

# North Education & Skills Charter







“The North West Business Leadership Team, Institute of Directors and the CBI have come together as business leadership organisations to produce this Education and Skills Charter.

“We intend this Charter to stimulate new discussions with key partners, locally, regionally and nationally as to how business can better support, influence and resource this vital agenda as well as give a clear indication as to what ‘good’ looks like in the world of education and skills from a business perspective.”

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sandy Lindsay'.

**Sandy Lindsay MBE**  
Chair, IoD and NWBLT Skills Groups  
Chair, Tangerine and The Juice Academy

@SandyLindsay



# Education & Skills Charter

At a time of significant economic uncertainty, at least one thing is clear: if we are to deliver improved economic prosperity we must first focus upon delivering an improved skills base across the North West. It has never been more important for business leaders to step up to play their part. And it has never been more important for us to be clear about our concerns and aspirations in this vital area.

This Charter is intended to be a clear, high level, and strategic articulation of the future workforce requirements of business leaders in our region. We recognise that there are many excellent initiatives under way and this Charter does not seek to examine them. Rather, we have sought to suggest how business can be better facilitated to support the education and skills system.

Importantly, it is a contribution intended to enable local, regional, and national government to better appreciate what skills and capabilities are most important to business.

Businesses large and small are keen to become more involved in the education and skills system. Many are already involved, we will encourage more to do so. However, if a significant step change is to be made in business involvement, changes must be made to how we work.

We are calling for four key guiding principles to be adopted:

<b>Sharing</b>	There are some fantastic examples of how to achieve great results across the North West – we must find a way to ensure these are shared better, hopefully leading to...
<b>Scale</b>	Small isolated projects, however excellent, will not make a long term impact. We are calling for initiatives to be of an appropriate scale to really make a difference.
<b>Signposting</b>	Clear information must be accessible for businesses which wish to become involved. Be that to employ an apprentice, become a school governor, or train themselves, we need a one stop shop to provide that crucial information.
<b>System</b>	We need a system that is flexible (including funding allocations) responsive and can provide the long term stability required for improvements to become imbedded. We must support and enable practitioners to have the time necessary to support the rounded development of young people.

**Critical Success Factors – we believe the following are critical to the region's economic success:**

- Careers inspiration – ensuring young people are exposed to relevant and aspirational careers advice to inspire them to choose the core subjects in school, college and – where appropriate – university, which support the region's core growth sectors
- Digital literacy – at every stage of life, but most particularly for the success of the thriving tech and digital sector in our region.



# What Business Needs: Defining the Northern Star

Employers do not expect applicants to be in possession of completely up to date technical skills. Those skills can be taught in work. Employers do, however, need young people in particular to be in possession of a series of ‘personality’ attributes and ‘soft skills’ that will enable them to flourish and further develop in the workplace.

## Personality

**Resilient**, independent, positive, enthusiastic and socially confident

**Ambitious** and driven with a commitment to continuing to learn, be organised and take pride in professionalism and the personal integrity needed to ‘do the right thing’

**Agile**, flexible and curious, with the imagination to explore and adapt  
Confident communicators able to collaborate in teams

## Key Skills

**Digitally literate** with the ability to data mine and synthesise information

**Creative** and capable of critical thinking to effectively problem solve and design solutions

**A self-starter** with business acumen and the ability to see the big picture

**Core literacy, numeracy and oracy skills**

It is essential that the education and skills system is designed to encourage and enhance these key skills and personality attributes if young people are to be successful in an increasingly disruptive and competitive age. **Business can assist and support this work and stands ready to do so.**



Integrity Social Confidence  
Timeliness Flexibility Imagination  
Respect Independence Curiosity Collaboration  
Team Working Perspective Self Confidence  
Resilience  
Communication  
Organisation Agility  
Doing The Right Thing  
Commitment To Continuous Learning  
Good Moral Compass

