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Swindon & Wiltshire  
Local Skills  
Improvement Plan  
2026



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**'This Local Skills Improvement Plan has been approved by the Secretary of State in accordance with the requirements of section 1 of the Skills and Post-16 Education Act 2022, and the relevant published statutory guidance'**

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## Introduction

**The Swindon & Wiltshire LSIP** is a Skills England funded and employer-led plan to better align post-16 education and training provision with the current and future skills needs of the regional economy.

This Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) for Swindon & Wiltshire sets out the priority skills needs of employers across the region and has been developed by Business West, the Chamber of Commerce for Wiltshire and the Designated Employer Representative Body for the Swindon & Wiltshire LSIP. The contents of this report have been informed through in-depth engagement with businesses, stakeholders, providers and partners in the employment and skills systems. This report provides an overview of the region's key sectors, the principal skills challenges identified through employer engagement, and the scale and breadth of engagement activity undertaken to inform the plan. It also sets out how these findings align with the emerging Swindon & Wiltshire Economic Strategy 2025–2035, while recognising the need to remain responsive to forthcoming strategic developments, including the Swindon Skills Strategy, Wiltshire Skills Strategy, and any future combined Swindon & Wiltshire skills framework developed during the LSIP delivery period.

This LSIP has been developed in alignment with a range of national and local strategic frameworks relating to economic growth, skills, employment and workforce development. It reflects the priorities set out within the Government's Opportunity and Growth Missions, the Post-16 Education and Skills White Paper, the Industrial Strategy and associated sector plans, and the Clean Energy Jobs Plan, alongside local economic and employment strategies for Swindon and Wiltshire. It also aligns with the Government's wider programme of skills and labour market reform. The priorities identified through employer engagement directly support the Government's Opportunity Mission through improving access to skills, progression and employment opportunities, while supporting the Growth Mission by addressing workforce shortages and improving productivity across priority sectors.

Swindon & Wiltshire is characterised by a diverse economy, with strengths in advanced manufacturing and engineering, defence, construction, and the visitor economy, alongside a significant Everyday Economy. However, the region faces distinct structural challenges, including rurality, transport constraints, and the absence of a local university, which impact workforce development and retention, as well as the potential creation of a Strategic Authority in the future, as part of the English Devolution Bill, which will change the skills landscape and priorities in the region.

*"Business West are proud to deliver this Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) for Swindon and Wiltshire on behalf of businesses, education and training providers and key stakeholders in the local area. LSIPs put employers at the heart of local skills planning, aligning training with real business need and strengthening collaboration with education providers to improve options for learners, and help businesses plan ahead." – Douglas Ure, CEO, Business West*

## Executive Summary

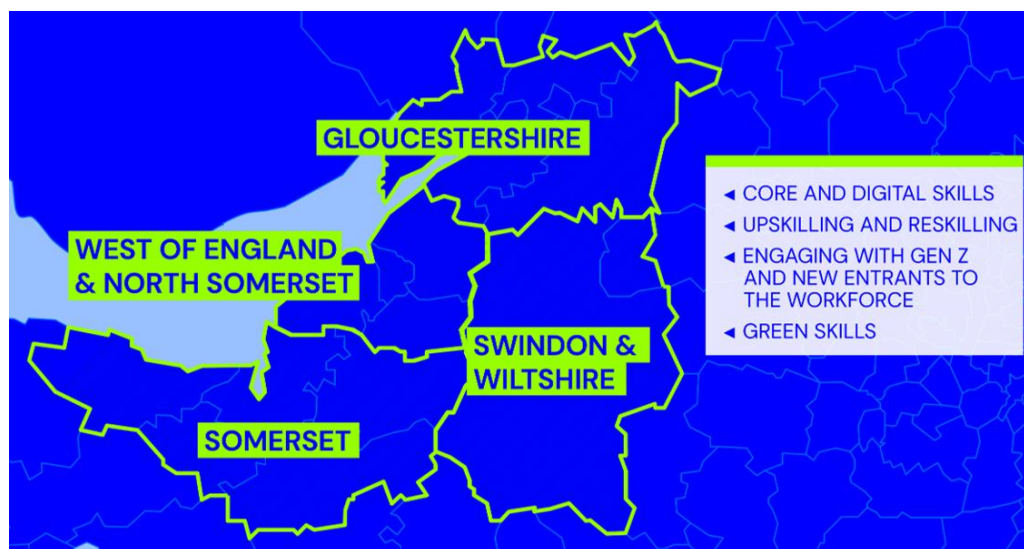
The findings of this LSIP reflect the ambitions set out within the Post-16 Skills Plan and Lifelong Learning reforms, particularly the emphasis on flexible, modular and employer-responsive provision. Employer demand for shorter, stackable and accessible training pathways was consistently identified throughout engagement activity. The LSIP further supports the objectives of the Get Britain Working agenda and the local Get Swindon & Wiltshire Working Plan by recognising the importance of reducing economic inactivity, supporting progression into employment and improving opportunities for individuals at risk of disengagement from education or work.

The growing focus on sustainability, retrofit, electrification and green capability also aligns strongly with the Government's Clean Energy Jobs Plan and wider Industrial Strategy priorities, particularly in sectors such as advanced manufacturing, defence, construction, digital technologies and clean energy systems.

In doing so, the LSIP seeks not only to identify employer skills priorities, but also to support a more connected and responsive skills system that enables workforce development, productivity growth and inclusive economic participation across Swindon & Wiltshire. Employer engagement has identified a number of consistent priority skills challenges. These include:

- Gaps in net zero and sustainability skills
- Increasing demand for digital and AI capabilities
- Widespread shortages in transferable and workplace skills
- Ongoing difficulties in recruitment—particularly at mid-level technical roles.

Employers also highlighted challenges in navigating the skills system and accessing appropriate training provision. In response, this LSIP outlines a set of priority actions focused on improving clarity and accessibility of training pathways, strengthening workforce pipelines, enabling flexible and modular provision, and better aligning the skills system with employer needs.



The Swindon & Wiltshire LSIP has adopted 7 sectors from within the Emerging Economic Strategy for Swindon & Wiltshire 2025–2036:

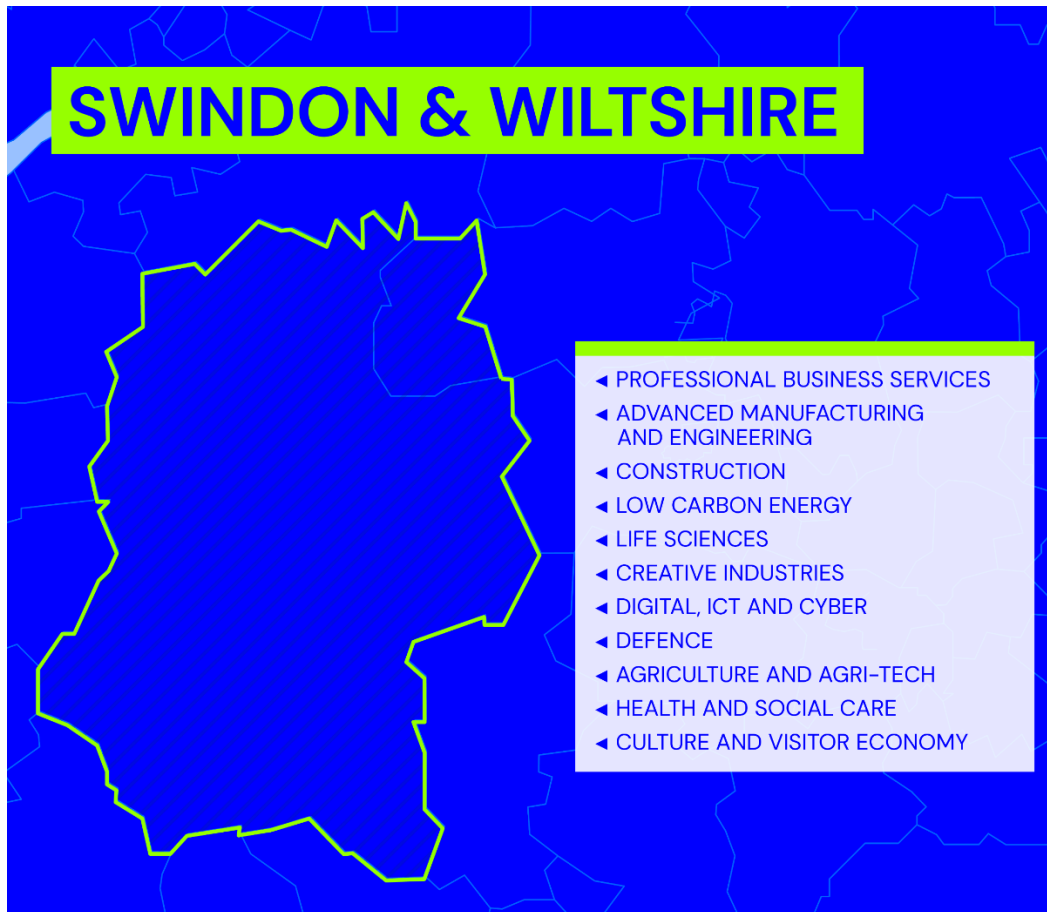
- Professional and business services
- Advanced manufacturing and engineering
- Low carbon
- Life sciences
- Creative industries
- Digital ICT and cyber
- Defence

These formed the basis for priority growth sector alignment during initial LSIP development, however this document was not ratified and therefore not published as a final document. Through our governance group (see Annex C), additional sectors were chosen to further reflect a wide cross-section of Swindon & Wiltshire’s economy;

- Construction
- Health & Social Care
- Agritech
- Cultural/Visitor Economy

These sectors were integrated at a later stage in the LSIP development process and, as such, will require further targeted engagement and analysis to fully articulate detailed skills needs and associated actions over the delivery period. However, it should be noted that several of these sectors – particularly Construction and Health and Social Care – were also prioritised within the previous Swindon & Wiltshire LSIP. This provides a strong foundation of existing intelligence and established stakeholder relationships on which to build, enabling a more rapid progression from identification of need to delivery of action.

The sectors identified in the Swindon & Wiltshire LSIP therefore reflect a combination of locally significant industries, priorities identified through the emerging Swindon & Wiltshire Economic Strategy, and additional sectors highlighted through employer and stakeholder governance discussions. Together, these sectors create a clear line of sight between local economic priorities and the Government’s Industrial Strategy priority sectors.



Several sectors directly align to the nationally identified Industrial Strategy growth sectors, including Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering, Defence, Digital ICT and Cyber, Life Sciences, Professional Business Services and Creative Industries. In addition, the LSIP reflects the Government’s recognition of Construction and Health and Social Care as foundational sectors critical to economic resilience and growth.

While not all priority sectors align directly to a single Industrial Strategy category, sectors such as Agritech and the Visitor Economy play an important enabling role within the Swindon & Wiltshire economy and were repeatedly identified through engagement activity as strategically significant to local employment, productivity and workforce demand.

These findings have been further sense-checked and refined through stakeholder engagement, including a multi-agency session with local partners, which reinforced that many of the challenges identified, particularly around work readiness, employer engagement and access to training, are systemic in nature and require coordinated, cross-partner responses rather than isolated interventions.

The action statements that follow have been developed in response to the priority needs identified through employer and stakeholder engagement, while also recognising that not all sectors are equally mature within the evidence base. For sectors where intelligence is already stronger, actions can be expressed with greater specificity at this

stage; for those brought into scope later, the initial focus will include further engagement and refinement to ensure that subsequent activity is proportionate, evidence-led and aligned with employer demand.

Implementation of this LSIP will be driven through a set of coordinated activities, co-developed with partners to reflect both employer need and delivery feasibility. These are outlined in Annex B, including lead roles, partnerships and delivery considerations. Activity development is ongoing through the Swindon & Wiltshire Skills Group, providing strategic oversight and ensuring alignment across stakeholders as the LSIP progresses from planning into delivery.

The previous Swindon & Wiltshire LSIP, delivered between 2022 and 2025, is accessible here: [Swindon & Wiltshire Local Skills Improvement Plan 2022 - 2025](#).

# Strategic and Economic Context

## REGIONAL ECONOMIC CONTEXT AND PERFORMANCE

**The Swindon and Wiltshire local area has a diverse and productive economic base,** contributing approximately £26 billion in Gross Value Added (GVA) to the UK economy. Economic activity is distributed across both Swindon and Wiltshire, with Swindon accounting for around 44% of output and Wiltshire 56%, reflecting differing economic structures and growth trajectories across the area (*Local Economic Assessment, p.4*).<sup>1</sup>

The area demonstrates several underlying economic strengths: productivity has grown in recent years, outpacing the national average, and the labour market is characterised by high levels of participation and relatively low unemployment. Around four in five residents are economically active, indicating strong engagement with the labour market (*Local Economic Assessment, p.5*).<sup>2</sup>

Swindon has a highly productive economy, ranking among the most productive local authorities in England, supported by a strong base of large employers and high-value sectors (*Local Economic Assessment, p.8*). Wiltshire complements this with strengths in areas such as manufacturing, construction and public administration, reflecting its more rural and dispersed economic geography (*Local Economic Assessment, p.4*).<sup>3</sup>

However, economic performance across the area is uneven. Growth patterns have diverged between Swindon and Wiltshire, with recent contraction in Swindon's manufacturing sector linked to structural changes, including major site closures, while Wiltshire has experienced stronger recovery in output (*Local Economic Assessment, p.4; p.8*). Business numbers have declined in recent years, and employment growth has lagged behind national trends, suggesting underlying fragilities within the business base and labour market (*Local Economic Assessment, p.4*).<sup>4</sup>

Demographic trends also shape the economic context. The population is growing, but the proportion of working-age residents is below the national average, and the population is ageing rapidly, increasing demand for health and care services while constraining labour supply (*Local Economic Assessment, p.5*).<sup>5</sup> These structural characteristics are central to understanding both current labour market conditions and future skills demand.

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<sup>1</sup> Swindon and Wiltshire Business and Growth Unit (2025): [Swindon and Wiltshire Local Economic Assessment](#).

<sup>2</sup> Swindon and Wiltshire Business and Growth Unit (2025): [Swindon and Wiltshire Local Economic Assessment](#).

<sup>3</sup> Swindon and Wiltshire Business and Growth Unit (2025): [Swindon and Wiltshire Local Economic Assessment](#).

<sup>4</sup> Swindon and Wiltshire Business and Growth Unit (2025): [Swindon and Wiltshire Local Economic Assessment](#).

<sup>5</sup> Swindon and Wiltshire Business and Growth Unit (2025): [Swindon and Wiltshire Local Economic Assessment](#).

The absence of a university physically located within Swindon & Wiltshire contributes to longer-term challenges around graduate retention and higher-level workforce development. Many young people leave the area to pursue higher education opportunities elsewhere and do not subsequently return, creating implications for future leadership pipelines, specialist technical capability and workforce succession. This reinforces the importance of strengthening local higher technical education pathways, expanding collaboration with neighbouring higher education institutions and ensuring that local progression opportunities remain visible and accessible to residents and employers.

## **PRIORITY SECTORS AND DRIVERS OF GROWTH**

The economic strategies for Swindon and Wiltshire identify a set of priority sectors that reflect both historic strengths and future growth opportunities. In Swindon, the Economic Growth Plan highlights three core high-value sectors: defence, component manufacturing, and financial and professional services (*Economic Growth Plan, p.8*).<sup>6</sup> These sectors build on the area's industrial heritage, strategic location along the M4 corridor, and established base of highly productive firms.

Manufacturing remains a central component of the local economy, contributing significantly to GVA and employment, although recent restructuring has highlighted the need for ongoing adaptation and diversification (*Economic Growth Plan, p.8; Local Economic Assessment, p.4*). The sector is increasingly oriented towards advanced and dual-use applications, including clean energy and defence-related technologies (*Economic Growth Plan, p.8*).<sup>7</sup>

The defence sector is identified as a particular area of competitive advantage, with emerging specialisms in technologies such as unmanned aerial systems and strong alignment with national defence priorities (*Economic Growth Plan, p.8*). Financial and professional services also represent a significant contributor to economic output, particularly in Swindon, where the sector accounts for a substantial share of GVA and continues to grow despite wider national trends (*Economic Growth Plan, p.9; Local Economic Assessment, p.8*).<sup>8</sup>

Across Swindon and Wiltshire more broadly, the Local Economic Assessment highlights a wider set of priority sectors, including Professional Business Services, Creative Industries, Cyber Security, Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering, Defence, Environmental Technologies, and Life Sciences alongside foundational sectors such as health, education, and retail, which are essential to supporting local communities and enabling broader economic activity (*Local Economic Assessment, p.10; Economic Growth Plan, p.9*).<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Swindon Borough Council (2026): [Economic Growth Plan](#).

<sup>7</sup> Swindon Borough Council (2026): [Economic Growth Plan](#).

<sup>8</sup> Swindon Borough Council (2026): [Economic Growth Plan](#).

<sup>9</sup> Swindon and Wiltshire Business and Growth Unit (2025): [Swindon and Wiltshire Local Economic Assessment](#).

Together, these sectors define the primary drivers of economic growth and key sources of current and future skills demand across the area. While Swindon & Wiltshire continues to demonstrate relatively strong employment performance overall, employers increasingly report challenges associated with labour shortages, demographic change, recruitment pressures and workforce replacement demand.

These pressures are particularly acute within technical and skilled occupations, where employers report ongoing difficulties recruiting experienced staff with up-to-date industry knowledge, supervisory capability and specialist technical expertise. Combined with an ageing workforce and constrained labour supply, this is creating increasing pressure across several priority sectors.

