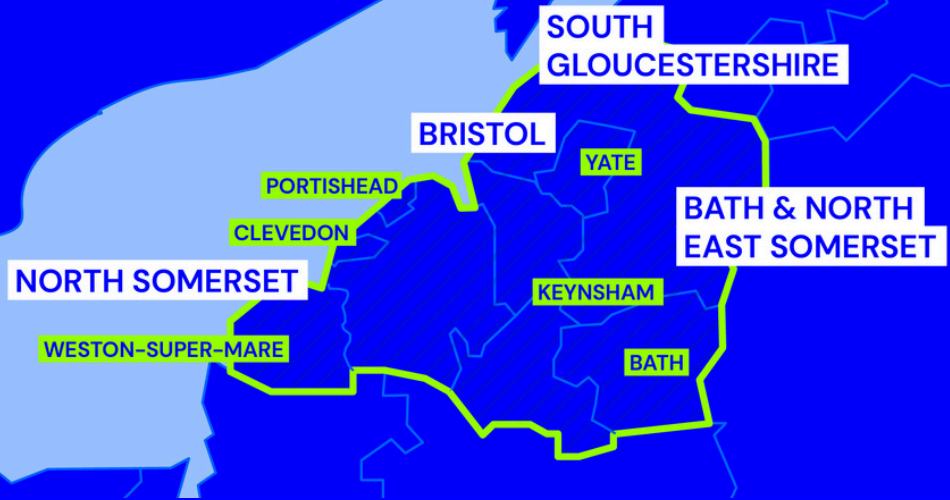


Business  
West

WEST OF ENGLAND  
& NORTH SOMERSET



West of England &  
North Somerset

Local Skills

Improvement Plan

2026



Funded by  
UK Government

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Corporation

This company meets high  
standards of social and  
environmental impact.

**'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

**Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs)** are statutory, employer-led plans, introduced through the Skills and Post-16 Education Act 2022, that set out priority skills needs and required actions over a rolling three-year cycle.

This Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) sets out the priority skills needs across the West of England and North Somerset, informed by extensive employer engagement and labour market analysis led by Business West as the designated Employer Representative Body.

Local employers, education and training providers, and wider stakeholders contributed to this LSIP through one-to-one interviews, focus groups and survey responses. This primary data was supported with labour market intelligence and secondary research to ensure the skills needs reported are representative of the regional skills landscape.

The skills needs and actions outlined in this LSIP are designed for local employers, education and training providers, and wider stakeholders, to respond to these current and future skills needs.

The West of England Combined Authority, WECA, as the devolved strategic authority and in partnership with the key regional stakeholders, is continuing to develop a more coherent, needs-led approach to skills across the region. The West of England Skills Strategy, published in June 2026, was developed as part of the wider Regional Growth Strategy agreed with central government and the LSIP is aligned to this strategic framework and has been shaped by the emerging priorities within the Skills Strategy and Growth Strategy. This ensures that employer-led skills needs are connected to the Combined Authority's wider ambitions for inclusive economic growth, productivity and increased workforce participation.

The West of England Skills Strategy sets out an ambition to build a more joined-up, inclusive and future-focused skills system that helps residents access opportunity while giving employers the skilled, adaptable and work-ready workforce they need to grow. It is structured around three pillars: Young People, focused on clear pathways into the jobs of the future, work readiness and reducing NEET through earlier intervention; Adults, focused on breaking down barriers to work, reducing economic inactivity and supporting people to stay in good work; and Lifelong Learning, focused on helping residents retrain, upskill and adapt as AI, automation and wider economic change reshape the labour market.

Together, the strategy aims to connect people more effectively to opportunity, align skills provision with regional growth sectors, and ensure that talent across the West of England is not wasted.

There is also strong support for North Somerset to join WECA in a cohesive West of England devolved area. Subject to approval by the secretary of state and legislation being passed, North Somerset could become a full member of WECA.

We, Business West as the LSIP ERB and the West of England Combined Authority confirm that the LSIP has been developed in line with the joint working arrangements set out in the statutory guidance; that the Strategic Authorities' sector skills priorities have been used to shape the LSIP; and that we are content with the plan and the actions it contains.

*"Business West are proud to deliver the West of England and North Somerset Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) 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 region benefits from a diverse and high-performing economy**, with strengths in advanced manufacturing, digital and creative industries, and a substantial Everyday Economy. However, employers report increasing challenges in accessing the skills required to support growth, innovation and productivity, particularly in the context of rapid technological change, digitalisation and the transition to net zero.

Engagement with employers across sectors has identified a consistent set of priority skills challenges. These include:

- a lack of clarity around green skills and career pathways
- growing demand for digital and AI capability across all sectors
- persistent gaps in critical workplace and transferable skills
- and systemic barriers to accessing relevant training.

