

South East Midlands Local Skills Improvement Plan

Progress Report June 2024



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“This progress report has been prepared in accordance with Local Skills Improvement Plans: Stage 2 Guidance (dated November 2023) and is intended to review progress against the local skills improvement plan published in August 2023. This report was produced in June 2024, but publication was delayed due to the pre-election period.”

Who is this publication for?

This Progress report is a snapshot of the current Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP). The purpose of the report is to clearly communicate the overall progress that has been made since the publication of the LSIP, to evidence the impact the LSIP is making and to encourage further and continued engagement from stakeholders and employers. The report is focused on the priorities outlined in the published LSIP <https://northants-chamber.co.uk/support/local-skills-improvement-plans-lsip/>

The primary audience(s) for the progress report are:

- Employers who have engaged in the development and/or implementation of the LSIP, to understand how their engagement has supported the process, the direction of travel and achievements
- Employers who have not yet engaged in the development and/or implementation of the LSIP to understand what is happening, how they might benefit from the LSIP and how they can get involved
- Training Providers such as Further Education (FE) Colleges, Sixth Form Colleges, independent Training Providers (ITPs) and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) that deliver English-funded post-16 technical education and training in carrying out the duties placed upon them in respect to LSIPs. This is to ensure they all understand overall progress and have sight of new or more granular intelligence on employer skills needs to help shape provision planning
- Other local stakeholders with an interest in skills and who are playing, or could play, an important role in the implementation of the LSIP such as:
 - Local authorities – including functions such as the Adult Education (Skills) Budget
 - Other employer member organisations, sectoral bodies and centres of innovation such as Catapult centres
 - The Jobcentre Plus network and career, education, information advice and guidance (CEIAG) providers
 - Other organisations that understand the needs of employees and learners, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds/special educational needs and disabilities.

Summary of the LSIP

- Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs) were introduced in the Skills for Jobs White Paper in January 2021. The Skills for Jobs White Paper set out an ambitious plan to put employers more firmly at the heart of the skills system to help ensure businesses and people have the skills they need to thrive and progress. The geographical area covered by the LSIP is the South East Midlands, comprising of 6 local areas: Bedford, Central Bedfordshire, Luton, Milton Keynes, North Northamptonshire and West Northamptonshire.
- We know Skills Gaps occur in local Lower layer Super Output Areas (LSOA's) where individuals may not have access to the resources or support needed to acquire advanced skills or training. This mismatch between available skills and job requirements can lead to a higher prevalence of low-skilled jobs. Our region contains a large number of rural and semi-rural areas and transport/mobility is an issue for people who live in areas of deprivation without access to a vehicle or good transport. Poor transport links into urban, industrial and business areas challenges not just employers and employees but also learners when attending training. Whilst online helps with this many skills (construction, engineering, catering etc) need to be done in person
- The LSIP details the aims and objectives of the area's specific key skills challenges and problems that we are trying to address/tackle in order to support local growth & productivity. It aims to drive change through cultural shift and developing and understanding of post-16 provision through the delivery of priorities and support for LSIF (Local Skills Improvement Fund) by regional stakeholders.
- From employer feedback, local reports etc, there is work to do before we look at "wholesale" change of provision - and although there are stated gaps in provision, based on the top 60 occupations, lots of funded provision is in place.

Strategic and economic context update

The following pages show relevant changes in the area since the publication of the LSIP which have a disproportionately large impact upon the strategic and/or economic context of the area.

The Current Labour Market

Data from the Office National Statistics and Lightcast shows activity within the labour market to be slowing down (full details are in Annexes as links) Key points are:

- Employment numbers and rate are increasing in the South East Midlands.
- Employment decreased in Milton Keynes and West Northamptonshire in 2023. Both have seen a reduction in head office business counts predominately due to changing working practices and rationalisation. This has impacted SMEs who provide IT support/programming and office administration support with business counts reducing.
- Male employment continued to grow but Female employment reduced in 2023.
- The proportion of employment that is part-time is increasing in the South East Midlands.
- The shift from full-time to part-time is mainly for females in roles related to care, administration, leisure and travel.
- Unemployment rate in the SEM is above the level pre pandemic and equal to the national average.
- The economic inactivity rate in the SEM for 16-64-year-olds reduced in 2023, below the national rate.
- The employment rate in Luton has remained high since the data records started in 2004 predominately due to a larger number of females looking after the family/home and the rate increased in Milton Keynes and West Northamptonshire in 2023 due to an increase in students in both and looking after the family/home in West North Northamptonshire.
- The percentage of those inactive wanting a job reduced to 14.6% (England 17.8%). Higher reduction for females to 12.3% (Eng 16.7%), males to 19% (Eng 19.4%).
- Job postings decreased by 9.5% (march 2024 vs March 2023) with the highest demand in occupational groups largely unchanged (STEM related, Health and Care, Education, Skilled Trades)
- Job postings show increasing focus on attitudes, behaviours and core transferable skills, less on qualifications.

Latest Employer Feedback

In collaboration with the SEMLEP, an Employment and Skills Business Survey was conducted with 1800 businesses in November 2023. A detailed analysis can be found in the Annex links. Key points were:

Positives

- A reduction in employers reporting hard to fill vacancies.
- Organisations reporting no skills gaps in their existing workforce increased to 88%, a trend that has shown continuous improvement since 2017.
- An increase of employer engagement with universities and apprenticeships and more in-house training.
- Increase in apprenticeship levy payers taking on new apprentices and a decrease in it not being used or having plans for its use.
- There are small increases in the use of traineeships and adult schemes for work experience and larger companies are increasing support for special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Employers offering experience of the workplace for 14–16-year-olds increased.

Challenges

- A negative shift in the perception of availability of skilled staff for micro businesses.
- A decrease in engagement for training with colleges, independent providers and online.
- The majority of the hard to fill vacancies are STEM related.
- SMEs are facing challenges in competing for people to fill roles with demands for more flexibility and higher salary expectations.

- Increase in organisations not prepared/unable to release staff during working hours and inflexible times/durations for training courses.
- Employer engagement with schools remains low.

Local Government

- The 6 local authorities within the SEM continue to work towards a possible devolution deal.
- SEMLEP has been incorporated into the local authority structure, hosted by West Northamptonshire Council supporting economic development in the SEM, businesses through the Growth Hub and schools/colleges via the Careers Hub.

Changes to national skills

- **BTECs** - From August 2025, government's strategy for school leavers is to steer students towards A-levels (academic) or T Levels (technical). The DfE has published a full list of BTEC qualifications it will no longer fund from August 2025.
- **AAQs** - A selection of alternative academic qualifications (AAQs), occupational entry qualifications and additional specialist qualifications
- **Traineeships** – ended August 2023 with the biggest beneficiaries of the traineeships programme being school leavers with low previous rates of achievement.
- **Apprenticeship Levy** - From 1st April 2024, all apprenticeship training fees for small businesses are fully funded for anyone up to the age of 21. Large employers who pay the apprenticeship levy will be able to transfer up to 50% of their funds to support other businesses.

Changes to the employer base

- Increasing investment in logistics including SEGRO Logistics (5m sq ft, new strategic rail freight interchange, potential 7,450 jobs), Yusen Logistics and Amazon at Northampton Gateway, Ocado, Lidl, Noatum, Bidfood and Warburtons in Central Bedfordshire.
- Universal Studios, Bedford – Currently in the initial phases, this could have an impact across the SEM for construction and hospitality and a wide range of other skills. Universal state that 5000 workers would be involved in the build and 8000 jobs created once opened.
- Continued investment continues in advanced engineering/manufacturing and the visitor economy.
- East West Rail - a nationally significant railway project through the SEM via Milton Keynes and Bedford connecting Oxford and Cambridge.
- Green Horizons Science and Innovation Park, a leading European centre for innovation in mobility related industries in Luton.
- Marshall Aerospace continue to work towards relocation to Cranfield, Central Bedfordshire with a potential of 1200 jobs

New investment, infrastructure, or development programmes

A high level economic strategy is to be developed for the South East Midlands including employment and skills and reference to the LSIP.

All Local Authorities have or are developing/refreshing their strategic economic plans and will include reference to employment and skills locally and the LSIP. The current status is:

- Bedford Borough Council – The Economic Prosperity Plan was published in 2023 and is a 5 year plan. <https://www.bedford.gov.uk/media/5677/download?inline>
- Central Bedfordshire Council – published in Jan 2021 -Economic Strategy (to be reviewed)
- Luton Borough Council Luton 2040 - currently looking to refresh their strategy
- Milton Keynes City Council – The Economic Development Strategy was developed in 2017 Layout 1 (milton-keynes.gov.uk)
- North Northamptonshire Council - currently developing their economic strategy for publication in

early 2025.

- West Northamptonshire Council – currently developing their economic strategy for publication in early 2025.

UK Shared Prosperity Funds are being utilised to support adult education aimed at specific cohorts and pathways in the local authority areas.