## **STRATEGIC PRIORITIES OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND SUB-REGIONAL PLANS AND POTENTIAL DEVOLUTION**

The strategic framework for Swindon and Wiltshire is shaped by a combination of local authority plans and regional economic strategies. The Swindon Economic Growth Plan (2026–2031) sets out a vision to position the borough as a leading economic centre in southern England, focusing on innovation, productivity and sustainable development (*Economic Growth Plan, p.7*).<sup>10</sup>

This plan is structured around key themes, including business and investment, infrastructure and connectivity, green economy, employment and skills, and community wealth building. It emphasises the importance of aligning economic growth with improvements in skills, regeneration and inclusive outcomes (*Economic Growth Plan, p.7*).<sup>11</sup>

At a wider level, the Swindon and Wiltshire Local Economic Assessment provides the analytical foundation for economic strategy, highlighting both opportunities and constraints across the area. It identifies the need to support business growth, address sectoral decline, and respond to future trends including the green transition, automation and demographic change (*Local Economic Assessment, p.127–133*).<sup>12</sup>

In Wiltshire, the Wiltshire Council Plan (2025–2035) sets out a long-term vision focused on building a more resilient, inclusive and sustainable county, with an emphasis on community-led development, partnership working and improving quality of life (*Wiltshire Plan, p.9*). The plan highlights the importance of strengthening local economies, supporting skills development, and addressing infrastructure and environmental challenges through coordinated action (*Wiltshire Plan, p.4; p.11*).<sup>13</sup>

Across these strategies, there is a consistent focus on productivity, sector growth, sustainability, and inclusive economic development. Skills are identified as a key enabling

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<sup>10</sup> Swindon Borough Council (2026): [Economic Growth Plan](#).

<sup>11</sup> Swindon Borough Council (2026): [Economic Growth Plan](#).

<sup>12</sup> Swindon and Wiltshire Business and Growth Unit (2025): [Swindon and Wiltshire Local Economic Assessment](#).

<sup>13</sup> Wiltshire Council (2025): [Our Wiltshire Plan](#).

factor in achieving these ambitions, providing the context within which the LSIP operates.

Wiltshire County Council, Somerset Council, BCP Council and Dorset Council continue to work together as the Wessex Partnership to explore bringing the benefits of devolution to the region. In line with the English Devolution Bill, this could mean the creation of a Strategic Authority in the future, and the devolution of decision making to it in areas such as skills and employment support, culture, economic development and regeneration, transport and infrastructure, housing and strategic planning, environment and net zero, health and wellbeing, and public safety.

Swindon Borough Council have also announced their intention to join a Thames Valley devolutionary area with Oxfordshire and Berkshire Local Authorities, with an updated jointly submitted to ministers in March 2026, outlining the functional economic market area alignments and desire to establish a Mayoral Strategic Authority.

The evolving devolution landscape presents significant opportunities for more integrated approaches to skills, employment and economic development across the wider region. Emerging combined authority arrangements may create opportunities for greater local influence over adult skills funding, workforce development priorities and employer engagement activity.

The LSIP has been designed to help ensure that employer intelligence, labour market need and local delivery priorities remain aligned, where possible, throughout periods of structural and governance change.

## **LABOUR MARKET DYNAMICS AND KEY CHALLENGES**

The labour market in Swindon and Wiltshire is characterised by high employment and economic activity rates, indicating strong overall performance. The combined employment rate exceeds both regional and national benchmarks, and unemployment remains relatively low (*Get Swindon and Wiltshire Working Plan, p.4*).<sup>14</sup>

However, this strong performance contributes to a tight labour market, with limited spare capacity and increasing challenges for employers seeking to recruit. Skills shortages are reported across a range of sectors, and there is evidence of a mismatch between the skills available in the workforce and those required by employers (*Get Swindon and Wiltshire Working Plan, p.8*).<sup>15</sup>

Demographic pressures further constrain labour supply. The population is ageing, with a growing proportion of residents aged 65 and over, and slower growth in the working-age

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<sup>14</sup> Swindon Borough Council and Wiltshire Council (2026): [Get Swindon and Wiltshire Working Plan](#).

<sup>15</sup> Swindon Borough Council and Wiltshire Council (2026): [Get Swindon and Wiltshire Working Plan](#)

population (*Local Economic Assessment, p.5; Get Swindon and Wiltshire Working Plan, p.8*).<sup>16</sup> <sup>17</sup> This has implications for both labour availability and demand for services.

While overall economic inactivity is relatively low, there are concentrated challenges among specific groups. Long-term health conditions and caring responsibilities are key drivers of inactivity, and there are disparities in employment outcomes across different demographic groups and geographic areas (*Get Swindon and Wiltshire Working Plan, p.9–10*).<sup>18</sup> There are also challenges related to skills and progression. Despite relatively strong educational performance in some areas, qualification levels at higher levels remain below national averages in parts of the area, and some young people enter employment without sufficient training, limiting long-term career progression (*Get Swindon and Wiltshire Working Plan, p.5*).<sup>19</sup>

These factors highlight the need for a coordinated approach to skills development, labour market participation and progression, and underline the importance of aligning training provision with both employer demand and the needs of individuals.

## **ALIGNMENT WITH WIDER STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND DELIVERY PLANS**

The LSIP is positioned within a broader strategic framework that integrates economic growth, labour market participation and community outcomes across Swindon and Wiltshire. It complements the objectives of the Swindon Economic Growth Plan, the Wiltshire Council Plan, and the evidence base provided by the Local Economic Assessment, translating strategic ambitions into actionable skills priorities.

In particular, the LSIP supports the delivery of sectoral growth by aligning skills provision with the needs of priority industries, including defence, manufacturing, financial and professional services, and emerging technology sectors. This ensures that the workforce is equipped to support productivity improvements, business growth and innovation, as set out in local economic strategies.

The LSIP also contributes to addressing the enabling conditions for growth identified across the strategic framework, including skills shortages, labour market constraints and demographic pressures. By identifying and promoting access to training and progression pathways through employer engagement, it helps to mitigate these challenges and support more inclusive economic outcomes.

The LSIP also supports the objectives of the Get Swindon and Wiltshire Working Plan by ensuring that skills provision is responsive to employer demand and accessible to those facing barriers to work. It reinforces the focus on progression by identifying the skills required for advancement within key sectors and supporting pathways from education into employment. It also contributes to a more integrated approach across policy areas, recognising the links between skills, employment, health and wider social outcomes.

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<sup>16</sup> Swindon Borough Council and Wiltshire Council (2026): [Get Swindon and Wiltshire Working Plan](#)

<sup>17</sup> Swindon and Wiltshire Business and Growth Unit (2025): [Swindon and Wiltshire Local Economic Assessment](#).

<sup>18</sup> Swindon Borough Council and Wiltshire Council (2026): [Get Swindon and Wiltshire Working Plan](#)

<sup>19</sup> Swindon Borough Council and Wiltshire Council (2026): [Get Swindon and Wiltshire Working Plan](#)

Overall, the LSIP forms a key component of the strategic approach to economic development in Swindon and Wiltshire. It operates alongside local authority plans and delivery strategies to ensure that the skills system supports both sectoral growth and improved labour market outcomes, contributing to a more coherent, inclusive and resilient local economy.

## Part 1: Local Skills Needs

This **Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP)** has been developed using a robust and evolving evidence base, combining qualitative employer insight with quantitative labour market intelligence and regional strategic analysis. This approach ensures that the findings reflect both the lived experience of employers across Swindon & Wiltshire and the wider economic context in which they operate.

The skills needs identified within this LSIP reflect a combination of immediate operational pressures, medium-term workforce development priorities and longer-term structural changes affecting the regional economy:

Immediate Workforce Pressures	Medium-Term Priorities	Longer-Term Strategic Needs
Recruitment difficulties	Improving progression pathways	The aging workforce
Transferable skills gaps	Strengthening employer engagement	AI adoption, digitalisation and automation
Workforce shortages	Embedding digital and sustainability skills	Decarbonisation
Employer understanding of the skills system	Improving coordination across the skills system	Changing occupational demands

An additional longer-term consideration that has been present throughout this LSIP is the potential future impact of devolution and economic restructuring within the wider region.

This distinction is important in ensuring that the LSIP responds both to current employer need and to the broader economic and technological changes likely to shape future workforce demand.

Engagement has been undertaken through a diverse range of complementary methods designed to capture both depth and breadth of insight, with 1187 engagements included in the Swindon & Wiltshire LSIP. These have included one-to-one business interviews, sector-specific group discussions, surveys, workshops and wider stakeholder engagement. Sectoral representation overall has been good, but the additional sectors added in 2026 to the original foci will need further attention to continue to develop useful sector intelligence at a granular level.

Our in-depth and qualitative engagement process has incorporated six underlying themes for researching, including technology adoption, critical and enabling skills, needs for business when working with young people and sustainability and decarbonisation as an extension of the previous LSIP processes.

This primary research process has been supported by secondary data sources from regional, national and sectoral sources, to ensure this LSIP is built on existing understanding and adding granular intelligence at a usable level reflective of the skills needs for Swindon & Wiltshire.

In addition to direct and survey-based engagement, the LSIP evidence base has been further informed by one-to-many engagement delivered through a programme of general business events and partner-led sessions as well as the incorporation of LSIP content into general business surveying mechanisms. These engagements enabled the inclusion of a wider employer audience, including those not reached through structured interviews or surveys. In some cases, detailed attendee data was not available to enable full sectoral or geographic classification. However, where events had a defined sectoral focus, contributions have been incorporated and attributed accordingly within the relevant sector evidence base. As with the supplementary survey data, insights gathered through these channels have been used to triangulate and strengthen the overall findings, rather than as standalone determinants of priority skills needs.

## **SUPPLEMENTARY EMPLOYER SURVEYS, PAN-REGIONAL (OTHER UNCLASSIFIED MAJORITY RESPONSES)**

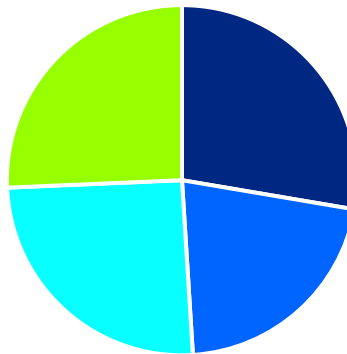
In addition to targeted LSIP engagement activity, a broad dataset of employer insight was incorporated through general business surveying activity undertaken across Business West activities. This included a total of 553 responses where LSIP-related questions were embedded, enabling the capture of wider employer perspectives beyond sector-specific or place-based engagement.

Due to the structure of this dataset, responses cannot be fully disaggregated by individual LSIP geography or priority sector. As such, the findings have been treated as supplementary, pan-regional evidence to inform overall trends and triangulate key themes emerging from primary LSIP engagement.

Respondents have been aligned at a high level using Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) groupings and indicative geography. On this basis, the distribution of responses is as follows:

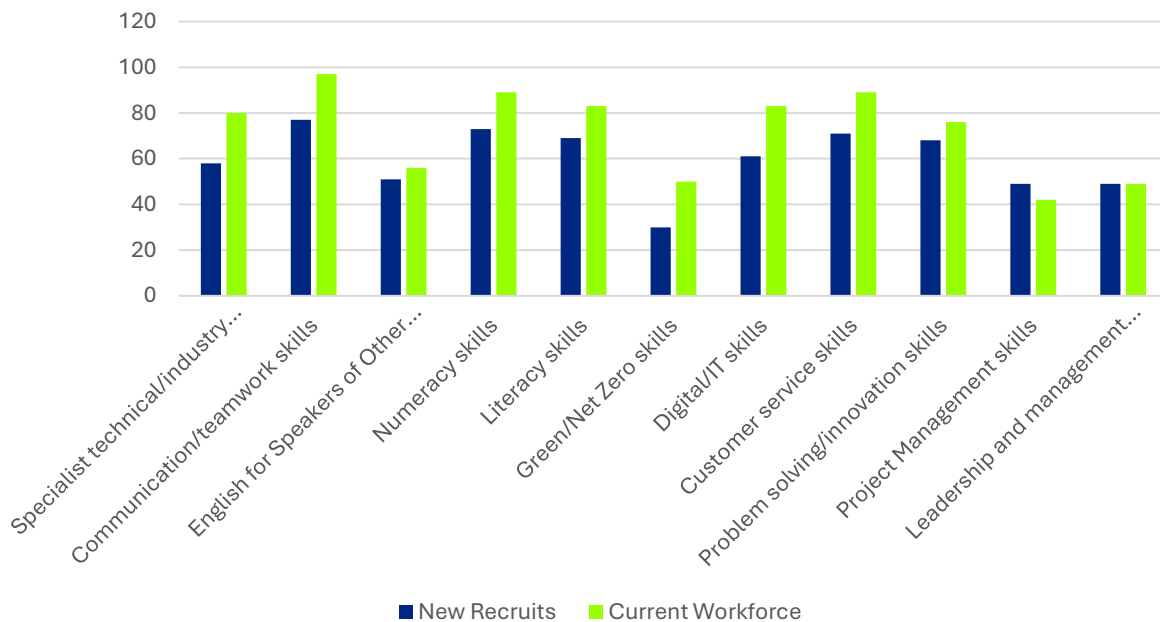
- 28% aligned to Gloucestershire
- 21% aligned to Swindon and Wiltshire
- 26% aligned to Somerset
- 25% aligned to West of England and North Somerset

## Supplementary evidence respondents based on primary region



This dataset provides additional context on employer sentiment, workforce challenges, and skills needs across the wider business base. While not used in isolation to determine priority actions, it has been used to validate and reinforce patterns identified through targeted engagement, particularly in relation to cross-cutting themes such as recruitment challenges, skills gaps, and training accessibility.

### Which of the following skill areas are currently important to your business?



In addition to employer engagement, findings were reviewed and tested through stakeholder sessions involving representatives from local government, further and higher education, schools, employers, health, and delivery partners. This provided an opportunity to validate emerging themes, identify areas requiring further focus, and consider how LSIP findings can best inform local priorities and delivery.

An agile methodology has been adopted throughout the development of this LSIP, building on the approach used in the previous LSIP while adapting methods to improve reach, accessibility and effectiveness.

This has included:

- Continuing the use of one-to-one engagement and sector discussions to capture detailed qualitative insight
- Expanding the use of surveys, distributed through digital channels and supported by targeted outreach, to increase the scale of engagement
- Refining data capture methods to ensure that all engagement activity is recorded and reflected, including shorter interactions that were previously underreported

The introduction of ongoing survey mechanisms has also enabled continuous engagement throughout the LSIP development period, allowing for the capture of evolving employer needs and perspectives over time.

This iterative approach ensures that the LSIP remains responsive and reflective of the region’s dynamic labour market, and that engagement methods continue to evolve in line with employer preferences and behaviours. These skills needs were identified through collaboration with regional employers, stakeholders, further education colleges and independent training providers in the local area, building on existing relationships and engaging with new participants of the LSIP. Stakeholder discussion reinforced that many of the skills challenges identified are interconnected and systemic, including work readiness, employer engagement, access to training, and progression pathways. These issues were consistently recognised as requiring coordinated action across the skills system, rather than being attributable to any single part of it.

The LSIP reflects the importance of supporting progression across the full skills pipeline, from entry-level employability and workforce participation through to higher-level technical capability, leadership development and workforce upskilling.

Skills Level	Primary Focus within the LSIP
Entry Level / Levels 1–2	Employability, work readiness, NEET prevention, progression into employment
Levels 3–5	Technical workforce shortages, apprenticeships, HTQs, supervisory and management capability
Levels 6–8	Advanced technical skills, leadership, digital specialisms, engineering capability, innovation and research alignment
Workforce Upskilling and Reskilling	AI adoption, sustainability, retrofit, digital capability, leadership and management

The challenges identified through this LSIP strongly align with the priorities set out within the [Get Swindon & Wiltshire Working Plan](#), particularly the shared focus on reducing economic inactivity, improving progression into employment, strengthening employability and digital skills, and supporting more joined-up approaches across skills,

health and employment systems. The emphasis within the LSIP on entry-level pathways, work readiness, employer engagement, flexible provision and improved system coordination directly supports the Plan's objectives around increasing labour market participation, supporting disadvantaged groups into sustainable employment, and creating a more integrated and accessible local support system for residents and employers across Swindon & Wiltshire.

## PRIORITY SKILLS NEEDS STATEMENTS

While several of the identified skills needs are interconnected and reflect wider systemic issues across the skills and employment landscape, they have been deliberately separated within this LSIP to ensure that distinct operational, strategic and delivery challenges are appropriately recognised.

This approach enables clearer articulation of employer need, more targeted actions and improved accountability across delivery partners. It also reflects the reality that, while themes such as work readiness, progression, digital capability and system coordination are closely linked, they often require different interventions, ownership structures and measures of success.

1. Employers report significant **gaps in critical workplace and transferable skills**, particularly among the emerging workforce, impacting recruitment, retention and progression across sectors.
2. Employers and stakeholders report limited entry-level pathways into employment, particularly at Levels 1 and 2, alongside a need for **stronger alignment between education provision and employer requirements to support progression** and reduce economic inactivity.
3. Employers face **difficulty navigating the skills landscape**, including confusion around availability and relevance of training options, support mechanisms and funding, alongside a preference for more flexible and accessible training provision.
4. Employers report a need for **greater support to engage with young people and new entrants**, alongside improved clarity of the skills system and stronger coordination of careers education, work experience and placement opportunities.
5. Employers report increasing use of AI and digital technologies across business operations, alongside a need for greater **understanding of safe and effective AI usage, improved support for SME digital adoption, and stronger baseline digital skills** across the workforce.
6. Employers report **growing demand for sustainability and net zero skills**, alongside concerns that current provision is not sufficiently relevant or aligned to business need, and a lack of visibility of available training opportunities within the region.
7. Employers report ongoing **challenges in recruiting candidates with up-to-date technical skills and relevant workplace experience**, alongside difficulties in supporting transitions from education into employment.

8. Employers and stakeholders report **a lack of coordination, clarity and alignment across the local skills system, resulting in fragmentation, reduced accessibility, and challenges in effectively engaging** with skills provision and workforce development activity.

## **GAPS IN CRITICAL WORKPLACE AND TRANSFERABLE SKILLS**

Transferable skills were overwhelmingly reported by employers across the local area as a major skills gap, regardless of sector or organisation size. Skills such as communication, time management, critical thinking, confidence and resilience were highlighted alongside general employability skills and professional behaviours as key skills needs by employers in sectors including construction, defence, visitor economy and clean energy.

Employers in Swindon and Wiltshire also reported a need for a digitally literate workforce, specifically digital fundamentals such as Microsoft Word, Outlook and Excel.

