



# Employability and skills integration

Institute of Employability Professionals

6 May 2022



Institute of  
Employability  
Professionals



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# 1 Executive summary

IEP, Nous and the Good Employability Company are investigating employability and skills integration as a major opportunity to improve sector sustainability.

Over the past year, the Institute for Employability Professionals (IEP) and Nous Group (Nous) have worked with employability leaders across a series of workshops exploring what is required to put the employability sector on a sustainable footing, beyond the traditional boom and bust cycle of government funding. The result was a report, [\*Building Sustainable Employability Services\*](#), released in October 2021.

One of the big ideas that came out of this collaboration was a desire to see closer integration of employability and skills. **Sector leaders identified this as the single idea that would have the greatest impact on the long-term sustainability of the sector, were it to be successfully implemented.**

Following the boom and bust series, IEP and Nous have partnered with the Good Employability Company to examine the potential for closer integration of employability and skills provision in the UK and to provide recommendations for how this might be accomplished. The initial research findings from this partnership provided context, framing and provocation for a workshop with sector experts in February 2022 to gather evidence and test ideas.

The case for closer integration is underpinned by the idea that employability is an overlapping aim of both employment and skills support sectors – to help people move into paid work and to increase the stock of transferrable work-focussed skills which contribute to human capital. This shared purpose implies that through closer cooperation, both markets could do more: through services that more comprehensively address the needs of individuals but also for businesses, wider society and for the UK economy.

Examples of employability and skills integration already exist both in the UK and internationally. These include cooperation in frontline operations such as co-located services, signposting, and local service pathway development; shared performance data to help jobseekers access high quality skills provision; and governance arrangements such as local skills and employment advisory panels and bilateral cooperation agreements between employers and training providers to improve the relevance of services.

Providers, sector bodies and Governments interested in integration can look to these case studies for inspiration, as many of these ideas could be scaled up, transplanted, or adapted to work in different operating environments. Further suggestions to scale the level of integration include building closer ties with careers services as another sector with complementary aims; using Information, Advice and Guidance services as a relatively low effort starting point for closer working relationships at a local service ecosystem level; and joining up advocacy and communication to improve dialogue between the sectors and present a stronger voice to government.

This report synthesises the outputs from both the initial research and workshop conducted by IEP, Nous and the Good Employability Company. The following pages include a high-level overview of the current employability and skills landscape, examples of existing sector integration, the rationale for further integration, and actions suggested by sector leaders that could be taken forwards at a local, sector and Government level.

## 2 Employability and skills landscape

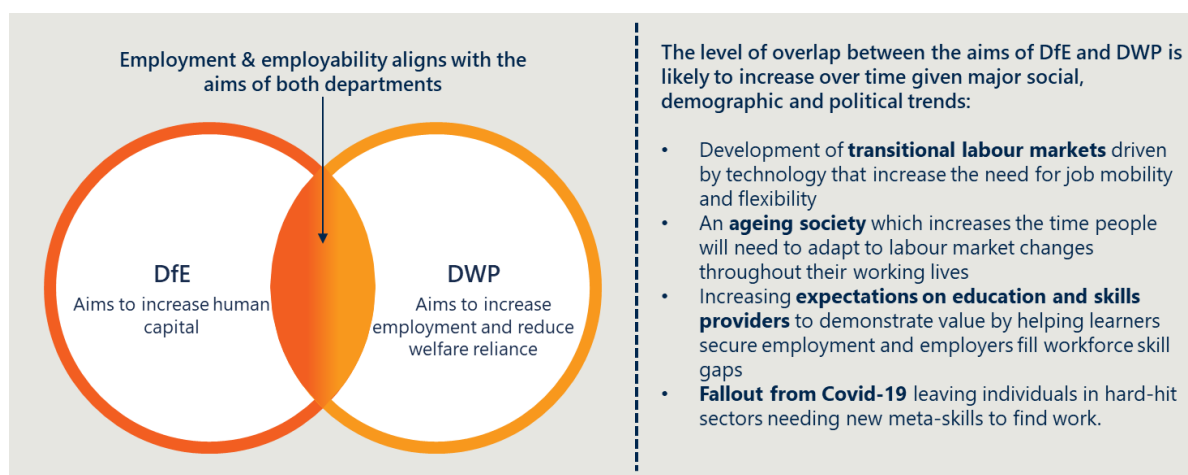
The current system of employability and skills provision is complex. Despite significant structural differences in funding and providers, there are notable overlaps between the current employability and skills landscapes, particularly in the target user groups of both sectors. Table 1 provides a summary of some of the key differences and areas of overlap in both sectors.