Future Employment

A report was commissioned for *Future Employment*, providing an indication of occupations trends up to 2035 within the South East Midlands based on current data and anticipated impacts from the adoption of technology and changing demographics within the geography. This report will be updated annually to compare actual numbers with the predictions. Predictions from the report included:

There will be **substantial growth** of employment for occupations in:

- Science, Research, Engineering and Technology Professionals, Business, Media and Public Service Professionals, Health and Social Care Associate Professionals and Health Professionals

Employment will **grow** for occupations in:

- Other Managers and Proprietors, Protective Service Occupations, Sales Occupations, Transport and Mobile Machine Drivers and Operatives, Skilled Metal, Electrical and Electronic Trades, Leisure, Travel and Related Personal Service Occupations, Business and Public Service Associate Professionals, Elementary Trades and Related Occupations and Teaching and Educational Professionals

Employment will remain **stable** in:

- Administrative Occupations

Employment will **reduce** for occupations for:

- Textiles, Printing and Other Skilled Trades, Process, Plant and Machine Operatives, Customer Service Occupations, Skilled Agricultural and Related Trades, Science, Engineering and Technology Associate Professionals, Elementary Administration and Service Occupations, Corporate Managers and Directors, Culture, Media and Sports Occupations, Secretarial and Related Occupations, Caring Personal Service Occupations and Skilled Construction and Building Trades

Priorities and actions (Roadmap)

There are many collaborative projects happening in our region, due both to osmosis and through raised awareness of LSIP actions. The ERB has had interest from over 100 interested parties in supporting the delivery of LSIP priorities and actions and is now pulling together 3 Task and Finish Groups to drive changes needed. If you are interested in being involved, **please contact us on: lsip@northants-chamber.co.uk**

Tackling the Digital Skills Gap (Priority 1)

- “To help businesses, particularly SME's to identify new shifts in business needs and to understand, develop, work with and take advantage of skills provision available through identified future technologies (and developments in practice) as well as new technologies already being used or available. Linked to providing accessibility and flexibility of training opportunities and a priority to engage with employers to identify how these can continue to be relevant”.
- Stakeholders and partners engaged include
 - East Midlands Advisory Group, Skills Working Groups, South East Midlands Business Engagement Group (network groups/sector bodies), Adult Bedford College, Electric Corby, Blue Cube, Digital Northants, Luton Council Adult Learning, MK College, North Northamptonshire Council, DWP, Bedford College Group, IT sector employers
- The ERB has a watching brief through the LEP in several of these groups and engages directly with LSIF providers, employers, FE, LA's and Trade Bodies to take updates on skills plans which are fed to employer groups for their comments – which is then relayed to stakeholders. The Task and Finish Group will be tasked with agreeing deliverable KPI's, communication, the monitoring of actions and realistic timescales on deliverables. Results etc will be published online through Chambers of Commerce and Stakeholders websites. There is more engagement with organisations and new stakeholders that haven't been part of stage 1 of the LSIP's development and networks and forums that bring employers, providers and other relevant stakeholders together so that dialogue is increased and information barriers are broken down.

Activity	<p>There is a lot of activity across our region that is helping to close the digital divide facing some employers by providing enhanced basic digital literacy, leading to collaborative engagement with employers in provision and providing them with clearer roles in the skills system. These activities are helping employers articulate their skills needs and aggregate demand in a way that translates into stronger demand signals for providers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enable AI – Runs AI Awareness clinics out of Northampton Vulcan Works and speaking with Northampton College to look at an agenda to deliver support to students & employers. • Fliwheel Tech – delivering workshops on AI and how it can support businesses, in conjunction with South East Midlands Growth Hub Network and Learn sessions. • DBFB are working with Saints Foundation to help support students with tech skills. • Careers and Enterprise Company - Supporting STEAM Northants/Bedford Borough. Formation of Cornerstone Employer Groups incorporating regional growth sectors. Funding My Great First Job webinars • GXO engaged actively using a company called Multiverse, working on a project called Data Academy which is apprenticeship levy funded. • London Luton Airport - AI training in place for existing analysts • NNC - Upskilling SME/Highstreet shops in digital • Employer focused events at MK College are happening to show new Tech, giving businesses the opportunity to have a tour of facilities and try kit to see how businesses can use these in their business
	<p>We are also increasing the talent pipeline by inspiring more young people to consider digital career pathways.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bluecube Technology Solutions – Apprenticeship programme and monthly forums • MK College Fairer Futures strategy. A partnership with Aiimi, a creative tech company that specialises in AI and data. Aiimi launched their first apprenticeship programme with the College in 2023 and since then the collaboration has gone from strength to strength. They currently have two software developer apprentices and an IT support apprentice in situ, with two new software developer apprentices joining later this year. • Moulton College has VR headsets and software for more interactive teaching. 5 x articulate

	licenses. Creation of learning hubs, utilising digital classroom tools and software. Extensive marketing campaign.
	<p>Incorporating IT skills alongside regular training and study across the community and business</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Luton Council - Adult Learning are focusing delivery on digital skills that residents are lacking. These are basic IT functions because without these it is even harder for residents to gain new employment. Linking with University of Bedfordshire to signpost for more advanced provision. MK College is working with Luton Adult Learning to deliver basic IT skills to prevent digital divide getting bigger. • National Eagle Labs Academy in Northampton are advertising to engage with the local community via coffee shops, libraries etc to build digital skills. This is open to the public through booked sessions and all the associated costs are covered by Barclays. • DWP - Digital support for unemployed customers. Both employed and unemployed support in basic and intermediate skills. • Multiply funding for digital skill courses in all Local Authorities • WNC has ringfenced £99,000 (ninety-nine thousand pounds) of its UKSPF allocation to provide training for people in employment in need of support to increase their digital literacy through the delivery relevant digital skills training. NNC have already commissioned a provider for this and further details to follow
Timescale	We commenced gathering groups together to discuss this priority late 2023 and are looking to develop outcomes from mid-2024 onwards
Method of implementation	<p>Many actions are being implemented across our region through a variety of channels:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research / Labour Market Information (LMI) / Data analysis through the LEP • One to one and group meetings with Colleges / Independent Training Providers (ITPs) / Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) at operational and Senior Management levels • Cross college / provider groups through existing forums, Various conferences / working groups / project groups etc. • A mixture of providers, employers and stakeholders, Marketing and promotion (yet to start) • Employer engagement – networking to discuss planned changes and take feedback that is presented to stakeholders • Discussions around Mainstream skills funding such as 16-19 formula funding, the Adult Education Budget (AEB), apprenticeships, Skills Bootcamps, Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQs), Feedback on LSIF, CITB, Levelling up, Multiply and UKSPF Projects
Monitoring	<p>Progress is currently being monitored through feedback at employer forums, weekly KPI and monthly LSIF meetings involving, Employers, Project leads across all involved FE's and colleagues involved in LSIF</p> <p>Marketing Meetup holds quarterly networking events partnered with The One Group, to bring together marketers in Northampton. They have talks from different professionals in the industry. Feedback on actions from the Task and Finish Group will be provided online - it is expected that this will be on a quarterly basis</p>
Progress Status	There is a lot of positive activity in our region to help achieve this priority and as new shifts in business needs continue to develop, we will be continuing to bring together stakeholders to discuss, understand, develop and take advantage of digital skills provision for businesses and our community

Employer engagement (priorities 2-7)

- Help businesses, particularly SMEs, to identify new shifts in business needs and to understand, develop, work with and take advantage of skills provision available through identified future technologies (and developments in practice) as well as new technologies already being used or available.
- Work with employers and stakeholders to identify why existing “life/soft skills” provision may not be relevant to the changing (post covid) workplace and how “readiness for work and essential skills for work – communication, attitude, resilience, problem solving etc”) can be effectively developed and evidenced within academic, technical and vocational provision.
- Raise awareness of existing provision (perhaps by individual FE) that satisfies demand in a way that employers understand and to continue to map provision against job demand and employer skills challenges so that further identified gaps in provision can be made available.

- The language(s) of business, provision and learners need to be more aligned and develop a "blended" business and learning language and bring up to date, relevant skills into FE. We need to demystify the perceptions of learner, employer, provider and stakeholder "identity and brands" by potential service users. Terms such as "green jobs", "soft skills" etc. are often mis-understood and detract from take-up
- Provide accessible and flexible training opportunities. Alongside this is a priority to engage with employers to identify how provision can continue to be relevant
- Employers expressed a desire to have staff working in FE to deliver non-accredited, up to date "knowledge" sessions to learners. A milestone action is to engage with employers to identify how courses can change to satisfy this

As with other priorities, there are many projects and activities happening in our region, many of which are working collaboratively with shared thinking and goals, all looking to help get more businesses engaged with skills provision and support the development of an agile skills system. Responsibilities for specific actions within the priorities have not been defined with stakeholders as many organisations are taking several actions relating to the LSIP priorities forward unilaterally as part of their skills development.

Stakeholders and partners we are either engaging with or are involved with this include STEM Learning groups, Restart (Jobs 22), Luton Adult Community Learning, Employer facing groups such as NNBN, Chambers, FSB, Post 16 Engagement into Employment (Luton Council), SEND schools, LSIF Employer forums, LEP/Growth Hub, Local Authorities via Skills Plans, Trade bodies (with members), DWP, East Midlands Advisory Group, Northampton College employer engagement and employability skills area, Luton Adult Community Learning, Luton Borough Council, Employment and Skills Scrutiny and Improvement Board, Central Bedfordshire and Bedford Borough Councils, North Northamptonshire Council Skills Working Group, South East Midlands Business Engagement Group (network groups/sector bodies), Adult Learning and Apprenticeship Performance Board, West and North Northamptonshire Councils and a range of employers who have expressed an interest.

