

Angela Noon
Chair of the Skills and Productivity Board
CFO of Royal Mail

Rt Hon Nadim Zahawi MP
Secretary of State, Department for Education
Sanctuary Buildings
Great Smith Street
Westminster
London
SW1P 3BT

28th March 2022

Dear Secretary of State Zahawi,

Since my last letter the Board has continued to carry out invaluable research and is now ready to release its findings and analysis relating to the three questions the board was originally asked to prioritise by your predecessor.¹

The Board will release nine publications, alongside the launch of the Unit for Future Skills, that represent the culmination of its research over the past year.

In all, the publications cover two main areas:

1. **Skills matching.** This includes new analysis showing skills that appear in shortage, and a piece covering the data and evidential gaps that limit our understanding of mismatches, providing a steer for where the UFS should focus (note, we shared this report with you on 3 February).
2. **Skills, productivity and place.** This includes four reports each discussing different aspects of the relationship between these factors. Two are discussion pieces raising key policy and institutional considerations, and the third is a new piece of analysis, explaining the extent to which people move between different areas in pursuit of better employment prospects. There is also an overview report covering these three papers.

Post-publication the Board intend to hold two engagement events around our findings with relevant government departments and Employer Representative Bodies (ERBs) – with the purpose of further developing and disseminating its

¹ 1. Which areas of the economy face the most significant skills mismatches or present growing areas of skills need?
2. Can the board identify the changing skills needs of several priority areas within the economy over the next 5-10 years?
3. How can skills and the skills system promote productivity growth in areas of the country that are poorer performing economically?

work and identifying ways that DfE and others can build on and take it forward.

As you know the board will be dissolved at the end of April. The Board and I would like to thank you for the opportunity to be a part of the SPB and to play a part in the future direction of education and skills data policy in this country. Going forward, we hope for a strong and productive relationship with the Unit and officials across the DfE.

The Board is confident that together the work we have done will go on to influence and shape work agendas across Government, specifically in the case of the new Unit.

The Board's work towards the goal of developing reliable evidence on skills supply and demand has highlighted that there are significant limitations to our current and future understanding of skills matching and the causes and drivers of matching problems. We therefore strongly support your aim for the UFS to provide information and data to Government and other audiences to support better matching of training and education to the opportunities within the labour market.

However, the Board wishes to emphasise that education and skills data and analysis should retain a strong link to productivity and that this is something that the Unit should keep in focus as it grows and evolves. Only by doing this will it be able to have the greatest impact.

Yours sincerely,

Angela Noon

Chair of the Skills and Productivity Board, on behalf of the members of the Skills and Productivity Board

Arun Advani

Claire Crawford

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