The key skills  
employers need

Self Starter  
Digital Creative  
Data Mining

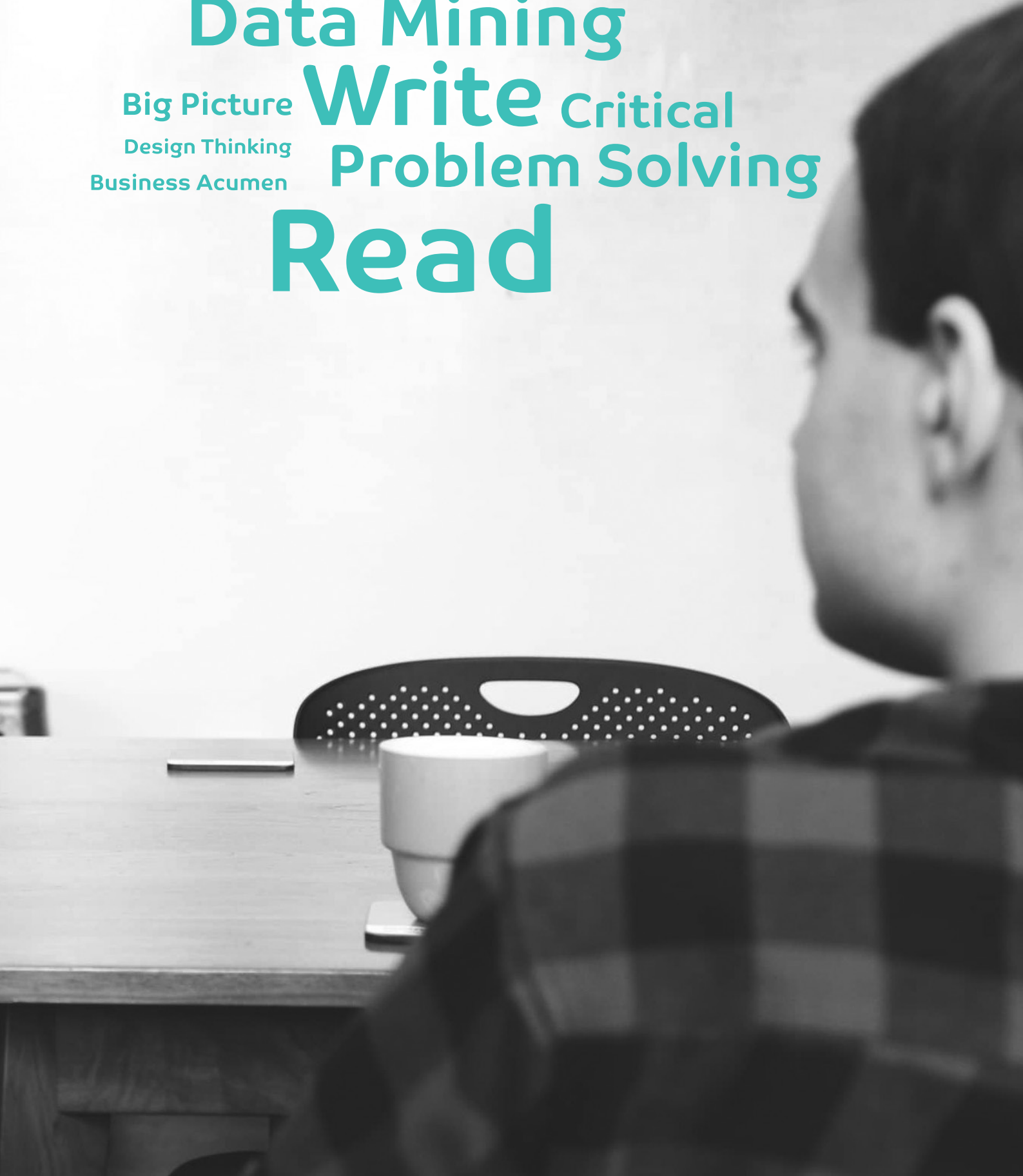
Big Picture

Design Thinking

Business Acumen

Write Critical  
Problem Solving

Read





# Schools: Building the Right Foundations

We both recognise and congratulate school leaders, teachers and young people on the progress that has been made to improve standards – great strides have been made. Many schools already enrich their curriculum with activities that help to shape young people to become ‘northern stars’. However, this crucial work is too often dependent upon the good will of individual teaching staff and/or their leaders.

Many businesses are keen to engage with schools, however anecdotal evidence suggests that a number of barriers exist. Notably, insufficient space is being made available in congested timetables for activity that is not ‘measured’ or accredited. We recognise the pressures on teachers already, and therefore do not seek to add to this. Rather, we wish to provide coordinated support for schools that enriches current activity.

## **Business can make greater contributions in the following ways:**

- As in business, strong and visionary leadership in schools is key. We would welcome the opportunity to support ‘innovative’ school leaders and assist in their work
- We would like to see more businesses partnering with schools. In particular, business could assist those who are subject to Ofsted recovery plans, or which do not have existing strong links. More business leaders should be encouraged to become school governors, particularly within deprived neighbourhoods
- Business specialists should be facilitated to teach core lessons, as is the case with the STEM Ambassador’s programme, not adding to the curriculum but enriching it
- Businesses should provide more, quality work experience opportunities. We note that while 66% of businesses believe it is important for future employees to have undertaken work experience, only 33% offer it
- As mentioned in critical success factors above, the quality and relevance of careers advice in schools is frequently cited by businesses as a significant problem. Good advice provided to children, teachers and parents should encourage an interest in employment in key growth sectors for the region for the future. In particular, we would like to see improved promotion of apprenticeships as a valuable and often more viable career path than university. Businesses would welcome the opportunity to engage in the planning of this activity.

