

## LEARNING, SKILLS AND EMPLOYABILITY

### Communities 1<sup>st</sup> - What We Stand For Policy Statement (5)

#### Introduction

Communities 1st, alongside our member Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) organisations, recognises the critical skills gaps within our communities, affecting various demographics, especially the younger generation and those within the charity sector. These gaps, spanning fundamental academic knowledge to essential soft skills and digital literacy, significantly impact our collective ability to foster personal and professional growth. Systemic barriers like financial, societal, and logistical challenges impede an inclusive learning environment. Our vision advocates for a society where individuals have the necessary opportunities and resources for skill development, enabling fulfilling lives.

#### Bridging the Gap: Addressing Skills Shortages

Significant skill gaps have been identified in both hard and soft skills across various demographics, notably among the younger generation and within the charity sector itself. These gaps range from a lack of fundamental knowledge in basic subjects to a shortfall in crucial soft skills and digital literacy. This skills mismatch is exacerbated by limited access to quality community-based education and training, hindering personal and professional growth and, by extension, the overall health of our communities. The current skills landscape significantly impacts our ability to serve effectively, with challenges in securing funding, advertising our services, and filling essential roles due to skill shortages.

#### Our Pledge

As Communities 1<sup>st</sup>, and our member organisations, we champion the cause of lifelong learning, recognising its importance in empowering individuals and communities alike:

- Engage with local communities to understand their needs, developing inclusive and diverse educational programmes that bridge skills gaps.
- Strengthen partnerships with local businesses, educational institutions, and groups, sharing resources and expertise to enhance skills development.
- Advocate for policies that make learning accessible to everyone, pushing for lifelong learning support and eliminating educational barriers.

#### Our Ask of Decision-Makers and Influencers

We call upon our politicians, senior leaders, and officers within governments, local councils, the NHS, and other public sector bodies to commit to our cause. We ask that they:

1. Push for local bodies and schools to work closely with VCFSEs, identifying and filling the gaps in community skills together, planning programs that meet everyone's needs.
2. Allocate specific funds to VCFSEs for creating and offering diverse educational programs, including online and local community learning.
3. Facilitate relationships and collaborations between VCFSEs, local companies, and schools to open up job opportunities for those who've completed training programs.
4. Enhance language skills and cultural integration for non-native speakers through dedicated ESOL programmes and community activities, encouraging wider community involvement.