectors. Green technology is an obvious example. The local industrial strategy must develop a robust green energy and industrial policy.

In 2016, the TUC published *Powering Ahead: how the UK can learn from Europe's environmental leaders*. This report, based on original research from Germany and Denmark, challenged the argument that environmental protection was a luxury that could only be afforded in good times; on the contrary, the Stern Report, which predicted a market of \$500bn in environmental goods and services by 2050, showed the economic opportunities, as well as the threats, from climate change.

A green industrial strategy in the region should look at how industries can meet the opportunities and challenges posed by a long-term plan for greening the economy, including a target of 50 per cent renewable energy target by 2030.

This should include:

- identifying the new industries that could be developed
- the changes and new technology that existing industries would need to implement
- supporting the research and development capacity that exists in the region
- facilitating knowledge transfer and the delivery of new technologies to market
- equipping workers with the skills and capacity to cope with these changes, through coordination with Skills Advisory Panels and the National Retraining Partnership.
- bringing all partners together, including unions, to jointly own and promote the green industrial strategy, ensuring an inclusive and collective response.

Improving productivity, pay and conditions in those sectors where there is furthest to catch up

Expanding jobs in high paid, high productivity sectors is an essential part of the drive for more decent jobs. But to deliver better jobs across the country, we need to improve the quality of work in low productivity and low paying industries. The problem of the rise of insecure work across the region is a major problem and deserves greater recognition within the industrial strategy.

We believe that a local industrial strategy should have a strong focus on supporting and promoting great jobs in the foundational economy. The foundational economy includes those parts of our everyday services that often overlooked in policy terms but are the foundation of all our communities – from ‘material’ services such as gas, electricity, telecoms, retail banking and food processing, distribution and retail through to ‘providential’ services such as health, social care and education.

These sectors of the economy are rooted in our communities, employ large numbers of local people and are largely sheltered from international competition, off-shoring and, in some respects, automation. They are also sectors where the state has significant leverage through commissioning, procurement, planning and regulation. They are also likely to continue to face rising demand. All factors that lend themselves to key components of sustainable and inclusive growth in all our communities.

It is estimated up to 40 per cent of the workforce is employed in these parts of the economy, broadly defined. However, too many of the jobs created within these sectors are insecure, low paid, low skilled and offer little in terms of progression. There is no reason why these sectors cannot create great jobs.

More than a third of all employee jobs nationally, around 9.6 million, are in the low pay sectors. The Low Pay Commission’s research has also demonstrated that in recent years the rate of jobs growth in low paying industries has outstripped the rise of employment in the rest of the economy. Sectors with a high incidence of low pay include: agriculture; food processing; textiles; retail; hospitality; cleaning; social care; child care; leisure; hairdressing; and transport and storage.

Research by the IPPR has demonstrated that it is in these industries that the productivity gaps that the UK experiences with the rest of Europe are largest. They estimate that “if we were able to raise productivity levels among low-wage firms to the levels seen elsewhere, the UK could close a third of its average productivity gap with Belgium, France, Germany and the Netherlands”.

These industries are also some of those seeing the fastest rises in insecure work. Since 2011, the industries in which insecure jobs (including low paid self-employment, agency work and zero hours contracts) have risen fastest, are hospitality and social care. When workers do not know the hours they are set to work from one week to the next, are frequently denied sick pay, and miss out on family friendly rights, it is easier to understand why productivity levels in these sectors are often so low. A goal of the WMCA should be to end the use of ZHCs across the region, instead promoting the principles contained within the TUCs ‘Great Jobs Agenda’

The draft WMCA strategy refers to “high employment, with more good jobs and accessible opportunities, and diverse leadership in business and public life”. This aim is welcome, but it is disappointing the consultation document makes no direct reference to the retail sector. Retail in the West Midlands generates 7% of total UK Retail GVA and 5% of total region GVA. Nationally the retail sector employs 2.98 million people, and this rises to 4.6 million when wholesale trade and motor vehicle trade and repair are included, making it the largest industrial sector in Great Britain. It contributes 11% to the UK economic output and is also fundamentally connected with other key sectors including distribution and food manufacturing.

While some of the challenges facing retail are national or sectorial issues, from a regional perspective more can be done to support the sector. For example, according to the Centre for Retail Research, store vacancies in the West Midlands stood at almost 15% in 2017. The retail union Usdaw welcomes the proposals from WMCA to revitalise town centres across Birmingham and the Black Country. Whilst recognising the future of the high street will not only be about shops, considering the size of the sector, any industrial strategy for the region must incorporate traditional sectors like retail and not just focus on the more innovative and technical sectors.

At a local level an industrial strategy for the region should include the following measures to help the retail sector:

- A comprehensive review of rents within the sector and other initiatives, including the proposal to establish a register of landlords of empty shops in each local authority.
- A review of town/city centre parking charges and other transport issues. For example, free bus travel for under 25's.
- Other initiatives to improve town centre footfall. This needs to involve a range of measures from tackling the issue of anti-social behaviour in town centres, as well as pursuing more creative measures to attract shoppers.
- A commitment from employers and local government to invest in skills within the retail sector, including sustained investment in skills for workers affected by automation, including through union learning and high-quality apprenticeships. According to the Centre for Cities, workers in the Midlands are amongst those who are most at risk of losing their jobs to automation/robots.
- A new model for co-operation around tackling retail crime, particularly in light of automation, e.g. self- service tills and the lack of investment in stores which has, in some cases, resulted in severe understaffing. We are also concerned about the rising level in knife crimes. As highlighted in Usdaw's Freedom from Fear campaign, in recent years we have seen rising levels of retail crime and abuse. The Freedom From Fear campaign seeks to bring together employers, the police and local authorities to tackle the scourge of violence, threats and abuse against public-facing workers.

Raising productivity, pay and conditions in these industries must therefore be a key part of the WMCA's industrial strategy in order to deliver for all citizens across the WMCA footprint. In the

West Midlands, there has been a 66% increase in the number of children living in poverty with a working parent since 2010.