Table 1 | Employability and further education and skills sector features and areas of overlap

	Employability sector	Areas of overlap	Further Education and Skills sector
<b>Funding streams</b>	<p>Predominantly contract-based funding through the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) with a smaller Department for Education (DfE) element. Other funders include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• European Social Fund</li> <li>• Big Lottery</li> <li>• Local funding (e.g., Skills for Londoners Capital Fund)</li> </ul>	<p>Common funding streams:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education and Skills Funding Agency</li> <li>• Trusts</li> </ul>	<p>Predominantly block-funded through the Department for Education (DfE). Funding sources include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employer levy</li> </ul>
<b>Providers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jobcentre Plus</li> <li>• Some independent Careers Services providers may also offer employability services</li> <li>• Local Authority commissioned provision</li> </ul>	<p>Common providers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local Authorities</li> <li>• Private providers</li> <li>• Charities and community organisations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General FE Colleges</li> <li>• National Specialist Colleges</li> <li>• Specialist Designated Colleges</li> <li>• Independent training providers</li> <li>• Adult and community learning</li> </ul>
<b>Delivery models</b>	<p>Centred on personal guidance in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CV building and interview prep</li> <li>• Personal development and resilience</li> <li>• Job brokerage</li> <li>• Employment subsidies</li> <li>• Signposting to wider service ecosystem provision</li> </ul>	<p>Common delivery model features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Service users access support according to need via a 'keyworker'</li> </ul>	<p>Delivery models are course-based, e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Classroom based learning</li> <li>• Online learning</li> <li>• Work based learning</li> <li>• Apprenticeships and traineeships</li> </ul>
<b>Target user groups</b>	<p>Jobseekers – people out of work and looking for immediate employment, and also people at risk of redundancy.</p>	<p>Common target cohorts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Young people (NEETs)</li> <li>• Low skilled (&lt;Level 2)</li> <li>• Older workers</li> <li>• Return to work</li> <li>• People with disabilities</li> <li>• Disadvantaged workers (e.g., ex-offenders)</li> </ul>	<p>Individuals looking for training to support a longer-term career or career change.</p>
<b>Target outcomes</b>	<p>Outcomes are employment focussed, e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Progression into the workforce</li> <li>• Time in employment (e.g., 6-month milestone)</li> <li>• Quality of work (e.g., Living Wage)</li> </ul>	<p>Common aims:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employability (see next page for more detail)</li> </ul>	<p>Outcomes are delivery focussed, e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learner success rate (attendance, completion)</li> <li>• Learner destination</li> <li>• Learner satisfaction</li> </ul>

DfE and DWP have different but complementary purposes. The strategic objectives pursued by both departments currently create limits on the level of integration that can be pursued through commissioning, reinforced by separate budgets and accountability systems. The UK and other Anglosphere countries have also historically centred employment support services around benefit provision and focused on getting people back in to work as quickly as possible. However, countries in Europe provide a precedent for public employment systems with a greater focus on building human capital, which better lend themselves to employment support and skills service integration. Employability has the potential to be an area of mutual alignment where the UK government seeks to both increase human capital and reduce welfare reliance, an overlap which is likely to become more prominent due to current trends, illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1 | Employability as a shared departmental aim of DWP and DfE



### 3 Existing sector interfaces

Existing sector interfaces in the UK and internationally show that integration of skills and employability can be achieved and indicate different ways of doing this.<sup>1</sup>

The UK (and particularly English) employability system is a largely transactional system focused on getting people off government benefits and into employment (i.e., a job) as quickly as possible. Pockets of cooperation exist with the skills system, for example the provision of employment and training services for young people (19-24) through Jobcentre Plus and work experience and career advice at VET providers.

