

Creating inclusive and sustainable growth and development: the contribution of Yorkshire Universities

September 2024

Context

The Labour Government is committed to delivering [five key Missions: Growth; NHS; Clean Energy; Safer Streets; and Opportunity](#). In relation to *Growth* and *Opportunity*, there is uneven geography of wealth and prosperity in the UK – a legacy of entrenched spatial and social inequalities.

In England, a sub-national architecture of devolution is taking root as a model of civic leadership, led by Mayors and Mayoral Combined Authorities (MCAs), and the Government is planning to expand devolution by introducing a [new English Devolution Bill](#). By June 2025, there should be four MCAs, all with elected Mayors, in Yorkshire – covering Hull and East Yorkshire, South Yorkshire, West Yorkshire, and York and North Yorkshire.

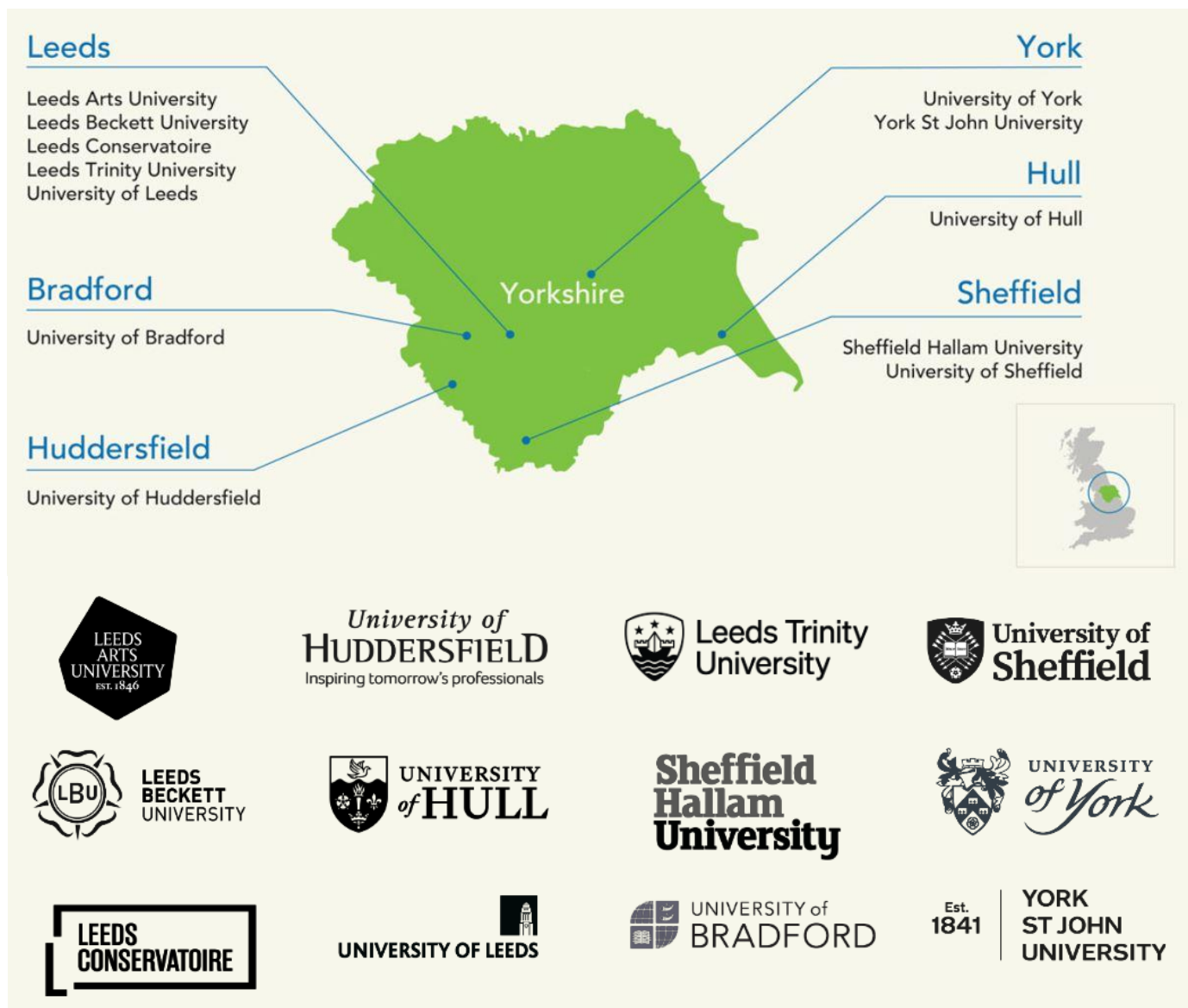
Chapter 3 of the new [Universities UK \(UUK\) Higher Education and Research Blueprint](#) recognises the crucial role and impact of partnerships, such as Yorkshire Universities, in forging collaborations between universities in the regions, and between the higher education sector and local, regional, and national government, and business and local communities. Yorkshire Universities has a successful track record in supporting local and regional growth and development.