And the current context is one where the need for a strategy for the low paid industries is becoming sharper:

- The government has rightly set out its ambition to ensure decent working standards for everyone, and is investigating how to do this through the Taylor review
- The expansion in coverage of the National Living Wage means that businesses dominated by low pay are already looking for ways to increase their productivity
- Many of these industries are at present reliant in large part on EU migrants, who make up over a quarter of the workforce in food manufacturing, hotels, and the domestic personnel sector. If immigration policy tightens, or EU citizens no longer find the UK an attractive place to live, these businesses may need to think of new approaches to recruiting and retaining staff, in an already tight jobs market.

It is certain that the low paid industries cannot deal with these issues on their own. Rather, government would need to take a tripartite approach in bringing together employers with working people and their trade unions in order to move forward.

The local industrial strategy should convene meetings of employers, commissioners and purchasers of services (where appropriate), unions and other key stakeholders to develop joint approaches to boosting productivity, creating great jobs and managing structural and technological change on a sector by sector basis, including a focus on ‘foundational sectors’, e.g. social care.

This could lead to the creation of sector-specific bodies in the region, charged with increasing pay, efficiency and general business success in each of the low paid industries. Our vision is for a new model, drawing some lessons from a number of bodies, including the industry-based Economic Development Committees of the National Economic Development Council, less formal initiatives like PILOT in the oil and gas industry, the Low Pay Commission, and the agricultural wage setting bodies of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

A short-coming of past initiatives is that none of them combined a vision of business success with a strategy to improve wage-setting and create better jobs. Yet improving pay and conditions is a necessary condition for raising productivity in these sectors, since low wages are often associated with low quality work, low skills, poor staff motivation, high turnover and negative labour sorting by ability.

The draft industrial strategy makes reference to a housing plan which is welcome. However, more specific detail is regarding the areas of need (i.e. low cost, affordable and social housing) is needed. The WMCA could learn from work being done through Nuneaton and Bedworth Council regarding the use of modular builds that could be developed across the region.

Recommendations

Develop new sectoral boards, bringing the WMCA and LEPs together with employers, unions and other stakeholders to support productivity improvements and better jobs across key

industries. Looking at opportunities for growth, resilience of the sector and the key employers within it, local labour supply, development of robust supply chains in the local economy, education and training that enables local people to access the skills required for key sectors, provision of workforce development and training, pay and conditions and career progression.

There is clear potential to support the development of more high skill, high productivity jobs by expanding the UK's role in low-carbon technologies. The local industrial strategy should aim for 50 per cent of energy to come from renewables by 2030 and should map potential for new technologies, areas of growth and coordinate support for workers and investment around a long-term plan for a just transition to a low-carbon economy.

The industrial strategy must include an approach to driving up productivity, pay and conditions in the low paid sectors, including retail. The TUC believes that sectoral approaches will be essential here, with new bodies that bring business, unions and the WMCA together to improve training, progression and productivity.

Worker voice and social partnership

Priorities

Promote the benefits that trade union engagement and collective bargaining has for productivity, skills and high performance at the workplace level

Embed trade union engagement and social partnership in the design, delivery and implementation of industrial strategy including with political leaders and employers through sectoral and other initiatives.

Promote broader civil society partnerships that bring voluntary and community groups, NGOs, unions, businesses and academia together to set out key outcomes for the region and establish partnership working to deliver them.

Key issues and evidence

Successful organisations of all kinds require effective mechanisms for consulting with and engaging their workforce. There are many ways through which effective mechanisms for workers' voice enhances organisational and business success.

It is intuitively obvious that people will prefer working for an organisation that treats them with respect, values their views and input and in which they feel that their skills and knowledge are making a clear and valued contribution. Higher levels of commitment and motivation translate directly into lower staff turnover rates and lower absence and sickness rates, both of which serve to boost productivity and profitability. In addition, organisations with effective procedures for resolving disputes and managing, for example, flexible working will be better able to safeguard the valuable resource of people's time and protect itself from losing valued staff who need to combine work with other responsibilities.

These are vital ingredients for the effective running of any organisation. However, the contribution of workers' voice to industrial strategy goes beyond these basic 'hygiene' factors, important though they are. As well as enabling organisations to run smoothly and minimise costs in areas like recruitment and sickness cover, workers' voice contributes to successful industries and sectors in (at least) three key areas:

- The introduction of new technologies
- Management of change
- Harnessing ideas for innovation and incremental improvements.

The introduction of new technologies is a key aspect of innovation in both products and processes and an important driver of higher productivity. Yet considerable sums are wasted every year on investments in new technologies where the potential benefits are not realised because of poor engagement and consultation with staff about the impact on their jobs and how to use the new technologies effectively. A recent survey of nearly 7,500 workers found

that while 87% agreed with the statement “I am keen to embrace technology and maximise its benefits”, and 73% agreed that technology would improve productivity, less than one in four (24%) said that their employer gave them a say in how technology effects their work.¹ Low levels of innovation and technological diffusion are one of the drivers of the UK’s low productivity,² so ensuring that investments in new technologies reap their full benefits is essential to boost the performance of UK industries and sectors.

This will be particularly important in responding to the challenges posed as technological change accelerates through the ‘fourth industrial revolution’. How trade unions – and government – can best respond to this has been set out in the TUC reports *Shaping our Digital Future* and *A Future that Works for Working People*.

Remaining competitive in an ever-changing commercial environment requires effective strategies for the management of change. A vital part of this is the changes to workforce practices and tasks that may be necessary for a business to continue to thrive in uncertain conditions. The UK’s relatively under-regulated labour market does not give companies and managers sufficient guidance in how to manage change effectively and does not give UK workers sufficient protection and voice in that process; this is an area where strengthened minimum standards would bring clear benefits to both workers and employers. Workers who feel secure in their jobs and committed to their employer are much more likely to have the motivation and confidence to embrace changes to working patterns and tasks and giving workers a say in the process of change is vital to securing a successful outcome.

