



VET 2050

Blog post

Exploring Place Based Perspectives on High Quality VET in a High-Quality VET System

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VET2050 aims to develop a long-term, ambitious vision for a high-quality vocational education and training (VET) system in England by 2050; a system capable of supporting the Youth Futures Foundation's 'north star' goal of leading the OECD in youth participation in education and employment. As part of this vision setting exercise, VET2050 is convening a series of thematic workshops that examine different dimensions of quality from various stakeholder perspectives. An upcoming workshop will focus explicitly on place-based perspectives to explore how geography, local economies and community contexts shape what high-quality vocational pathways look like for young people across England.

To ground these discussions, VET2050 will host an event in Sunderland and draw on experiences from the North East alongside reflections on how place shapes VET systems across England. Despite long-standing issues, the region is marked by substantial innovation.

This makes the North East an ideal space to explore not only how places differ, but how they build resilience in a VET system faced with frequent structural and funding changes.

The regional perspective allows to consider how rurality and urbanity shape access to training and employment, with geography and the distribution of economic opportunities influencing the routes which are realistically available to learners. This is particularly visible in the NE where some former mining towns and certain urban neighbourhoods experiences of isolation and poor links to opportunity. The VET2050 workshop will provide a structured space for experts to reflect on how local specificity should inform national VET systems and policy – so that there is a nationally coherent system that is genuinely responsive to place.

Why place-based perspectives matter

As discussed at a launch event and highlighted in the [VET2050 Scoping Paper](#), there are several interrelated challenges shaped by geography. This includes uneven provider and workforce capacity, misalignment between provision and local labour market needs, inequality in access and outcomes. Taking a place-based focus to consider what quality can mean in England's VET system will help us understand how national-level issues are experienced and navigated differently across the country. Place-based approaches also allow for meaningful discussion of the broad networks of employers, providers, local authorities, community organisations and residents – all of whom influence young people's opportunities.

Local labour demand, transport availability, employer density, and local resources influence what opportunities exist for young people, and if they can access them. For many, where you live determines what training routes are available and what jobs they can realistically progress into. Ensuring that the VET system works for all young people requires grappling with local conditions which enable or constrain participation.

A place-based approach will allow us to explore questions of governance within VET systems: where decisions should be made, how responsibilities should be shared between local, regional and national actors, and how to balance local responsiveness with national coherence.

Questions guiding the workshop

- What works when VET delivery and coordination are viewed from a place-based perspective?
- Which practices or institutional structures could be scaled up or down to support high-quality provision which is adapted to local needs?
- What forms of coordination, information-sharing and foresight are needed to ensure that provision aligns with learner aspirations and employer needs?

- How can places not only develop skills locally but retain talent and ensure access to good quality jobs?
- How do places like the North East maintain continuity and innovation amid frequent policy and funding changes within VET?
- What is not working to deliver high quality VET?

Connecting evidence to policy and practice

The session will bring together a diverse group of local policy experts and practitioners. This will enable understanding how place shapes VET opportunities and how national and local actors can work to ensure high quality provision. The workshop is designed not to evaluate current initiatives but to look ahead, considering what is needed for a future VET system if it is to deliver equitable, locally relevant opportunities for young people.

Insights from the pace-based workshop will play an important role in the co-creation of the VET2050 vision. It will enable us to identify place-sensitive markers of quality, explore ideas to reduce geographic inequalities related to accessing training and understand the institutional capacity needed to bridge local and national systems.

Invitation to Engage

While participation in the workshop is limited to ensure meaningful opportunities for participation among those in the room, we welcome input from anyone through the project website. TO learn more about the project, read the full scoping paper, or see more about this and other workshops, please visit the project website.

Be sure to take the opportunity to share your input, by letting the project team know what you think is more significant as we work to craft a vision for a high-quality VET system for England.

 [Share your input](#)

To stay up to date about project activities and have an opportunity to participate in future workshops, please join the mailing list.

 [Join the VET2050 mailing list](#)

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