# Further & Higher Education in a Disruptive Age

Graduate and FE courses that are relevant to the local economy will encourage retention of our Northern Stars in the region. Team-working between business and our local colleges and universities is essential and we wish to see more and deeper engagement taking place.

The devolution of skills budgets provides a valuable opportunity, but only if advantage is taken of the opportunity to adopt a more responsive and flexible approach.

This task is becoming ever more critical given the uncertainty of BREXIT, an ageing population and the digital revolution. These present both opportunities and risks in terms of our skills base. Business plans are subject to significantly less certainty, meaning that a clear picture of future demand is difficult to predict.

Significant and rapid change resulting from technological innovation means it is a practical impossibility for courses that are taught in a traditional manner to keep pace. Business does not require graduates and FE to be familiar with the most up to date technology, but rather to have the competencies in an appropriate subject to learn while in work and be open to offers of partner working to provide this vital resource

The new Teaching Excellence Framework has the potential to reward institutions that invest in the employability of graduates. This is an excellent opportunity for business to work in close partnership with the sector to deliver a step change in how we work together.

- The new Degree Apprenticeships are a welcome innovation that will require high quality practitioners to have an involvement in the sector. Businesses should be facilitated to teach on courses, providing both information regarding the latest advances in innovation and timely careers advice on current opportunities
- We wish to see more of a focus upon alternative ways of 'training' for our young people, such as 'conversion' training, to ensure graduates have the skills required to effectively compete in an age of ever increasing disruptive innovation. For example, graduate training programmes which have the potential to rapidly enable businesses to reskill graduates who do not have the most relevant qualifications for work
- Shorter timescales for business-specific research would be better suited to emerging disruptive technologies. A more agile and flexible system would facilitate closer working relationships between industry and academia
- The perception of apprenticeships needs to be tackled across the entire system from young people and their parents to careers advisors and teachers. If we do not robustly address the status of apprenticeships we will deny young people significant employment opportunities and the potential gains made from the Apprenticeship levy will be diminished.

# Skills for Life

Over a third of companies reporting a literacy and numeracy skills gap amongst their workforce say that they have lost business or orders to competitors as a result. It is clear that if the North West is to address the productivity challenge, business needs to invest further in relevant work education and training. For example, it is estimated that if skills levels in the advanced manufacturing sector were raised just to the same level as the national profile the economic benefit would be £1.33 billion over the next decade.

Providing training and development opportunities is a significant factor in both recruitment and retention of staff. We know that training and development

are the most important considerations when looking for a new job, after basic salary. Investment in training will also enable more employers to support a living wage policy by linking pay increases directly to the acquisition of skills and technical qualifications.

Businesses in the region which provide training for staff trained 70% of their workforce, compared with an average of 63% across the rest of the UK. When businesses do train their staff, they train a lot of them, however the percentage that do is no higher than the national average. The challenge is obvious – how do we ensure more businesses recognise the importance of a proactive approach to workforce development?

- We must encourage senior managers to invest in training themselves, given the implications of poor management practice upon productivity. We must also be clear that investment in middle management reduces recruitment costs
- Employee engagement is crucial. We must promote the message that investment in continued training will enable individuals to negotiate the career ‘lattice’ rather than ‘ladder’ that is rapidly becoming the reality of the modern pattern of employment
- There is no single solution that will encourage more businesses to invest and plan properly for their future skills needs. Larger businesses can, and will, play our part in working with their supply chains to encourage better practice. It is crucial that this is not simply argued from a perspective of efficiency – but rather that the goal is to add value to the entire supply chain system
- We could and should explore how our educational institutions could involve themselves in this activity in order to provide an additional revenue stream to offset possible Brexit implications, as well as build better links with employers.

# Moving Forward Together

Over the coming months we will be seeking to engage with key partners from across the North West and beyond to explore how real change can be delivered together. In turn we will encourage a conversation to take place across the business community to deliver increased support and involvement across the region in this vital agenda.

**We would like to thank the following for their help in preparing this Charter.**

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WE DON'T  
LIVE STILL

WE DON'T  
LIVE CLEAN

WARRORS  
DID YOU GET UP  
AT THE WEEKEND?  
OFFICE ASSAULT CASE  
TRAINING DAY  
SUNSHINE  
SUPERHERO  
DON'T LIVE CLEAN



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