Internationally, there is more evidence of skills and employability integration. For example, in some countries of the EU the Public Employment Services (PES) is an ecosystem of employment services that enables PES and their partners to function as a unit, integrating different public sector employability, skills providers and other stakeholders to deliver personalised support that meets individual circumstances.

In both the UK and internationally there are examples of integration driven through local advisory panels that work with employers, training providers and other stakeholders to determine tailored solutions to local employment and skills needs. In the UK this has been implemented by some devolved authorities (e.g., Greater Manchester and Tees Valley Combined Authorities) while in the US and Canada, these interfaces form an integral part of the national employability and skills policy ecosystem.

Initial research by Nous and the Good Employability Company produced a shortlist of seven different types of sector interfaces backed up by local and international case studies:

1. **Co-locating delivery services** - See case studies 1. Jobcentre Plus; 2. MyGo Suffolk
2. **Local advisory panels** - See case studies 3. Manchester W&S; 8. WDB US; 9. LMA Canada
3. **Flexible funding arrangements** - See case studies 3. Manchester W&S; 7. ESP Wales
4. **Shared performance monitoring** - See case study 4. Denmark

<sup>1</sup> Sources: Eichorst et al 2015; Zimmermann 2013; PES Network Secretariat 2021; Committee on Work and Pensions, 2002; Bennett et al. 2018; Williams et al. 2018; NatCen Social Research 2017; European Commission 2017, 2018, 2019



5. **Screening to tailor employability and skills training** - See case study 5. Belgium
6. **Bilateral cooperation** - See case study 6. Luxembourg
7. **Work placements** - See case study 7. ESP Wales

Table 2, Table 3, and Table 4 provide further detail on each of these case studies.

Table 2 | Existing sector interfaces: case studies 1-3<sup>2</sup>

CASE STUDY 1   JOBCENTRE PLUS SECTOR-BASED ACADEMIES  Integrating benefits delivery with an employability and skills focus	CASE STUDY 2   MYGO SUFFOLK Integrating delivery of employability and skills programmes to tackle youth unemployment	CASE STUDY 3   MANCHESTER COMBINED AUTHORITY, WORK & SKILLS Devolution provides authorities with the flexibility to respond to local needs
✓ Demonstrates that integrating services in a single destination increases individual engagement with different services.	✓ Demonstrates that effective engagement and support of young people requires a range of partnerships with organisations in contact with the target group.	✓ Demonstrates devolution and advisory panels that integrate employability and skills stakeholders can implement effective programs.
<p><b>CONTEXT / CHALLENGE</b></p> <p>Previously, there was not a work focus to benefit delivery: people could claim benefit without simultaneously considering the opportunities and assistance to get in to work.</p> <p><b>APPROACH</b></p> <p>Sector-based work academies aim to help the unemployed gain the relevant skills and work experience required to work in a specific sector.</p> <p>A sector-based work academy usually consists of three elements:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Sector-specific pre-employment training of up to 30 hours a week;</li> <li>2. A work experience placement with an employer;</li> <li>3. A guaranteed job interview linked to a genuine vacancy.</li> </ol> <p><b>OUTCOME</b></p> <p>An assessment of young people participating in JCP work academies found that taking part reduces the time 19 to 24 years old Jobseeker Allowance claimants spend on benefits and increases the time they spend in employment. On average, participants spent 29 days less on benefit relative to non-participants.</p>	<p><b>CONTEXT / CHALLENGE</b></p> <p>MyGo was part of a commitment by the area to deliver a 'youth guarantee', to offer work experience, training, education or employment for young people within three months of leaving education or becoming unemployed.</p> <p><b>APPROACH</b></p> <p>Key elements include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Co-location of Jobcentre Plus services with additional employment support</li> <li>• Working collaboratively with partners to facilitate access to a wide range of support options.</li> <li>• Offering a range of different pathways towards the labour market, tailored to young people</li> <li>• Providing an improved environment for the delivery of employment services to young people.</li> </ul> <p><b>OUTCOME</b></p> <p>MyGo was successful in delivering a single service that extended beyond the JCP claimant offer with two fifths of participants not claiming benefit at the point of referral. One-to-one support from a MyGo coach was usually the most valuable aspect of the service for participants.</p>	<p><b>CONTEXT / CHALLENGE</b></p> <p>High unemployment has been a problem in the region for decades. In 2019, the unemployment rate was 4.8% compared to the UK average of 3.9%. Improving technical skills is a priority as 10% of the population have no qualifications, 2% higher than the national figure.</p> <p><b>APPROACH</b></p> <p>Skills Advisory Panels (SAPs) bring together employers, skills providers and key local stakeholders to better understand and resolve skills mismatches at a local level. Devolved funding enables authorities to trial schemes, such as Working Well in which local services worked with agencies to deliver individual support by targeting specific barriers to employment. The programme combined physical and mental health support and advice on drug and alcohol problems, skills, education and housing.</p> <p><b>OUTCOME</b></p> <p>Devolution has enabled authorities to implement impactful employment strategies that target the local areas needs. Since its inception in 2014, Working Well programmes have achieved employment outcomes for over 6,500 Greater Manchester residents (November 2020).</p>