A 2009 study by Alex Bryson et al using nationally representative data for the private sector found that managerial innovations are associated with lower worker well-being and job satisfaction, except when workers are covered by a collective bargaining agreement. Further research suggested that this effect resulted directly from union involvement in consultation over innovation, showing that innovation and change introduced in consultation with unions is more likely to be successful³. However, declining rates of union density and organisation in the private sector have left workers in non-unionised companies poorly protected in terms of consultation practices and voice at work.

The right of workers to be consulted about changes to their work is recognised in the Information and Consultation of Employees Regulations 2004 (ICE). However, as currently drafted these regulations have proved ineffective in delivering these rights and have failed to ensure that workers in non-unionised workplaces are consulted properly about developments at work. This is because the consultation rights have to be triggered by a request from 10% of the workforce, which, in an employer of any size that is not unionised, is a very high bar in

¹ ‘The productivity puzzle’ A view from employees, A Smith Institute survey supported by Prospect, BECTU, USDAW, Community, the FDA, the Association of Teachers and Lecturers, and the Society of Radiographers March 2016

² For a discussion of the different factors contributing to the UK’s low levels of productivity, see Productivity puzzles Speech given by Andrew G Haldane, Chief Economist, Bank of England London School of Economics 20 March 2017, <http://www.bankofengland.co.uk/publications/Documents/speeches/2017/speech968.pdf>

³ The Road to Recovery How effective unions can help rebuild the economy, TUC 2010

terms of workforce organisation. In addition, many workers, in all probability the vast majority, are totally unaware of these rights. The TUC supports reform of the ICE regulations as an essential part delivering minimum standards across the UK in terms of workplace consultation and this would make an important contribution to an effective industrial strategy. In the meantime, however, the industrial strategy could help promote collective workplace consultation as a means to securing better workforce consultation.

Who knows a firm's products and services better than its workforce? It is common sense that those who are responsible for making or delivering those products and services will be well-placed to suggest improvements - particularly in terms of processes, which can directly raise productivity, but also in terms of product design and service quality. Engaging the workforce in discussion about business improvement should be an ongoing process in which all voices and ideas are considered and valued; a dusty suggestion box that is never emptied does not do the job. There are numerous examples of suggestions for product and process innovation that have come from the workforce; for example, a suggestion from British Airways employee is saving the airline £600,000 in fuel (as well as reducing the company's emissions). The suggestion was to make the planes lighter by de-scaling the toilet pipes;⁴ it is easy to see why this suggestion was more likely to come from the shop (or in this case plane) floor than the boardroom!

While the analysis of Andy Haldane of the Bank of England points towards a range of factors bearing responsibility for the UK's low productivity, the data show that the productivity gaps within sectors are greater than, and increasing faster than, the gaps between sectors. This shows the importance of examining practices within firms in terms of explaining and addressing the UK's productivity challenges. There is evidence to suggest that differences in terms of the quality of management are a significant part of the firm-level practices which distinguish high-productivity, successful companies from others⁵ and effective strategies for workforce participation are an essential part of good management.

Workers' voice and involvement in decision-making is currently a serious weakness of the UK economy. The WERS Survey 2011 found that less than half (47%) of employees thought that managers were good at responding to suggestions from employees and just over one in three (35%) said that managers were good at allowing employees to influence decisions.⁶ This is a relative, as well as absolute, weakness. The European Trade Union Institute compiles a European Participation Index (EPI) which measures three sources of workers' influence on companies: firstly, board-level employee representation; secondly, workplace representation; and finally, collective bargaining strength, as measured through the percentage of the workforce covered by collective bargaining and trade union membership⁷. The most recent

⁴ <http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/flush-with-cash-british-airways-saves-740383>

⁵ Andy Haldane, op cit

⁶ The 2011 Workplace Employment Relations Study FIRST FINDINGS

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/336651/bis-14-1008-WERS-first-findings-report-fourth-edition-july-2014.pdf

⁷ The European Participation Index is described in Sigurt Vitols (2010). The European Participation Index (EPI): A Tool for Cross-National Quantitative Comparison, ETUI

version of the EPI puts the UK sixth from bottom of the EU28 Member States in terms of workforce participation; only Cyprus, Lithuania, Latvia, Bulgaria and Spain perform worse⁸. Addressing this weakness must be a key component of a successful industrial strategy for the UK.

Workers' participation in the companies in which they work can take different forms, many of which are complementary. Collective bargaining enables the workforce to negotiate with one voice over pay and working conditions and is key to delivering those 'hygiene factors' outlined above. In addition, in many cases, it is through collective bargaining machinery that workers have a collective voice in discussions about the future development of their workplace and company. Collective consultation can also take place in the absence of unions (for example, some companies have set up joint consultative committees under the ICE Regulations⁹), although this is relatively rare. Workforce input into strategic decision-making through worker representation on company boards is almost non-existent in the UK, though where it is in place it is certainly valued¹⁰. Across much of the rest of Europe, the inclusion of worker directors on company boards is an established and valued part of doing business¹¹.

The WMCA is fortunate that union recognition is prevalent across many major employers and industries across the footprint of the combined authority. Union recognition provides the most effective vehicle for worker voice and to securing improvements to pay, terms and conditions and health and safety. On a practical level, it can also play a vital role in identifying and developing training routes and programmes for workers. The WMCA would be wise to draw on these examples in spreading the message that collective bargaining arrangements is central to securing increased worker voice, productivity and sustainable economic growth in the long term for the region.

Recommendations

The WMCA and LEPs should aim to increase employee and trade union engagement, explaining the benefits that this can bring for productivity.

Employee and trade union engagement should include:

- Firm level - promoting the value of social partnership through collective bargaining and workforce voice in strategic decision-making. This could take the form of establishing greater information and consultation mechanisms with recognised trade unions or through other forms of employee engagement in non-unionised workplaces.