Employers also highlighted challenges in recruiting and retaining talent, particularly at entry level, alongside increasing complexity in navigating the skills system.

In response, this LSIP identifies a set of priority actions focused on improving clarity and accessibility of training pathways, embedding core and transferable skills within provision, enabling more flexible and modular training models, and strengthening coordination between employers, providers and the wider skills system.

The sector focus adopted within the LSIP was initially informed by priority sectors identified by the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority (WECA) through the West of England Growth Strategy. At the outset of the LSIP process, WECA identified a number of strategic growth and foundational economy priorities to help frame the scope of employer engagement and evidence gathering. The LSIP subsequently tested and refined these priorities through extensive employer, provider and stakeholder engagement, alongside labour market intelligence analysis.

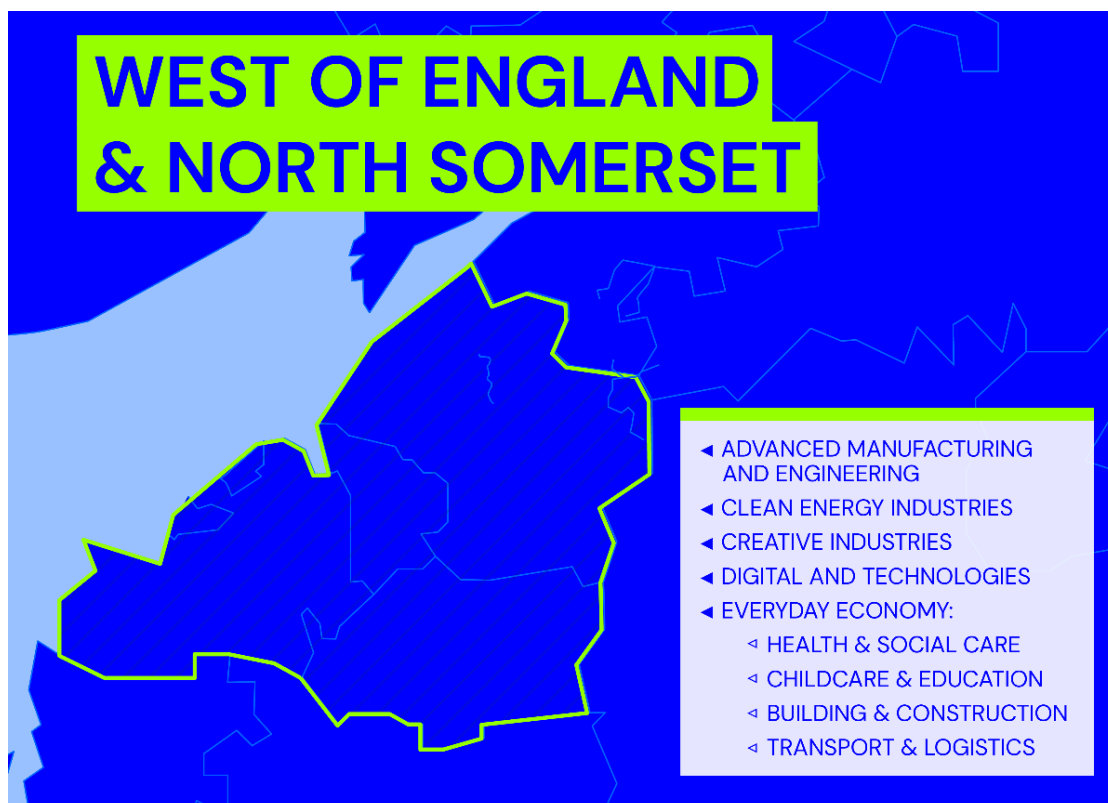
## LSIP Priority Sectors for West of England and North Somerset:

LSIP Priority Sector	Alignment to WECA Growth Strategy	Alignment to Industrial Strategy "8+2"
Advanced Manufacturing & Engineering	Priority growth sector	Advanced Manufacturing
Digital & Technologies	Priority growth sector	Digital & Technologies
Creative Industries	Priority growth sector	Creative Industries
Clean Energy Industries	Priority growth sector	Clean Energy Industries
Health & Social Care (Everyday Economy)	Everyday Economy priority	Life Sciences / Foundational Economy
Childcare & Education (Everyday Economy)	Everyday Economy priority	Foundational Economy / Education pipeline
Building & Construction (Everyday Economy)	Everyday Economy priority	Advanced Manufacturing / Clean Energy overlap
Transport & Logistics (Everyday Economy)	Everyday Economy priority	Transport / Clean Energy transition overlap

This approach ensures alignment between local economic strategy, employer demand and wider national industrial priorities, while recognising the interconnected nature of growth sectors and foundational sectors within the regional economy. The detailed mapping of priority skills needs and associated actions is set out in Annex C, with further sectoral intelligence in Annex A.