The Growth Hub attend several of these groups and feedback updates, the ERB engages directly with LSIF providers, other employer facing groups, DWP, Restart, FE, LA's and Trade Bodies to take updates on skills plans which are fed to employer groups for their comments – which is then relayed to stakeholders. The ERB has also been working directly with Logistics Employer Advisory Board, Bedford College FE employer forums, Sector bodies, DWP and employer networking groups

Activities

Since October 2023 the ERB has looked at including as many "new organisations" as possible to the LSIP and have attended or presented at 117 networking events (60 in Northamptonshire, 35 in Milton Keynes and 22 in Bedfordshire) to discuss the LSIP and engaged with a number of employer facing organisations across the region (Chambers of Commerce, FSB, Collaborate MK, Business Buzz, Silverstone Technology Cluster, Your Business Expo, NNBN). The total number of employers attending these events so far 3,732 and the number of employers directly engaged with has been 1,230 (32%).

With regard to activities happening that are related to supporting priorities:

- University of Northampton and Bedford College Group hold regular Logistics Employer Advisory Forums to bring FE/HE and employers closer. GXO and chair of Northamptonshire Logistics Forum are working with University of Northampton to support Supply Chain degree
- Regional FE collaborative website deliveringskills.co.uk has been launched. Over 250 employers have so far made enquiries to the site, with 50 of them expressing an interest in working with Colleges
- LSIF consultation and feedback relating to employer engagement - York Consulting completed surveys (exact number unknown) with employers in the region. Outcomes of this as to why employers do not engage were good communication needed, lack of information of what is available, lack of understanding of the education landscape.
- Relaunch of the LEP Cornerstone Employers group and also beginning to plan for next year. One of the things this group are looking at is dome infographics and resources that teachers can use to incorporate common language around skills into lessons and also creating a CPD staff session to offer to schools.
- Moulton College have held Industry Skills Boards and followed these up with second events to present proposal of changes from first events such as adding customer service training, animal first aid etc.
- Newlands UK are supporting University of Northampton with delivering 1:1 sessions, feeding back on assessment etc to help grow the logistics sector.
- Wincanton have set a programme to support young people into logistics as part time role alongside studying. They also support schools and FE by offering work experience and keep in touch with these students up to 2 years after their work experience as well as having an early careers team who visit schools to talk about logistics.
- Weetabix used apprenticeship programmes to upskill their team and continue to promote Apprenticeships to their supply chain
- Luton Council Team have regular business newsletters that go out to 3,500 businesses. Promotion of

	<p>apprenticeships and how to access levy funding. Adult Learning funding is to be significantly increased to help meet the demands and requirements of the businesses.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • London Luton Airport has engaged with Cranfield University and University of Bedfordshire to take skills needs forward • Centrality have developed 'soft-skills' training such as Customer Service, Managing Customers, Communication Skills and is discussing this with stakeholders • Moulton College hold regular Industry Skills Boards across construction, agriculture, animal care and sport. Solar pv ground roof mount in partnership with Gen Carbon who will guarantee job interviews • Central Beds Council - Working with social care and schools as employers and supporting apprenticeships, both of which are critical sectors given aging population and issues with recruitment and retention of teachers. Promoting skills provision through business focused newsletters and website. • NNC - Working with JCP and Tresham College on sector based work academies and jobs, careers and recruitment fairs. • DWP - Working with lots of SME's - critical to how we work with customers. Work with employers on work progression/retention.
Timescales	This set of priorities and actions has been happening since May 2025 – we expect to see results on communications and changes to employer attitudes to FE provision by mid 2025 onwards. The Task and Finish Group will be tasked with agreeing deliverable KPI's, communication, the monitoring of actions and realistic timescales on deliverables. Results etc will be published online through Chambers of Commerce and Stakeholders websites
Method of implementation	This includes the ERB directly delivering activity with other employer facing groups and employers, research /Labour Market Information (LMI) / Data analysis, developing targets, trajectories, and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), one to one and group meetings with Colleges / Independent Training Providers (ITPs) / Higher Education Institutions, cross college / provider groups, conferences / working groups / project groups for providers, employers, stakeholders, marketing and promotion, LSIF working groups, CITB, Levelling up, Multiply and UKSPF Projects
Monitoring	<p>As with other priorities, we are aware that a lot of activity is happening “ad-hoc” and in isolation. The Task and Finish Group will be tasked with bring together interested parties, agreeing feedback on KPI's, communication and Monitoring of actions. Results etc will be published online through Chambers of Commerce and Stakeholders websites</p> <p>Alongside attendance at many stakeholder groups as detailed in then “sharing updated intelligence” section of the report), there are regular (weekly/monthly) presentations made by the ERB to employer networking groups where employer and stakeholder plans, T levels, skills bootcamps and provision are discussed along with hard and soft figures detailing employer awareness and changes to engagement with FE etc. Progress is also measured through MK College report(s) on Employer engagement with FE, Attendance at LSIF meetings (monthly)</p> <p>There are monthly Network and Learn meetings held by South East Midlands Growth Hub. May event based around Net Zero (Green Skills), discussed with employers in attendance around what their thoughts around Net Zero are, what they are already doing and what else they can be doing. June event will be based around AI (Digital Skills). Use local employers specialists in relevant field to run events.</p> <p>The ERB and LEP accesses a range of datasets to monitor regional change, including Lightcast, IfATE and Local market intelligence. There is also regular feedback from FE on new/existing employers engaged</p>
Progress Status	Progress is currently being monitored through feedback at employer forums, weekly KPI and monthly LSIF meetings involving, Employers, Project leads across all involved FE's

Green Jobs and Skills (Priority 8)

- “To look at the development and availability of capital and human resource in partnership with sector specialists, supporting employers working on green/sustainable/decarbonisation projects or those who have recognised “green” jobs to interact with SME's and support knowledge transfer about what “green jobs” are, facilitating an understanding of future skills needs in this area. Also to work with SME's to help them think strategically about future skills needs and recruitment in these areas, including accessing wider groups of people such as those at risk of exclusion in order to build skills and enter further education, training, and employment”
- There are many projects and activities happening in our region, many of which are working collaboratively with shared thinking and goals, all looking to help get more businesses engaged with skills provision and support the development of an agile skills system.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stakeholders and partners engaged include: East Midlands Advisory Group, STEM Learning, South East Midlands Creative and Cultural Industries Group, Restart, Jobs 22 – employability skills, Northampton College, MK College, Tresham College and Moulton College, Luton Adult Community Learning, Luton Borough Council, Employment and Skills Scrutiny and Improvement Board, Central Bedfordshire and Bedford Borough Councils, Local Authority, Midlands Business Engagement Group (network groups/sector bodies), Post 16 Engagement into Employment, Luton Borough Council, Adult Learning and Apprenticeship Performance Board, West and North Northamptonshire Councils, SEND employment event, West Northamptonshire Council, Greater South East Retrofit Training Network Steering Group, South East Midlands University Vice Chancellors, BIG 50 Strategy Vision Gathering, North Northamptonshire Council, Logistics Employer Advisory Board, Bedford College. Green construction / engineering / agritech. Employers such as Opus, FE/employer forums and sector trade bodies such as CITB (retrofit, decarbonisation etc) and CILT, IAA – (See Annex for details) The ERB has a watching brief in several of these groups and engages directly with LSIF providers, employers, FE, LA's and Trade Bodies to take updates on skills plans which are fed to employer groups for their comments – which is then relayed to stakeholders. A task and Finish group (led by the ERB) is being set up (first meeting planned for July) with invited stakeholders. This Group (run by the ERB) will be tasked with agreeing deliverable KPI's, communication, the monitoring of actions and realistic timescales on deliverables. Results etc will be published online through Chambers of Commerce and Stakeholders websites. There is more engagement with organisations and new stakeholders that haven't been part of stage 1 of the LSIP's development and networks and forums that bring employers, providers and other relevant stakeholders together so that dialogue is increased and information barriers are broken down.
Activities	<p>To show learners how the technology can significantly reduce energy consumption using renewable energy sources and advanced energy management systems, resulting in a considerable decrease in carbon emissions and operational costs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> South East Midlands Growth Hub are running a '@Step into Net Zero' programme with BBC to support businesses in Beds Borough Region on a journey to become net zero which is funded through UKSPF By using predominantly feedback from employers as well as information gathered from LSIP, IFATE, reports, Bedford College Group (LSIF lead on this project) are developing qualifications into their existing learning and have produced a list of qualifications they are planning to offer across the LSIP group. These are still in development and the ERB is looking to get a sense from employers on demand or bespoke need. Industry specific equipment ordered and to be disseminated to relevant colleges. 13 new courses in Green skills from level 3 to 5 to be ready for delivery early 2025 Thalia Waste MK hosting students to visit site to learn more about sustainability. <p>Increase awareness from primary school age, give these terms "real meaning" to people. Keep the "language" simple and understood by everyone and help employers to "look forward"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adult learning are focusing on green skills through math using Multiply funding Through Local Authorities, UKSPF recently launched a suite of four qualifications to support businesses and residents in retrofitting <p>By adopting green technologies, demonstrate how to actively contribute to the preservation of natural resources, including water conservation and protection of biodiversity, as well as mitigating the environmental impact associated with traditional construction practices.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Industry specific equipment ordered (through LSIF) and will be delivered to relevant colleges by November 2024 TBCG is reviewing their estates to accommodate new equipment. Construction sector Green skills in careers programme will be included in all Study programmes to further promote sustainability in all sectors. This will be at all levels from 1 to 5. Resources and content in new Green skills courses will promote this. The following resources will link to how this is adopted for example: Domestic rain water collection kit, Renewable energy kits, Solar PV systems FE Sector is working with CITB on the national Green Construction Advisory Board meeting. Employer Project groups have been set up, particularly to support effective use of resources/machinery <p>Disseminate how green technology integration will generate economic opportunities, including job creation, fostering innovation, and attracting investments in the renewable energy and sustainable construction sectors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> MK College have acquired funding from LSIF to have an additional building (building permission has been granted) which will be used for Green Construction skills training. They are building relationships with IAA to help with delivering Level 2 T-Level training. Due to employer feedback around skills shortage, the college have added Dry Wall Lining as an enrichment on to existing courses. Karen