The current absence in these skills has raised concerns with employers in the area about slower onboarding of new entrants and the burden on existing staff to deliver non-technical or organisation-specific training. Small and medium employers have also stated that young people lacking these skills has reduced their appetite to take on apprentices as the perceived additional workload is not manageable for their organisation, notably in Health and Social Care, who reported a preference for taking on more experienced, mature workers.

Alongside this, there has been significant discussion around whether the region can adopt a consistent narrative around the variously described as critical/enabling/soft/transferable/work readiness/employability skills to prevent further misunderstanding of this vital part of the skills system and to ensure replicability and consistency, with some suggestion that this could be aligned around the [NFER 6 Essential Employment Skills](#), with discussion ongoing.

## **STRONGER ALIGNMENT BETWEEN EDUCATION PROVISION AND EMPLOYER REQUIREMENTS TO SUPPORT PROGRESSION**

The absence of a university in the local area, and employers reported hesitancy to engage with placement opportunities, highlights a need for more development of level 1 and level 2 progression pathways, as well as improved careers advice and guidance for both the future workforce and the employers that will be recruiting them.

Recognising the absence of a university physically based within Swindon & Wiltshire, there is a need to strengthen collaboration with neighbouring higher education institutions and alternative higher-level delivery models to ensure that Levels 4 – 8 technical pathways remain accessible within the local area. This is particularly important in areas such as defence technologies, advanced manufacturing, AI and digital systems, clean energy infrastructure and leadership development, where employers identified growing demand for higher-level technical and specialist capability.

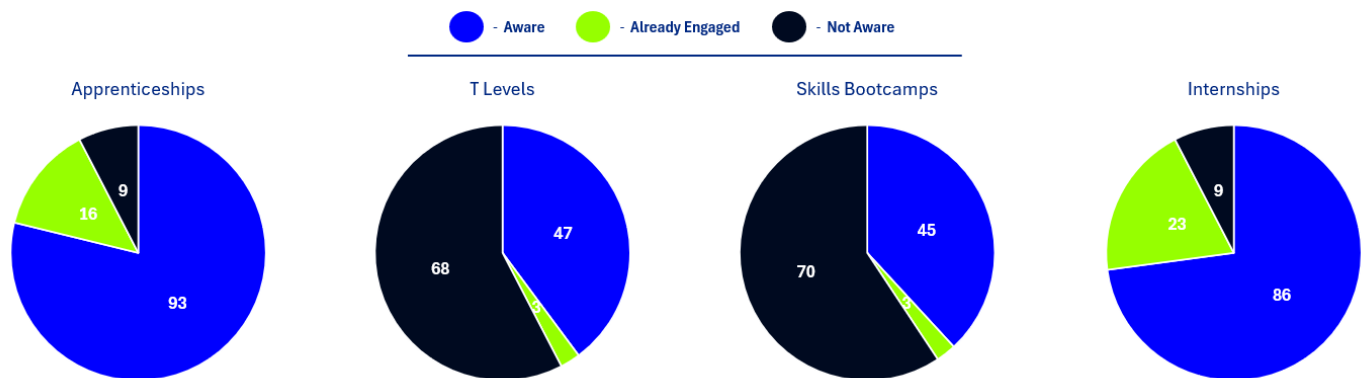
This includes opportunities to expand satellite delivery, modular and blended learning provision, Higher Technical Qualifications, Institute of Technology partnerships and collaborative FE/HE progression arrangements. Strengthening these pathways will support retention of local talent, reduce barriers to higher-level study and help address employer demand for advanced technical, managerial and specialist skills within priority sectors.

There is also an opportunity to strengthen alignment between higher-level technical provision, research and innovation activity, and emerging sectoral strengths such as defence technologies, digitalisation, advanced manufacturing and clean energy systems.

By aligning the needs of both parties, the local area can ensure that those young people who could be at risk of becoming economically inactive will be offered opportunities, preventing NEET (not in education, employment or training) status.

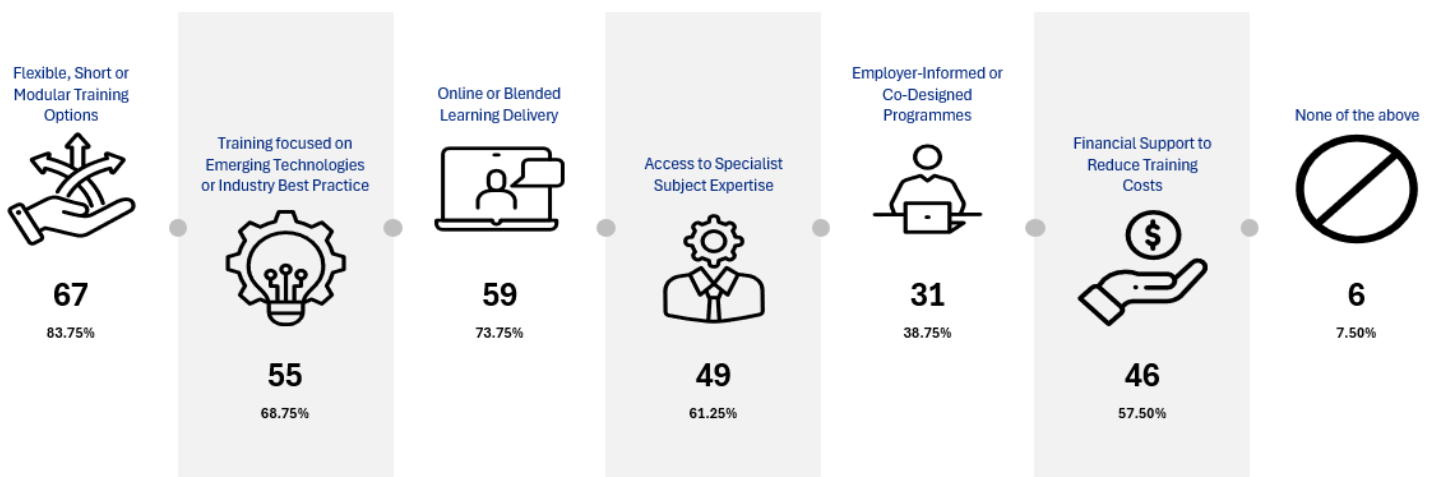
### DIFFICULTY NAVIGATING THE SKILLS LANDSCAPE

Employers of all sizes and across all sectors in Swindon and Wiltshire reported finding the skills landscape and offering confusing. The wide range of training options, including skills bootcamps, apprenticeships, T Levels, Institute of Technologies and the Lifelong Learning Entitlement, were all mentioned by employers as having an awareness of but requiring further clarification in order to make the best choices about the appropriate training options for their organisation.



[Data from supplementary research survey]

Overwhelmingly short, modular learning, alongside flexible delivery and blended online modules, was the preferred method of choice for employers who engaged with the LSIP, with many citing the length of traditional apprenticeships to be a cause of their reluctance to explore this mode of training.



[Data from supplementary research survey]

Aligned with the volume of choice, employers also stated that they found the funding support offering to be confusing and were not sure of what was available to them, which added to the reluctance of engaging with the skills system for example a Construction and Built Environment employer highlighted that the classification of certain tasks restricts ability to access funding, such as Solar Panel Installation which is defined as electrical, rather than construction or roofing.

A consistent theme across stakeholder discussions was the distinction between employer demand for qualifications and employer demand for competence. Employers often expressed a preference for smaller, more flexible and task-focused training solutions, reinforcing the need for modular, stackable and employer-responsive provision.

## GREATER SUPPORT TO ENGAGE WITH YOUNG PEOPLE AND NEW ENTRANTS

Work readiness, or employability skills, particularly in those entering the workforce for the first time out of full-time education, have been cited throughout engagement with business and stakeholders as a top priority to address through the LSIP. Alongside this, employers in the local area reported concerns about having an aging workforce and the impact that having no university based in the area would have on retaining talent pipelines. While there are existing programmes in place to support young people into the workforce, employers reported needing further guidance and support to understand and navigate the skills system – allowing them to engage with initiatives such as work placement opportunities or apprenticeships. Additional support and guidance would also prove beneficial to the employers that expressed a reluctance to recruit inexperienced candidates highlighting the opportunities and benefits of expanding their workforce and their talent pipelines with young people, for example small and medium construction employers reported a hesitancy to engage with the apprenticeship system, while both Construction and the Built Environment and Health and Social Care employers highlighted the ability to drive is a major benefit in their sectors and the shortage of driving lessons, combined with the cost of learning to drive and owning and maintaining a vehicle puts a huge barrier in place for young people.

Employers who were keen to engage with opportunities such as apprenticeships and T Levels noted their hesitancy stems from their working environment, with employers in various sectors including digital moving to hybrid or remote working, which makes it difficult to facilitate work placement opportunities.

Stakeholders emphasised that responsibility for work readiness is shared across the system, but in practice can lack clear ownership. Exposure to real working environments was repeatedly identified as one of the most effective ways to prepare young people, although employers highlighted practical constraints in delivering placements and work experience at scale.

## **UNDERSTANDING OF SAFE AND EFFECTIVE AI USAGE, IMPROVED SUPPORT FOR SME DIGITAL ADOPTION, AND STRONGER BASELINE DIGITAL SKILLS**

Amongst employers of all sizes and across all priority sectors, it was reported that AI is already operationally embedded and being used in more technical aspects of roles such as modelling and design, as well as administration tasks to improve efficiency and productivity. Tasks such as engineering workflows and recruitment systems were cited as examples of functions that had been supported by AI, although employers did highlight obstacles that had occurred when using AI for shortlisting, such as neurodivergent candidates being more likely to be filtered out of selection when AI is used. Employers also highlighted the growing importance of responsible AI adoption, including ethical usage, cyber resilience, data protection, transparency in automated decision-making and understanding the limitations of AI systems.

This reinforces the need for AI literacy across the wider workforce, extending beyond technical specialists to include managers, operational staff and decision-makers responsible for implementing and overseeing AI-enabled systems and processes.

There is a clear divide between specialist AI skills (data science, drone and defence tech integration and systems integration) and fundamental AI skills and knowledge (critical thinking, prompt engineering, ethical usage and understanding AI limitations). While the use of AI is widely accepted by employers across the local area, concerns were highlighted around the pace of change, with SMEs in particular cautious of being “left behind” due to slower digital adoption. Employers also raised concerns around digital literacy for all ages of the workforce, highlighting basic skills such as email usage and Microsoft Suite as skills that are lacking, but required, in their workforce.

Stakeholders highlighted that there is not yet a shared understanding of what “AI skills” means in practice, distinguishing between technical expertise and the broader capabilities required to work effectively with AI, including communication, critical thinking and judgement. Health and Social Care employers who contributed to the LSIP discussion reported an increased demand for innovation and ‘health-tech’ integration, as well as the training to support the introduction of this digitalisation in the sector.

## **GROWING DEMAND FOR SUSTAINABILITY AND NET ZERO SKILLS**

Employers in Swindon and Wiltshire reported that while there is a demand for Net Zero and Sustainability skills, especially solar PV, battery storage and high-voltage expertise, the general consensus is that the training is not fit for purpose, alongside concerns that current provision is not sufficiently relevant or aligned to business need, and a lack of visibility of available training opportunities within the region.

Employers increasingly recognised sustainability capability not solely as a compliance issue, but as a commercial and competitive opportunity linked to procurement requirements, inward investment, supply chain expectations, customer demand and long-term organisational resilience.

Across several sectors, businesses identified opportunities associated with retrofit, low-carbon technologies, sustainable manufacturing, environmental reporting and clean energy infrastructure, reinforcing the importance of ensuring that workforce capability develops in parallel with economic transition.

Course duration has been reported as being too long, particularly Apprenticeships, while others who engaged with the LSIP highlighted the lack of recognised qualifications for specialist renewables roles and a fear that qualifications are too broad; the in-demand specialist skills training isn't available, forcing the employers in the local area to either seek workers from outside the region, reducing green investment locally.

Despite reporting a strong interest in Sustainability, employers in the Sustainable Tourism sector reported incremental, rather than transformational change, expressing a fear of "greenwashing" and the need to embrace training and marketing opportunities to further promote this change.

Employers across sectors also felt that there was a greater need for sustainability literacy, especially within regulated sectors such as health and social care and construction, and more awareness on benefits of sustainability (and aligned tech), cost implications and savings.

## **CHALLENGES IN RECRUITING CANDIDATES WITH UP-TO-DATE TECHNICAL SKILLS AND RELEVANT WORKPLACE EXPERIENCE**

The general consensus across all sectors and organisations of all sizes was that the difficulties they are experiencing in recruiting are around finding not only the candidate with the qualifications, but the correct personality traits and attributes that would suit both the role and the organisation, particularly in more typically 'hands-on' sectors such as Construction and the Built Environment. In regard to the technical skills, while there is a need for entry level positions for new entrants, the skills shortages can largely be found in mid-level technical positions, including middle management and supervisors with a small Clean Energy employer who was interviewed for the LSIP highlighting over 10 current vacancies in supervisory, team leader or manager roles.

Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering employers, particularly in the Defence sector, reported concerns of the expansion in drone manufacturing outpacing the availability of

skilled workforce to support it, while it was also recognised that the labour market intelligence that supports this could already be outdated and not fully representative of the growth of this sector, and subsequently the job role demands. This sector also reported shortages in electrical and high-voltage capabilities.

Employers from the Construction sector reported difficulties recruiting into roles in carpentry, electrical and groundworks, as well as existing staff requiring further training to develop their retrofit knowledge and skills. Concerns were also raised by Health and Social Care employers who stated that there was a need for support and guidance in integrating sustainability into their sector.

### **A LACK OF COORDINATION, CLARITY AND ALIGNMENT ACROSS THE LOCAL SKILLS SYSTEM, RESULTING IN FRAGMENTATION, REDUCED ACCESSIBILITY, AND CHALLENGES IN EFFECTIVELY ENGAGING**

Employer and stakeholder engagement identified a lack of clarity, coordination and shared ownership across the local skills system, impacting the effectiveness of existing provision and limiting employer engagement. While a wide range of training offers, funding mechanisms and support programmes are available, these are often perceived as fragmented, difficult to navigate, and insufficiently aligned to employer demand.

Employers reported challenges in understanding how different elements of the system—such as apprenticeships, skills bootcamps, T Levels and emerging modular provision—connect to one another, and how they can be utilised effectively within their organisation. This is compounded by inconsistent messaging and a lack of clear entry points into the system, particularly for small and medium-sized enterprises.

Stakeholders also highlighted that responsibility for key areas such as work readiness, careers engagement and employer coordination is shared across multiple organisations but can lack clear accountability in practice. This can result in duplication of effort, gaps in provision, and missed opportunities to align activity with local economic priorities.

There is therefore a need to strengthen coordination, improve system coherence, and ensure that employers, providers and partners are working within a more clearly defined and aligned framework that supports engagement, responsiveness and delivery.

## Part 2: Agreed Changes and Actions Needed

**This section sets out the agreed changes and actions** required to address the priority skills needs identified through employer engagement and analysis. These actions have been developed collaboratively with employers, education and training providers, local authorities and wider stakeholders, ensuring they are grounded in evidence and aligned with regional priorities for Swindon & Wiltshire.

The actions outlined within this section have been developed and refined through ongoing engagement with employers, further education providers, independent training providers, local authorities, stakeholders and wider delivery partners across Swindon & Wiltshire.

These actions should therefore be viewed not solely as employer recommendations, but as locally informed and collaboratively developed changes intended to support a more responsive, aligned and accessible skills system. Stakeholder discussions consistently reinforced the need for shared ownership and coordinated delivery across the region in order to address the systemic nature of many identified skills challenges.

The actions focus on improving the clarity, accessibility and responsiveness of the skills system, alongside strengthening workforce pipelines, embedding core and transferable skills, and addressing structural barriers to engagement. Particular emphasis is placed on supporting employers to better navigate the skills landscape, enabling more flexible and relevant provision, and improving alignment between skills delivery and labour market demand.

The expected outcomes of these actions include increased employer engagement with training, improved access to appropriate provision, clearer progression pathways and a more resilient and adaptable workforce. Progress against these outcomes will be monitored through ongoing employer engagement, data tracking and agreed performance measures. Each action is broken down in Annex A into Sectoral and thematic skills needs, with Annex B providing a granular list of activities identified to meet the skills needs and address the actions and changes needed within this section.

It is also acknowledged that these actions vary in terms of immediate intervention required to longer-term objectives, therefore the skills needs have been RAG rated to reflect the urgency of the intervention:

Time Horizon	RAG rating	Illustrative Themes
Immediate workforce pressures	Red	Recruitment challenges, enabling skills, access to training
Medium-term (3 year) priorities	Yellow	Education and employer alignment, AI implementation
Longer-term future needs	Green	Sustainability and net zero integration

The urgency of these needs statements, as well as factors such as the economic impact on the local area and the feasibility of achieving these objectives has also been considered:

	Urgency	Economic Impact/Scale	Feasibility
Gaps in critical workplace and transferable skills	High	Medium	High
Stronger alignment between education provision and employer requirements to support progression	Medium	High	Medium
Difficulty navigating the skills landscape	High	Medium	Medium
Greater support to engage with young people and new entrants	High	Medium	High
Understanding of safe and effective AI usage, improved support for SME digital adoption, and stronger baseline digital skills	Medium	High	High
Growing demand for sustainability and net zero skills	Medium	Medium	Medium
Challenges in recruiting candidates with up-to-date technical skills and relevant workplace experience	High	High	High
A lack of coordination, clarity and alignment across the local skills system, resulting in fragmentation, reduced accessibility, and challenges in effectively engaging	High	High	High

Progress against the LSIP will be monitored through a combination of quantitative and qualitative measures, developed collaboratively with delivery partners and refined throughout the LSIP lifecycle.

Indicative measures will include:

- Number of employers engaged by sector and geography
- Number of employers participating in curriculum co-design activity
- Increased participation in work placements, industry placements and careers engagement activity
- Changes to curriculum or provision aligned to identified skills priorities
- Learner participation and progression into employment within priority sectors
- Increased uptake of modular, flexible or bootcamp-style provision
- Increased employer awareness and understanding of skills pathways and funding opportunities
- Increased participation in digital, AI and sustainability-related training activity

More detailed activity-level monitoring arrangements will be set out and maintained within Annex B as a live implementation document.