Delivery of this LSIP has been supported through a coordinated programme of activity, co-developed with employers, providers and regional partners.

Detailed actions and implementation activity for Stage 2 are set out in Annex B, including lead organisations, delivery approaches and indicative measures. Ongoing refinement of these activities is being undertaken through the Get West of England Working Group, ensuring alignment with regional priorities, employer need and system capacity as the LSIP moves into delivery.



### Defining foci in the “Everyday Economy”

The everyday economy (taken from the [West of England Growth Strategy](#)) covers foundational services and sectors that maintain wellbeing and local economic health and allow the economy as a whole to function as intended. These sectors and services are typically lower productivity but high employment volume sectors, where LSIP interventions can yield strong social and place-based impact. From regional evidence and initial discussions (WECA 2024 Growth Strategy, LSIP 2024 feedback, and Skills England thematic reviews), the four initial sub-sectors for inclusion are:

Sector	Rationale for LSIP inclusion	Illustrative sub-sectors
1. Health & Social Care	Largest employment share; ageing workforce; vital to inclusion & resilience	Care assistants, domiciliary care, allied health, nursing, health tech
2. Education & Childcare	Foundational for workforce participation and local stability	Early-years, teaching assistants, support staff, sector expertise into education
3. Construction & Built Environment	Decarbonisation, housebuilding and local regeneration anchor the everyday built environment	SME trades, retrofit, M&E, engineering, housing maintenance
4. Transport & Logistics	Essential enabler for place connectivity and net-zero mobility goals	Bus/rail ops, EV maintenance, warehousing, last-mile delivery

Although these have been chosen as the first iteration of sub-sector foci within the everyday economy, the LSIP may look at additional elements at the behest of WECA and project governance in line with regional priorities, with retail and hospitality likely to be incorporated.

This LSIP builds in part on the work of the previous 2022-2025 LSIP for the West of England & North Somerset region, with some themes taken forward and extended and these sectors previously incorporated:

- Advanced Manufacturing & Engineering
- Creative Industries
- Construction & Built Environment
- Health & Social Care

# Strategic and Economic Context

## REGIONAL ECONOMIC CONTEXT AND PERFORMANCE

**The West of England and North Somerset area has a strong and growing economic base**, characterised by a diverse sectoral mix, high levels of skills, and sustained population growth. The regional economy is valued at approximately £53.7 billion and has outperformed national growth trends in recent years, with higher productivity than other combined authority areas and a comparatively high employment rate (*State of the West of England*, p.4–5). □

The region benefits from a large and expanding working-age population, including a relatively high proportion of young people and graduates. Around 56% of the working-age population are qualified to Level 4 or above, significantly exceeding the national average (*State of the West of England*, p.4–5).<sup>1</sup> This provides a strong foundation for knowledge-intensive and innovation-led sectors, supported by four major universities and a large student population.

Economic growth has been accompanied by strong business dynamism, including growth in the number of large firms and a high rate of innovation activity. Employment has expanded significantly over the past decade, with particularly strong growth in higher value sectors such as digital and technologies and the creative industries (*State of the West of England*, p.5). □

However, the evidence also highlights structural challenges. Growth in GDP per capita has been comparatively slow, indicating constraints on productivity and living standards. High housing costs, particularly in Bristol and Bath and North East Somerset, limit labour mobility and access to employment opportunities. Transport congestion and infrastructure constraints further affect connectivity within the region, while shortages of suitable commercial space can constrain business expansion and inward investment (*State of the West of England*, p.6). □

Inequalities remain a significant feature of the regional economy. A substantial number of residents live in areas of deprivation, and there are persistent disparities in employment outcomes across different groups (*State of the West of England*, p.6; p.11).<sup>2</sup> These factors shape both the supply of labour and the accessibility of opportunities, and are therefore central to understanding the skills system within the region.

## PRIORITY SECTORS AND DRIVERS OF GROWTH

The West of England Growth Strategy identifies five priority sectors which underpin the region's economic trajectory: advanced manufacturing, digital and technologies, clean energy industries, creative industries, and the everyday economy (*West of England Growth Strategy*, p.5).<sup>3</sup> These sectors reflect both existing strengths and future growth opportunities, and together provide the primary context for skills demand.

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<sup>1</sup> West of England Combined Authority (2025): [State of the West of England](#).

<sup>2</sup> West of England Combined Authority (2025): [State of the West of England](#).

<sup>3</sup> West of England Combined Authority (2025): [West of England Growth Strategy](#).