This briefing builds on, and complements, the UUK Blueprint to illustrate how Yorkshire Universities is in a strong position to contribute towards the Government's five Missions.

Yorkshire Universities

[Yorkshire Universities](#) is an action-oriented regional partnership of twelve institutions representing a diverse higher education ecosystem in Yorkshire. Collectively, there are 220,000 students at our member institutions, and 75,000 graduate from the region's universities each year.

The higher education sector in Yorkshire generates significant economic, social and cultural value from its teaching, research, and knowledge exchange activities, part of the [overall economic impact of our universities on towns, cities, and the wider region](#).



Yorkshire's Economic Opportunities and Challenges

With a population of 5.5 million, an economy worth £110 billion, and key sectors that include: Advanced Manufacturing; Energy/Low Carbon; Food and Drink/Agri-Food; Health and Care; and Digital/Creative Industries, Yorkshire has distinct assets, capabilities and institutions that provide a critical mass of diverse geographies, talent, research and innovation, infrastructure and industrial capacity. These provide the foundations for growth and widening opportunity. There is also a strong tradition of partnership working across the region.

Undoubtedly, Yorkshire possesses significant strengths and advantages. However, the region also faces systemic and structural challenges. There is a need for targeted, long-term public and private investment, in both physical and social infrastructure, and in people and places, to make tangible and sustainable improvements in prosperity, education and skills, employment participation, and population health.

Yorkshire Universities 2022-25 Strategy

[Yorkshire Universities' 2022-25 Strategy](#) is based on four key priorities, which are geared towards helping change our region for the better. The solution to addressing complex inequalities, and driving more inclusive and sustainable growth, requires the adoption of a systems approach to determine policy choices and guide project and programme development and implementation. Within and across the four priorities in our Strategy we can highlight activities and outputs that align with the ambitions in the Government's five Missions.

1. Championing civic leadership in Yorkshire

In March this year, we [published an open letter to all candidates standing in Mayoral elections in Yorkshire](#), which advocated five key asks, and invited those elected as Mayors to work with the Yorkshire Universities Board on the following:

- To champion Yorkshire as the region to invest, to live, to work, and to learn, and help take forward proposals in our [2024 International Higher Education Statement](#).
- To lead efforts to create more sustainable and inclusive growth, attracting more well-paid and secure jobs into the region.
- To support the contribution of Yorkshire's universities to the regional skills, education, and training landscape.
- To create a new culture of business, enterprise, and entrepreneurialism.
- To improve students' experiences of living and studying in Yorkshire.

Our public declaration to work in partnership with Mayors and other civic leaders in the region demonstrates a commitment to widen and deepen growth, well-being, and prosperity.

As a regional grouping, Yorkshire Universities has also been instrumental in charting [a new path for collaboration across the north of England](#). We have worked with the Northern Mayors, and local government and business leaders, in advance of the publication of the [Manifesto for the North](#), under a new 'Great North' brand, which we fully endorse.

2. Championing Yorkshire knowledge and skills

We raise the profile of Yorkshire's knowledge and skills through our links to national policymakers, UUK and other regional partnerships. Yorkshire Universities will extend and expand its engagement with Government, national agencies and devolved institutions to contribute towards emergent initiatives, such as the National Industrial Strategy and Local Growth Plans.

As set out in this year's [Health White Paper we published with Health Innovation Yorkshire and Humber, and the NHS Confederation](#), Yorkshire Universities is committed to working with NHS bodies, Government, and local authorities to meet the ambitions and targets of increasing and retaining NHS and social care workforces.