The challenges identified through the LSIP are largely systemic and require coordinated responses across employers, providers, local authorities and wider stakeholders. Delivery of these actions will therefore depend on collaborative approaches that align activity, reduce duplication and focus collective effort on areas where impact can be maximised. Stakeholder engagement highlighted several system-level considerations that are critical to addressing the identified skills needs. These include the need to:

- Improve coordination across the skills system, particularly in relation to employer engagement, work experience and progression pathways
- Reduce complexity and improve clarity of language, pathways and opportunities for both employers and learners
- Recognise and respond to the capacity constraints faced by employers, particularly SMEs, in engaging with skills activity
- Strengthen connections between employers and providers, including through more structured or consortium-based approaches

These insights reinforce the role of the LSIP as a mechanism not only for identifying skills needs, but for supporting more effective system alignment and collaboration.

The detailed mapping of priority skills needs, actions and delivery partners is set out in Annex C.

## Key Priority Skills Needs:

### GAPS IN CRITICAL WORKPLACE AND TRANSFERABLE SKILLS

<b>Need Statement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employers report significant gaps in critical workplace and transferable skills, particularly among the emerging workforce, impacting recruitment, retention and progression across sectors</li> </ul>
<b>Actions/Changes Needed</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integration of Employability and Transferable Skills Within FE Curriculum Prior to Placement</li> <li>• Collaboration with Employers to Ensure Employability Skills Reflect Industry Needs</li> <li>• Improved CEIAG Incorporating Employer Expectations of the Workplace</li> <li>• Increased Employer Engagement Through Guest Lectures and Industry Insight Activities</li> </ul>
<b>Intended Outcomes/Illustrative measures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved Baseline Employability Skills Across the Emerging Workforce</li> <li>• Stronger Future Talent Pipeline Through Increased Employer Engagement</li> <li>• Better Alignment Between Employer Expectations and Workforce Readiness</li> <li>• Engagement with employers across all priority sectors through curriculum design activity, placement opportunities, workshops or workforce development support</li> </ul>
<b>Immediate workforce pressures</b>	

## Critical Skills in the Curriculum

Employers cited critical and enabling skills as their priority skills need, with a lack of employability skills highlighted as a particular challenge for the emerging workforce. Further Education colleges in Swindon and Wiltshire should seek to review their employability skills offering, to ensure these skills are embedded in the curriculum.

Working in collaboration with local employers from all sectors when incorporating these employability skills into the curriculum will ensure the needs of local businesses are represented, and the skills are relevant to industries in the area.

## Employer Expectations

There is a reported discrepancy between the expectation and reality of work with the emerging workforce, with employers reporting an impact on recruitment and retention of young people. Working in partnership, Further Education colleges and local employers, with the support of local authorities and Business West as the LSIP ERB, should integrate employer expectations into careers, education information, advice and guidance (CEIAG) alongside employability skills. Providing guest career lectures and industry insights will set more realistic expectations of the world of work for the emerging workforce, easing the transition from education into the workplace. The LSIP will work with local FE colleges to review destination data, comparing with previous cohort information to ensure that this improved CEIAG is translating into positive transitions into employment or further education and training.

Addressing gaps in critical workplace and transferable skills, we could expect to see the following impacts:

**Equipped Emerging Workforce** – all young people receive standardised support for employability skills will ensure the emerging workforce are all equipped with the baseline employability skills that are transferable across sectors and job roles in the local area.

**Future Talent Pipeline** – employers actively engaging with local further education colleges through guest lecturers and industry insight days will connect them with the emerging workforce. By sharing their experiences and expectations, they will be ensuring that the future workforce have realistic expectations and the knowledge of the basic skills they will need in the world of work. In turn, these young people will bring with them a new set of skills and experiences that can innovate organisations and reinvigorate the existing workforce.

**Increased Engagement** – helping employers understand and navigate the skills system will promote increased and ongoing engagement, empowering them to continue the development of their workforce.

## STRONGER ALIGNMENT BETWEEN EDUCATION PROVISION AND EMPLOYER REQUIREMENTS TO SUPPORT PROGRESSION

<b>Need Statement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Employers and stakeholders report limited entry-level pathways into employment, particularly at Levels 1 and 2, alongside a need for stronger alignment &amp; understanding of existing integration between education provision and employer requirements to support progression and reduce economic inactivity.</li> </ul>
<b>Actions / Changes Needed</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Development of Entry-Level (Level 1 and Level 2) Provision to Support Transition into Employment</li> <li>Strengthened Alignment Between Employers, Further Education Providers and Local Authorities</li> <li>Increased Support for Young People at Risk of Becoming NEET</li> <li>Promotion of Work Placement Opportunities to Support Progression into Employment</li> </ul>
<b>Intended Outcomes/Illustrative measures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduced Risk of Young People Becoming NEET</li> <li>Annual Curriculum Review Activity Involving Employers from Priority Sectors to Support Alignment Between Provision and Workforce Demand. Stronger Talent Pipeline into Local Employment</li> <li>Increased Retention of Talent Within the Local Area</li> </ul>
<b>Medium-term (3 year) priorities</b>	

**Entry Level Provision:** The lack of entry level courses (Levels 1 and 2) for young people, combined with the absence of a university in the area was raised as a concern by contributors to the LSIP who felt that there were limited career entry pathways for young people. Further Education Colleges and the local authorities should seek to develop entry level provision to ease the transition into work for those leaving education, but also to reengage the economically inactive or NEET young people that require additional support. Reduction in the number of economically inactive young people or those at risk of becoming NEET in the Swindon and Wiltshire area will be the primary metric of success towards this needs statement.

**Employer and Education Alignment:** Employers in the local area reported a hesitancy towards engaging with work placement opportunities – local authorities and Further Education Colleges should work with them to highlight the benefits of work placement opportunities for both the employer and the emerging workforce and ensuring the learners are equipped with the relevant skills needed, aligning the needs of the employers and their future workforce.

Closer alignment between employers and education and training providers in the Swindon and Wiltshire area could result in the following opportunities:

**Reduced Risk of NEET status** – improving access to entry level provision and ensuring all young people have the opportunity to engage with training opportunities regardless of their previous academic attainment will strengthen the pathway from

education into work and reduce the risk of young people becoming economically inactive or NEETs.

**Employer and Education Collaboration** – developing and maintaining a strong relationship between employers and local further education colleges through ongoing collaboration and curriculum codesign will ensure alignment between training and local business need and develop a future talent pipeline with the emerging workforce.

**Talent Retention** – developing entry level provision and exploring other pathways into work such as work placement opportunities will provide alternative opportunities for those who do not wish, or are unable, to leave the area to go to university. Retaining this talent in the local area will widen the prospective talent pool for employers and provide economic growth for the local area.

## DIFFICULTY NAVIGATING THE SKILLS LANDSCAPE

<b>Need Statement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Employers report difficulty navigating the skills landscape, including confusion around availability and relevance of training options, support mechanisms and funding, alongside a preference for more flexible and accessible training provision</li> </ul>
<b>Actions/Changes Needed</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clarification of the Skills System Through Collaboration with Local Authorities</li> <li>Promotion of Growth Hubs and Existing Business Support Mechanisms</li> <li>Delivery of Skills Clinics, Webinars and Resources to Support Navigation of Training Options</li> <li>Continued Delivery of Skills Bootcamps or Equivalent Flexible Provision Aligned to Employer Need</li> </ul>
<b>Intended Outcomes/Illustrative measures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clearer and More Accessible Training Landscape for Employers</li> <li>Increased Engagement with Training, Upskilling and Reskilling Opportunities</li> <li>Increased participation in modular, flexible or employer-responsive provision aligned to identified workforce needs and provision with extended work placement requirements (such as T Levels and Apprenticeships). Development of a Stronger Learning Culture Across Businesses</li> </ul>
<b>Medium-term (3 year) priorities</b>	

**Demystifying the Skills Landscape:** Employers in Swindon and Wiltshire reported confusion when navigating the Skills Landscape due to the wealth of opportunities for training, upskilling and reskilling and therefore are unlikely to engage with the skills system. As the LSIP ERB for Swindon and Wiltshire, Business West will develop resources including webinars and infographics to highlight the different training options available and work in collaboration with the local authorities to promote the

Growth Hub and other local support mechanisms. Simultaneously, we will provide ongoing bespoke workforce development planning support through the Skills Advisor service. We will monitor engagements and referrals made through the bespoke Skills Advisor service, as well as working with the local Growth Hubs to review their engagement levels. It is hoped that a clearer skills landscape will result in higher levels of engagement with both the Growth Hub and the Skills Advisor service and ultimately higher levels of engagement with upskilling and reskilling in the local area.

In Swindon and Wiltshire, employers and providers highlighted the importance of building on collaborative approaches already developing across the area, including employer-led curriculum engagement, targeted outreach activity, apprenticeship expansion and investment in specialist technical facilities linked to priority sectors such as advanced manufacturing, digital and engineering. Stakeholders noted that strengthening these collaborative delivery models can help improve workforce participation, widen access to training opportunities and ensure the skills system remains responsive to changing employer and sector needs.

**Training Preferences:** A consistent request from employers in the local area was access to smaller, flexible and task-focused training opportunities for upskilling and reskilling, such as Skills Bootcamps. Local authorities, with the support of Business West, should work to continue the delivery of Skills Bootcamps or an equivalent provision that meets the needs of local businesses.

The positive impacts of addressing difficulties with navigating the training landscape include:

**Clearer Training Landscape** – a clearer, more unified skills landscape and bespoke support would ensure employers in the local area are able to identify and access the most relevant training for their skills needs.

**Increased Engagement with the Skills System** – providing clarity around the skills system, allowing employers and individuals in the local area to navigate with ease will result in increased engagement with training, upskilling and reskilling of the emerging and existing workforce.

**Learning Culture** – removing barriers to engagement and offering a clear and easy way to engage with the skills system will likely encourage more individuals and organisations to seek out training opportunities and ensuring the methods and topics of the provision meet their needs will encourage continued professional development.

## GREATER SUPPORT TO ENGAGE WITH YOUNG PEOPLE AND NEW ENTRANTS

<b>Need Statement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Employers report a need for greater support to engage with young people and new entrants, alongside improved clarity of the skills system and stronger coordination of careers education, work experience and placement opportunities</li> </ul>
<b>Actions/Changes Needed</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improved Employer Engagement in Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG), Including Increased Placement Opportunities</li> <li>Strengthened Collaboration Between Local Authorities, FE Providers and Employers</li> <li>Clarification of the Skills Landscape and Available Funding Options</li> <li>Development of a 'One Front Door' Approach to Skills System Navigation</li> <li>Continued Delivery of Bespoke Workforce Development Support for Employers</li> </ul>
<b>Intended Outcomes/Illustrative measures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased Employer Engagement with the Skills System</li> <li>Stronger and More Coordinated Regional Approach to Work Experience and Careers Engagement</li> <li>Improved Access to and Understanding of Skills Pathways</li> <li>Strengthened Future Talent Pipeline into Local Businesses</li> </ul>
<b>Immediate workforce pressures</b>	

### Skills System Clarity

Employers in Swindon and Wiltshire expressed a desire to engage with the skills system but reported being unsure of how to navigate the various training options and funding support. Business West as the LSIP ERB for the area will work in collaboration with local authorities, further education colleges and independent training providers to strengthen a 'one front door' approach to the skills system. Business West will continue to provide bespoke workforce development planning support for local businesses through business skills advisors. This impartial service will help businesses identify the training they may require, any funding support that is available and provide support with navigating the skills landscape to engage with the training.

The proposed "One Front Door" approach is intended to strengthen, coordinate and simplify access to the existing skills and employment support landscape across Swindon & Wiltshire, rather than create a wholly new standalone structure. Employers consistently reported confusion around where to access support, duplication in communication, and uncertainty regarding the respective roles of providers, local authorities and intermediary organisations.

The approach will therefore build on and align existing mechanisms already operating within the region, including local authority skills and employment services, Growth Hub support, FE college employer engagement teams, Careers Hub activity,

apprenticeship and placement coordination, Business West Skills Advisor support, and sector-led employer forums.

Partners will work collaboratively through existing governance and working group arrangements to improve consistency of messaging, streamline referral pathways and develop clearer routes into the skills system for employers, learners and residents. Activity will focus on improving visibility and coordination of provision, reducing duplication and ensuring that employers – particularly SMEs – can more easily access impartial advice, workforce development support and training opportunities through a more coherent and joined-up system.

This activity will also seek to ensure representation from a broad cross-section of sectors, employer sizes and geographies across Swindon & Wiltshire, reflecting the diversity of the regional economy and ensuring that engagement approaches remain relevant, accessible and employer led.

### **Improved Engagement with Careers Education Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG)**

There is an opportunity for Further Education Colleges, local authorities and employers in the local area, with the support of the LSIP ERB, to work in partnership to review, increase and improve placement opportunities for young people in Swindon and Wiltshire. The introduction of career lectures and industry insight days will provide opportunities for employers who are unable to commit to longer-term work placements to showcase their industry and organisation. We will work with FE providers in the area to review previous uptake of work placements in comparison with figures following this intervention, with an increase in placements (and maintaining this higher level of engagement) being the primary metric of success.

Increasing support for employers looking to engage with the skills landscape and the future workforce would provide many advantages, including:

**Increased Engagement** – helping employers understand and navigate the skills system will promote increased and ongoing engagement, empowering them to continue the development of their current and emerging workforce.

**Strong Regional Approach to Work Experience** – developing a cohesive approach to career insights and work experience opportunities from further education colleges and local authorities and creating a clear and concise engagement plan is key for employers in the local area to engage with the skills landscape. Strengthening the regional approach to careers education information, advice and guidance and providing a standardised baseline of support available will allow for easier (and increased) engagement from employers and a more meaningful experience for young people.

**Future Talent Pipeline** – employers engaging with further education providers through career insight opportunities and work placement experiences will have access to the emerging workforce and be able to develop skills and behaviours in the emerging workforce before welcoming new entrants into their business. These young

people often bring with them a new set of skills and experiences that can innovate organisations and reinvigorate the existing workforce.

## UNDERSTANDING OF SAFE AND EFFECTIVE AI USAGE, IMPROVED SUPPORT FOR SME DIGITAL ADOPTION, AND STRONGER BASELINE DIGITAL SKILLS

<b>Need Statement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Employers report increasing use of AI and digital technologies across business operations, alongside a need for greater understanding of safe and effective AI usage, improved support for SME digital adoption, and stronger baseline digital skills across the workforce</li> </ul>
<b>Actions/Changes Needed</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Delivery of AI Awareness and “Demystifying AI” Sessions</li> <li>Provision of Training and Resources on Safe, Ethical and Effective AI Usage</li> <li>Targeted Support for SMEs to Adopt Digitalisation and Emerging Technologies</li> <li>Collaboration with Local Authorities and FE Providers to Strengthen Basic Digital Skills Provision</li> </ul>
<b>Intended Outcomes/Illustrative measures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Futureproofing of Organisations Through Improved Digital Capability</li> <li>Improved Baseline Digital Skills Across the Workforce</li> <li>Increased Productivity, Efficiency and Innovation Within Businesses</li> <li>Strengthened Digital Resilience and Confidence in AI Adoption</li> </ul>
<b>Medium-term (3 year) priorities</b>	

### AI Awareness and Safety

53% of survey respondents in Swindon and Wiltshire reported an increased use of AI or Automation, however there was also reported hesitancy to integrate AI into their business due to fears about safe usage. There is an opportunity for local authorities and further education colleges, supported by Business West as the LSIP ERB, to deliver information, support and guidance around the integration of AI, safe and ethical usage and prompt literacy. We will develop AI awareness resources, hosted on the Swindon and Wiltshire LSIP resources webpage, monitoring engagement with this content and working with local authorities and education and training providers to develop and deliver further content that meets demand.

### Disparity in Digital Skills

Small and medium employers in the local area highlighted a need for support in helping them with digital adoption within their business. Local authorities, in collaboration with Business West, can develop impartial support and guidance through webinars and resources to help businesses explore how to embrace emerging technologies and digitalisation within their sector. In contrast, there was

also a concern about the lack of basic digital skills within the area. Further Education colleges should seek to provide basic, functional IT skills throughout the curriculum, such as Microsoft suite and email communications, to support new entrants to the workforce. These colleges should also seek to work in partnership with local authorities to ensure that fundamental IT skills are represented in their provision to provide the necessary upskilling and reskilling provision available for the existing workforce to develop their skills. Increasing digital and AI support in Swindon and Wiltshire could provide the following positive impacts for businesses in the area:

**Future Proofing Organisations** – providing training opportunities for both basic and more advanced digital skills needs, as well as introductions to emerging technologies, will ensure that local businesses are equipped with the skills they need to embrace digitalisation and the benefits it provides such as improved efficiency, productivity and innovation.

**Baseline Digital Capabilities** – ensuring all current and emerging workforce meet a minimum threshold of digital capability will provide equality of opportunity for both the emerging and existing workforce. For existing employees, it will boost productivity, efficiency and confidence – streamlining some processes to allow opportunities for innovation and collaboration within the organisation and for the emerging workforce will provide them with the fundamental, transferable skills that can be adapted to all job roles and sectors.

**Digital Innovation and Resilience** – providing support and training around the safe adoption and usage of AI will ensure that both the staff and the organisation as a whole are digitally resilient. It will provide security within their current work environment as well as providing opportunities for businesses to adapt, build upon these digital capabilities and embrace additional emerging technologies.