Digital and technologies is a particularly fast-growing sector, with significant increases in employment over recent years and a strong base of innovative firms. The creative industries have also expanded rapidly, supported by the region's cultural assets and strong links between creative production and digital technologies. Advanced manufacturing remains a key contributor to productivity and economic resilience, maintaining employment levels in contrast to national trends. Clean energy industries are identified as a major opportunity for future growth, linked to the transition to net zero and supported by investment in areas such as offshore wind and nuclear capability (*State of the West of England, p.5; Growth Strategy, p.6*). <sup>4</sup>

Alongside these growth sectors, the everyday economy (healthcare, education, construction, logistics and retail) plays a critical role in supporting the functioning of the regional economy and labour market (*State of the West of England, p.5; p.13*).<sup>5</sup> Growth in this sector broadly reflects population change and underpins employment opportunities across a wide range of occupations and skill levels.

The Growth Strategy also identifies a number of spatial growth areas that are relevant to sector development, including the West Innovation Arc, the Severn Estuary, the Somer Valley, and the North Somerset Growth Gateway. The North Somerset Growth Gateway highlights the area's role within the wider regional economy, particularly in relation to innovative production, manufacturing and digital technologies (*West of England Growth Strategy, p.10*). <sup>6</sup>

Taken together, these sectors and spatial priorities define the principal areas of current and future skills demand and provide the framework within which the LSIP is situated. The LSIP will work alongside the State of the West of England paper, the West of England Growth Strategy and other local initiatives to ensure these needs are met.

## **STRATEGIC PRIORITIES OF THE WEST OF ENGLAND COMBINED AUTHORITY**

The West of England Growth Strategy provides the overarching strategic framework for economic development over the next decade. It sets out ambitions focused on creating jobs, improving productivity, supporting innovation, and ensuring that growth translates into improved living standards for residents (*West of England Growth Strategy, p.4–5*). <sup>7</sup>

Central to this strategy is a focus on enabling conditions for growth, including improved transport connectivity, the delivery of new housing, investment in skills and education, and the transition to a low-carbon economy. The strategy also emphasises inclusive growth, including reducing child poverty, improving access to affordable childcare, and supporting residents to access better paid and more secure work (*West of England Growth Strategy, p.4; p.8*). <sup>8</sup>

Skills are positioned as a key enabler of these ambitions. The Growth Strategy includes commitments to developing a regional skills strategy, expanding apprenticeships,

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<sup>4</sup> West of England Combined Authority (2025): [West of England Growth Strategy](#).

<sup>5</sup> West of England Combined Authority (2025): [State of the West of England](#).

strengthening pathways from education into employment, and building facilities aligned with priority sectors (*West of England Growth Strategy, p.8*).

The LSIP therefore sits within a broader programme of economic and social policy, contributing to the delivery of sector growth, labour market participation, and productivity improvement.

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

While the West of England benefits from a strong labour market overall, there are important imbalances that affect both employers and residents. The region has a high employment rate, but this masks persistent gaps in participation for specific groups, including those with long-term health conditions, caring responsibilities, and other barriers to work (*Get West of England Working Plan, p.3*). □

Economic inactivity is a particular concern, with long-term ill health and caring responsibilities accounting for a significant proportion of those out of the labour market (*Get West of England Working Plan, p.3*). At the same time, some individuals are in low-paid or insecure employment, limiting progression and contributing to cycles of underemployment (*Get West of England Working Plan, p.5*).

There is also evidence that the skills of the workforce are not fully aligned with employer demand. Despite high qualification levels, some businesses report difficulties accessing the skills they need, particularly in high-growth sectors (*State of the West of England, p.6*).

Challenges affecting labour supply are closely linked to wider structural issues. Housing affordability limits the ability of workers to live near employment opportunities, while transport constraints reduce access to jobs and training. Inequalities in educational attainment and outcomes further affect the supply of skills, particularly for disadvantaged groups and young people (*State of the West of England, p.6; Get West of England Working Plan, p.7*).<sup>6</sup>

These dynamics highlight the importance of a coordinated approach to skills, employment and wider economic policy, and reinforce the role of the LSIP in addressing both sector-specific skills needs and broader labour market barriers.

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

The LSIP sits within a wider, integrated framework of national and regional strategies which collectively aim to support economic growth, improve labour market outcomes and address structural inequalities across the West of England and North Somerset.

At a national level, the LSIP has been developed within the context of wider priorities relating to economic growth, workforce participation, productivity and workforce adaptability. The LSIP aligns with the Government's Opportunity and Growth Missions, the Get Britain Working White Paper, the Clean Energy Jobs Plan and Local Growth Plans, particularly in relation to reducing economic inactivity, supporting progression into good

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<sup>6</sup> West of England Combined Authority (2025): [Get West of England Working Plan](#).

work, strengthening employer-led workforce development and enabling the transition to net zero. The LSIP also reflects the emerging priorities of Skills England, including the need for a more responsive and locally informed skills system, alongside alignment to national Industrial Strategy sector priorities, including the “8+2” growth sectors. Collectively, these national priorities are reflected throughout the LSIP’s focus on technical and higher-level skills, digital and AI capability, lifelong learning and modular upskilling, and clearer progression pathways into priority sectors and employment opportunities.