⁸ ETUI, Benchmarking Working Europe 2017 <http://www.etui.org/Publications2/Books/Benchmarking-Working-Europe-2017>

⁹ See Duncan Adams et al, ACAS Research Paper Joint consultative committees under the Information and Consultation of Employees Regulations: A WERS analysis, 2014

¹⁰ See FirstGroup's Annual Reports, including eg p 49 of its 2018 report available at https://www.firstgroupplc.com/~/_media/Files/F/Firstgroup-Plc/AGM/2018/firstgroup-plc-annual-report-2018-final.pdf

¹¹ TUC All Aboard Making worker representation on company boards a reality 2016 <https://www.tuc.org.uk/economic-issues/corporate-governance/workplace-issues/all-aboard-making-worker-representation>

The WMCA and local authorities could work with LEPs to jointly promote this as a core objective of the local industrial strategy as well as using commissioning, procurement and the allocation of specific funding streams to require evidence of effective workforce engagement.

- Sector level - convening sectoral bodies for employers, commissioners and purchasers of services (where appropriate), unions and other key stakeholders to develop joint approaches to boosting productivity, creating great jobs and managing structural and technological change on a sector by sector basis, looking at local labour supply, education and training that enables local people to access the skills required for key sectors, provision of workforce development and training, pay and conditions and career progression. The sectoral bodies should be convened for priority sectors in the region, including a focus on 'foundational industries' such as social care.

Ensure that the creation of great jobs is a core component and key performance indicator of the industrial strategy – looking at both securing high productivity, high pay employment in the region but enhancing employment standards, worker voice, good work and well-being for the large part of the workforce currently employed in foundational sectors of the economy.

Establish governance arrangements for the delivery and monitoring of the industrial strategy that includes trade union representation. For example, establish boards to oversee implementation of the industrial strategy Grand Challenges in the region, bringing a range of stakeholders representing employers, workers, community organisations, service users and others to oversee and scrutinise progress against Grand Challenge objectives in the region.

Appendix 1: Submission by the University and College Union (UCU)

Policies for an Inclusive Economy

A response from the University and College union (UCU) to the West Midlands Industrial Strategy consultation document

We welcome the opportunity to respond to the West Midlands Industrial Strategy (WMIS) consultation document. [1]

Background

UCU supports devolution of skills funding where it is transparent, democratic and improves outcomes for local people in the broadest sense, including positive social and community outcomes.

Our focus in this response is on the claim that the WMIS is a strategy for Inclusive Growth.

Before we address specific issues we comment on the overall context and framing of the document.

'Growth Plus' or an 'Inclusive Economy'?

The Greater Manchester Combined Authority was established before the WMCA and there are useful lessons that we in the West Midlands can draw from its experience. The Inclusive Growth Analysis Unit at Manchester University, which is funded by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation as part of its Cities, Growth and Poverty programme, has been researching the development of the GMCA for several years. In its report Inclusive Growth Opportunities and Challenges for Greater Manchester, published in October 2016, the IGAU points out that there are differing versions of the concept of inclusive growth: [2]

- views on inclusive growth tend to be located on a spectrum from a 'growth plus' position (which emphasises greater efforts to connect people to 'growth as usual'), and an 'inclusive economy' position (which emphasises the need to change the nature of the economy in ways less likely to produce poverty and inequality). (p3)

The following table, adapted from the table on page 4 of the report, summarises the two conceptions of growth.

‘Growth Plus’	‘Inclusive Economy’
This position sees the existing economic model as necessary and/or unproblematic but acknowledges the need to connect more people in to this growth. More growth requires more inclusion.	This position maintains that the economy should serve inclusive, social goals. The current economic model produces inequality so needs to change to achieve greater inclusion.
Focus on connectivity and the supply side of the labour market	Focus on the demand side of the labour market
Pulling up the bottom of the distribution rather than questioning business models that create inequality	Challenging business models that create inequality
Inclusion important because it supports growth	Inclusion important in its own right
Better distribution of future growth rather than of growth that has already occurred	Distribution of existing prosperity not just dependence on future growth

An ‘Inclusive Economy’ approach

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation report *Inclusive growth in the West Midlands: an agenda for the new Mayor* [3] is an example of an ‘inclusive economy’ approach:

...inclusive growth - growth that benefits everyone across the city region. Such an approach would have clear economic, fiscal and social benefits.

Creating more and better jobs and connecting people in poverty to opportunities are at the heart of an inclusive growth agenda.

Attracting, retaining and generating investment to grow the economy is vital for a more prosperous city region. But while growth is necessary, it is not sufficient on its own to develop an economy that works for everyone and where poverty is lower.

...all too often the bottom end of the labour market is overlooked in local economic strategy. For inclusive growth, the quality of jobs created and the skills and capabilities of local residents to take them up is every bit as important as the number of jobs.

A 'whole economy' approach is needed. Alongside the targeting of traditional high growth sectors, activities to raise the productivity and pay in low pay sectors should also be a priority.

The government's Industrial Strategy is based on a 'Growth Plus' model

As the Centre for Local Economic Strategy (CLES) points out in *What Needs To Be Done: The Manifesto For Local Economies* (May 2017), the Conservative government's economic policies exemplify the 'Growth Plus' approach and it is the basis of its devolution policy: [4]

The devolution deals have been framed by austerity and locked into an economic model prescribed by the Treasury. People and places are expected to benefit either through trickle-down of new wealth generated through jobs, or a geographic 'trickle outwards' of wealth from city centres and growth areas. (p8)

The analysis by CLES is borne out by the Government's 'Local Industrial Strategies Policy Prospectus', published in October 2018. [5] The Prospectus makes clear that 'Local Industrial Strategies will be ... long-term, based on clear evidence and aligned to the national Industrial Strategy.' (p4) and that 'Agreeing a Local Industrial Strategy for their area with Government will be a necessary condition for Mayoral Combined Authorities and Local Enterprise Partnerships to draw down any future local growth funding being deployed through them.' (p7).

There is no mention of Inclusive Growth in the Prospectus:

The recently published Strengthened Local Enterprise Partnerships set out that reformed and stronger Local Enterprise Partnerships will adopt a single mission: to promote productivity by delivering Local Industrial Strategies. (p3)

A single-minded focus on productivity will not promote inclusive growth and in fact will tend to widen existing inequalities.