	<p>Campbell at Bedford College Group who has recently taken on the LSIP and LSIF role at the college. They are starting curriculum planning meeting around green skills based from information received predominantly from employers as well as LSIP, IfATE, LEP reports and LMI data. They are also working on a holistic plan of studies to incorporate 'life/soft' skills in all courses.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Green Future Challenge - part of an initiative run by Moulton College, Milton Keynes College, Northampton College and Tresham College to educate students in the local area about the importance of sustainability.
	<p>Focus on sustainable materials and waste reduction strategies will explain how to minimise resource consumption, promote recycling, and contribute to a circular economy in the construction sector</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Luton Council has a Net Zero Roadmap which aims to be net zero by 2040. As such various support measures have been put in place utilising UKSPF funding to support local businesses to reduce their carbon footprint through different training initiatives. WNC have put investment towards UKSPF E29, to mitigate their carbon footprint with two projects that are designed to support local businesses to achieve their net zero target including capital and revenue funds of up to £20,000.00 to support in developing their decarbonisation ambitions and contributing towards sustainable businesses ActNow consultancy delivering 'Stepping into Net Zero' on behalf of Bedford Borough Council. LLA - Working with airlines for cleaner emissions by using better engines to reduce carbon emissions. Centrality is working to be carbon neutral by 2027
Timescales	Ongoing from January 2024 - the Task and Finish Group will be tasked with agreeing deliverable and realistic timescales. Feedback for delivery of actions will be published online
Method of implementation	Research / Labour Market Information (LMI) / Data analysis through the LEP, One to one and group meetings with Colleges / Independent Training Providers (ITPs) / Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) at operational and Senior Management levels, Cross college / provider groups through existing forums, Various conferences / working groups / project groups etc. A mixture of providers, employers and stakeholders, Marketing and promotion (yet to start), Employer engagement – networking to discuss planned changes and take feedback that is presented to stakeholders, Discussions around Mainstream skills funding such as 16-19 formula funding, the Adult Education Budget (AEB), apprenticeships, Skills Bootcamps, Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQs), Feedback on LSIF, CITB, Levelling up, Multiply and UKSPF Projects
Monitoring	We are aware that a lot of activity is happening "ad-hoc" and in isolation. The Task and Finish Group will be tasked with bring together interested parties, agreeing feedback on KPI's, communication and Monitoring of actions. Results etc will be published online through Chambers of Commerce and Stakeholders websites
Progress Status	Progress is currently being monitored through feedback at employer forums, weekly KPI and monthly LSIF meetings involving, Employers, Project leads across all involved FE's

What else has been achieved so far?

Progress made to date against identified priorities and actions, emerging benefits and evidence of the early signs of impact of the LSIP:

Developing a common language of the skills system

A *Future Skills* report was completed which aimed to define the skills that will be needed by people for the occupations listed in 'Future Employment'. A full version can be found in the Annexes. The report included a proposed a common language for 'employability skills' with definitions of each. The use of this terminology will be promoted to all stakeholders including those with Accountability Statements related to the LSIP, Leading to improved understanding of skills landscape, what is on offer and how to access it through relationships, shared knowledge and a clear pathway for learners and employers



Employers, Providers and Learners “see” skills from three different perspectives. The “Employer Engagement” Task and Finish group will be working with employers, learners and providers to develop a cohesive, clearly articulated and commonly understood language set and to understand what we mean by “skills” in order to bring these three areas closer together and provide effective and relevant learning for more people

Occupational Group Tracking:

We know from ERB engagements, presentations, stakeholder meetings, LSIF projects, employer feedback, local Authority forums and the recent launch of the regional FE website (deliveringskills.co.uk) that there has been an increase in employers engaging in the skills system through curriculum development/delivery, CPD, workforce-industry exchange.

A comparison of the employment and job postings for twenty-five of the largest occupational groups (SOC2020) for 2023 and 2024 as shown below is starting to show several key changes to our employment landscape – namely, the impact of AI on a number of occupations, the growth in demand for Health and Social Care as we have a greater percentage of the population and the continuing need for skilled staff in key occupations such as manufacturing, management, construction and science.

The list below highlights where growth/shortages and areas of need. (a more detailed trends for job postings & employment together with a visual mapping can be found in Annexes

Occupational Group	2023	2024
Administrative Occupations	Growth/Replacement Need	Shortages/Replacement Need
Business and Public Service Associate Professionals	Growth/Replacement Need	Growth/Replacement Need
Business, Media and Public Service Professionals	Growth/Replacement Need	Growth/Replacement Need
Caring Personal Service Occupations	Growth/Replacement Need	Growth/Replacement Need
Corporate Managers and Directors	Shortages/Replacement Need	Shortages/Replacement Need
Culture, Media and Sports Occupations	Shortages/Replacement Need	Shortages/Replacement Need
Customer Service Occupations	Replacement Need	Shortages/Replacement Need
Elementary Administration and Service Occupations	Growth/Replacement Need	Growth/Replacement Need
Elementary Trades and Related Occupations	Shortages/Replacement Need	Growth/Replacement Need
Health and Social Care Associate Professionals	Growth/Replacement Need	Growth/Replacement Need
Health Professionals	Growth/Replacement Need	Growth/Replacement Need
Leisure, Travel and Related Personal Service Occs.	Growth/Replacement Need	Growth/Replacement Need
Other Managers and Proprietors	Growth/Replacement Need	Shortages/Replacement Need
Process, Plant and Machine Operatives	Shortages/Replacement Need	Shortages/Replacement Need
Protective Service Occupations	shortages/Replacement Need	Growth/Replacement Need
Sales Occupations	Growth/Replacement Need	Shortages/Replacement Need
Science, Engineering & Technology Associate Profs	Shortages/Replacement Need	Shortages/Replacement Need
Science, Research, Engineering and Technology Profs	Growth/Replacement Need	Growth/Replacement Need
Secretarial and Related Occupations	Shortages/Replacement Need	Shortages/Replacement Need
Skilled Agricultural and Related Trades	Shortages/Replacement Need	Shortages/Replacement Need
Skilled Construction and Building Trades	Shortages/Replacement Need	Shortages/Replacement Need
Skilled Metal, Electrical and Electronic Trades	Shortages/Replacement Need	Growth/Replacement Need
Teaching and Educational Professionals	Growth/Replacement Need	Shortages/Replacement Need
Textiles, Printing and Other Skilled Trades	Growth/Replacement Need	Shortages/Replacement Need
Transport and Mobile Machine Drivers and Operatives	Growth/Replacement Need	Shortages/Replacement Need

LSIP Proposed Provision Review

The following table shows the status of provision now available against the proposed provision list in the 2023 LSIP, where perceived shortages of provision against employer need existed. Some provision is new and some already available but not identified previously

Proposed Provision	Provision 2024	
Apprenticeships	Level	No. of Providers Based in SEM
Urban driver	Level 2	7 Providers
Large goods vehicle lgv driver c + e	Level 2	13 Providers
Supply chain warehouse operative	Level 2	73 Providers 2 Local
Express delivery sortation hub operative	Level 2	6 Providers
Express delivery operative	Level 2	9 Providers
Food and drink process operator	Level 2	14 Providers
Lean manufacturing operative	Level 2	45 Providers 3 Local
Professional security operative	Level 2	7 Providers
Commercial thermal insulation operative	Level 2	None
Construction assembly and installation operative	Level 2	None
Motor Vehicle Service and Maintenance Technician (Light Vehicle)	Level 3	13 Providers 4 Local
Digital marketer	Level 3	63 Providers 1 Local
Marketing assistant	Level 3	63 Providers 1 Local
Machining technician	Level 3	6 Providers 3 Local
Food and drink technical operator	Level 3	10 Providers
Security first line manager	Level 3	5 Providers
Industrial thermal insulation technician	Level 3	None
Low carbon heating technician	Level 3	None
Refrigeration, air conditioning and heat pump engineering technician	Level 3	None
Sales executive	Level 4	35 Providers 2 Local
Market research executive	Level 4	2 Providers
Marketing executive	Level 4	21 Providers 1 Local
Public relations and communications assistant	Level 4	5 Providers
Associate project manager	Level 4	44 Providers 1 Local
Logistics operations warehousing manager	Level 4	None
Business to business sales professional	Level 6	None
Digital marketer	Level 6	2 Providers 1 Local
Marketing manager	Level 6	5 Providers
FE Full-Time	Level	No. of Locations in SEM
Maintenance, installation and repair for engineering and manufacturing - Light and Electric Vehicles	T Level	4 Locations
Food and drink technical operator	T Level	None
Installation and maintenance electrician	T Level	4 Locations
Refrigeration, air conditioning and heat pump engineering technician	T Level	4 Locations
Plumbing and domestic heating technician - Environmental Technologies	T Level	4 Locations
Domestic, Commercial & Industrial Electrical Vehicle Charging Equipment Installation City & Guilds	Level 3	1 Location
Installation & Maintenance of Small Scale Solar Photovoltaic Systems City & Guilds 2399-12	Level 3	None
Domestic Electric Vehicle Charging Equipment Installation	Level 3	1 Location
Converter Provision - Short courses/training to upskill/reskill	Status	
Account Manager/Representative	No ESFA funded, other available	
Marketing Manager	No ESFA funded, other available	
Project Manager	Programmes available	
Scheduler/Operations Coordinator	None	
Security Officer - limited specialist provision in place.	No ESFA funded, other available	
Utilities Technicians (including Electricians, Plumbing, Heating, Green Energy and Retrofit)	LSIF Project	
Modular Provision	Status	
Sales for micro/small businesses	Diploma/Apprenticeship L2/3	
Digital marketing for micro/small businesses	LSIF Project	
Microsoft Excel - application	LSIF Project	
Critical Thinking	Introductory course available	
Entrepreneurship/Enterprise	Courses/Diploma L3 available	
Communication – written with Microsoft Outlook and Word	Communication + digital	
Communication – presentations with Microsoft PowerPoint	courses available	
Financial capability	Multiply	
Leadership	Courses available	
Provision will be required for:	Status	
Retrofit assessors	LSIF Project	
Retrofit coordinators	LSIF Project	
Retrofit designers	LSIF Project	