## GROWING DEMAND FOR SUSTAINABILITY AND NET ZERO SKILLS

<b>Need Statement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Employers report growing demand for sustainability and net zero skills, alongside concerns that current provision is not sufficiently relevant or aligned to business need, and a lack of visibility of available training opportunities within the region</li> </ul>
<b>Actions / Changes Needed</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provision Review and Alignment with Employer Need</li> <li>Promotion of Alternative Provision to Apprenticeships</li> <li>Improved Visibility of Existing Sustainability and Green Skills Provision</li> <li>Delivery of Meet the Expert (MTE) Sessions on Sustainability</li> <li>Development of a Local Sustainability Working Group to Share Best Practice</li> </ul>
<b>Intended Outcomes/Illustrative measures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Building a Local Network to Support Knowledge Sharing, Innovation and Collaboration</li> <li>Increased Employer Engagement with the Skills System and Training Provision</li> <li>Improved Alignment of Provision to Employer Needs</li> <li>Futureproofing of the Workforce to Support Net Zero Transition</li> </ul>
<b>Longer-term future needs</b>	

### Provision Review

Employers in Swindon and Wiltshire cited a desire to engage with training in sustainability, however, were cautious about the content being relevant. Further education providers and local authorities, along with support from Business West as the LSIP ERB for the area, should review their current offering to ensure the content is relevant and meets the needs of local businesses.

There is also an opportunity to highlight the scope of provision available in the area to ensure that employers are aware of the full range of opportunities for upskilling and reskilling their current and future workforce.

### Knowledge Sharing

There is an appetite with employers in the local area to develop their knowledge and understanding of sustainability and green skills. We will build on the previous success of Meet the Expert sessions run by Business West to further explore topics of interest for employers in the area, as well as working in collaboration with local authorities to develop a working group for local businesses to share best practice, knowledge and behaviours around sustainability. In addition to Meet the Expert sessions, Business West will develop its 'Demystifying' webinar series to provide an additional knowledge sharing

platform, monitoring the attendee numbers and engagement of these sessions to develop further provision in line with demand.

Addressing the growing demand for net zero and sustainability support in the local area could provide the following opportunities for businesses:

**Building a Local Network** – developing a network of businesses to share best practice, skills and problem solving will improve productivity, innovation and collaboration in the local area.

**Increased Engagement with the Skills System** – ensuring provision is up to date and reflective of the needs of employers will improve engagement, as will employers having full visibility of the variety of training options available to them.

**Futureproof the Workforce** – nationwide net zero targets and a shift in values for the emerging workforce has resulted in the need for more sustainable skills within organisations to ensure relevancy within the sector.

## CHALLENGES IN RECRUITING CANDIDATES WITH UP-TO-DATE TECHNICAL SKILLS AND RELEVANT WORKPLACE EXPERIENCE

<b>Need Statement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Employers report ongoing challenges in recruiting candidates with up-to-date technical skills and relevant workplace experience, alongside difficulties in supporting transitions from education into employment</li> </ul>
<b>Actions / Changes Needed</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support curriculum Codesign with Employers to Ensure Provision is Up to Date and Relevant</li> <li>Collaboration with FE Providers to Align Training with Current Industry Needs</li> <li>Promotion of the Benefits of Work Placements to Employers</li> <li>Development of Clearer Pathways from Education into Employment, Including Sector-Specific Routes (e.g. Construction)</li> </ul>
<b>Intended Outcomes/Illustrative measures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased Employer Engagement in Curriculum Development and Skills Provision</li> <li>Improved Alignment Between Workforce Skills and Employer Requirements</li> <li>Smoother Transition from Education into Employment</li> <li>Improved Retention and Workforce Integration</li> </ul>
<b>Immediate workforce pressures</b>	

### Curriculum Codesign

Employers reported young people entering the workforce with out-of-date technical skills and knowledge, therefore ensuring provision is up to date, relevant and reflects the needs of businesses across all sectors in the local area is key to closing skills gaps. Further Education Colleges should seek to review their provision, with collaboration from local employers, through Employer Partnership Boards and

Curriculum Codesign. Local authorities can also support this by providing additional training opportunities for the existing workforce, with Leadership and Management being the most reported upskilling needed for those already in employment.

### **Pathways into Employment**

Employers can further support their local colleges by exploring ways to ease the transition from education into the workplace, highlighting career pathways and providing insight for young people's pathways into their chosen careers. Aligned with this, employers in Swindon and Wiltshire displayed reluctance to engage with work placement opportunities, therefore Further Education Colleges, local authorities and Business West as the LSIP ERB should work in collaboration to promote the benefits of work placements for both employers and the emerging workforce. Following these awareness raising activities, we will monitor employer engagement with work placements, comparing data with previous engagement levels as the primary indication of success.

Addressing the reported recruitment and retention challenges in the local area would see the following impacts:

**Increased Employer Engagement** – inviting employers to contribute to the development of curriculum and ensuring their needs are represented will likely result in sustained engagement with local Further Education Colleges through initiatives such as work experience placements or guest lectures.

**Workforce Development Opportunities** – ensuring the emerging workforce enter into their chosen careers with the relevant skills ensures a smooth transition from education into the world of work, but also encourages further engagement with upskilling and reskilling across the company, future proofing their business and improving staff morale through career development.

**Realistic Work Expectations** – employers providing firsthand insights and experience for young people will result in improved onboarding, integration and employee morale and giving the emerging workforce an accurate understanding of industries and job roles will improve retention.

## A LACK OF COORDINATION, CLARITY AND ALIGNMENT ACROSS THE LOCAL SKILLS SYSTEM, RESULTING IN FRAGMENTATION, REDUCED ACCESSIBILITY, AND CHALLENGES IN EFFECTIVELY ENGAGING

<b>Need Statement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Employers and stakeholders report a lack of coordination, clarity and alignment across the local skills system, resulting in fragmentation, reduced accessibility, and challenges in effectively engaging with skills provision and workforce development activity</li> </ul>
<b>Actions / Changes Needed</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strengthened Governance and Partnership Working</li> <li>Improve Coordination and Dialogue Between Employers, Providers and Stakeholders</li> <li>Clearer Regional Communication and Articulation of Skills Pathways, Provision and Funding Opportunities</li> <li>Development of More Joined-Up and Accessible Employer Engagement Approaches</li> <li>Improved Alignment of Skills Provision to Identified Employer Needs Across Sectors and Geographies</li> </ul>
<b>Intended Outcomes/Illustrative measures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improved Coordination and Reduced Fragmentation Across the Skills System</li> <li>Increased Employer Confidence and Engagement with Skills Provision</li> <li>More Aligned and Responsive Skills Delivery Across the Region</li> <li>Enhanced Collaboration and Resource Sharing Between Partners</li> </ul>
<b>Immediate workforce pressures</b>	

To address this need, actions will focus on improving coordination, clarity and alignment across the local skills system, ensuring that activity is better connected, more accessible to employers, and more responsive to regional priorities. This includes strengthening governance and partnership working through existing structures such as the Swindon & Wiltshire Skills Board, enabling more consistent dialogue between employers, providers and stakeholders, and supporting shared ownership of key challenges such as work readiness and workforce development.

Activity will also focus on improving how the skills system is communicated and accessed by employers, including clearer articulation of pathways, provision and funding opportunities, and the development of more joined-up approaches to engagement. This will help reduce fragmentation, improve employer confidence, and support increased participation in skills and training. In parallel, partners will work collaboratively to align provision more closely with identified skills needs, ensuring that delivery is coordinated across sectors and geographies, and that opportunities for joint working, resource sharing and system-wide improvement are fully realised. By monitoring engagement with the skills system over the course of the LSIP we will illustrate the success of these attempts to improve regional coordination, and can make additional interventions to improve engagement further.

## **Strengthened Governance and Partnership Working Through Existing Structures**

There is an opportunity to build on existing governance arrangements, including the Swindon & Wiltshire Skills Board, to strengthen coordination across the skills system. By ensuring consistent representation from employers, providers and stakeholders, these structures can support clearer decision-making, shared ownership of priorities, and improved alignment between strategic intent and delivery activity.

## **Improved Coordination and Dialogue Between Employers, Providers and Stakeholders**

Employers highlighted the need for more consistent and meaningful engagement with the skills system. Partners across the region should work collaboratively to facilitate regular dialogue between employers, further education providers, local authorities and intermediaries, ensuring that employer voice is embedded within planning, design and delivery of provision.

## **Clearer Communication and Articulation of Skills Pathways, Provision and Funding Opportunities**

Employers reported confusion when navigating the skills system, particularly in understanding how different training offers and funding mechanisms connect. There is an opportunity to improve how this information is communicated, ensuring that pathways, provision and funding opportunities are presented in a clear, consistent and accessible way to support employer engagement and informed decision-making.

## **Development of More Joined-Up and Accessible Employer Engagement Approaches**

Current engagement activity is often perceived as fragmented, with multiple entry points and inconsistent messaging. Partners should work together to develop more coordinated approaches to employer engagement, reducing duplication and ensuring that businesses are able to access support through clearer, more streamlined routes.

## **Improved Alignment of Skills Provision to Identified Employer Needs Across Sectors and Geographies**

There is a need to ensure that skills provision is more closely aligned to employer demand, reflecting both sectoral priorities and local labour market conditions. Through strengthened collaboration and shared intelligence, partners can better coordinate delivery, identify gaps, and ensure that provision is responsive, relevant and targeted.

These actions towards the reported disjointed skills system could see the following positive impacts:

**Improved Coordination and Reduced Fragmentation Across the Skills System** – a more joined-up approach will reduce duplication and create a clearer, more coherent system for employers and stakeholders to engage with.

**Increased Employer Confidence and Engagement with Skills Provision** – clearer pathways and improved coordination will support greater employer understanding and participation in skills and training activity.

**More Aligned and Responsive Skills Delivery Across the Region** – stronger collaboration and shared intelligence will ensure that provision better reflects employer needs and regional priorities.

**Enhanced Collaboration and Resource Sharing Between Partners** – improved partnership working will enable more effective use of resources, knowledge and expertise across the system.

## Annex A: Detailed Sector Skills Needs

### Introduction

**Swindon and Wiltshire operate within a comparatively tight labour market,** characterised by strong employment participation but emerging workforce supply pressures. The area has a population of approximately 756,000, of whom 61% are of working age, slightly below the national average of 63%. Over the past five years, the working-age population has grown by only 2%, compared with 3% nationally, while the population aged 65 and over has increased by 11%, indicating growing replacement demand pressures.<sup>20</sup> [

Labour market participation is strong, with an employment rate of 81.7%, significantly above the national average (75.7%), and unemployment at 2.3%, below national levels, although this still equates to approximately 8,700 unemployed residents and 12,650 benefit claimants. The sub-region supports approximately 331,000 filled jobs, with 112,000 in Swindon and 219,000 in Wiltshire.<sup>21</sup>] The Employer Skills Survey found that 10% of employers identified skills shortages as a cause of vacancies, in line with the national average.<sup>22</sup> [3.]

This annex provides detailed supporting evidence relating to the priority sector skills needs identified through the development of the Swindon and Wiltshire Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP). It draws together employer intelligence, stakeholder engagement, labour market analysis, previous LSIP evidence, provider insight and wider regional and national sector intelligence to provide a fuller understanding of workforce pressures, occupational change and emerging skills demand across the Swindon and Wiltshire economy.

The evidence base demonstrates that workforce demand is increasingly shaped by cross-cutting issues including digitalisation, AI adoption, sustainability transition, demographic change, leadership capability and widening employability concerns. Employers consistently reported that technical competence alone is no longer sufficient. Across sectors, businesses highlighted growing importance of communication, resilience, professionalism, adaptability, problem solving and digital confidence alongside occupational expertise.

This annex is intended to support interpretation of the main LSIP priorities and provide additional context for implementation planning, curriculum development and future workforce analysis.

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<sup>20</sup> Swindon and Wiltshire Business and Growth Unit (2025): [Swindon and Wiltshire Local Economic Assessment](#), p.5.

<sup>21</sup> Swindon and Wiltshire Business and Growth Unit (2025): [Swindon and Wiltshire Local Economic Assessment](#), p.4

<sup>22</sup> Swindon and Wiltshire Business and Growth Unit (2025): [Swindon and Wiltshire Local Economic Assessment](#), p.5

## PROFESSIONAL AND BUSINESS SERVICES

### Introduction

Professional and business services form a significant part of the Swindon and Wiltshire economy and include financial services, legal services, accountancy, insurance, consultancy, administration, HR, property and wider business support activity. Employer evidence suggests the sector is undergoing rapid change driven by AI adoption, automation, sustainability reporting requirements and increasing demand for analytical and customer-facing capability. Businesses increasingly described the sector as interconnected with digital and data capability rather than as a standalone occupational category.

### Labour Market Intelligence

Employers consistently identified demand for analytical capability, digital administration, project management and customer relationship management. Several businesses highlighted growing pressure associated with sustainability and ESG reporting requirements, particularly within larger supply chains and regulated environments. Employers additionally identified difficulties recruiting experienced mid-level professionals with both technical competence and communication capability. Further local vacancy analysis would strengthen understanding of emerging impacts associated with AI-enabled automation of administrative functions.

Professional Business Services represent the largest priority-sector employment base across Swindon and Wiltshire. Swindon supports approximately 20,000 jobs in Professional Business Services, despite employment declining by 5% between 2018 and 2023. The sector includes 1,260 businesses, although the business base declined by 25% between 2019 and 2024.<sup>23</sup> [4

Wiltshire supports a larger employment base of 31,000 jobs, with employment growth of 11% over the same period. The sector also represents the largest business concentration among priority sectors, with 5,025 businesses, despite an 8% contraction in business numbers.<sup>24</sup> [5]

Professional, scientific and technical activities contribute approximately 10% of Wiltshire's GVA (£1.5 billion), underlining the sector's economic significance.<sup>25</sup> [6

### Skills Implications

Likely workforce priorities include business services capability, project management, professional digital skills, technical consultancy, commercial management, finance and leadership development.

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<sup>23</sup> Swindon and Wiltshire Business and Growth Unit (2025): [Swindon and Wiltshire Local Economic Assessment](#), pp.10-11.]

<sup>24</sup> Swindon and Wiltshire Business and Growth Unit (2025): [Swindon and Wiltshire Local Economic Assessment](#), pp.18-19.

<sup>25</sup> Swindon and Wiltshire Business and Growth Unit (2025): [Swindon and Wiltshire Local Economic Assessment](#), p.16.<sup>1</sup>

## **Occupational Priorities**

Priority occupations include accountants, business analysts, project managers, HR professionals, procurement specialists, customer relationship managers and sustainability-related advisory functions. Employers additionally identified increasing demand for hybrid roles combining commercial understanding, digital capability and stakeholder management.

## **Occupational Opportunities**

Opportunities exist for progression from operational and administrative roles into project management, analytical and advisory functions. Employers also identified opportunities associated with sustainability reporting, procurement, AI-supported workflow management and digital business operations.

## **Reported Skills Needs**

Reported skills needs include communication and stakeholder management, AI literacy, digital administration, data analysis, sustainability reporting, commercial awareness, project management and leadership capability. Employers additionally identified need for improved critical thinking and judgement in relation to AI-generated outputs.

## **Critical and Enabling Skills**

Communication, professionalism, adaptability, customer interaction, resilience and emotional intelligence were consistently identified as critical enabling skills. Employers repeatedly highlighted the importance of relationship management and commercial awareness alongside technical knowledge.

## **Digital Skills**

Digital skills include CRM systems, cloud-based collaboration tools, data analysis, Power BI, cyber awareness, AI tools and digital communication platforms. SMEs additionally highlighted uneven digital maturity and limited confidence regarding safe AI implementation.

## **Sector Specific & Technological skills**

Sector-specific requirements include regulatory compliance, ESG reporting, procurement and tendering, client management, commercial negotiation and business analytics. Employers also highlighted increasing importance of AI-enabled workflow systems and automation.

## **Net Zero**

Net Zero and sustainability increasingly affect the sector through carbon disclosure requirements, ESG reporting, procurement expectations and supply-chain compliance. Employers identified growing need for people capable of translating sustainability obligations into operational business processes.

## ADVANCED MANUFACTURING AND ENGINEERING

### Introduction

Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering remain strategically important sectors for Swindon and Wiltshire and are closely connected to aerospace, defence, food and drink manufacturing, precision engineering and clean energy supply chains. Employer evidence identified significant workforce pressure linked to ageing workforces, automation, sustainability transition and shortages of experienced technical staff.

### Labour Market Intelligence

Employers consistently identified demand for engineering technicians, electrical and mechanical trades, maintenance engineers, CAD technicians, production operatives and automation specialists. Businesses also reported increasing pressure associated with digital manufacturing and sustainability requirements.

Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering remain strategically important but present contrasting labour market trajectories between Swindon and Wiltshire. Manufacturing contributes 11% of total GVA across Swindon and Wiltshire (£2.8 billion).<sup>26</sup> Swindon supports approximately 3,500 Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering jobs, but employment declined by 50% between 2018 and 2023, reflecting industrial restructuring following the Honda closure.<sup>27</sup> Wiltshire presents a more stable picture, with 6,000 jobs and a manufacturing employment concentration above the national average (LQ 1.2).<sup>28</sup>

### Skills Implications

Likely workforce priorities include engineering technicians, automation, advanced production, maintenance engineering, robotics, quality assurance, digital manufacturing and industrial reskilling.

### Job Postings and Forecasts

Additional vacancy analysis should include engineering technicians, maintenance engineers, CAD technicians, manufacturing operatives, electrical engineers and digital manufacturing occupations. Particular attention should be paid to replacement demand linked to ageing workforces.

### Occupational Priorities

Priority occupations include engineering technicians, maintenance engineers, electrical and mechanical engineers, production managers, fabrication and welding occupations and automation specialists.

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<sup>26</sup> Swindon and Wiltshire Business and Growth Unit (2025): [Swindon and Wiltshire Local Economic Assessment](#), p.4.]

<sup>27</sup> Swindon and Wiltshire Business and Growth Unit (2025): [Swindon and Wiltshire Local Economic Assessment](#), pp.10-11.

<sup>28</sup> Swindon and Wiltshire Business and Growth Unit (2025): [Swindon and Wiltshire Local Economic Assessment](#), pp.18-19.

## **Occupational Opportunities**

Opportunities exist within aerospace, automation, robotics, EV technologies, defence supply chains, sustainable manufacturing and AI-enabled production systems. Employers additionally highlighted opportunities linked to modular construction, climate technologies and advanced materials.

## **Reported Skills Needs**

Employers identified need for practical engineering capability, maintenance and diagnostics, process engineering, automation, CAD, project management and sustainability awareness.