<sup>2</sup> Sources: Riley et al. 2011 (JobCentre Plus); Bennett et al. 2018 (MyGo); Greater Manchester Employment & Skills Advisory Panel 2021 (Manchester Combined Authority)



Table 3 | Existing sector interfaces: case studies 4-6<sup>3</sup>

CASE STUDY 4   SYSTEMATIC TRAINEESHIP ASSESSMENT, DENMARK	CASE STUDY 5   INTEGRATION THROUGH WORK, BELGIUM	CASE STUDY 6   BILATERAL COOPERATION AGREEMENTS WITH EMPLOYERS, LUXEMBOURG
<b>Benchmarking traineeships to support counsellors and employers</b>	<b>Providing tailored services to support jobseekers with migration backgrounds</b>	<b>Bilateral agreements between the PES and employers</b>
✓ Demonstrates that good VET – employment coordination requires shared performance monitoring	✓ Demonstrates how integrated services can be tailored to jobseeker needs	✓ Demonstrates that employer engagement can produce good outcomes from VET inputs
<b>CONTEXT / CHALLENGE</b> The lack of transparency on traineeships and their contribution to the integration of jobseekers into the labour market prompted desire for a monitoring of practice. Additionally, several large Danish companies asked for a tool to measure their efforts.	<b>CONTEXT / CHALLENGE</b> The low employment rate among people with a migration background and non-native speakers was the main driver of the practice. The slow and ineffective process to integrating this group into the labour market prompted change.	<b>CONTEXT / CHALLENGE</b> The Luxembourg PES reform in 2013 included developing its relations with employers, aimed at increasing the number of registered jobseekers who are successfully integrated into the labour market. Before the reform, the Luxembourg PES had a negative reputation in the labour market. Employers did not regard the PES as an important actor as its focus was primarily on jobseekers. Most employers would therefore decline candidates put forward by the PES for job vacancies.
<b>APPROACH</b> A benchmarking tool on traineeships collects information on how many traineeships within a given period were offered by an employer and how many of the internships have ended in employment. This information helps counsellors to direct jobseekers to promising internships, and helps the employers to get a better understanding of the effect of their efforts. The tool helps to compare the employment outcomes of traineeships in different branches, occupations and employers.	<b>APPROACH</b> A first screening of the person's distance from the labour market is carried out (if possible with the support of an employer). Jobseekers are then assigned to one of four trajectories, and different PES services, including language classes and practical job orientation classes are provided accordingly. Those with weaker language skills follow a linear pathway. Those with strong language and employment skills instead benefit from an integrated pathway with simultaneous action and quick mediation.	<b>APPROACH</b> PES developed bilateral cooperation agreements with employers and employer federations. Training is developed in conjunction with employers and employer federations. The PES has an easy and accessible system to finance on-the-job-training for jobseekers for up to six months. These commit employers to invite pre-selected jobseekers for an interview and give feedback on their employability.
<b>OUTCOME</b> STAR has had positive feedback from both counsellors and employers. They both find the tool helpful and they have contributed with suggestions to its further development.	<b>OUTCOME</b> In both 2015 and 2016 around 90% of jobseekers taking part in the Integration Through Work practice attended a guidance programme and/or mediation to work. Results from 2016 showed that: 22.8% found a job after 6 months; 37.1% after one year; and 47.7% after two years.	<b>OUTCOME</b> There is nearly a 100% hiring rate of PES registrants that finish the training. An employer satisfaction survey conducted as part of the partnership showed positive results: 84% of employers indicated they will work with PES again and have recommended their services to others.