At a regional level, the West of England Growth Strategy provides the overarching strategic framework for economic development across the region, including the development of priority sectors, the transition to net zero, and the creation of better paid and more secure employment (West of England Growth Strategy, p.4–5). Within this context, the LSIP contributes to the delivery of the Growth Strategy by supporting the development of a workforce aligned to the needs of the region’s key sectors. It provides a mechanism for translating sectoral growth ambitions into actionable skills priorities, ensuring that provision across further education, training and employer-led pathways is responsive to current and emerging demand.

The LSIP also aligns with the Growth Strategy’s emphasis on the enabling conditions required for growth. Challenges identified within the regional evidence base, including housing affordability, transport connectivity and skills mismatches, have direct implications for both labour supply and employer demand (State of the West of England, p.6). While these issues extend beyond the remit of the skills system alone, the LSIP plays a role in supporting employers to access relevant training which could enable progression into higher-value roles, while also strengthening pathways into employment for underrepresented groups and supporting the objective of inclusive growth.

The Get West of England Working Plan forms a further key component of this wider strategic framework, focusing specifically on labour market participation, progression and inclusion. Its priorities — supporting more people into work, improving job quality and progression, and strengthening pathways for young people — complement the sectoral and productivity-focused ambitions of the Growth Strategy (Get West of England Working Plan, p.5).

The LSIP supports delivery of the Get West of England Working Plan by ensuring that skills provision is closely aligned with employer demand and accessible to those facing barriers to employment. In particular, it reinforces the focus on reducing economic inactivity and addressing employment inequalities by identifying the skills needs associated with both entry-level and progression pathways within key sectors, while strengthening the role of employers in shaping provision. More broadly, the Get West of England Working Plan highlights the interdependencies between skills, employment, health, transport and wider social factors in shaping labour market outcomes (Get West of England Working Plan, p.3; p.8). The LSIP contributes to this integrated approach by articulating employer demand across sectors and supporting more coordinated action across the regional system.

Ongoing discussion through the Get West of England Working Group has also reinforced the importance of aligning LSIP priorities with the development of the West of England Skills Strategy and emerging integrated settlement arrangements, recognising the interdependencies between skills, progression, employability, labour market participation and wider regional growth ambitions.

Taken together, these relationships position the LSIP as a key component of the region's wider strategic approach to economic development. Operating alongside the West of England Growth Strategy, the Get West of England Working Plan and the emerging West of England Skills Strategy, the LSIP supports a more coherent, joined up and responsive skills system across the West of England and North Somerset.

## Part 1: Local Skills Needs

**This section outlines priority skills needs** for the West of England & North Somerset, as reported through our in-depth business, provider and stakeholder engagement activities, undertaken between October 2025 and May 2026, and building where applicable on both secondary research analysis and the findings and methodology of the [2022-2025 West of England and North Somerset LSIP](#). All published resources from this LSIP are available online and for discussion here: [West of England LSIP 2022-2025 Resources](#).

We have identified (in line with delivery guidance and with our partners and stakeholders, including WECA) nine priority skills need statements for the West of England and North Somerset and broken these down below (as well as in further sectoral detail in Annex A, highlighting specific demand, need and opportunity). Annex A also includes a table of priority vacancies and unmet demand within the workforce, where feasible, mapped to sectoral SIC and SOC codes for consistent analysis. These Needs Statements align with our thematic areas of investigation alongside demand signals that felt strongest for the region.

The LSIP addresses workforce challenges across three elements of horizons of need: immediate workforce pressures, medium-term priorities over the LSIP delivery period, and longer-term structural and economic transitions:

Time Horizon	Rating	Illustrative Themes
Immediate workforce pressures	Red	Work readiness, recruitment challenges, enabling skills, access to training, at risk adults
Medium-term (3 year) priorities	Yellow	AI implementation, inclusive employment
Longer-term future needs	Green	Sustainability and net zero integration

The local skills needs were selected as they were represented in all the key priority sectors for the West of England and North Somerset and aligned with WECA's regional skills strategy. While timescales on these priorities vary, all were deemed to be of medium or high importance when looking at the current and future needs of the local area and were recurring themes within primary research from employers, education and training providers and local stakeholders.