## **Critical and Enabling Skills**

Communication, reliability, problem solving, adaptability, teamwork and professionalism were repeatedly identified as critical enabling skills. Employers also highlighted the importance of capturing tacit operational knowledge from experienced staff before retirement.

## **Digital Skills**

Digital skills include CAD, ERP systems, automation controls, industrial data systems, cyber awareness, digital diagnostics and AI-assisted workflows. Employers additionally identified growing importance of digital manufacturing capability.

## **Sector Specific & Technological skills**

Sector-specific requirements include electrical and mechanical engineering fundamentals, automation and robotics, process optimisation, sustainable materials, systems integration, production management and regulatory compliance.

## **Net Zero**

Employers identified increasing importance of sustainable manufacturing, energy efficiency, waste reduction, low-carbon production systems and environmental monitoring. Sustainability is increasingly embedded within engineering and manufacturing operations rather than treated separately.

## **CLEAN ENERGY INDUSTRIES**

### **Introduction**

Employers consistently described low-carbon and clean energy activity as extending across construction, engineering, infrastructure, manufacturing and professional services rather than operating as a wholly separate labour market. Workforce demand is increasingly shaped by retrofit, electrification, renewable energy deployment, sustainability reporting and infrastructure transition.

## Labour Market Intelligence

The strongest recurring workforce pressure identified through employer engagement related to electrical competence. Employers across retrofit, solar, battery storage, infrastructure and housing decarbonisation repeatedly identified shortages of electricians and electrotechnical professionals as major delivery constraints. Employers additionally highlighted fragmented training pathways and rapidly evolving standards. Environmental Technologies remain a relatively small but fast-growing strategic labour market. Swindon supports approximately 1,250 jobs, with employment growth of 39%, and an employment location quotient of 1.8.<sup>29</sup> Wiltshire supports approximately 2,000 jobs, with employment growth of 100%, also with a location quotient of 1.8.<sup>30</sup>

## Skills Implications

Likely workforce priorities include low-carbon technologies, environmental engineering, retrofit capability, sustainability management, energy systems and green technical skills.

## Occupational Priorities

Priority occupations include electricians, retrofit coordinators, heat pump installers, solar PV installers, sustainability professionals, energy systems engineers, battery storage technicians and carbon management roles.

## Occupational Opportunities

Opportunities exist for career changers, experienced worker routes, veterans and progression from construction and engineering into low-carbon delivery roles. Employers also identified opportunities linked to customer-facing sustainability and energy advisory functions.

## Reported Skills Needs

Reported skills needs include electrotechnical competence, retrofit coordination, heat pump installation, solar PV systems, energy data analysis, sustainability reporting, carbon accounting and customer communication. Employers repeatedly stressed the importance of whole house approaches rather than isolated technical interventions.

## Critical and Enabling Skills

Communication, trust-building, customer engagement, adaptability and project management were identified as critical enabling skills. Employers particularly highlighted need for people capable of explaining complex technologies clearly to households and businesses.

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<sup>29</sup> Swindon and Wiltshire Business and Growth Unit (2025): [Swindon and Wiltshire Local Economic Assessment](#), pp.10-11.

<sup>30</sup> Swindon and Wiltshire Business and Growth Unit (2025): [Swindon and Wiltshire Local Economic Assessment](#), pp.18-19.

## Digital Skills

Digital skills include energy monitoring systems, environmental modelling, carbon accounting tools, digital customer management systems, Power BI and AI-assisted environmental analysis.

## Sector Specific & Technological skills

Sector-specific requirements include MCS and PAS standards, retrofit quality assurance, high-voltage systems, battery storage systems, ventilation and moisture management, grid infrastructure awareness and understanding of accreditation frameworks.

## Net Zero

Net Zero is the principal driver of workforce demand across the sector. However, employers repeatedly stressed that workforce development alone will not be sufficient without stable policy, infrastructure investment, grid capacity and clearer market demand.

## LIFE SCIENCES

### Introduction

The life sciences sector within Swindon and Wiltshire includes pharmaceuticals, diagnostics, medical technologies, laboratory sciences, health technologies and research-led innovation activity. Employers described increasing convergence between life sciences, digital technologies, sustainability and advanced manufacturing.

### Labour Market Intelligence

Employers identified growing demand for technical and scientific occupations linked to automation, digitalisation, sustainability reporting and regulatory compliance. Evidence also highlighted increasing influence of NHS procurement standards and supply-chain sustainability expectations. Further local labour market analysis may be required to strengthen understanding of regional life sciences specialisms and workforce concentrations.

Life Sciences represent one of the strongest growth sectors in the sub-region. Swindon supports approximately 4,330 jobs, with employment growth of 70% between 2018 and 2023, despite a relatively small business base of 10 firms.<sup>31</sup> Wiltshire supports approximately 9,680 jobs, with employment growth of 103%, and a very strong employment concentration (LQ 5.8). Wiltshire also supports 65 businesses, with a business concentration above the national average (LQ 2.1).<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Swindon and Wiltshire Business and Growth Unit (2025): [Swindon and Wiltshire Local Economic Assessment](#), pp.10-11.

<sup>32</sup> Swindon and Wiltshire Business and Growth Unit (2025): [Swindon and Wiltshire Local Economic Assessment](#), pp.18-19.

### **Skills Implications**

Likely workforce priorities include laboratory technicians, bioscience capability, regulatory compliance, quality assurance, advanced scientific roles, data-enabled science and technical STEM progression pathways.

### **Occupational Priorities**

Priority occupations include laboratory technicians, quality assurance professionals, process engineers, automation specialists, regulatory professionals, data analysts and sustainability-related technical functions.

### **Occupational Opportunities**

Opportunities exist within sustainable medicines manufacturing, AI-enabled diagnostics, automation, digital laboratory systems and environmentally sustainable production systems. Employers additionally highlighted opportunities linked to interdisciplinary technical roles combining scientific, digital and analytical capability.

### **Reported Skills Needs**

Reported skills needs include regulatory compliance, laboratory systems, automation, digital manufacturing, sustainability reporting, data analysis, project management and process engineering. Employers additionally identified increasing need for interdisciplinary capability.

### **Critical and Enabling Skills**

Communication, collaboration, problem solving, adaptability and analytical thinking were repeatedly identified as critical enabling skills. Employers additionally highlighted the importance of regulatory awareness and quality culture.

### **Digital Skills**

Digital skills include digital laboratory systems, AI-enabled diagnostics, automation systems, data analysis, machine learning applications and environmental monitoring systems.

### **Sector Specific & Technological skills**

Sector-specific requirements include regulatory science, sustainable manufacturing, green chemistry, automation, digital process systems, continuous manufacturing and carbon reporting capability.

### **Net Zero**

Net Zero increasingly affects life sciences through NHS procurement requirements, sustainable supply-chain expectations, carbon disclosure obligations and sustainable manufacturing standards. Employers highlighted growing importance of environmental compliance capability.

It is clear that green skills are required in all levels of organisations in the Life Sciences sector, from front line staff to senior leadership and their wider-supply chains. There is therefore a need for green skills knowledge and job roles to be embedded at all stages. A more robust understanding of green skills including sustainable procurement, supply chain management, circular economy, reduction of waste and carbon reduction will support the sector's net zero transition and represent the regional priorities.

## **CREATIVE INDUSTRIES**

### **Introduction**

The creative industries within Swindon and Wiltshire include screen, digital media, design, marketing, arts, events, cultural activity and wider freelance creative work. Employer evidence highlighted the sector's importance to place identity, visitor economy activity and inward investment while also identifying significant workforce fragility and freelance pressures.

### **Labour Market Intelligence**

The sector is characterised by microbusinesses, freelancers and portfolio careers, making workforce analysis more complex than in larger corporate sectors. Employers highlighted challenges around progression pathways, visibility of careers beyond performance roles and access to practical industry experience. Vacancy data alone is unlikely to fully capture workforce demand within the sector. Creative Industries represent an important employment and enterprise ecosystem, although they are not currently a major employment specialisation relative to other sectors. Swindon supports approximately 3,000 creative jobs, with employment broadly stable between 2018 and 2023. The sector includes 635 businesses, although business numbers declined by 33%.<sup>33</sup> Wiltshire supports approximately 8,000 jobs, with employment growth of 14%, alongside 2,005 businesses, despite a 12% decline in the business base.<sup>34</sup>

### **Skills Implications**

Likely priorities include digital content production, design capability, creative software, entrepreneurial/self-employment skills, production technologies and business development capability.

### **Occupational Priorities**

Priority occupations include digital content creators, marketing professionals, producers, technical theatre roles, events management occupations, creative technologists and freelance creative professionals.

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<sup>33</sup> Swindon and Wiltshire Business and Growth Unit (2025): [Swindon and Wiltshire Local Economic Assessment](#), pp.10-11.

<sup>34</sup> Swindon and Wiltshire Business and Growth Unit (2025): [Swindon and Wiltshire Local Economic Assessment](#), pp.18-19.

## **Occupational Opportunities**

Opportunities exist within digital content production, screen industries, technical production, creative entrepreneurship, cultural programming and digital marketing. Employers also highlighted opportunities linked to cross-sector collaboration between creative businesses and tourism, hospitality and digital sectors.

## **Reported Skills Needs**

Reported skills needs include creative entrepreneurship, networking, contracts and IP awareness, project management, technical production capability, marketing and stakeholder engagement. Employers additionally highlighted importance of placements and industry exposure.

## **Critical and Enabling Skills**

Confidence, communication, collaboration, resilience, adaptability and professional behaviours were repeatedly identified as critical enabling skills. Employers additionally highlighted importance of helping young people build industry confidence and social capital.

## **Digital Skills**

Digital skills include digital marketing, editing and production software, AI-aware creative practice, CRM systems, audience analytics and digital communications.

## **Sector Specific & Technological Skills**

Sector-specific requirements include technical theatre capability, lighting and sound, content production, contracts and IP awareness, freelance business practice and AI-enabled creative workflows.

## **Net Zero**

Evidence regarding Net Zero within the creative industries remains less developed than in engineering and construction sectors. However, sustainability increasingly affects events, venues, procurement and visitor-facing activity. Further local research may be beneficial. There is a need for further exposure of the extent of green skills needs in the creative industries in Swindon and Wiltshire, and the opportunities that are available.

Highlighting potential green job roles, career pathways and organisations to the emerging workforce through industry insights sessions will spotlight these opportunities to the next generation of workforce, who are frequently reported to place higher importance on an organisation's values, including net zero, when choosing a career or employer.

An increased focus on net zero within the creative industry through further education colleges, local authorities and employers who are already embracing net zero will provide further opportunities to highlight the value that can be added to an organisation through adopting sustainable practices. To ensure as wide a reach as possible, the opportunity should be taken by the LSIP, local authorities, stakeholders and local

businesses to work collaboratively and adopt a ‘business–friendly’ approach, utilising simplified, accessible terminology to demystify the green landscape and provide access to support and guidance for local businesses.

## **DIGITAL ICT AND CYBER**

### **Introduction**

Digital ICT and cyber capability are increasingly fundamental across the Swindon and Wiltshire economy. Employers identified growing demand for both specialist digital occupations and broader workforce digital confidence. AI adoption has accelerated rapidly across sectors and is reshaping administration, customer engagement, data handling and business operations.

### **Labour Market Intelligence**

Employers identified increasing demand for cyber security, cloud infrastructure, software development, AI capability and data analysis. Businesses also raised concerns regarding declining workplace digital literacy amongst younger entrants, despite widespread use of personal technology. SMEs frequently identified uncertainty regarding AI implementation and governance. Cyber Security is identified as a strategic growth sector linked to defence and digital capability. Swindon supports approximately 2,250 cyber jobs, although employment declined by 25% between 2018 and 2023. The sector includes 500 businesses, despite a 42% decline in business numbers.<sup>35</sup> Wiltshire supports a larger employment base of approximately 6,000 jobs, with employment broadly stable, alongside 1,050 businesses, despite a 29% contraction in the business base.<sup>36</sup>

### **Skills Implications**

Likely workforce priorities include cyber security, software engineering, digital systems, network infrastructure, secure technologies, data capability and digital retraining.

### **Occupational Priorities**

Priority occupations include software developers, cyber security professionals, cloud specialists, data analysts, AI–related occupations, digital marketers and digital project managers.

### **Occupational Opportunities**

Opportunities exist within AI implementation, cyber resilience, cloud systems, digital transformation and cross–sector digital capability development. Employers additionally highlighted opportunities for mature entrants with strong communication and business understanding.

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<sup>35</sup> Swindon and Wiltshire Business and Growth Unit (2025): [Swindon and Wiltshire Local Economic Assessment](#), pp.10-11.

<sup>36</sup> Swindon and Wiltshire Business and Growth Unit (2025): [Swindon and Wiltshire Local Economic Assessment](#), pp.18-19.

## **Reported Skills Needs**

Reported skills needs include AI literacy, cyber security, cloud systems, data analysis, Power BI, digital project management, coding, digital marketing and data governance. Employers additionally highlighted concerns regarding confidentiality and over-reliance on AI outputs.

## **Critical and Enabling Skills**

Communication, critical thinking, curiosity, adaptability, resilience and stakeholder management were repeatedly identified as critical enabling skills. Employers stressed that technical professionals increasingly require customer-facing capability.

## **Digital Skills**

Digital skills include coding, cloud systems, cyber awareness, AI tools, digital accessibility, data visualisation, digital communication and sector-specific digital platforms.

## **Sector Specific & Technological skills**

Sector-specific requirements include AI governance, SaaS development, cyber resilience, cloud systems, operational technology security and digital infrastructure capability.

## **Net Zero**

Net Zero issues include environmental impacts of AI and data centres, sustainable digital infrastructure and efficient data management. This remains an emerging evidence area requiring further local exploration.

The primary sustainability concern that has been reported in relation to the Digital, ICT and Cyber sector is the environmental impact of AI, however there were concerns that there is not enough understanding and awareness of the impact and that those that were aware were “turning a blind eye to it”. Through events, webinars and practical tools, and a collaborative approach from the LSIP and local authorities, the complex net zero landscape will be demystified and awareness raised to highlight the effects of data centres, water use and energy consumption

## **DEFENCE**

### **Introduction**

Defence remains a strategically significant sector within Swindon and Wiltshire and the wider South West economy, supporting advanced engineering, aerospace, digital technologies, cyber security, logistics and specialist manufacturing. Employers identified increasing workforce demand associated with defence modernisation, autonomous systems and cyber resilience.

## Labour Market Intelligence

The sector is closely interconnected with aerospace, engineering, digital technologies and advanced manufacturing. Employers highlighted increasing competition for security-cleared technical professionals and growing overlap between defence and civilian digital capability requirements. Further workforce mapping may be beneficial regarding defence supply chains and autonomous systems.

Defence is one of the strongest strategic employment specialisms, particularly in Wiltshire. Wiltshire supports approximately 7,000 defence jobs, with employment growth of 17% between 2018 and 2023, and a location quotient of 1.9, indicating strong employment concentration.<sup>37</sup> Swindon supports approximately 2,000 defence jobs, although employment declined by 33% over the same period.<sup>38</sup> Public administration and defence contribute approximately 14% of Wiltshire GVA (just over £2 billion).<sup>39</sup>

## Skills Implications

Likely priorities include engineering, defence technologies, laboratory science, systems engineering, technical operations, digital systems and higher-level STEM pathways.

## Occupational Priorities

Priority occupations include systems engineers, cyber security professionals, electrical and electronic engineers, project managers, advanced manufacturing technicians and logistics professionals.

## Occupational Opportunities

Opportunities exist within autonomous systems, drones, cyber security, AI-enabled defence systems, advanced manufacturing and engineering transition routes from civilian sectors.

## Reported Skills Needs

Reported skills needs include systems integration, cyber resilience, electrical and electronic engineering, project management, digital manufacturing and supply-chain management.

## Critical and Enabling Skills

Communication, professionalism, collaboration, adaptability and problem solving were repeatedly identified as critical enabling skills. Employers additionally highlighted importance of interdisciplinary capability.

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<sup>37</sup> Swindon and Wiltshire Business and Growth Unit (2025): [Swindon and Wiltshire Local Economic Assessment](#), pp.18-19.

<sup>38</sup> Swindon and Wiltshire Business and Growth Unit (2025): [Swindon and Wiltshire Local Economic Assessment](#), pp.10-11.

<sup>39</sup> Swindon and Wiltshire Business and Growth Unit (2025): [Swindon and Wiltshire Local Economic Assessment](#), p.16.

## **Digital Skills**

Digital skills include cyber security, AI-enabled systems, digital systems integration, operational technology security and secure data management.

## **Sector Specific & Technological skills**

Sector-specific requirements include security clearance pathways, defence procurement, autonomous systems, digital manufacturing and resilient supply-chain capability.

## **Net Zero**

Net Zero and sustainability increasingly affect the sector through procurement standards, infrastructure resilience, energy security and supply-chain expectations. Swindon and Wiltshire has emerged as a prominent technology hub for the defence industry with notable skills gaps for energy specialists, especially in alternative fuels such as hydrogen, biomass and sustainable aviation fuels.

## Indicative SIC/SOC Mapping

This section provides indicative SIC (Standard Industrial Classification) and SOC (Standard Occupational Classification) mappings for the priority sectors identified within the Swindon and Wiltshire LSIP. The mapping has been developed in line with Skills England guidance and is intended to support consistency of interpretation between local labour market evidence, national datasets and implementation planning.

The mapping reflects both traditional occupational structures and emerging occupational areas identified through employer engagement. Several emerging occupations, particularly within clean energy, AI and sustainability-related activity, are not yet fully reflected within existing SOC frameworks. In these cases, indicative mappings and narrative descriptions have been provided.

The SIC and SOC mappings are indicative and should be refined further during implementation and validation activity. Several occupations operate across multiple sectors, and some emerging occupations are not yet fully represented within existing SOC classifications.