In 2017 the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Inclusive Growth published a collection of paper titled 'The State of the Debate 2017'. The implications of government policy for an inclusive economy are explained by Professor Ruth Lupton, Director of the Inclusive Growth Analysis Unit (IGAU), in her paper 'Inclusive Growth at City Region Level: A Perspective from Greater Manchester', which is based on research with a range of stakeholders. [6]

...central government is in the way. I mean this partly as a point about England's highly centralised governance structure.

But I also mean that specific current policies of central government are getting in the way. Three issues have occurred most commonly in our consultations:

- i) the role of a punitive welfare system in preventing sustained employment;
- ii) cuts to the services which underpin inclusion in the labour market (such as adult and community learning, libraries, Sure Start centres and employment tribunals);
- iii) and cuts to social security which are taking money out of local economies.

The IGAU report concludes that ‘We will not see substantial progress unless central government also understands that social investments, funded through general taxation, underpin economic inclusion, and very likely also underpin greater prosperity and stronger national economic performance.’

The report also concludes that inclusive growth requires a radical change in business behaviour:

‘We have also learned that ‘inclusive growth’ doesn’t resonate very well with businesses or business representative organisations. A key challenge nationally and locally will be to leverage change in business behaviour.’

‘There is a clear danger that stakeholders will sign up to inclusive growth in a ‘motherhood and apple pie’ way and that one or two additional things will get done, with no overall transformational effect.’

Another report from the Inclusive Growth Analysis Unit, ‘Towards Inclusive Growth in Greater Manchester’ (2016), warns that ‘While the development of a more inclusive economy appears to have wide support, it also requires large-scale change and the development of new policies and strategies that have not been part of mainstream urban economic development in recent years.’ [7]

The West Midlands Industrial Strategy consultation document and Inclusive Growth

The points above provide a context and framework within which to assess the West Midlands Industrial Strategy (WMIS) consultation document.

The first point to make is that the 40 page WMIS consultation document contains a page headed ‘Inclusive Growth’ (p24). The recognition of the need for growth to be inclusive is a welcome development, since the concept of inclusion has been largely absent from previous key documents of the WMCA until very recently. For example, one of the foundation documents of the WMCA, the 2016 Strategic Economic Plan, which is still in force, makes no reference at all to inclusive growth or inclusion (including no mention of gender and ethnic inequality). But the WMIS contains no acknowledgement that it represents a departure from previous policy. It contains no critical review and balance-sheet of previous and current policy.

A Growth Plus rather than an Inclusive Economy model

This raises the crucial question: how integral is inclusive growth to the industrial strategy of the WMCA? The WMIS draws together its strategies for growth in a page headed ‘Commitments’:

‘We have agreed ten ambitious but deliverable commitments. These show the kind of West Midlands we will achieve, by working together on connectivity and access to opportunities, on supporting successful supply chains and building on our distinctive competitive advantages.’ (p22)

There is no mention in these ten commitments of inclusion or inclusive growth. For example, there is no Commitment to a Living Wage, to eliminating zero-hours contracts or compulsory self-employment, and no commitment to trade union recognition.

Page 24 is headed 'Inclusive Growth'. It too contains ten 'commitments'. The problem is they are not integrated into the ten preceding 'strategies for growth' commitments, they are presented as an appendage to them and the relationship between them is not made explicit. This exemplifies a Growth Plus rather than an Inclusive Economy model.

How will Inclusive Growth be measured?

The WMCA's principal measures of growth have been Gross Value Added (GVA) and numbers of jobs, rather than inclusive growth. Despite there being a page in the WMIS headed 'Inclusive Growth' it contains no proposed measures of progress towards inclusive growth. The WMIS states 'Metrics by 2030 including: Increased healthy life expectancy, 500,000 Jobs, 215,000 Homes, 20,000 New Businesses' (WMIS p7.) These are not measures of inclusive growth. To be so they would need to specify a narrowing of the gap in healthy life expectancy between the richer and poorer areas within the West Midlands and an increase in the proportion of 'affordable' homes including social housing. And they would also specify an increase in the wealth of the poorest and a reduction in the wealth equality gap.

They would also include issues of gender, ethnicity and dis/ability. The WMIS notes that 'Black and minority ethnic (BAME) employment rates are 15% lower than for white groups. There are similar disparities for those with disabilities...' (p10) but there is no mention of the gender disparities, including in pay. And none of these issues of inequality are mentioned in the page headed 'Inclusive Growth'. This is disappointing and a missed opportunity.

These measures should be elements of a comprehensive set of 'impact assessments to ensure that major strategies and developments reach, and do not further disadvantage, people who are already marginalised.' ('Towards Inclusive Growth in Greater Manchester').

The TUC published a paper in June 2017 called 'Can devolution generate inclusive growth in the West Midlands?' [8]. It refers to the Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce (RSA) Inclusive Growth Commission report 'Making Our Economy Work For Everyone', published in March 2017. [9]

The RSA argued that we need to get much better at measuring growth, by taking into account things like:

- Job quality (e.g security, flexibility and contract types).
- How are skills used, detailed to the firm - and small town - level.
- Living standards (e.g. median household savings at neighbourhood, local and city-region level; health and wellbeing; individuals' sense of agency and belonging).
- Level of enterprise (e.g. rate of new businesses opening up; share of workforce protected by employment rights).

The TUC paper adds that 'a new "Quality GVA" metric should also measure worker voice (e.g. collective bargaining coverage, worker representation on boards).'

Developing a more inclusive economy and connecting more people to economic opportunity

The Inclusive Growth Analysis Unit report 'Towards Inclusive Growth in Greater Manchester' (October 2016) makes a useful distinction between two 'main spheres of activity': 'those concerned with developing an inclusive economy and those concerned with including more people in economic opportunity.'

'The former would include actions to ensure decent pay and working conditions, to develop economic activity in communities which have suffered economic decline, and to ensure equitable employment practices which do not discriminate between ethnic and social groups.