- **All priorities**

- Task and Finish groups with regional stakeholders set up to take actions forward
- Feedback that FE/Employer/Stakeholders are collaborating on projects, skills & provision
- Mapping of local provision, review of Top 60 occupational changes and future demand

- **Priority 1 Tackling the Digital Skills Gap**

Some examples of responses of partners to the priorities and actions outlined in the LSIP that have been supported by the LSIP are:

- Focusing some initiatives on digital initiatives linked to logistics sector.
- SDF Project and SEMLEP helped the college to initiate some of this activity and LSIF is supporting to carry these initiatives forward.
- Laptop/Chromebook to every student.
- Basic digital skills, digicap, across the curriculum.
- VR/RFID/Games design student engagement help content for VR.
- UKSPF and DWP fund bespoke provision for digital skills

- **Priority 2-7 Employer Engagement**

- Wincanton have developed a programme called Cygnets Programme, designed to attract young people into the logistics sector by allowing them to work part-time while continuing in education. This helps with talent pipeline for the sector, increasing young peoples skills with some going on to start an apprenticeships with the company.
- Harpur Trust have started a Career Mentoring programme and are currently working with two schools in Bedfordshire. It is aimed at identifying possible mentors (aged under 35 and including employers, employees and university students) to work with the students in the schools using skills builder universal framework. Currently have 40 mentors to work with 2 schools but looking to grow to 70 mentors across 5 schools in year 2. Have also set up 'World of Work' programme to helps find work experience for students.
- Bedford College Group - Launching an Employer Partnership Scheme and opening three Employer Partnership zones to bring employers and curriculum to co-create and give students more opportunities with employers and vice versa.
- UoN has regular articles in Business Times magazine, focussing on Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTP's). Has a new website which is more employer friendly.
- Careers and Enterprise Company - Supporting and upskilling Career Heads and schools with teaching career readiness. Teacher encounters with Co-Op, NHS and Keir with more opportunity to do this as well as taking teachers out of the classroom and into the sector to upskill firsthand.
- Elizabeth School of London - Introducing 'sustainability' as a course at the school so they are aware of the careers and endless opportunities. Inculcating 'sustainability' and 'green policy' into the school.
- University of Bedfordshire is number 3 in country for its sustainability campus, offering courses in Sustainable Accounting and Sustainable Management.
- Right Track Consultancy working with Silverstone Technology Cluster to drive skills initiative within the cluster. They have also created an Early Careers networking group to help employers understand the different Early Careers programmes available and the benefits.
- Cognisco works with businesses to help identify skills gaps.
- Brackmills have a networking group for all apprentices in the Brackmills businesses to attend.
- GXO has a 'Digital Warehouse of the Future' facility with Nestle that is focused on innovation.
- Milton Keynes City Council have allocated £100,000 to skills interventions as part of the 2nd UKSPF Grant Competition. No decisions have been made yet.
- SOFEA is delivering an Employability Programme in MK which aims to support disadvantaged young people enter work

- **Priority 8 Green Jobs and Skills & Priority 2-7 Employer Engagement**

- IAA - Developed NOS for building insulation techniques. Working with IFATE for apprenticeships. Designed career pathways for energy efficiency. Built National Energy Efficiency Centre in Leighton Buzzard.

- **Priority 8 Green Jobs and Skills**

- Northampton College are collaborating with Bedford College. Big Rig for Year 10's - solar powered water systems.
- Luton council are working with University of Bedfordshire to deliver a range of sustainable skills including Carbon Literacy training and working with Barnfield College on Retrofit programmes.
- DWP Working with Crown Estates around off-shore wind in the North Sea. By 2030 hope to recruit another 70,000 to the industry which impacts across UK.

In line with stated priorities the LSIP is adding value through communication and collaboration:

- Through networking, feedback and working with stakeholder groups, the LSIP is supporting employers to better articulate their skills needs and aggregate demand in a way that translates into stronger demand signals for providers. This includes a clear language that is understood by interested parties, engaging with hundreds of hard-to-reach small and medium enterprises (SMEs) that may have had limited engagement with the development of stage 1 of the LSIP to gauge opinion
- Through the regional Growth Hub, the Careers Enterprise Network (CEN) and engaging directly with employers and stakeholders the ERB/LSIP is gathering up-to-date labour market intelligence (see Annexes for full data)
- Engaging with new/growing organisations to the region such as Universal Studios, Amazon and East West Rail industries that are developing a strong presence in the area to link them with local contacts
- Ensuring that employers are aware of, and utilising the provision already available and are able to navigate the local skills system.
- Galvanising employers to support the delivery of Local Skills Improvement Funded projects
- Supporting employers to utilise Apprenticeship levy transfer funds, take up apprentices, take learners on work placements (e.g. T Level Industry Placements) and promoting learning and training programmes for upskilling and reskilling existing employees (e.g. Skills Bootcamps) through presentations and networking. Also encouraging employers to offer work placements for FE college teachers and second industry staff to support curriculum design and delivery, and contribute facilities and specialist equipment
- Working with stakeholders to create a vocational education and training system with clear pathways so people and employers understand and can be made aware of training options and can make informed decisions about what and where provision is available, including more flexible, portable training with corresponding micro-credentials or accreditation where they add value, licenced to providers to mitigate the risk in quality of delivery.
- Ongoing and sustained collaboration of stakeholders in the development of provision to meet labour market demand including: co-designing of programmes alongside new/innovative learning methods & use of technology.
- Development of Stakeholder task and finish Groups to understand areas such as “green” skills and “soft skills” within provision.
- New provision for digital literacy for use within the workplace and business development/efficiencies (spreadsheets, digital marketing, CRM, etc) and specialist digital higher-level skills (programming, cyber security, etc).
- Bringing together interested stakeholders across the region to collaborate on STEM related occupations through changing perceptions and understanding of opportunities within sectors, existing provision and future needs
- Creating a cultural shift (thinking and acting differently) through stakeholder collaboration and the promotion of benefits and opportunities created through open recruitment, development and retention of the workforce through provision that develops management, is more flexible, accessible and relevant to employers through use of efficient use of time and content that adds value.

Examples of what is working well, and the impact of collaboration:

- Northampton Adult Learning Service (NALS) are reviewing the way that they structure and set up their service and subsequently the curriculum offer in order to identify opportunities for greater partnership working in the development of life/soft skills. This includes the implementation of a specific business growth role within the service to actively engage with employers and aid the review of the curriculum offer.
- The Installation Assurance Authority (IAA) <https://www.theiaa.co.uk/> has opened a National Energy Efficiency Centre in Leighton Buzzard which forms the start of a movement connecting similar centres across the UK. The centre is working with Local Authorities and MK College and provides training space, for current technologies and exhibition space for manufacturers and designers to not only demonstrate new technologies, systems and approaches but will allow training to both new entrants and those needing to upskill on the latest technologies, systems and processes (see Annex 1 for further details)
- Colleges across the south-east Midlands have launched a high-profile campaign to help businesses find the skilled people they need. Bedford, Barnfield, Milton Keynes, Moulton and Northampton colleges, supported by LSIF funding through the Department for Education (DfE), have banded together to fund wide-ranging research into what companies want and how they can better meet those needs through the training they provide. The group, known as Colleges of the South-East Midlands (CoSEM) already educates and trains almost 56,000 learners and engages with 8,500 employers. <https://www.deliveringskills.co.uk/>
- Using the Multiply and Shared Prosperity Fund NALS has developed a wide range of courses delivering a range of transferable skills to over 1500 learners.
- They have engaged in some partnership working with other SEM institutions specifically relating to ESOL. NALS has reviewed the approach to the curriculum planning using the LSIP as a guiding document for required intervention. This includes:
 - Diversification of the course formats ensuring that we offer a range of in-class, remote and blended learning options, short term courses and self-paced directed learning.
 - Expansion of subject areas offering new provision in Childcare/Education, Health and Social Care and a range of business topics such as Lean Management.
 - Community Outreach Programmes building off our already wide reach but also by developing relationships with other and utilising other funding streams have allowed for greater reach of those furthest from the job market.
- NALS have started to review their communication of the course offer to ensure they standardise the terminology. They have appointed a new marketing role to aid in this development. This will involve defining terms such as "technical skills," "life skills", "soft skills," "core skills," "employability skills," and "digital skills" to help learners, providers, and employers understand the different aspects of skills development. They are making some progress in this area however they recognise there is room for further development and improvement. It would also be the intention to join with other training providers in the area to look at standardised terminology although this work is yet to be undertaken
- Further education students from colleges across the South East Midlands gathered at Moulton College yesterday on 24th April to battle it out in a prestigious environmental competition. The Green Future Challenge event is part of an initiative run by Moulton College, Milton Keynes College, Northampton College and Tresham College to educate students in the local area about the importance of sustainability.