Table 4 | Existing sector interfaces: case studies 7-9<sup>4</sup>

CASE STUDY 7   EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS PROGRAM, WALES	CASE STUDY 8   WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARDS, UNITED STATES	CASE STUDY 9   LABOUR MARKET AGREEMENT, CANADA
<b>Delivering quality work placements and training builds employability skills</b>	<b>Involving employers in one-stop services</b>	<b>Engaging with stakeholders to deliver localised plans</b>
✓ Demonstrates that good quality work placement opportunities is critical to achieving employment outcomes	✓ Demonstrates that integrating one-stop employability, skills centres with employers is important for generating results.	✓ Demonstrates that localised plans and funding can deliver strong employment results for vulnerable clients most in need of employment services
<b>CONTEXT / CHALLENGE</b> ESP is a voluntary programme that targets unemployed adults with a reasonable chance of being ready for employment within six months.	<b>CONTEXT / CHALLENGE</b> Workforce Development Boards were originally created in 1998. The focus is to consolidate, coordinate, and improve employment, training, literacy, and vocational rehabilitation program.	<b>CONTEXT / CHALLENGE</b> Prior to the introduction of the LMAs, provinces served predominantly work-ready clients. Those most in need of employment services – including immigrants, the disabled and youth were not being adequately served. Funding restrictions prevented longer-term interventions like training from being offered. Labour market programs in Canada consisted of a tangled set of arrangements.
<b>APPROACH</b> Training providers offered participants work preparation training, essential skills if required, and a work placement or employer-specific training. Following initial meetings with the provider and an essential skills level assessment participants were provided with an employability plan detailing their tailored training support and employment. The Programme provides all participants with a work placement or training opportunity to provide participants with workplace experience with a local employer, voluntary or community organisation.	<b>APPROACH</b> State and local WDBs serve as connectors between the U.S. Department of Labor and local Job Centers that deliver services to workers and employers, to develop regional strategic plans and funding priorities, oversee policy and coordinate services through a network of 3,000 One-Stop Career Centers, implementing initiatives for potential workers and employers in one location. More than half of each WDB's members must come from the business community. WDBs are required to have representation from local community colleges and training providers, as well as elected officials and workforce program leaders.	<b>APPROACH</b> Provinces outlined labour market circumstances in the annual LMA plan, and demonstrated that it had consulted with stakeholders such as employers, unions, community organizations and postsecondary institutions. LMA plans provided a detailed overview of the provincial context, interventions planned and the clients to be served, in order to determine funding allocation and use.
<b>OUTCOME</b> Participants noted they had developed soft skills and made contacts which will support them to gain employment in the future. 27% reported a positive employment or training outcome. The rate of employment outcomes is higher when linked to good quality work placements.	<b>OUTCOME</b> The makeup of the WDP ensures that current skill needs of local businesses are communicated to training programs. States are not only meeting federal mandates, but also adapting initiatives and outreach to best meet the economic development demands in their state.	<b>OUTCOME</b> High level participation levels in all provinces from under-represented group confirmed that the LMA funding had been successful in reaching defined target groups. 86% were employed after the LMA intervention, compared to 44% at the start of their participation. About 25 percent achieved a gain in employment that they attributed to their participation in LMA programming.