The latter would include strategies to increase knowledge and skills, and to connect people to jobs physically (via transport infrastructure and services) and via employment programmes, advice and guidance and the building of networks. They would also include support services to support and sustain employment, such as childcare and the mechanics of the social security system.' (pp 4-5)

Developing an inclusive economy: a place-based approach

We are pleased to see that the WMIS integrates economic and social policies: 'Taking a place-based approach - integrating investment in specific sites and growth corridors bringing together transport, housing, skills, Public Service Reform and wellbeing investment to drive long-term change.' (p24). The WMIS page headed 'Inclusive Growth' does contain a number of positive proposals for developing a more inclusive economy:

Use our role as the public sector to deliver 'anchor' commitments – through procurement and our social value commitment minimise barriers to bidding for SMEs and new entrants.

Lead by example to promote diversity by implementing the Leadership Commission's recommendations of organisational culture change policies and policies to support individuals in the WMCA and wider public sector.

Embrace the role of social enterprise – to diversify the types of economic activity available to create opportunities and improve wellbeing and productivity for people and communities. (p24)

The IGUA report 'Towards Inclusive Growth in Greater Manchester' makes a related point about promoting different forms of business organisation such as co-operatives, mutual and social enterprises: 'Understanding how different forms of economic growth contribute to inclusion and exploring broader economic strategies including: developing sectors that may be slower or lower growing but create higher quality jobs; and increasing support for local start-ups and small businesses.'

Developing an inclusive economy: a whole system approach from cradle to career

In Manchester the Inclusive Growth Analysis Unit has taken the logic of a place-based approach further. Their 2017 report 'Education and Skills from Cradle to Career: A whole-system approach for Greater Manchester' identifies the following steps to be taken. [10]

- Set out a vision and strategy for education and skills as a whole linked to GM's social as well as economic objectives.
- Develop new structures to bring all aspects from cradle to career into one system.
- Work with partners to develop oversight and coordination of system resources including
 - the type and quality of provision in relation to need, teacher demand and supply, teacher
 - development, and funding.
- Develop analysis and intelligence capacity at the GM level. Develop better measures which
 - capture a wider range of outcomes and enable a focus on transition and progression.
 - Make maximum use of system capacity and move knowledge around, for example by setting up a knowledge-sharing hub, working with the Regional Schools Commissioner to identify schools in need of support, and maximising the contributions of universities.

UCU agrees with this analysis. Too often at a national level there has been a failure to think about how schools, colleges, universities and adult learning services can work together to complement each other and provide clear pathways for learners at all ages and stages. UCU would like to see a 'joined-up' approach, ensuring that all parts of the skills system link as seamlessly as possible. The WMCA could support this by ensuring providers work collaboratively instead of in competition for local resources.

The IGAIU report goes on to call on the Mayor of the GMCA to 'place equity and the reduction of inequalities at the heart of his strategy, and work with partners to:

- Consider how resources could be distributed within the system to focus more effort on the most disadvantaged people, institutions, and places which are the keys to success.
- Support place-based multi-agency approaches to address the "social determinants" of educational underachievement.
- Identify aspects of the current system that contribute to educational inequalities and work out which could be dismantled by local action.
- Draw systematically on research and on local evidence of success in addressing inequalities and make sure this knowledge is spread around the system.
- Advocate for strength-based approaches and those that work closely with families and communities.'

Again UCU supports this analysis. The provision of accessible, local learning opportunities is important in engaging hard-to-reach groups who may be resistant to the idea of attending a college or university. Funding levels must allow providers to develop and adapt provision to meet learner needs in the community. This also means ensuring that local venues where adult learning courses are hosted (e.g. libraries) remain accessible. The WMCA could therefore play an important part in ensuring our physical skills infrastructure at a local level facilitates education for those not engaged with formal learning environments.

Developing an inclusive economy: employment standards

The TUC paper 'Can devolution generate inclusive growth in the West Midlands?' makes a number of proposals which focus on employment standards, especially in the low pay sectors of the West Midlands economy:

The WMCA should focus on upgrading jobs in lower skill, lower value sectors of the region's economy. It should encourage all employers to go beyond the legal minimum on issues like voice at work, fair and decent pay, regular hours, fair treatment and respect, healthy workplaces, and learning and progression.

The WMCA should work with the government to develop industrial bodies charged with driving up pay and conditions in low-paid sectors.

The mayor should use his procurement powers to lead from the front in setting employment standards.

This is a massive task to undertake, but the Midlands can learn from the Welsh Government's 'Fair Work Nation' programme, and kick things off by establishing a 'Commission on great jobs'.

With unions and employers, the Commission should be tasked with enhancing procurement policy and work out how to promote great jobs across the region.

UCU would add to this list the importance of good careers Information and Guidance (IAG) which helps to connect local people with opportunities. Particularly given the large young population in the West Midlands, developing a high quality IAG network, accessible to all, should be a priority for the WMIS.

The TUC's proposals relate to those in 'Towards Inclusive Growth in Greater Manchester', which include:

actions to ensure decent pay and working conditions, to develop economic activity in communities which have suffered economic decline, and to ensure equitable employment practices which do not discriminate between ethnic and social groups.

Increasing the number of employers paying the Living Wage, particularly those operating in low paying sectors and large employers, partly by promoting the Living Wage campaign but also by establishing and promoting standards of decent employment across the city-region, building on experience in certain local authorities.

The TUC paper stresses the need not only to focus on low pay often low skill jobs but to protect high-productivity jobs:

The TUC is keen to work with the WMCA and partners in the region to explore how to create the best possible investment environment for high productivity sectors, like automotive. This is a key priority given the prospect of a 'hard Brexit', which could have severe impacts on the automotive supply chain and FDI.

The mayor and WMCA should work in partnership with automotive employers and unions in the region to make the strongest possible case for Single Market access.

The Greater Manchester Combined Authority is currently developing a 'Greater Manchester Employer Charter'. It's an idea which the WMCA should adopt in the WMIS.

The Inclusive Growth Analysis Unit's response to the 'Greater Manchester Employer Charter' consultation (March 2018) contains a series of proposals which UCU would recommend to the WMCA. [11]

What commitments should the charter contain?