The competition was the culmination of a challenge that saw students present ideas on how the Further Education sector can become more sustainable. Individuals and teams of up to four students were tasked with developing ideas and pitching them Dragons Den style to a panel of leading lights in sustainability, including Steve Frampton MBE, Sustainability Consultant for the Association of Colleges; Michelle Hemmingfield, from the charity, Students organising for

Sustainability; Paul Thompson of SEMLEP, which delivers sustainable economic growth in the South East Midlands, and Lauren Gallyot, Sustainability Lead at Milton Keynes College Group, who works with students, staff and local communities to coordinate College-led initiatives.
<https://www.moulton.ac.uk/about/latest-news/moulton-college-hosts-prestigious-sustainability-competition>

- MK Council and Bedford College are discussing a Supported Internship Scheme. Bedford College use 'Project Search' a company that finds a large placement that students can access. At Bedford College they use Bedfordshire County Council however it was felt that the outcomes for students on placement at the council were not as high as expected to be. Project search model is based away from educational provider, all based at employer's offices. Confirmed that they were currently in the process of seeking more info re costings for using 'Project Search'. Mentioned that they had found a link at Harrow College who use the local hospital as a placement and their student outcomes are very positive. MK College are hoping to meet with Harrow College shortly.

Update on the Local Skills Improvement Fund (LSIF) projects

The outcome of the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) has defined an agreed set of actionable priorities that employers, providers, and stakeholders in a local area can get behind to drive change. They have placed employers at the heart of local skills systems and facilitated direct and dynamic working arrangements between employers and providers. As a follow up, the Government allocated £165million across 2 financial years and just over £5.2 million to our region in the form of a Local Skills Improvement Fund (LSIF) to support the delivery of the identified priorities to 31st March 2025.

[Skills for Jobs: Lifelong Learning for Opportunity and Growth \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

The primary purpose of LSIF is to address the gap between what the sector delivers, and the skills needed by the local labour market. This will be achieved through strategic planning and investment in skills at an area-wide level. Milton Keynes College have played a key role in the development of the LSIP within the South East Midlands, and are the lead college within this region for the LSIF, working collaboratively with Barnfield College, Bedford College Group, Moulton College and Northampton College, facilitating skills spend across the region. The collaboration of colleges has agreed to work together to deliver the following projects:

- **LSIF Priority – Green Jobs and Skills – Bedford College Group (Lead)**
 - Industry specific equipment ordered and to be disseminated to relevant colleges. Current timeline 24 weeks
 - 13 new courses in Green skills from level 3 to 5 to be ready for delivery by September 2024
 - Attended national Green Construction Advisory Panel (GCAP) meeting. Will become regional members.
 - Project groups being set up, particularly to support effective use of resources and machinery.
 - TBCG is also reviewing their estates to accommodate the equipment.

In addition to these courses and the construction sector Green Skills in careers programme will be included in all Study programmes to further promote sustainability in all sectors. This will be at all levels from 1 to 5. Employer forums on Green Skills are in the initial stages. GCAP membership will further support this. Employers will also benefit from the knowledge and skills of students in both T Levels and Apprenticeships.

- **LSIF Priority – Tackling the Digital Skills Gap – Milton Keynes College (Lead)** - Digital curriculum development is advanced with testing at employer level. To be rolled out across the rest of COSEM
- **LSIF Priority – Health & Science Capacity Building Barnfield College (Lead)** - Employers worked with Barnfield College on a bespoke route-into-work course for their early career pipeline; this is now ready for delivery and college staff have been trained to do this. Next steps include securing more employer commitment to delivery in colleges across the region. Equipment

procurement process is underway; this has been informed by employer consultation. We have built new relationships with a range of stakeholders in the NHS as a result of this project. This progress has resulted in an increase of employer engagement over last 6 months.

- **LSIF Priority – Employer Engagement Milton Keynes College (Lead)** - Several employer forums hosted across college sites, feedback shared with curriculum colleagues so that provision can be developed and delivered to meet the specific needs identified by employers. A wide range of stakeholder partnerships are being developed at a strategic level. Feedback from employers is gathered routinely via account managers, delivery teams and surveys. Feedback is reviewed and action taken to implement or enhance existing processes/procedures to ensure that we provide the best and most relevant services to boost innovation and productivity and to contribute to the skills development for our regions. Employer support has increased which means that we have been able to effectively respond to and anticipate employers' needs. The development of strong employer partnerships has improved the quality of student work/industry placements and apprenticeship opportunities. Adult learners have access to a wider range of opportunities to include digital learning opportunities and ESOL.

Project 2 of LSIF (linked to employer engagement) - Employer comms has provided research and marketing audit findings to be analysed for future use. CoSem has come together to discuss how we raise awareness as a group of colleges. Employer comms has also delivered a marketing campaign to raise awareness of colleges as skills partners. The Chambers of Commerce and the ERB have worked with the colleges to deliver sector boards to encourage engagement.

What still needs to be achieved?

Actions that are due to happen in the future

We encourage stakeholders to get involved by contacting us at: lsip@northants-chamber.co.uk. Whilst the LSIP cannot directly affect societal challenges, the cultural shift and range of priorities employers have identified do matter if we are to affect any positive changes and increase productivity for UK Plc. We know there are challenges to bringing about the changes identified, and we will need to explore and investigate these further with all stakeholders throughout the lifetime of the LSIP (and LSIF) projects.

- Formation of the task and finish groups (mid July 2024 latest) with regular meetings and dissemination of action “leads” to all stakeholders focusing on the key LSIP success outcomes:
 - Clarifying terms such as “green jobs”, “life/soft skills” etc. as they are still often mis-understood and detract from take-up
 - A vocational education and training system with clear pathways
 - More flexible, portable training with corresponding micro-credentials or accreditation where they add value, licenced to providers to mitigate the risk in quality of delivery.
 - Collaboration of stakeholders in the development of provision to meet our labour market demand including: co-designing of programmes alongside new/innovative learning methods & use of technology
 - More employers engaged and invested in all types of skills provision and training (including T levels, Apprenticeships, non-accredited, modular and vocational)
 - The inclusion of the development, application and evidencing of basic skills, core transferable, attitudes and behaviours (“life/soft skills”) within provision. This includes their relevancy to the workplace.
 - New provision and inclusion in existing provision for the development of ICT/digital skills at a basic level (email, web searches, etc) , for digital literacy for use within the workplace and business development/efficiencies (spreadsheets, digital marketing, CRM, etc) and specialist digital higher-level skills (programming, cyber security, etc).
 - More people within the learner pipeline for occupations with need locally particular for STEM related occupations through changing perceptions and understanding of opportunities within sectors, existing provision and future needs – increasing learner engagement and achievements and reducing barriers

- Creating a cultural shift (thinking and acting differently) through stakeholder collaboration and the promotion of benefits and opportunities created through open recruitment, development and retention of the workforce through provision that develops management, is more flexible, accessible and relevant to employers through use of efficient use of time and content that adds value.
- Creating accessible and communication channels between stakeholders that add value
- Developing a common language of the skills system to be used by stakeholders.

When planning next steps, we will consider the range of responses we received and look through comments wherever possible for improvement. In order to help deliver the LSIP priorities, we will continue to partner and work with those delivering skills based contracts, (Further Education, Higher Education providers, Adult Learner, Community Learner Services within Local Authorities, National Career Service, Restart, Work and Health Programme providers) plus commissioners such as Crown Commercial Services, Ministry of Justice, Dept of Work and Pensions, Local Authorities, Dept of Education. Trade bodies as well as other Employer Representative Bodies, Employers from all industries/sectors and Skills/Careers Hub

The key challenge is not provision – it is communication – raising employers awareness and education about the ever changing landscape and how to successfully navigate it in a way they understand. To successfully deliver outcomes, we must look to build employers trust in, and belief of, a skills system by helping providers and employers to understand each other's world and to really understand local business and employability needs in a way that employers want to be involved. The challenges FE face are capacity, staff recruitment versus the private sector, curriculum changes and the fact that FE income derives mainly from learners.

Granular intelligence on next steps that has been gathered from employers and stakeholders:

- Careers Enterprise Network and Cornerstone Employer group feedback - See Annexes
- Stakeholder feedback from LSIP event 16 May 2024 – See Annexes
- Local reports on occupational demands, Top 60 changes of provision etc. see links in Annex
- Weetabix would like to develop own Grad Programme.
- Dunbia Group struggle to find and FE provider who deliver butchery courses and as a result, there is a large skills gap in this area.
- Harpur Trust are in process of writing a document to create a new pilot for schools and businesses to come together, whereas the businesses will develop projects for the students to work on to help alleviate struggles with work experience.
- London Luton Airport - Planning to offer apprenticeships and grad schemes next school year now that right team is in place. Going to be delivering sessions for local colleges in coming weeks.
- Need commercial angle to get businesses to engage.
- Courses for employers are also needed to build on basic skills as they are the main people involved with the students. However, funding is a major issue that needs to be addressed. Looking into Academic Intensity as there is so much misconduct that comes through as students literally copy everything from AI data hence the creativity is lost in the process.
- Greater use of apprentices in the NHS and in long term workforce plan.
- UoN - In discussions with Graph UK (main sponsors of sustainability summit) about KTP's. Launching next round of AKT's (mini MTP's) and have funding for fast fashion and sustainability. Reached out to Brackmills BID to collaborate.
- The digital divide is already a huge concern, and we are in jeopardy of making future employment opportunities unobtainable for our 25+
- Employees need to be educated on where AI will negate or replace entirely their chosen skillset. The same must be said for students. Are the students choosing a degree/course discipline that will be replaced by the time they finish their scholarship?
- Digital skills are a barrier to job searching/applications.
- Increased awareness from primary school.
- LLA introducing an EV fleet and more sustainable approach.
- AI has a lot to answer for - increased power and water (cooling) needs. Foundational knowledge required at all levels. Personal one-to-one training can, in most cases, be digitised.