Sector leaders suggested additional and complementary examples of existing employability and skills interfaces based on their own experiences. These included:

<sup>3</sup> Sources: European Commission 2019 (Denmark); European Commission 2017 (Belgium); European Commission 2018 (Luxembourg)

<sup>4</sup> Sources: Harries and Lewis 2019 (ESP Wales); CareerOneStop 2021 (WDB US); Wood & Hayes 2016 (LMA Canada)

- **Providers drawing on multiple funding streams** – Providers of the Work Programme, Work & Health Programme and most recently Kickstart have all drawn on funding from the Adult Education Budget (AEB) to improve programme outcomes for participants. For example, Work Programme providers used AEB funding to purchase training for participants which in turn created better quality candidates for job vacancies. In some instances, sector-based academies have been able to negotiate aligned employment and skills outcomes to further streamline this process, whereas ESF programmes in London already combine outcomes in their contracts.
- **One stop shop provision for young people** – Careers hubs for young people aged 18-24 provide an example of integrated provision where employability guidance, sector-based academies, employer levy engagement, careers advice and money management are all available under a single umbrella service. In Wales, the devolved government has also implemented a personal learning account system where young people can draw on free courses and professional qualifications to develop their skills and help progress or change careers.
- **Government playing a bridging role between sectors** – In some areas Government has started to embed employment-ready skills such as communication, team working and interpersonal skills into Higher Education and Further Education by design to improve employability outcomes. Local authorities have also played a direct 'bridging' role between unemployed people and employers where skills gaps have been too great for employers to consider candidates, stepping in to provide short-term training in return for guaranteed interviews.

## 4 Case for further integration

There is a strong sense that the current structural disconnect of employability and skills holds back both markets from delivering maximum impact – to individuals, businesses, the UK economy, and society as a whole. Providers in both sectors believe that properly integrating support for training and employment with the skills and recruitment needs of employers in a sustained way, would be a positive step forward.

### Four key reasons to increase the integration and coordination of employability and skills services:

1. **The potential to deliver a more comprehensive service:** Integrated funding and objectives could help ease jobseekers' access to the many divergent employability and training services, to build a more comprehensive service for jobseekers. This is particularly pertinent given that the overlap of purpose outlined is set to increase over coming years:
  - Appropriate training is important to developing informed jobseekers and is particularly important in building long-term employability. The OECD reports that in an increasingly competitive labour market, training will continue to be an even more important component of employability in future.
  - Soft skills (including communication, presentation, and organisation), which employability providers excel in teaching, are increasingly important to employers. Both employability skills and occupational skills are required for jobs to be attained in a competitive labour market.
  - Engagement with employers is critical in building employability. A young person with four or more meaningful encounters with an employer is 86% less likely to be unemployed or NEET.
2. **The overlap of purpose:** Employability and skills sectors have complementary purposes; skills training prepares people for a vocation and employability services seek the goal of working in that vocation. This overlap of purpose is a self-evident motivation for integration and highlights the risk of duplicated public spending in the current system. It also highlights the potential for additional integration with other complementary services such as Career Development, which helps people identify a vocation and the pathways to achieve it.
3. **Build a more sustainable sector:** A more integrated active labour market policy would provide a more stable marketplace in which private and voluntary sector providers could operate. Reducing barriers between provider types and creating a more integrated sector where activity can flex between employability and skills focuses as needs change would reduce the impact of the 'boom and bust' cycle. This could also have advantages for professionals working in both sectors if they have the appropriate skillsets to easily transfer between different types of provision.
4. **Wider social gains:** Good skills training provides both vocation and education, raising abilities and aspirations. Employability services support informed life-choices and the enactment of those choices. These are complementary goals; they may be harder to measure than job outcomes, but they are no less important. The focus of the literature on jobs and wages does little justice to these human goods, and we would do well to consider them in our discussion, particularly given the overall objective of providing a better service for the jobseeker.

## 5 Ideas to scale the level of integration

In the recommendations of the 2021 *Building Sustainable Employability Services* report, IEP and Nous documented initial ideas coming from sector leaders to achieve a greater level of employability and skills integration. These recommendations predominantly emphasised the role of government in driving closer integration through programme design.

### Initial ideas from the IEP x Nous boom and bust report:

- Government and commissioners adopting common employment-focused outcomes across both sectors.
- Building on the success of the 'work and health' model of collaboration between DWP and the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) to establish shared employability and skills pilots and programmes between DWP and the Department for Education (DfE).
- Aligning contract lengths, recognising that skills contracts are often shorter than in employability.
- Commissioners establishing funded 'challenges' for transformative integration on-the-ground.