## Priority Skills Needs Statements

1. **Improve understanding and engagement with net zero and sustainability**, including clarity on green skills, career pathways and return on investment.
2. **Improve work-readiness of young people and new entrants**, particularly employability skills, confidence and awareness of career pathways.
3. **Strengthen digital and AI capability across the workforce**, including both foundational digital skills and the ability to adopt emerging technologies safely and effectively.
4. **Address persistent gaps in critical and enabling skills**, including communication, problem solving, resilience and workplace behaviours.
5. **Address ongoing recruitment and retention challenges**, particularly in technical roles and entry-level positions across priority sectors.
6. **Improve employer understanding and navigation of the skills system**, including training provision, pathways, funding and infrastructure barriers such as transport and digital connectivity.
7. **Strengthen skills and workforce development across the Everyday Economy**, supporting high-employment sectors critical to regional function and inclusive growth.
8. **Strengthen health, work and inclusive employment capability**, including support for residents with health conditions, disabilities, caring responsibilities and low confidence to enter, remain and progress in work.
9. **Build progression and retraining pathways for adults at risk of displacement**, particularly those in low-paid, insecure, routine or clerical roles affected by automation, AI and wider labour market change.

	Urgency	Economic Impact/Scale	Feasibility
Improve understanding and engagement with net zero and sustainability	Medium	Medium	High
Improve work-readiness of young people and new entrants	High	Medium	Medium
Strengthen digital and AI capability across the workforce	Medium	High	High
Address persistent gaps in critical and enabling skills	High	Medium	High
Address ongoing recruitment and retention challenges	High	High	High
Improve employer understanding and navigation of the skills system	High	Medium	Medium
Strengthen skills and workforce development across the Everyday Economy	High	Medium	Medium
Strengthen health, work and inclusive employment capability	Medium	High	Medium
Build progression and retraining pathways for adults at risk of displacement	High	High	High

## Skills Pipeline, Qualification Levels and Progression Pathways

Stakeholder feedback through the LSIP governance process highlighted the importance of clearly articulating progression pathways and the interdependencies between entry-level provision, Level 3 attainment and higher technical skills ambitions across the region.

### Progression/Pathways – Illustrative Table:

Stage / Qualification Level	Typical Pathways & Provision	Key Skills Needs Identified Through the LSIP	Illustrative Priority Sectors / Themes
Pre-entry & Engagement	Careers education, outreach, Youth Guarantee activity, employability support, community learning	Career awareness, confidence, accessibility, awareness of pathways, reducing barriers to participation	Everyday Economy, young people, underrepresented groups
Entry Level – Level 2	Entry-level FE provision, traineeships, supported learning, bootcamps, apprenticeships	Work readiness, communication, punctuality, resilience, digital basics, employer expectations	Everyday Economy, construction, logistics, health & care
Level 3 Technical Pathways	T Levels, technical diplomas, apprenticeships, FE full-time provision	Technical competence, progression pathways, industry exposure, employability, sustainability awareness	Advanced manufacturing, digital, creative, construction, clean energy
Levels 4–5 Higher Technical Skills	Higher technical qualifications, higher apprenticeships, modular provision, workplace upskilling	Higher-level digital skills, AI adoption, retrofit, leadership, technical specialisms, productivity	Digital & technologies, clean energy, advanced manufacturing
Levels 6–8 Higher Education & Specialist Skills	Degrees, degree apprenticeships, postgraduate and specialist provision	Advanced technical capability, innovation, research translation, leadership, specialist sector expertise	Cyber, engineering, creative industries, professional services
Workforce Upskilling & Reskilling	CPD, modular learning, Skills Bootcamps, employer-led training	AI adoption, digital confidence, sustainability literacy, management capability, career transition	Cross-sector, adult workforce, SMEs
Cross-cutting System Priorities	Employer engagement, Skills Connect, Connect to Work, Careers Hub, provider collaboration	Skills system navigation, progression clarity, accessibility, transport barriers, inclusion	Whole regional skills system

## **Methodology & Engagement Statement**

This LSIP is based on robust and direct evidence, combining qualitative employer insight with quantitative labour market data and intelligence. Engagement has been undertaken through a range of methods, including one-to-one interviews, sector skills discussions, workshops, surveys and wider stakeholder engagement.

The LSIP for the West of England and North Somerset has incorporated intelligence from 2047 primary engagements undertaken through a variety of modes and methods to gather both qualitative and quantitative intelligence, between October 2025 and June 2026.