- *Offering fair terms and conditions of employment: to include fair pay for all workers (including those in a company's supply chain); a review of promotion criteria and decisions to ensure following best practice and equalities duties;*

- *Seeks to create pathways into work for under-represented and/or disadvantaged groups: employers commit to recruit from under-represented groups through targeted recruitment activities, and review current recruitment practices and decisions, particularly in relation to ethnicity, disability, and gender; employers encouraged to offer more well-paid jobs on a flexible, part-time basis.*

... It has already been suggested that the charter may include commitments to address the gender pay gap, tackle the use of exploitative zero hour contracts, promote ethical business practices, and ensure that we offer fair pay to apprentices.

Some principles for designing a GM employment charter

- *Prioritise clear and meaningful commitments and includes resource to engage and work with employers to secure change;*

- *Contextualise employer achievements: set the bar high but recognise where progress is being made;*

- *Build a movement around the charter: the idea would be to bring together employers, employee representatives, campaigners and others on equal terms to review the charter. They could also act as a resource, helping to engage others;*

- *Bring employers together to share learning and ideas on how to change employment practices. For example, the Green City Business Consortium aims to offer opportunities for business-to-business learning on environmental issues. This might be replicated for employment practices, perhaps with coordination by the Chamber of Commerce;*

- *Set out what the charter is aiming to achieve and commit to regular and transparent review. The aim should be to understand the extent and level of engagement and how many workers have been affected across Greater Manchester. The Living Wage Foundation, for example, collects data on the number of employees that have benefited from employer accreditation.*

Developing an inclusive economy: procurement through 'anchor' institutions

The WMIS page on Inclusive Growth proposes to 'Use our role as the public sector to deliver 'anchor' commitments – through procurement and our social value commitment minimise barriers to bidding for SMEs and new entrants.' (p24). This is supported by UCU and echoes a strategy being pursued successfully by the GMCA:

Maximising the local employment impact of the activities of the city's 'anchor institutions' by

increasing local procurement and developing the capacity of smaller local businesses to supply their goods and services. ('Towards Inclusive Growth in Greater Manchester')

A similar approach is being adopted by Birmingham City Council which UCU supports and would encourage in other parts of the WMCA area. The commitment in the 2018 Manifesto has been followed by a 'Local Wealth Building Summit 2018' held on 17 July 2018 and the publication of Local Wealth Building in Birmingham & Beyond: A New Economic Mainstream, a report by the Centre for Local Economic Strategies. [12].

Developing an inclusive economy: gender and procurement

David Etherington and Martin Jones in their report 'Devolution, Austerity and Inclusive Growth in Greater Manchester: Assessing Impacts And Developing Alternatives' [13] describe how 'Public investment in social infrastructure makes economic sense, as it not only generates employment, but also contributes to gender equality and human development.' They give the example of the care industry:

Reducing the employment gap is not the only gender inequality that could be improved through investment in care. Wages and working conditions in the care industry (including Health and Social Care which is identified as a key growth sector by the GMCA) would have to improve considerably if such an investment were to be successful, given existing retention and recruitment problems in the industry. Achieving high quality care is a gender issue in its own right, since women predominate among one significant section of care recipients, the elderly.

The 2017 report 'Social care as a local economic solution for the West Midlands', by the New Economics Foundation together with Localise West Midlands, argues that local authorities could use their procurement strategies to shift funding for social care from large often national profit-driven social care providers to small local businesses and social enterprises, which would

provide more personalised care and also better working conditions for their largely female workforce. [14]

Connecting more people to economic opportunity

The principal approach of the WMCA to address this issue has been to focus on the need for a more skilled workforce and for better skills and qualifications for those wanting to access the labour market. Page 10 of the WMIS, headed 'People, skills and employment', summarises the problem. Here are two extracts:

We have record levels of employment. But our social mobility, wage growth and access to opportunities lag behind overall growth and vary widely across the West Midlands. We have concentrations of low employment and high levels of unemployment and deprivation. Too many of our communities don't enjoy the access to jobs, skills and support for enterprise that they should, and face entrenched structural issues creating a confluence of poor economic, social and health outcomes.

The West Midlands as a whole also performs below the national average on GCSE attainment, adult attainment, employment and unemployment. 86,036 people need to be upskilled to close the skills gap. On basic skills, 11.4% of the WMCA area had no qualifications in 2017 compared to 8% nationally, and there is a 'missing middle' of technical skills at Levels 3 and 4.

UCU believes that a highly qualified, well-supported and fairly remunerated workforce must be underpinned by a quality education system. To ensure education staff can perform to their best, we need to tackle systemic issues including low pay, high workloads and insecure employment practices in education as well as in the wider regional economy.

For example, staff pay in both the further and higher education sectors has fallen against inflation for several years, while many staff report that their workloads are becoming increasingly unsustainable. This is making it harder for institutions to compete with industry in recruiting and retaining staff, and has real implications for the future sustainability of the education workforce. In the FE sector alone over 15,000 teaching staff have been lost nationally since 2009, and UCU estimates that it would cost around £700m to restore capacity in the sector.

There is also a problem with widespread insecure precarious employment contracts in both the FE & HE sectors. Poor working conditions for staff mean poor learning conditions for students. As stated previously we believe the WMCA could help tackle insecure working conditions in the sector through specifications in its procurement and commissioning.

High-quality technical skills education needs to be led by dual professionals who are both educational and occupational experts. The Commission on Adult Vocational Teaching and Learning (CAVTL) highlighted the importance of the 'two-way street' in ensuring proper collaboration between employers and educators to ensure that those delivering technical education stay at the cutting edge of their field. There needs to be investment to ensure the

workforce is able to access professional development opportunities and stay abreast of industry developments which inform high-quality skills learning.

The WMIS page headed 'People, skills and employment' has a number of positive proposals:

bespoke solutions for individuals, for example through the 'Thrive into Work' programme – a new employment support service for people with a mental health and/or physical health condition in primary and community care.

Targeted action to reduce youth unemployment – a fresh new approach to working with young people through the Transition to Work scheme to create a sustainable pipeline of young talent in the region.