Sector leaders added to these ideas in the recent 2022 workshop, recommending that departments implement employer-led commissioning that focusses on the needs of specific industries and occupations rather than on generalist requirements. Specialist organisations could then be more effectively used to supplement the work of prime employability providers to meet academic, technical, and foundational skills needs. This could also lead to training providers producing shorter, more targeted skills interventions to better meet employer requirements.

Whilst joint outcomes targets and integrated commissioning is clearly a long-term aim that would shift the dial on sector integration, sector leaders also suggested several other avenues to pursue that may be more feasible in the short to medium term given the structural realities of the two sectors.

**Careers services as a third pillar to create an integrated skills system** – Sector leaders recommend that careers services, including the National Careers Service (NCS) could be a natural third partner alongside employability and skills provision, helping to keep and move individuals across sustainable employment opportunities over the course of their careers. A recognition that careers often incorporate horizontal moves could also encourage the further education and training sector to shift its focus on traditional linear progression to new pathways that better reflect people's experience of work. Expanding one-stop shop Careers Hubs models beyond the 18-24 cohort would be a positive step towards this kind of integration, which is contemplated in the Local Government Association's Work Local vision for an integrated and devolved employment and skills service. It also resonates with the ambitions of the Career Development Policy Group for a lifelong Career Guidance Guarantee in England<sup>5</sup>. Higher Education is another example where employability, skills and career development could be brought closer together to provide more comprehensive support for students.

**Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) services present an opportunity to pilot closer partnership working** – Sector leaders identified IAG services as a good starting point for quickly building closer ties between existing employability and skills provision across a local area, given this is primarily about increasing the knowledge and awareness of frontline staff rather than implementing more formalised partnership arrangements. The GMCA social prescribing model can be cited as an example of existing good practice in this area. Local services mapping and data sharing agreements were noted as two key enablers of this recommendation: the former to improve the accuracy, effectiveness and comprehensiveness of signposting, and the latter to ensure outcomes achieved by service users are built on rather than duplicated.

**Joined up advocacy and communication can improve dialogue between the sectors and present a stronger voice to government** – Sector leaders see closer joined up working between sector representative bodies like IEP and ERSA with their equivalents in Further Education and Skills as a catalyst for making the organisational and interpersonal connections necessary for collaboration between the sectors. Sector representative bodies can use their platform and networks to share examples of good practice (e.g., providers being innovative in using existing funding streams to integrate services) and to bring organisations together around shared areas of interest (e.g.,

<sup>5</sup> The Career Development Institute, CDPG; <https://www.thecdin.net/Career-Development-Policy-Group>

how to improve system-wide outcomes for people with disabilities). This could act as a foundation for a more joined-up approach to government, with employability, skills and perhaps careers services advocating for integrated funding pools, commissioning, and multi-system target outcomes with one voice. Sector leaders rightly identified closer working between representative bodies in each sector (e.g., IEP and ERSA for employability) as a necessary precursor to these actions.

**Training and development can help improve transferability for employability and skills professionals** - Sector leaders were also asked to consider what the implications of these ideas could be for the workforce of both sectors. One of the opportunities for closer integration is greater flexibility and job security for skilled professionals who can transfer easily between sectors in response to commissioning changes. Mapping the skillsets required for both employability and further education and skills delivery would be a useful first step to identify existing areas of overlap as well as gaps which could be bridged through targeted training. Greater alignment of skillsets in this way could lead to mutually recognised or joint qualifications to help facilitate this portability.

## 6 In summary

Employability sector leaders are keen to see further integration with the skills sector. There are sufficient examples in the UK let alone in Europe and further afield that demonstrate the potential value of this integration. However, it will require government to better plan and coordinate its policy and service commissioning to realise this aspiration at scale. At the same time, there is much that providers at a local level and industry bodies at a national level can do.

This report is hopefully the start of further conversations and ultimately action by the sector. We look forward to seeing how the sector moves this agenda forward in the ensuing months and years.

# Appendix A      References

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## Appendix B      List of contributing sector leaders

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David Morgan MIEP, CEO, Career Development Institute  
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Mark Owen FIEP, CEO, Standguide  
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