This has been complemented by analysis of labour market intelligence and key strategic publications, including the West of England Growth Strategy, as well as prior LSIP research and engagement activities where relevant. An agile methodology has been adopted throughout the development of this LSIP, enabling engagement approaches to be refined in response to effectiveness and employer needs. This has included:

- Increased use of targeted one-to-one engagement, providing tailored skills support and insight gathering
- Expanded use of surveys, supported by digital outreach and telemarketing, to increase engagement reach
- Enhanced data recording methods to capture the full range of engagement activity, categorised by impact

This approach has ensured both the depth and breadth of employer insight is reflected. 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 (\* INCLUDING OTHER & UNCLASSIFIED MAJORITY RESPONSES)**

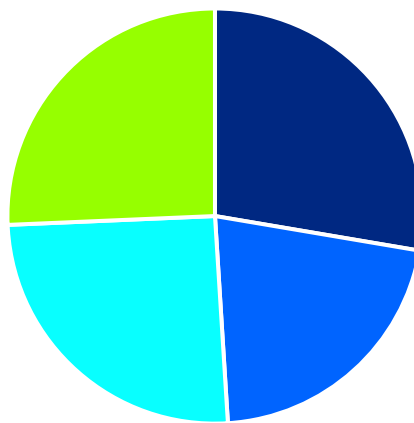
In addition to targeted LSIP engagement activity, a broad dataset of employer insight was incorporated through general business surveying activity undertaken across Business West activities. This included a total of 172 responses where LSIP-related questions were embedded, enabling the capture of wider 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.

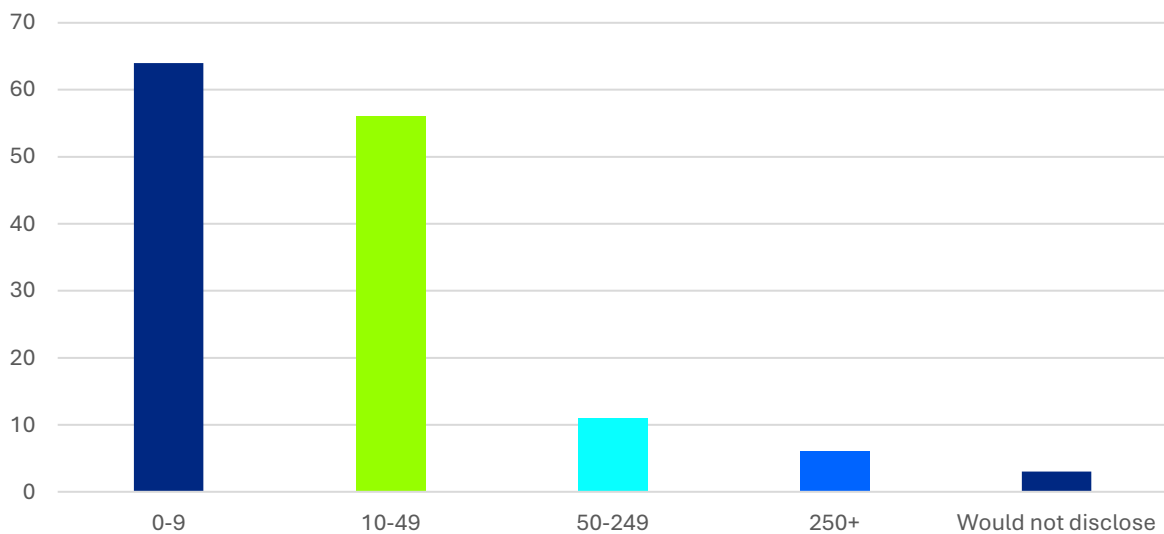
Respondents have been aligned at a high level using Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) groupings and indicative geography. On this basis, the distribution of responses is as follows:

