

Policy context: Commission into diversity and inclusion in digital tech (previously called STEM Commission)

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Hackney has become a prime location for companies involved in digital technology, with fast-growing employment opportunities.
- 1.2 However, Hackney has high poverty levels, inequality and deprivation. The borough faces persistent disparities in skills and labour market outcomes across different population groups (e.g. by gender, ethnicity, disability status) with a combination of education, skills, health, social, childcare and racism barriers affecting outcomes.
- 1.3 Hackney Council's core objective is to create a fairer, more inclusive local economy, whereby everyone in Hackney - irrespective of background - has the opportunity to thrive and prosper in a borough that local people feel is theirs to shape. The Council is doing what it can to help the economy recover from the pandemic, including providing employment, learning, skills support, and brokerage to help local people secure quality job and economic opportunities.

2. POLICY CONTEXT

- 2.1 The Labour Manifesto 2018 sets out commitments to improve training and create jobs and opportunities. Over the longer term, the Council seeks to "Reduce existing disadvantages experienced by residents in the labour market". To this end, a longer-term goal of the Council is to:

"Work with education providers and the business community to close The STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) skills gap".
- 2.2 The Commission aligns with Hackney's economic and social policies, including priority three of the Inclusive Economy Strategy, which seeks to:

"Connect residents to high-quality employment support and opportunities to learn new skills, get good quality, well-paid work and progress their career throughout their working life."
- 2.3 To take this forward, the Commission will refer to the Inclusive Economic objectives to improve resident access and STEM skills to enhance opportunities in the labour market. For example:

"Increase the number and diversify the range of pathways into good quality employment, offering fair pay".

"Ensure these pathways are accessible to residents experiencing economic barriers and disadvantages".

"Maximise opportunities arising from the devolution of the Adult Skills Budget to London, ensuring that these opportunities are inclusive and meet our skills gaps and the needs of local people".

- 2.4 Further, the Commission will refer to the Council's Adult Learning in Hackney draft strategy, which outlines the Council's approach to ensuring adult learning provision reflects the Council's Inclusive Economy strategic priorities, including:

"A focus on meeting the needs of key sectors and delivering a provision based on local evidence".

- 2.5 The Council's Community Strategy for 2018-2028 sets out a shared vision to respond to residents from all backgrounds and income groups regarding their concerns about some community groups' exclusion from the borough's growing prosperity. The vision aligns with this Commission, particularly the following key aspirations:

"A borough where everyone can enjoy a good quality of life and the whole community can benefit from growth".

"A borough where residents and local businesses fulfil their potential, and everyone enjoys the benefits of increased local prosperity and contributes to community life".

- 2.6 Older Residents

The Council's Inclusive Economy Strategy and the Ageing Well strategy aims to address the specific challenges older residents face in the labour market. For example, we know that some residents in their 50s struggle to get support to re-train in their current job or to change careers and find fulfilling and appropriately remunerated work. The Council, working with partners, is committed to engaging and supporting older residents to re-train and reskill, providing pathways and stepping stones into high-quality employment, for example, via work placements or traineeship programmes. The Commission will act by following these aims.

2.7 Younger Residents

Hackney's Young Futures Commission listened to young people aged 10-25 years and shared their recommendations to shape the available opportunities. The Commission found that young people typically have high aspirations but may face several barriers in realising them. For example, young people reported a lack of available jobs, apprenticeships, work experience, or training and support. Recommendations to address these challenges include:

- Having a clear local offer for young people starting their careers and marketing effectively ensures young people know what support, services, and opportunities are available in their local area.
- Engaging employers to work with youth organisations and infrastructure organisations creates various work experience placements and support young people to take up formal employment opportunities, including apprenticeships.

2.8 Young Black Men

The “Improving Outcomes for Young Black Men” programme is an ambitious, long term project to tackle inequalities for black boys and young black men in Hackney. The underlying drivers of disparities in education, employment and opportunity were identified as low-level education and qualifications, discrimination and stereotyping, whether careers advice and employment support meet the aspirations of young black men, lack of access to professional networks, limited exposure to the world of work, the nature of employment support, and barriers to career progression. Recommendations to address these challenges include:

- Holding annual sessions to look at employment and skills careers advice and inclusive employment
- Joining up existing inclusive employment initiatives