- The logistics sector looking at fuel emissions but electric vehicles don't always work due to battery charges etc.
- Careers and Enterprise Company are planning Careers Leader and Teacher CPD for 2025
- Initiatives at Northampton College to build a green skills centre over the summer linked to construction and engineering provisions.

Sharing updated intelligence

Data and messaging is shared at bi-monthly South East Midlands Employment and Skills Briefings to skills and training stakeholders. Data and analysis is provided in dashboards for stakeholders including Employment, Job Postings, Unemployment and Inactivity; Apprenticeships; Further Education; A Levels.

The Task and Finish Groups will be sharing intelligence and updating stakeholders online through Chambers of Commerce and Stakeholders websites. The LSIP is also promoted and informed through the membership of the team in the following employment and skills governing bodies and working groups throughout the South East Midlands such as South East Midlands Business Engagement Group (network groups/sector bodies), South East Midlands Creative and Cultural Industries Group, Greater South East Retrofit Training Network Steering Group, Logistics Employer Advisory Board, Bedford College, East Midlands Advisory Group, STEM Learning, CoSEM, Further Education College Principals Group, South East Midlands University Vice Chancellors, Bedford Borough Council, Skills Core Delivery Partnership, Employment and Skills Scrutiny and Improvement Board, Central Bedfordshire and Bedford Borough Councils, Luton Adult Learning, Luton Borough Council, Employment and Skills Provider Forum, Luton Borough Council, Adult Learning and Apprenticeship Performance Board, West and North Northamptonshire Councils, North Northamptonshire Council Skills Working Group, BIG 50 Strategy Vision, North Northamptonshire Council, Restart Local Engagement, Jobs 22, Post 16 Engagement into Employment, Milton Keynes Post-16 Planning Strategy Group, SEND Employment, West Northamptonshire Council Wider Determinants of Health Economy Employment and Skills, West Northamptonshire Local Authority Economic Development Officers – Business Survey feedback

Annexes and Links to reports:

Annex 1

Installation Assurance Authority

Annex 2

Careers Enterprise Network local report


Links

- **Employer Data Dashboard**




Emp Skills Data.xlsx

- **Future Employment report**

 [FutureEmploymentSEM202404.docx](#)

- **Future Skills report**

 [FutureSkillsSEM202404.docx](#)

- **Business Survey Summary 2023**

 [SEMLEPBusinessSurvey2023SkillsOverview.docx](#)

Annex 1 - THE NATIONAL ENERGY EFFICIENCY CENTRE, DELIVERED BY THE INSTALLATION ASSURANCE AUTHORITY IN CONJUNCTION WITH INDUSTRY AND PARTNERS

The Challenge

At peak in 2012 the Insulation Industry consisted of 54,000 employees, it currently consists of just under 10,000 active installers and scheme administrators operating under PAS 2030:2019. In order to reach Net Zero 2050, over 19 million domestic properties, including owner-occupied homes are required to have some level of deep retrofit, let alone that required by industrial and commercial premises and where the workforce does exist it generally does not hold the skills nor qualifications as required by PAS2030:2023. The future demand will require the current workforce to quadruple in size purely to meet the requirements of Government funded schemes, let alone privately financed solutions. It is forecasted that a further 107,000 building fabric and retrofit professionals will be required by 2030.

In addition, there is a lack of identified career pathways for apprenticeships and school leavers. The IAA's careers pathways paper, consulted on by over 230 installers at our recent annual conference, is seen as a clear solution to this problem and will be used extensively at the NEEC Leighton Buzzard to bring installer companies in line with PAS 2030:2023 through new entrant training.

The Proposed NEEC Solution

A National Energy Efficiency Centre is being created in Leighton Buzzard and will form the start of a movement connecting similar centres across the UK. The centre will provide training space, for current technologies and exhibition space for manufacturers and designers to not only demonstrate new technologies, systems and approaches but will allow training to both new entrants and those needing to upskill on the latest technologies, systems and processes.

The training area will include classrooms for theoretical training and rigs for practical training in various insulation and microgeneration technologies. Training will be available for all Installer companies and their employees to attend either commercial courses or Government funded provision, all to the current National Occupational Standards (NOS) and qualifications required under the PAS installation and design standards. Using the sector approved careers pathway model we will also provide a range of training and knowledge transfer opportunities to colleges and schools and those who require additional learning support. The centre will also provide a location where local authorities and Registered Social Landlords can better understand the process of deep retrofit, the available technologies and potential solutions.

The Delivery Concept

The NEEC will deliver contextualised learning programmes that maximise on the use of practical environments and skills alongside virtualised delivery using techniques such as virtual reality to simulate insulation methods and Artificial Intelligence 360 degree tours for those not able to visit in person.

The NEEC will provide a platform for learning and using technology a means of replicating industry developed content nationally and internationally to ensure the industry can get the knowledge skills and behaviours consistently delivered to meet its current and emerging needs.

Not only will the NEEC provide a platform for delivering industry required skills and knowledge but it will act as a platform to improve understanding, enhance careers advice and guidance, reduce risk and cost and deliver a diverse workforce across the whole of the supply chain from client to manufacturer to installer.

The IAA Commitment

The IAA have taken on the lease of a 17,000 square foot EPC A rated warehouse facility at 3 Union Park in Leighton Buzzard and are committing £2.8 million to the project through the life of the lease agreement with a £425,000 capital investment. The site will be sustained through:

- Industry and Manufacturer sponsors (both capital and revenue along with training support)
- The IAA (membership subscriptions and investments),
- Local Skills Investment Plans (LEP's),
- Collaboration with local colleges (using their own DfE and Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) funding),
- Direct from DESNZ - IAA(CS) holds a current DESNZ Adult Skills Budget (ASB) contract,
- Future DfE ASB tenders
- Income from a range of commercially available retrofit, professional courses.

Future capital funding for expansion and upgrades, is being obtained through further sponsorship from manufacturers, systems designers and at least one major energy supplier, as well as income from our extended activities as the industry Technical Authority for retrofit and consumer protection. The installation industry already has considerable support from product manufacturers wishing to be part of the NEEC model.

The Plan

We have a 3-year development plan for the centre, which commenced in November 2023.

- Phase 1 – Obtain premises, build training rigs and develop exhibition/teaching space - November 2023 – April 2024
- Phase 2 – Commence training delivery – April 2024
- Phase 3 – Run at full capacity – Jan 2025

As stated The IAA and The IAA's Commercial Services company are funding a ten-year lease and have agreed to fund all associated running costs which will amount to £2.5m of funding (over the 10 years). A target of £300,000 sponsorship has been set and is already well on the way to achievement from manufacturers. Further bids and tenders are being submitted to assist with content development and creation of some of the teaching and learning space and £50,000 has now been secured from the Resilience Innovation Grant administered by SEMLEP.

The centre, once fully operational will support:

- Our own 350 installer members, (which is growing on a weekly basis, many of whom are CITB registered)
- Tier 1 contractors seeking to develop their wider workforce and supply chain, which will support their own successful bids under Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) and Home Upgrade Grant (HUG) schemes funded by Government.
- A further c1,500 installer employers from across the building fabric/retrofit sector including those currently operating in new build.

With the expectation of c3,500 learners per annum from c1,500 companies, using the facility either as learners on structured programmes or those undergoing manufacturers or installer training we will be able to increase the skills of individual installers which will inevitably increase companies' productivity. Training and qualifications will also reduce the need for reworks due to incorrect installations and installer companies will become PAS compliant enabling them to take on more work under PAS. There will also be an economy of scale as the resources at the centre will be able to be reused time and time again.

We will further impact on improving productivity by producing more fully trained and qualified new entrants to the sector through our training packages linked to our agreed careers pathway work. The careers pathway work will enable people from a wide range of diverse backgrounds and genders (addressing the gender and diversity imbalances in construction), to enter the sector as career transfers, new entrants or those returning to work (including the recently released prison population).

All qualifications and training will be in line with the NOS and meet the requirements of the installation and design standards under PAS 2030:2023 and PAS 2035 and the MCS standards.

Amongst a variety of commercially sponsored, short training and upskilling courses we will offer:

- Level 2 Awards to the unemployed and current on programme construction students in colleges and training providers.

- NVQ training to the employed, across 4 insulation methods. (Learners will also receive training in Building Interfaces, Defects and Risk)
- L3 Awards to currently employed Retrofit Coordinators, Assessors and Designers in Energy Efficiency Measures for Older and Traditional Buildings
- Level 5 Diploma in Retrofit Coordination and Risk Management to those currently employed
- Certified assessor competency training to learners in the evaluation of retrofit through ventilation assessment.
- Microgeneration Technologies including Air and Ground Source Heat Pumps, Solar Heating, Solar PV and battery storage along with a range of electrification of heat and vehicle charging.