Yorkshire Universities' [Graduate Talent](#) work stream convenes universities, local authorities, MCAs, and employers to collaborate on many of the opportunities and challenges discussed at our July ['Overcoming employer challenges and championing graduates across Yorkshire'](#) Conference. We have also developed joint resources, such as the [Inclusive Recruitment Guide for Employers on recruiting students and graduates](#), and have shared knowledge and insights on enhancing student employability experience through, for example, the [Good Practice Guide for Engaging Students in Sustainability Service-Learning](#).

3. Brokering and leading partnerships

YU's ground-breaking [Memorandum of Understanding \(MoU\) with Yorkshire and Humber Councils](#) strategically connects Yorkshire's higher education sector to the region's local authorities and MCAs.

The MoU is an innovative place-based agreement that is enabling universities and policymakers in Yorkshire to contribute, in partnership, to the development and implementation of national and regional plans and strategies.

The MoU has provided a framework to mobilise our combined research and policy expertise to tackle climate, sustainability and environmental challenges, through the joint support given by Yorkshire Universities and Yorkshire and Humber Councils to the [Yorkshire and Humber Climate Commission](#) – the largest place-based climate commission in the UK.

4. Promoting the value of higher education to society, culture, and the economy

Yorkshire Universities is using its convening power to deliver major projects, ensuring that the higher education sector delivers broader value to the region's economy and society, particularly in the utilisation of research and evidence to inform and develop policy and strategy.

Emerging from the MoU between Yorkshire Universities and Yorkshire and Humber Councils, the [Yorkshire and Humber Policy Engagement & Research Network \(Y-PERN\)](#) is a novel network-based approach to inclusive and place-based academic policy engagement and research, involving all twelve Yorkshire Universities' members. £3.9m of funding was awarded by the Research England Development (RED) Fund to identify actions and solutions to some of the major opportunities and challenges facing the region. Significantly, Y-PERN works on a multi-level scale; committed to partnerships with local authorities, MCAs, and Yorkshire and Humber Councils.

Stemming directly from Y-PERN, the [Yorkshire and Humber Policy Innovation Partnership \(Y-PIP\)](#) secured £5m of funding from UK Research and Innovation to test and expand the range of research activity co-designed and co-delivered between the region's universities, policymakers, local communities and businesses to help drive positive, practical change within and across Yorkshire. Y-PIP is the [only Local Policy Innovation Partnership \(LPIP\) funded in England, and one of four within the UK](#).

Yorkshire Universities is also a key partner in the [National Institute for Health Research \(NIHR\) Applied Research Collaboration \(ARC\) Yorkshire and Humber programme](#), which conducts applied health research to improve the health and wellbeing of people in the region. The ARC is also supporting four NIHR-funded local [Health Determinants Research Collaboration \(HDRC\) projects](#) in Yorkshire, which are designed to tackle local health challenges in Bradford, Doncaster, North Yorkshire, and Wakefield.

How the members of Yorkshire Universities are driving growth and development

There are five areas where the twelve member institutions of Yorkshire Universities are demonstrating their worth in helping to drive growth and development.

Addressing core productivity challenges

- Undertaking academic research and analysis, in collaboration with partners, to develop effective policy and business cases, and investment interventions, designed to improve productivity.

Training and nurturing workforce talent and closing skills gaps

- Developing skills pipelines for key sectors in the region, with employers and policymakers, and connecting talent with enterprise and business start-ups, and in vital parts of the foundational economy, such as health and social care.

Improving business leadership and management

- Working with businesses to overcoming the challenges to growth and expansion, particularly for SMEs, and by advising, mentoring and training leaders in private and public sector organisations.

Translating world-class research into innovative new products and processes

- Undertaking discovery research that underpins the development and commercialisation of new ideas that can be taken to markets or used for wider societal benefit.

Leveraging investment in physical infrastructure

- Attracting inward investment and contributing to the delivery of large-scale capital/revenue projects, such as Investment Zones and Freeports.

Conclusion

Yorkshire Universities is making a distinct contribution towards improving skills, undertaking research and innovation, generating data, insights and driving knowledge exchange, as part of the civic partnerships that we and our members have formed with policymakers, business, and communities. We and our members have a successful track record of contributing to local and regional growth and development, and we will work closely with Government and local and regional partners for the benefit of our region.