Occupation	SOC Code	LSIP Interpretation	Relevant SIC Codes
<b>Professional and Business Services</b>			
Business and financial project management professionals	2424	Project management and business change roles	70, 69, 66
Chartered and certified accountants	2421	Finance and accountancy professions	69
Human resource managers and directors	1132	HR leadership and workforce planning	70
Business and related associate professionals	3539	Business support and advisory activity	70
Customer service managers	7220	Client relationship and account management	82
<b>Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering</b>			
Engineering professionals	2122	Mechanical, production and process engineering	25, 28, 30
Engineering technicians	3113	Technical maintenance and production support	25, 28
Electrical and electronics technicians	3112	Electrical systems and diagnostics	27
Welding trades	5215	Fabrication and welding occupations	25
Production managers	1121	Manufacturing operations and leadership	25, 28

<b>Clean Energy Industries</b>			
Electricians and electrical fitters	5241	Electrical installation and maintenance	35, 43
Construction and building trades	5319	Retrofit and low-carbon installation	43
Energy managers and sustainability professionals	3567	Environmental and sustainability management	71, 74
Engineering professionals	2122	Renewable energy systems engineering	35
Environmental professionals	2142	Carbon and environmental analysis	74
<b>Digital, ICT and Cyber</b>			
Programmers and software development professionals	2134	Software engineering and applications	62
IT business analysts and architects	2135	Systems analysis and infrastructure	62
Cyber security professionals	2139	Cyber resilience and security	62
IT operations technicians	3131	Digital support and infrastructure	62
Web design professionals	2137	Digital media and web services	63
<b>Construction</b>			
Electricians and electrical fitters	5241	Electrical installation and infrastructure	43
Carpenters and joiners	5315	Construction trades	41, 43
Construction project managers	2436	Construction leadership and delivery	41, 42
Roofers and tilers	5313	Roofing and retrofit support	43
Building technicians	3114	CAD, BIM and technical design	71

<b>Health and Social Care</b>			
Care workers and home carers	6135	Residential and community care	87, 88
Nursing professionals	2231	Registered nursing	86
Health associate professionals	3219	Clinical and support occupations	86
Managers in health and social care	1242	Care management and leadership	87
Welfare and housing associate professionals	3231	Support and safeguarding services	88
<b>Creative Industries and Visitor Economy</b>			
Graphic designers	3421	Creative design and visual communication	73, 90
Arts officers, producers and directors	3416	Creative production and programming	90
Chefs	5434	Hospitality and visitor economy	56
Hotel and accommodation managers	1221	Tourism and visitor management	55
Marketing associate professionals	3554	Digital marketing and audience engagement	73

## SIC and SOC Mapping Limitations

Several limitations should be noted regarding SIC and SOC classification systems. Employer engagement identified significant growth in hybrid occupations that combine elements of digital, sustainability, engineering, analytical and customer-facing capability. Examples include AI-enabled business analysts, retrofit coordinators, sustainability managers and digital manufacturing technicians.

A number of emerging occupations are not yet fully reflected within existing SOC frameworks. In these cases, the LSIP has relied upon employer descriptions, occupational standards and sector evidence to identify workforce demand. This is particularly relevant within clean energy, AI, cyber security and sustainability-related activity.

Freelance and portfolio careers within the Creative Industries may also be underrepresented within standard vacancy datasets and SIC classifications. Similarly, green skills requirements are often embedded within existing occupations rather than appearing as standalone occupational categories.

## Emerging and Specialist Occupations (Not Yet Covered by SOC)

The following matrix isolates the specialised, fast-evolving roles disrupting the Swindon and Wiltshire labour market, compiled from direct consultation with the sub-region's core employment networks. Positioned strategically along the M4 corridor, Swindon and Wiltshire support a highly productive advanced manufacturing, defence, and logistics footprint. The area benefits from distinct localised strengths, particularly in unmanned aerial systems (UAS/drones) and complex military supply chains, while managing a large, vital "Everyday Economy" spanning healthcare and hospitality.

However, the regional skills pipeline is heavily pressured by unique structural hurdles: an intensely aging demographic, acute rural transport limitations for young apprentices, and the distinct absence of a physical higher education university campus footprint within the sub-region. This has forced employers to look for highly integrated, cross-cutting roles—such as dual-use technology technicians and ESG supply chain compliance specialists—to remain competitive and protect against a regional talent drain. Because these positions blur the lines between software data science, environmental compliance, and traditional mechanical assembly, they remain largely invisible within standard federal vacancy trackers, requiring the localised, modular interventions outlined below.

Role / Occupation	Sector	Context & Employer Demand	Closest SOC Code(s)	Classification Gap / Limitation	Cross-Cutting Themes	Classification Status
<b>AI Governance, Ethics &amp; Prompt Engineers</b>	Cross-sector (All priority sectors)	AI usage is operationally embedded across engineering workflows, modelling, design, and recruitment. Employers require staff who understand critical prompt engineering, ethical usage, automated bias mitigation, and data protection.	Spans 2133 IT Business Analysts; 2134 Programmers & Software Developers.	Existing codes capture technical coding or generic analysis, completely missing the distinction between specialised AI data science and baseline operational AI governance literacy.	Digital & AI; Technology Adoption; Professional Services.	Not classified — entirely cross-cutting and new function.

<b>Drone Manufacturing &amp; Integration Technicians</b>	Defence / Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering	Accelerated by Swindon and Wiltshire's unique competitive advantage in unmanned aerial systems and national defence supply chains. Rapid industrial expansion is severely outpacing workforce availability.	3113 Engineering Technicians; 2122 Mechanical Engineers.	Standard codes fail to capture the dual-use technology convergence sitting between advanced aerospace manufacturing, autonomous software engineering, and defence-specific systems integration.	Defence; Advanced Manufacturing; Innovation Pipelines.	Fragmented / Partial – Outpaced by sector growth speed.
<b>Electrotechnical &amp; High-Voltage Systems Engineers</b>	Clean Energy Industries / Defence	Driven by rapid sub-regional growth (+100% in Wiltshire clean energy jobs). Massive delivery constraints are reported in high-voltage capability, solar PV infrastructure, grid balancing, and battery storage.	5241 Electricians; 2123 Electrical Engineers.	Standard electrical codes do not map the specific grid infrastructure competencies, alternative propulsion, or high-voltage commercial renewables frameworks requested by local employers.	Net Zero & Sustainability; Clean Energy Infrastructure; Electrification.	Partial / Fragmented – Core codes exist but skip specialised technical skills.
<b>Retrofit Coordinators &amp; Sustainable Materials Leads</b>	Construction & Foundational Trades	Crucial for regional housing decarbonisation, local SME supply chain resilience, and whole-house energy infrastructure transitions.	3440 Retrofit Coordinators; 3114 Building Technicians; 2451	Traditional manual trades codes (carpentry, electrical, groundworks) treat roles in isolation. They	Net Zero & Sustainability; Foundational Infrastructure;	Transition gap – Role is heavily multi-disciplinary.

		Shift is from manual trades to green building physics.	Construction Project Managers.	fail to reflect hybrid systems-level thinking, MCS/PAS quality assurance, and digital site tools.	Whole House Systems.	
<b>Sustainability &amp; Carbon Disclosure Accountants</b>	Professional and Business Services / Life Sciences	Triggered by rapid regulatory shifts, carbon disclosure requirements, Scope 1–3 compliance, and strict NHS procurement expectations tracking down to local supply chains.	2421 Chartered Accountants; 3534 Finance Analysts.	Standard accounting or finance classifications fail to capture environmental metrics tracking. These roles frequently stay "hidden" inside standard job titles, making them data invisible.	Net Zero & Sustainability; Business Services; Supply Chain Compliance.	Not classified – embedded in legacy titles.
<b>Digital Healthtech Integration Leads</b>	Health and Social Care	Prompted by an intensely aging local demographic and rural footprint constraint. Demand is spiking for the rollout of automated care management systems, data sharing, and telehealth.	2139 IT Professionals n.e.c.; 3239 Care Managers.	standard classifications capture traditional personal values-based care provision. They fail to track the digital competency bridge required to integrate physical health technology into day-to-day care delivery.	Digital & AI; Care System Resilience; Rurality.	Transition gap – Bridging healthcare and ICT.

<b>Eco- Accreditation Communicators &amp; Local Sourcing Promoters</b>	Visitor Economy / Sustainable Tourism	Critical regional baseline economy seeking incremental shifts toward local sourcing, sustainable tourism metrics, and corporate carbon reductions.	3543 Marketing and Events Roles; 6211 Leisure/Travel.	No classification tracks environmental metrics directly within hospitality fields. Roles are typically masked within generic administrative or event management titles due to fear of "greenwashing".	Net Zero & Sustainability; Rural Economy; Supply Chain Sourcing.	Not classified — Embedded in legacy job titles.
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## Conclusion

The evidence contained within this annex demonstrates the breadth and complexity of workforce challenges affecting Swindon and Wiltshire over the LSIP period. Across sectors, employers consistently identified accelerating digitalisation, sustainability transition, leadership capability gaps, ageing workforce pressures and increasing importance of communication, resilience and workplace readiness.

The findings additionally reinforce the need for stronger progression pathways, modular and flexible training provision, improved careers awareness and closer collaboration between employers, providers and regional partners. Continued labour market intelligence gathering and employer engagement will remain important throughout the implementation phase of the LSIP.

## Annex B: Delivery Plan and Implementation Activities

The below activities annex outlines planned activities from Business West, as the LSIP ERB, as well as stakeholders, employers, Local Authorities and Further Education providers in Swindon and Wiltshire. Where a specific lead organisation for each action has been determined this is included below. For instances where a lead has not yet been assigned this will be updated as the action is undertaken and the annex updated accordingly.

This annex is a live document and will be updated regularly, with new activities added and a status update for each proposed activity. Updated versions of Annex B will be hosted on the LSIP pages of the Business West website for transparency, accessibility and engagement from partners in the local area.

Skills Need	Actions/Changes Needed	Activities	Lead	Partners Involved	Timescale and Milestones	Expected Outcomes	Monitoring and Measurement
Employers report significant gaps in critical workplace and transferable skills	Integration of Employability and Transferable Skills Within FE Curriculum Prior to Placement	Highlight the importance of critical skills to the emerging workforce	FE Colleges		Ongoing until June 2028	Increased understanding	Number of learners advised
	Collaboration with Employers to Ensure Employability Skills Reflect Industry Needs	Identify key critical skills required by each sector, and explore opportunities for application	Business West	Employers, FE Colleges	Delivered by January 2027 – June 2027 (TBC)	Report/infographic highlighting sector specific critical skills needs	11 x report/ infographic
		Demystifying Events – Sectors	Business West	FE Colleges, Employers	Completed by June 2026 – June 2028	Sector specific insight events – topics based on demand from intel	Survey before/after the event, College metrics and CEC data

		Careers and Enterprise Company Construction Pilot	Business West	Careers and Enterprise Company, Swindon and Wiltshire Careers Hub	Completed by September 2026	Employers have a better understanding of emerging workforce.	Careers Hub metrics and baselines
	<b>Improved CEIAG Incorporating Employer Expectations of the Workplace</b>	Digital Recruitment Event reengaging those furthest from the workplace (NEET/50+)	Business West	Swindon and Wiltshire Careers Hub	Completed by June 2028 (TBC)	Reengagement with skills system.	Event attendees
	<b>Increased Employer Engagement through Guest Lectures and Industry Insight Activities</b>	Showcasing employer skills growth journeys and success stories through marketing (case study)	Business West	Employers	Ongoing until June 2028	Development of a bank of case studies. Increased engagement with skills landscape.	5 careers insights outputs created and hosted on the Business West LSIP Resources Page.
		Development of robust and flexible Industry Insights (including cross-sectoral opportunities) programme - guest lecturing, placements	Local Authorities	FE Colleges, Business West	Ongoing until June 2028	Report highlighting Industry Insights offering in the region.	Increased employer engagement. Wider range of engagement opportunities available.

Employers and stakeholders report limited entry-level pathways into employment	Development of Entry-Level (L1 & L2) Provision to Support Transition into Employment	Work with FE to understand L1/L2 needs	Business West	FE Colleges	Ongoing until June 2028	Improved understanding of the provision for signposting. Additional provision developed as necessary to meet industry need.	Increase in provision at L1/L2 within FE
		Work with ITP to explore online L1 provision	Business West	Independent Training Providers	Ongoing until June 2028	Improved understanding of the provision for signposting. Additional provision developed as necessary to meet industry need.	Increase in provision at L1/L2 within FE
	Strengthened Alignment Between Employers, Further Education Providers and Local Authorities	Employer Boards	Business West	FE Colleges	Ongoing until June 2028	Developing employer skills needs intel. Review and amendment of provision to ensure industry alignment	Increase in provision at L1/L2 within FE
		Develop working group to work collaboratively to combat increase in NEET status risk	Local Authorities	Business West, FE Colleges	Ongoing until June 2028 (TBC)	Working group developed and maintained. Actions developed and reviewed periodically.	Reviews at Governance meetings

		Careers and Enterprise Company Stakeholder Group	Business West	Careers and Enterprise Company	Ongoing until June 2028	Develop Stakeholder Working Group	Employability units created and incorporated within provision
	<b>Increased Support for Young People at Risk of Becoming NEET</b>	Utilising Adult Education Budget funding to support furthest from the workplace into employment	Local Authorities	Business West	Ongoing until June 2028	Increased engagement with training.	Local Authority baseline metrics
	<b>Promotion of Work Placement Opportunities to Support Progression into Employment</b>	Development of robust and flexible Industry Insights (including cross-sectoral opportunities) programme – guest lecturing, placements	Local Authorities	FE Colleges, Business West	Ongoing until June 2028	Report highlighting Industry Insights offering in the region.	Increased employer engagement. Wider range of engagement opportunities available.
<b>Businesses face difficulty navigating the skills landscape, including confusion around availability and relevance of training options</b>	<b>Clarification of the Skills System Through Collaboration with Local Authorities</b>	Showcasing employer skills growth journeys and success stories through marketing (case study)	Business West	Employers	Ongoing until June 2028	Development of a bank of case studies. Increased engagement with skills landscape.	5 careers insights outputs created and hosted on the Business West LSIP Resources Page.
		Sector Events – Delivery/Talks/Workshops	Business West	Stakeholders	Ongoing until June 2028	Sector specific insight events – topics based on demand from intel	Support businesses across Swindon and Wiltshire
	<b>Promotion of Growth Hubs and Existing Business Support Mechanisms</b>	Collaborative working with Local Authorities to show scope of support available in the region and benefits of engaging	Business West	Local Authorities	Developed by June 2026 – June 2027 (TBC)	Robust signposting to existing provision and increased engagement with skills landscape.	Support businesses across Swindon and Wiltshire

	<b>Delivery of Skills Clinics, Webinars and Resources to Support Navigation of Training Options</b>	Delivery of Skills Clinics and development of additional resources to help navigate the Skills System	Business West		Ongoing until June 2028	Bespoke workforce development planning. Signposting to provision and resources.	Support businesses across Swindon and Wiltshire
	<b>Continued Delivery of Skills Bootcamps or Equivalent Flexible Precision Aligned to Employer Need</b>	Development of skills bootcamps/modular/flexible short course training	Business West	Local Authorities	Developed by June 2027 – June 2028 (TBC)	Development of modular provision	Reviews at Governance meetings
<b>Employers report a need for greater support to engage with young people and new entrants</b>	<b>Improved Employer Engagement in CEIAG, Including Increased Placement Opportunities</b>	Development of robust and flexible Industry Insights programme – guest lecturing, placements	Local Authorities	FE Colleges, Business West	Ongoing until June 2028	Report highlighting Industry Insights offering in the region.	Increased employer engagement. Wider range of engagement opportunities available.
		Employer Toolkit – Recruiting individuals with disabilities	Business West		Completed by June 2027 (TBC)	Development of a bank of downloadable resources.	Toolkit available for download by employers.
		Benefits of Employer/Education Engagement webinar	Business West	FE Colleges	Completed by June 2027 (TBC)	Awareness raised of Employer/Education Engagement opportunities. Increased employer engagement with FE Colleges.	Amount of webinar attendees

	<b>Strengthened Collaboration Between Local Authorities, FE Providers and Employers</b>	Careers and Enterprise Company Construction Pilot	Business West	Careers and Enterprise Company, Swindon and Wiltshire Careers Hub	Completed by September 2026 (TBC)	Employers have a better understanding of emerging workforce.	Careers Hub metrics and baselines
	<b>Development of a "One Front Door" Approach to Skills System Navigation</b>	Connect businesses with the Get Britain Working programmes	Business West		Ongoing until June 2028	Awareness raised on Get Britain Working programmes. Increased engagement.	Businesses supported
		Develop One Front Door approach to training support	Local Authorities	Business West, FE Colleges	Developed by June 2026 – June 2027 (TBC)	Develop and maintain working group – cohesive messaging and marketing	Reviews at Governance meetings
	<b>Continued Delivery of Bespoke Workforce Development Support for Employers</b>	Delivery of Skills Clinics and development of additional resources to help navigate the Skills System	Business West		Ongoing until June 2028	Bespoke workforce development planning. Signposting to provision and resources.	Support businesses across Swindon and Wiltshire
	<b>Clarification of the Skills Landscape and Available Funding Options</b>	Delivery of Skills Clinics and development of additional resources to help navigate the Skills System, including raising awareness regarding funding options	Business West		Ongoing until June 2028	Bespoke workforce development planning. Signposting to provision and resources.	Support businesses across Swindon and Wiltshire

