**Industrial Strategy Consultation: March 2017**

**Coordinated response from the D2N2 *Social Inclusion and Equalities Advisory Group***

**Overarching comments on the Strategy:**

In discussion and subsequent feedback on the Industrial Strategy the following key points were highlighted and agreed:

* There is widely-held concern that the despite the current rhetoric around the need to move towards an economy that ‘works for everyone’ the proposed strategy lists structures and mechanisms but provides very little reference to people and benefit and how this will be managed. It is the specific view of the group that in order to achieve an inclusive economic model these two factors must be considered in parallel.
* There was an additional concern that despite best intentions, national policy is undermining local aims. A number of examples were raised including:
  + Apprenticeships – not accessible to / suitable for young people in supported accommodation or reliant on benefits as a result of complex backgrounds and lack of stable home support. Housing and other benefits cannot be claimed as an apprentice regardless of personal circumstances and low level of wage being offered. (Similar applies to college courses / further education which are judged as hindering ‘ability to work’)
  + Advanced learner loans - not all level 3 to 6 qualifications are eligible for advanced learner loans which can at times undermine learner or potential learner attempts to develop higher skills when they cannot afford to self-fund qualifications or do not have employer financial support. For example, the level 5 teacher training 'Diploma in Education and Training' which has not been eligible for advanced learner loans in 16/17 or in 17/18 as below. Earlier this year additional qualifications which could help to reduce the higher skills gap have also been removed from the eligible catalogue (ie they are no longer eligible for loans). Some of these may be funded by higher education providers under HE student loans but these are not open to all providers only approved HE institutions and some are not funded through either loan route. The system is not joined up.
  + Careers advice and guidance – there is a lack of coherent IAG for young people in schools and in particular advice which directly relates to local growth and employment opportunities. As such it becomes difficult for the skills system to build a labour supply chain that meets local needs once choices have already been made and pursued. Quality careers service is vital for the sustainability and growth of local business and should be addressed with substantial local input.
* The reasons underpinning low UK productivity need to be further investigated. If low ‘productivity’ is as a result of business holding onto skills and expertise during economic dips then this should be considered as a positive commitment to long term skills and employment. Business trying to retain staff despite not trading at full capacity, so that they have the staff in place when business improves, need to be prioritised for support to recover.
* Overall the consultation is, by nature, a high level strategy but has very little clarity around local nuances and implementation. Locally we would hope to see a strong role for LEPs and a continued commitment to devolution that extends beyond the large city regions.

**Responses to specific consultation questions:**

Q2 Are the ten pillars suggested the right ones to tackle low productivity and unbalanced growth? If not, which areas are missing?

Q8 How can we best support the next generation of research leaders and entrepreneurs?

Lots of projects have already shown success in growing entrepreneurialism. However, approaches are usually ad-hoc and not core to the educational offer. A greater emphasis on Business Studies in school would help backed up by real experience and action. Examples include the Studio Schools model and Social Action Projects / Starter for £10 etc.

There is also a need for more social entrepreneurs to fill the gaps created by public spending gaps. Support for this is low and further diminishing.

Q14 How can we enable and encourage people to retrain and upskill throughout their working lives, particularly in places where industries are changing or declining? Are there particular sectors where this could be appropriate?

Not sure if there are any levers for this locally. Nationally (or influence employers locally if we can) we could encourage / legislate for companies to be incentivised for community volunteering. Not for ‘shed painting’ activity, but skilled roles like Trustees / Governors and allow people to take training related to these roles. People gain interest / knowledge in areas they would never have an opportunity too.

Q34 Do you agree the principles set out above are the right ones? If not what is missing?

There is almost no mention regarding PEOPLE. Growth is encouraged…but how is this expected to trickle down? Extensive research by NPC and CLES show again and again that the trickle-down economic model does not work. We need to rethink economic approaches in order to address the polarisation of benefit taking place. Key actions will need to include:

* Reviewing the use of all public spend at local level;
* Evaluating WHO will benefit from infrastructure investment;
* Balancing the impact of growth against life-essentials such as housing cost and availability;
* Improving the quality, skills development opportunities and progression within lower value / high employment sectors.
* Improving careers advice and guidance for young people and connecting local job opportunities with skills supply and guidance services

Q36 Recognising the need for local initiative and leadership, how should we best work with local areas to create and strengthen key local institutions?

It is important to encourage participation generally – VCS / community organisations are best placed to enable this. For example, Youth Groups having GENUINE voice and engagement of young people and therefore a mandated power to influence, but also offer practical support to individuals such as training alongside; ensuring they can continue to build and sustain that engagement for the long term and contribute practically to local community sustainability. This model can equally be applied to Health / Older People etc. By working with and though local organisations it is possible to give disadvantaged people real power and influence. Support them to understand the issues and they will respond.

Q37 What are the most important institutions which we need to upgrade or support to back growth in particular areas?

Social entrepreneurs in local communities.

Community Anchor organisations who can facilitate the flow of skills, labour market and employability support – connecting people to local opportunities.

**Additional information relating to this response**

The role of D2N2 *Social Inclusion and Equalities Advisory Group* is to

The group met on the 2nd March 2017 to discuss the proposed Industrial Strategy and to shape a response to this consultation. This response was coordinated by the D2N2 Active Engagement Officer and has been further circulated for additional comments. Membership of the D2N2 SIEAG (and therefore contributors to this response) includes:

Bassetlaw CVS

Campaign for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE)

Communities Inc.

Community Action Derby

Enable

Framework

Groundwork Greater Nottingham

Nottingham Community and Voluntary Service

Nottinghamshire Community Foundation

One East Midlands

Rural Action Derbyshire

Rural Community Action Nottinghamshire

The Prince’s Trust

YMCA Derbyshire

This response has been further shared with advisory members to the SIEAG from the 4 upper tier local authorities:

Derby City Council

Derbyshire County Council

Nottingham City Council

Nottinghamshire County Council