The Premises

Unit 3, Union Park is a newly built, high-quality industrial unit on a small site consisting of 9 units in Leighton Buzzard.

There is a total warehouse area of 15,570 sq. ft and the building is EPC rated A, and comes with EV charging points, bicycle shelter, 10% natural roof lights and close to Grovebury Retail Park.

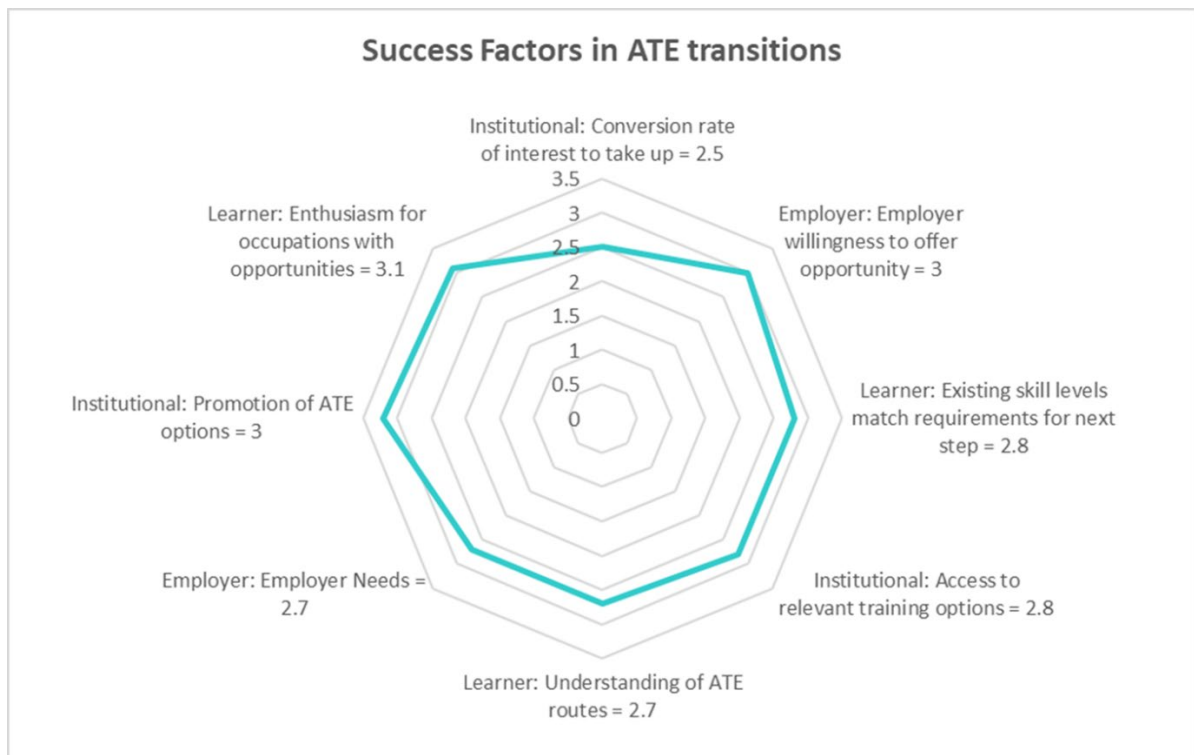
Union Park is located in Bedfordshire, approximately 46 miles to the North West of Central London, and 13 miles south of Milton Keynes. The M1 Motorway (junction 11A) is approximately 8 miles to the east, and the A5 is easily accessed by the A4146 Leighton Buzzard bypass.

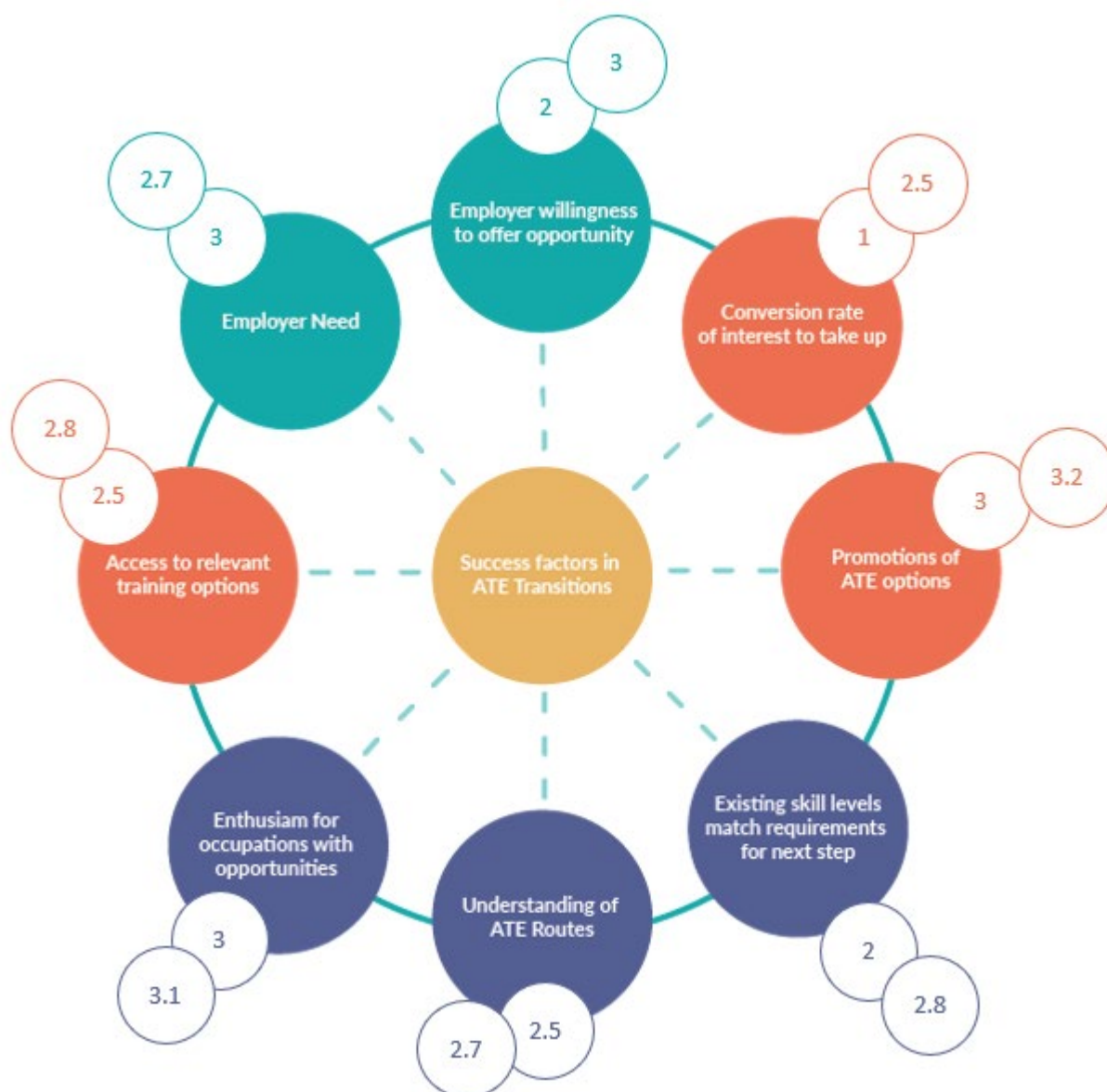
Annex 2 - Careers Enterprise Network ATE local report

ATE Framework workshop in May. Your thoughts and ideas have been incredibly valuable when our attention has turned to how we can continue to amplify apprenticeships and technical education in the 2024-25 academic year.

The Careers and Enterprise Company are keen to gather stakeholder feedback on your involvement in the process as they continue to reflect on and plan for any improvements going forward. I would be most grateful if you could complete the short evaluation survey here: [ATE Workshop – Stakeholder evaluation](#).

It may be helpful to refresh your memory as to the outcomes of the workshop below:





Identified strength areas:	Areas of challenge:
<p><i>3 highest scoring:</i></p> <p>Employer: Willingness to offer opportunity Institutional: Promotion of ATE options Learner: Enthusiasm for occupations with opportunities</p>	<p><i>3 lowest scoring:</i></p> <p>Institutional: Conversion rate of interest to take up Employer: Employer need Learner: Existing skill levels match requirements for next step</p>

Conclusion from stakeholder discussion:

An agreement to develop initiatives which focus on improving the success factors:

- Access to relevant training options: To increase the visibility of the range of opportunities locally.
- Continuing work on the success factor conversion rate of interest to take up. To increase the availability, visibility and understanding of apprenticeships and all technical pathways across Northamptonshire, Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes.

The above recommendations will be reviewed, scoped out with partners and delivered in a staged approach by the South East Midlands Careers Hub as part of the key priority to amplify apprenticeships, technical and vocational routes.

Recommendations to improve the above factors:

- Survey of all stakeholders to identify current knowledge and understanding of ATE routes, along barriers to accessing opportunities.
- Single point of contact for schools, students and parents to see what opportunities are available – establishment of an online provider directory.
- Apprenticeship academy resources – making these available for schools who would like to run an in-house apprenticeship academy to support learners to access apprenticeships
- Teacher CPD – what opportunities are available, how can we support young people to access these?
- Project to work on a common skills language in partnership with LSIP.
- All initiatives to be accessible and inclusive to young people facing most barriers to transition and progression.