<b>Employers report increasing use of AI and digital technologies across business operations</b>	<b>Delivery of AI Awareness and 'Demystifying AI' Sessions</b>	Digital and Cyber Skills Breakfast	Business West	Stakeholders, Employers	Completed by June 2026	Improved digital skills knowledge.	Sign up for Cyber Security Training & Digital Bootcamp/ new module training
		Digital and Cyber Skills Online Event	Business West	Stakeholders, Employers	Completed by December 2026	Improved digital skills knowledge.	Sign up for Cyber Security Training & Digital Bootcamp/ new module training
	<b>Provision of Training and Resources on Safe, Ethical and Effective AI Usage</b>	Develop AI and Digitalisation usage upskilling provision and support mechanism	Local Authorities	FE Colleges, Independent Training Providers	Ongoing until June 2028	Increased engagement with digital training.	Provision developed. Employers engaged with provision
	<b>Collaboration with Local Authorities and FE Providers to Strengthen Basic Digital Skills Provision</b>	Develop baseline digital skills threshold/needs matrix	Local Authorities	Business West, FE Colleges	Completed by June 2027	Digital skills matrix developed	Adoption by FE colleges in the region
		Strengthen fundamental digital skills provision	FE Colleges	Business West	Ongoing until June 2028	Relevant, up to date and industry aligned provision	College baseline metrics
	<b>Targeted Support for SMEs to Adopt Digitalisation and Emerging Technologies</b>	Develop AI, Digitalisation and Automation upskilling provision and support mechanism	Local Authorities	FE Colleges, Independent Training Providers	Ongoing until June 2028	Increased engagement with digital training.	Provision developed. Employers engaged with provision
<b>Employers report growing demand for</b>	<b>Provision Review and Alignment with Employer Need</b>	Retrofit - Curriculum design/module – what's missing?	Business West	Employers, FE Colleges	Completed by June 2026 – June 2028 (TBC)	Curriculum review and provision development where necessary	Review of curriculum with 2 regional FE colleges

<b>sustainability and net zero skills</b>	<b>Promotion of Alternative Provision to Apprenticeships</b>	Skills Clinics and Green Lead provide bespoke support with identifying potential	Business West		Ongoing until June 2028	Bespoke workforce development planning. Signposting to provision and resources.	Support businesses across Swindon and Wiltshire
	<b>Development of a Local Sustainability Working Group to Share Best Practice</b>	Develop working group to develop a network of local employers to share best practice	Business West	Local Authorities, Employers	Established by June 2027	Develop and maintain working group - complete actions as developed	Reviews at Governance meetings
		ROI – Sustainability Plan/Social Value offering	Business West	Local Authorities	Ongoing until June 2028	Awareness raised on Sustainability ROI	Number of employers engaged
	<b>Improved Visibility of Existing Sustainability and Green Skills Provision</b>	Green Lead – Who’s the ‘go to’ for sustainability business resources?	Business West		Completed by June 2027 (TBC)	Guide developed for referrals and signposting	Support businesses across Swindon and Wiltshire
	<b>Delivery of Meet the Expert sessions on Sustainability</b>	Development and delivery of webinar series to help demystify Sustainability	Business West	Stakeholders	Delivered by June 2027 (TBC)	Awareness raised of Sustainability and best practice	Amount of webinar attendees
<b>Employers report ongoing challenges in recruiting candidates with</b>	<b>Support Curriculum Codesign with Employers to Ensure Provision is</b>	Employer boards to review curriculum and ensure industry alignment, development of	Business West		Ongoing until June 2028	Developing employer skills needs intel. Review and amendment of provision to	Attend Employer Boards held in the region

<b>up-to-date technical skills and relevant workplace experience</b>	<b>Up to Date and Relevant</b>	curriculum codesign relationship				ensure industry alignment	
	<b>Collaboration with FE Providers to Align Training with Current Industry Needs</b>	Swindon IOT new module for Finance students as current gap in provision of T-Level – with placement.	Swindon New College IOT	LSIP, Sector Bodies Large and SME Employers	Delivered by September 2026 (TBC)	Curriculum development.	IOT metrics
		Employer boards to review curriculum and ensure industry alignment, development of curriculum codesign relationship	Business West		Ongoing until June 2028	Developing employer skills needs intel. Review and amendment of provision to ensure industry alignment	Attend Employer Boards held in the region
	<b>Promotion of the Benefits of Work Placements to Employers</b>	Recruitment Entry/ Apprenticeships – Marketing campaign /modules/ incentives/Day in the Life videos	Employers	Business West	Ongoing until June 2028	Development of a bank of career insights resources	20 careers insights outputs created and hosted on the Business West LSIP Resources Page
		Recruitment/ Retaining Tech Skills – Toolkit?	Business West		Delivered by June 2027	Development of a bank of downloadable resources.	Toolkit available for download by employers.
	<b>Development of Clearer Pathways from Education into Employment, including Sector-Specific Routes (e.g. Construction)</b>	Recruitment Entry – Youth Guarantee/ Apprenticeships	Business West		Ongoing until June 2028	Reengagement with skills system.	Event attendees

<b>Employers and stakeholders report a lack of coordination, clarity and alignment across the local skills system</b>	<b>Strengthen Governance and Partnership Working</b>	Develop Governance mechanisms and working group to ensure cohesive and robust approach to skills system	Local Authorities	Business West	Ongoing until June 2027	Develop and maintain working group – cohesive messaging and marketing	Reviews at Governance meetings
		Work collaboratively to develop a clear employer facing map of engagement	Business West	Wessex Partners	Ongoing until June 2028	Understanding of the Wessex shared skills needs	Development of Ladder of Engagement tool
		Develop skills priorities for Wessex Partnership area to support devolution discussions in partnership with the Dorset and Somerset LSIPs	BCP Council, Dorset Council, Somerset Council and Wiltshire Council	Dorset Chamber, Business West	Completion by October 2026 (TBC)	Understanding of the Wessex shared skills needs	Dorset Skills and Workforce Board
	<b>Improve Coordination and Dialogue Between Employers, Providers and Stakeholders</b>	Cross-stakeholder working group to develop and implement cohesive messaging and promotion of local skills landscape	Local Authorities	Business West	Developed by June 2027 (TBC)	Develop and maintain working group – cohesive messaging and marketing	Reviews at Governance meetings
	<b>Development of More Joined-Up and Accessible Employer Engagement Approaches</b>	Cross-stakeholder working group to strengthen One Front Door approach to skills system and governance	Local Authorities	Business West	Developed by June 2027 (TBC)	Develop and maintain working group – cohesive messaging and marketing	Reviews at Governance meetings

	<b>Improved Alignment of Skills Provision to Identified Employer Needs Across Sectors and Geographies</b>	Employer boards to review curriculum and ensure industry alignment, development of curriculum codesign relationship including digital skills	Swindon New College IOT	Business West, Sector Bodies, Large and SME Employers	Feb 2026 for initial outlining Board establishment 1 <sup>st</sup> full meeting to discuss these skills need 29 <sup>th</sup> April 2026	Membership of Board established	Agenda, minutes and actions provided for bi- monthly meetings.
	<b>Clearer Regional Communication and Articulation of Skills Pathways, Provision and Funding Opportunities</b>	Increased LSIP presence in community to expand engagement	Business West		Ongoing until June 2028	Increased event attendance, Skills Clinic attendance and 121s	Hours of engagement. Amount of employer engagements. Amount of events delivered.
		Swindon Skills Connect – online provision?	Business West		Ongoing until June 2028	Bespoke workforce development planning. Signposting to provision and resources.	Support businesses across Swindon and Wiltshire

## Annex C: Background & Method

### 1. Evidence Base & Methodology

This LSIP builds upon the methodology and findings of the previous LSIP – adopting an agile methodology and ensuring we are adapting to the highlighted needs and demands of employers, stake-holders and colleges and Independent Training Providers in the local area, as well as being flexible with our data capturing methods to ensure the process is accessible to all who wish to contribute to the LSIP. The LSIP is intended to act as a connector and translator across the skills system—bringing together employers, providers and stakeholders, translating employer need into practical responses, and supporting collective action where it can have the greatest impact.

We have continued to embrace successfully tested methods of data capture such as one to-one interviews and sector skills discussions, whilst acknowledging previous methods such as Signposting Local Provision didn't garner the volume of engagement we would have wanted and so these were not continued in this round of LSIPs.

The previous LSIP provided extensive qualitative data, however it was acknowledged that further qualitative data was required to support these findings. Therefore this LSIP utilises both qualitative methods (one to one interviews, focus groups) and quantitative methods (surveys), both with equal weighting. Secondary data was also incorporated to provide further supporting evidence, ensuring the findings in this report are representative of a cross section of employers and the inclusion of the Post 16 White Paper and Industrial Strategy, as well as Skills England intelligence and datasets, within research ensures alignment with both regional and national priorities.

We acknowledge that accessibility is key and to have integrated new methods of data capture such as surveys which will remain open for the duration of the LSIP– allowing respondents to share their thoughts throughout various points– and allowing us to evaluate changes in needs and attitudes over the course of the 3-year LSIP. We will also use the learning from the previous LSIP, which can be found summarised in the [Simplifying Skills Communications report](#) to ensure outputs and outreach are accessible.

In line with our agile methodology, we continue to review and adapt our employer Engagement methods to reflect the needs and demands of employers, stakeholders and education providers in the local area. This will allow us to ensure that the views of those in the local area are represented and up to date.

### 2. Alignment with the LSIP Guidance

Engagement activity for this LSIP has extended significantly beyond the existing membership of Business West, ensuring that the plan reflects the needs of the wider business community across Swindon & Wiltshire.

Targeted outreach has been undertaken to engage employers who are not currently engaged with Business West or the wider skills system, including small and medium-sized enterprises and those operating within priority sectors. This has been supported through a combination of direct engagement, partner networks and open-access survey mechanisms. This approach ensures that the LSIP is representative of the broader employer base and not limited to established networks, in line with statutory expectations.

The development of this LSIP has ensured representation across the key sectors that underpin the Swindon & Wiltshire economy, including advanced manufacturing and engineering, defence, construction, visitor economy, and health and social care.

The LSIP has identified all relevant Trade Unions that align with the Industrial Strategy priorities and will engage where appropriate and has also engaged with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and JobCentre Plus through the development of this LSIP, working collaboratively with the LSIP Skills Advisors to develop activities that work towards LSIP priorities, including around inclusivity and access to work.

Engagement has been structured to reflect both sectoral priorities and cross-cutting themes, ensuring that the LSIP captures:

- Sector-specific technical skills needs
- Cross-sector challenges such as digitalisation and transferable skills
- Variations in need across different employer sizes and locations

This approach ensures that the LSIP reflects the diversity of the regional economy and supports targeted and relevant actions.

### **3. Environmental and Net Zero Goals**

In collaboration with local authorities and key stakeholders, the LSIP identified Clean Energy as a key priority sector for Swindon and Wiltshire, in addition to acknowledging the importance of sustainability as a cross-cutting theme across all priority sectors. Therefore, resource was allocated to focus on outreach, engagement and research for Clean Energy skills needs, with questions covering the following topics:

- Business context and growth plans
- Challenges and barriers faced
- Skills needs/gaps
- Specific job role needs/gaps
- Training methods, needs, and preferences
- Support, changes, or interventions to support them and the wider industry

The findings will be published in more detail in a report accompanying the LSIP, featuring our first-hand business insights and recommendations, alongside key Clean Energy LMI and secondary research.

Questions on green skills were incorporated into engagements across all key priority sectors, including one to one interviews, wider skills discussions, focus groups, telemarketing and surveys (including surveys shared by stakeholder organisations), with themes being explored including:

- Actions being taken to become more sustainable
- Challenges and barriers faced
- Skills required
- Job roles
- Support, changes or interventions needed to support them and their wider industry be more sustainable

Insights into Green Skills, Sustainability, Net Zero and Clean Energy were gathered across nearly 240 engagements with 59 organisations. These organisations were targeted as they specifically work in the Clean Energy or wider sustainability space, with contributors including consultants, trade unions, associations, business networks or key stakeholder organisations.

In line with our agile methodology, we are seeking to review and refine our engagement methods to ensure that they best suit the organisations wishing to feed into the LSIP. Previous challenges that were identified as preventing engagement included mixed understanding of sustainability goals, barriers or actions already taken, a lack of understanding of 'green skills', 'net zero' or 'sustainability' or because this responsibility sat with other people in the company and was not clearly communicated.

Therefore, we adapted the language we used, including definitions of 'green skills' and using terms such as 'environmental sustainability', which has helped with understanding, as well as ensuring questions are not too specific and keeping an open question style to allow respondents to explore their answers fully. As Clean Energy, sustainability and green skills have been identified as priorities, to ensure we are continuing to gather relevant and up to date intel across the course of the LSIP, mandatory sustainability questions will be embedded into all engagement across all sectors to continue to develop our insights and understanding.

#### **4. Equality of Opportunity**

Swindon and Wiltshire being such a diverse region poses unique challenges to its residents such as the challenges that come from rurality, including transport links and access to opportunities. Those living in more rural areas experience increased barriers accessing training and job opportunities; there is therefore a need to work collaboratively with local Further Education providers and the local authorities to ensure these opportunities are accessible, either providing additional support with navigating the transport system or ensuring training methods are flexible and accessible, such as online training. This poses its own challenges with ensuring that young people have access to the necessary digital equipment, an appropriate space to engage with this training, and the connectivity and online infrastructure can support these opportunities.

This approach aligns with the wider inclusion and equality ambitions set out within the Swindon Borough Council and Wiltshire Council strategic frameworks, including priorities relating to reducing inequality, improving access to opportunity, supporting disadvantaged communities and strengthening inclusive economic participation. The LSIP recognises that skills accessibility, transport connectivity, digital exclusion and awareness of opportunities can disproportionately impact rural communities, lower-income households, disabled individuals and those furthest from the labour market. Engagement activity and ongoing implementation will therefore seek to ensure that skills development opportunities are accessible, inclusive and responsive to differing local needs and barriers.

As well as ensuring access to training opportunity we must also work with employers and local authorities to ensure there are adequate, aspirational jobs available for these young people following completion of training to ensure that they do not become economically inactive.

Ensuring that this LSIP represents the local area as fully and accurately as possible is imperative and so we have adopted recommendations from employers that were developed during the first LSIP as part of the Accessible Communications report [\[link\]](#). Language will be simplified and communication methods will be expanded to ensure that these findings and recommendations are accessible.

We will continue to investigate and identify any barriers to engagement with the skills system through our conversations with employers, stakeholders and Further Education colleges in the area over the course of the LSIP and support these parties to implement change.

Employers have highlighted the digital divide between large and smaller organisations, as well as further gaps between the existing older workforce's digital capabilities and those of the emerging workforce. IT is divided further with concerns of connectivity in the more rural areas of the geography.

This also extends to the use of IT within organisations, such as employers reporting that the use of AI in recruitment processes either creating job adverts or using to shortlist, neurodivergent candidates are more likely to be affected by AI bias and exclusion; AI is potentially filtering out neurodivergent candidates and raising wider concerns about fairness and accessibility in automated recruitment processes.

In response to the barriers identified, including transport, system complexity and employer capacity, this LSIP places emphasis on widening access to opportunities across Swindon & Wiltshire. This includes supporting young people, those at risk of economic inactivity and individuals seeking to progress or change careers, ensuring that pathways into employment are clearer and more accessible. Working with local partners, activity will focus on strengthening engagement with employers, improving coordination of outreach and careers activity, and ensuring that training opportunities are communicated in a way that is meaningful and accessible to individuals. This approach recognises the importance of creating a more inclusive and navigable system that supports both workforce entry and progression.

## 5. Governance of the Swindon & Wiltshire LSIP

Business West as the designated ERB and contract holder, retains overall responsibility and accountability for the development, delivery and ongoing review of the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP). This responsibility is exercised through Business West's established internal governance and assurance arrangements, ensuring compliance with Skills England guidance and statutory expectations.

Strategic coordination and oversight of the LSIP is provided through the Swindon & Wiltshire Skills Group, which acts as the primary forum for shaping strategic direction, reviewing progress and ensuring alignment with regional economic and skills priorities. The Skills Group provides structured challenge and oversight across the full lifecycle of the LSIP, from development and publication through to implementation and iteration, with a focus on strategic assurance rather than operational delivery.

This governance approach is strengthened through alignment with existing local skills leadership structures, including the Wiltshire Strategic Skills Group and the Swindon Strategic Skills Board. These groups bring together a broad range of stakeholders and provide an established mechanism for capturing local intelligence, sharing insight and ensuring that LSIP priorities are informed by and aligned with wider system activity. Insights and priorities from these groups are intended to inform and feed into the Swindon & Wiltshire Skills Group, ensuring coherence and avoiding duplication across the local skills landscape.

This group has established and embedded some principles of LSIP engagement activity and the development of a Service Level Agreement is underway, incorporating principles around the application of LSIP resource in line with both governance and statutory delivery guidance, highlighting the needs to not duplicate activity, share intelligence and align engagement activity with or incorporate regional needs and specific initiatives such as Connect to Work.

Recognising that these forums are largely comprised of public sector partners, providers and stakeholders, Business West supplements this structure through its own governance arrangements, including engagement with its Board and wider business networks. This ensures that employer voice remains central to decision-making and that the LSIP continues to reflect the needs of businesses across the region.

Attendance of the Swindon & Wiltshire Skills Group includes representation from Swindon Borough Council, Wiltshire Council, Providers and the Swindon & Wiltshire Business Growth Unit, alongside wider partners including business, employer representative organisations such as FSB and Wessex Inspire and stakeholder organisations such as DWP, Citizens Advice and CEC. We also recognise that there is appetite to further ensure LSIP output aligns with potential needs aligned with devolution: Business West will continue where feasible to align activities with needs highlighted in devolutionary processes.

While Swindon & Wiltshire does not currently contain a university physically based within the LSIP geography, the LSIP recognises the importance of higher education engagement in supporting Levels 4–8 progression pathways, higher technical skills and specialist workforce development.

As a result, engagement with neighbouring higher education institutions, Institute of Technology arrangements and wider HE partners will continue throughout the LSIP delivery period to ensure that higher-level technical education and progression opportunities are reflected within ongoing implementation activity and workforce planning discussions.

This approach reflects the structural characteristics of the local area while acknowledging the importance of maintaining higher education engagement within the broader skills system.

This governance model ensures that the LSIP is employer-led, strategically aligned and delivered through a coordinated and transparent framework, as well as enabling effective oversight of progress, responsiveness to emerging skills needs and ensures that the LSIP remains embedded within the wider regional skills and economic system throughout other strategic or systemic changes.

In line with the expectations set out in LSIP guidance, engagement has not been limited to a single point in time but has been designed as an ongoing and iterative process. Mechanisms such as open surveys, continued one-to-one engagement and sector discussions will remain in place throughout the lifecycle of the LSIP, enabling:

- Continuous feedback from employers
- Identification of emerging skills needs
- Refinement of priorities and actions over time

This ensures that the LSIP remains responsive and reflective of the evolving labour market.