Ensure that skills and employability support for residents are aligned with business support and that it is designed in a flexible manner that can address evolving needs of employers.

Nurture children & young people as our social capital of the future - developing new ways of tackling social problems that have become entrenched in the region and which block the potential of so many of our communities.

Expand radical prevention programmes - includes work with NHS such as the MCP EXPLAIN model in Dudley or Wolverhampton's health integration.

The document offers two case studies of positive programmes in addition to the 'Thrive into Work' project: Black Country City Deal Working Together pilot [15] and the Inclusive Economy Partnership - Transition to Work (p25). [16]

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation report 'Inclusive growth in the West Midlands: an agenda for the new Mayor' (2017) makes two useful proposals:

Connect economic development and poverty reduction – where economic development leads to new jobs or local anchor institutions (the biggest local spenders and employers such as local authorities, universities, the NHS) are recruiting staff, action should be taken to ensure local people with barriers to the labour market benefit. (p13)

Individual Placement and Support schemes (where rapid entry into a mainstream job is complemented by on-the-job training and ongoing support to sustain employment) for people with learning difficulties and severe and enduring mental health difficulties. (p18)

The IGUA's report 'Towards Inclusive Growth in Greater Manchester' points out that a major cause of exclusion of women from the economy is the lack of affordable high-quality childcare. It also stresses the importance of 'the contribution of flexible working to reducing non-employment and under-employment and seeking mechanisms to promote this.'

Connecting more people to economic opportunity: the problem of low skill low pay jobs

Jonathan Payne has recently been carrying out research in the West Midlands focusing on local actors' understandings of the 'skills problem' and approaches to addressing it. He provides a critical analysis which is absent from the WMIS report. It is worth quoting in some detail. [17]

The main finding of his report 'Devolution, Inclusive Growth and Local Skills Strategies' (2018) is that 'local skills strategies are struggling to move beyond a narrow supply-driven agenda and develop a more integrated approach which fronts up to the challenges presented by low skill, low wage jobs.'

Equipping people with education and training can help some individuals to get better work but it cannot magic away low-skill, low-pay, insecure and dead-end jobs which still have to be done by someone.

The danger is that local skills strategies focus simply on boosting qualification stocks, addressing skills gaps and shortages, and equipping young people and the unemployed with the 'right' skills and attitudes for work, against the backdrop of massively reduced funding.

As the OECD/ILO have also argued, if local skills strategies are to contribute to national productivity and inclusive growth they need to go beyond traditional skills supply measures and address employer demand and utilisation. They call for a major re-think of the 'skills problem' which would involve integrating skills into broader initiatives around economic development and business improvement, and working with employers to address issues of product market strategy, work organisation and job design, and the way people are managed. A key challenge is firms bedded down on the 'low road', competing on the basis of price, with low wages and low skill job design.

This raises interesting questions for local skills strategies in England at a time when Government is asking Combined Authorities and LEAs to bring forward 'local industrial strategies'. How far will local growth strategies address low paying sectors? Will we see skills integrated with economic development and business improvement initiatives in ways that do not neglect the lower end of the labour market? Do local actors have the resources, capacity and expertise available to do any of this and can they think differently about the 'skills problem'? How much progress can be made locally in terms of raising employer demand for, and use of, skills in the context of a weakly regulated labour market and shareholder-driven economy?

Connecting more people to economic opportunity: the funding crisis

The TUC paper 'Can devolution generate inclusive growth in the West Midlands?' points out that 'The West Midlands devolution agreement gives the mayor powers over adult skills. However, this is in the context of substantial cuts to Further Education since 2010, which the WMCA should call on the government to reverse.' It recommends that the WMCA should:

Analyse the potential impacts of the loss of the EU European Social Fund, and consider making the case to government for post-Brexit replacement funding.

Explore opportunities to redistribute savings recouped by the Department for Education through the Apprenticeship Levy scheme towards adult education.

Connecting more people to economic opportunity: Apprenticeships

David Etherington and Martin Jones (2017) in their report 'Devolution, Austerity and Inclusive Growth in Greater Manchester: Assessing Impacts and Developing Alternatives' advocate an Apprenticeship Charter:

*Apprenticeships should be designed with respect to standards set down in an Apprenticeship Charter relating to pay, work quality and mentoring. Also there needs to be clear routes and pathways to accessing apprenticeships via schools and FE system. We recommend that a work and skills plan should be drawn up with the trade unions as well as employers and funding requirements based on both a demand and needs based assessment. The possibility of pooling levy funding exists and establishing a regional skills fund needs to be explored which can fund social investment projects such as Unionlearn workplace skills and Job-Rotation.... (p10)
[See Note 1]*

Connecting more people to economic opportunity: in-work progression

The WMIS makes a positive proposal:

Help workers to move up the value chain and access more employment opportunities through in-work progression ... particularly for employers and residents working in tourism, retail and other historically lower paying sectors, where technological change will open up new, higher skilled roles. This will require focus through business support and skills provision. (p24)

The TUC paper 'Can devolution generate inclusive growth in the West Midlands?' makes a number of proposals:

The WMCA should focus on upgrading jobs in lower skill, lower value sectors of the region's economy.

The WMCA should work closely with the Talent Retention Scheme to strengthen its understanding of the potential skills shortages on the horizon, and identify opportunities for partnership. It should also work with unions and employers to consider which other industries in the region could benefit from a similar scheme.

The WMCA can also use its devolved budget to:

- *Create personal learning accounts and enable low income adults, the unemployed and others to access fully funded retraining courses.*
- *Provide an entitlement to face-to-face careers guidance and a new right to a mid-life career review for workers at the age of 50.*

Finally, the government-sponsored Union Learning Fund could support skills and learning relating to major infrastructure projects in the region such as HS2. The WMCA should explore opportunities to support union ULF bids on projects like these in 2017-18 and beyond.

The WMCA should work closely with the Talent Retention Scheme to strengthen its understanding of the potential skills shortages on the horizon, and identify opportunities for partnership. It should also work with unions and employers consider which other industries in the region could benefit from a similar scheme. [18]

UCU supports all these proposals.

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