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

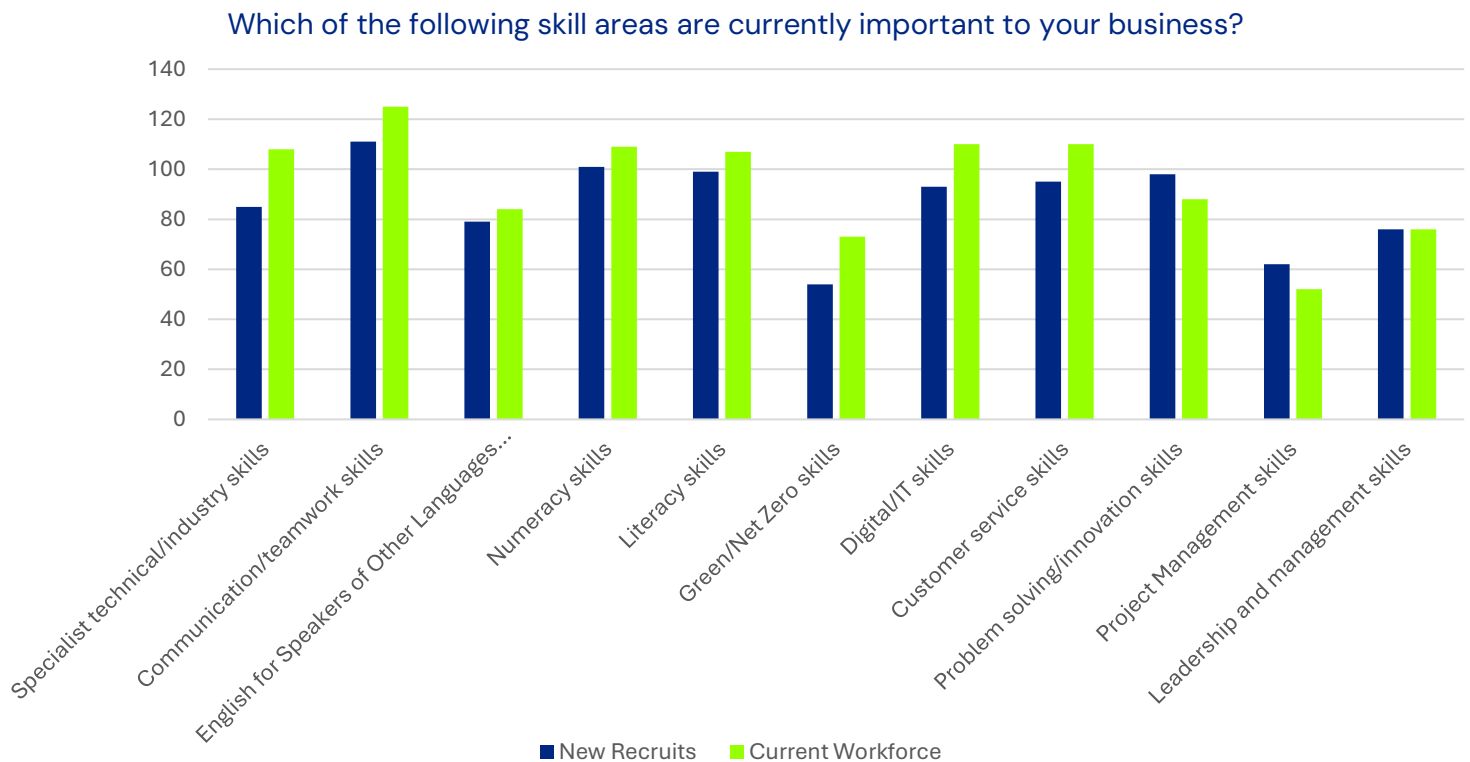
Supplementary evidence respondents based on primary region



Organisation size of respondents to supplementary survey data



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, training accessibility and current priorities for businesses.



In total, this LSIP draws on (as of 1<sup>st</sup> June, 2026) 2047 individual engagements via one-to-one interviews, wider skills discussions, surveys and sector skills discussions, as well as incorporating additional intel from labour market intelligence and key strategic publications such as the West of England Growth Strategy. Supporting this primary data with secondary, quantitative supporting data allows us to illustrate broader demand, as well as the sector specific detail and through complementary primary and secondary data gathering we have been able to synthesis substantial qualitative intelligence from business, key stakeholders and education providers in the region,

*NB: Only 36 Engagements were recorded against companies confirmed as members of Business West (via Futures West, the initiatives, Chambers of Commerce, Nuclear South West and Hydrogen South West LINKS), making up less than 3%. However, there is a small likelihood that the person engaged for LSIP purposes was not aware of their organisation's membership.*

## Priority Skills Needs Detail



**The following priority skills needs have been identified** through employer engagement and analysis. These reflect both sector-specific challenges and cross-cutting themes impacting the regional economy:

### **IMPROVE UNDERSTANDING AND ENGAGEMENT WITH NET ZERO AND SUSTAINABILITY**

Generally, employers in the West of England and North Somerset are not resistant to net zero and sustainability – however they report confusion and fear of unmitigated risks or lack of Return on Investment when engaging with it.

Across all key priority sectors there was a reported need for greater clarity on what ‘green jobs’ means both in terms of skills needing and the potential career pathways. Employers also stated a lack of understanding of how to transition from existing career pathways into green roles or adapt roles to include more sustainable traits, with some employers reporting hesitancy to invest in training due to the unclear pathways for the workforce. A small employer in the Construction and Built Environment sector reported a desire to reskill some traditional roles including carpentry to incorporate more sustainable knowledge and skills but was unsure of the how to enable this.

Particular skills related to sustainability that were highlighted as gaps included retrofit, heat pump installation, sustainable construction methods and infrastructure transition. There was also a reported demand for sustainability consultancy capabilities within businesses, however some employers that engaged with the LSIP cited uncertainty about the return on investment for green skills training as a reason for not exploring the skills landscape leading to potential underdevelopment in green capabilities, especially within small and medium sized organisations.

## **IMPROVE WORK-READINESS OF YOUNG PEOPLE AND NEW ENTRANTS AND EMPLOYERS' RECOGNITION OF EMBEDDING IN EXISTING PROVISION**

Employers reported concerns regarding with the transition from education into employment, citing low confidence among early-career applicants and a lack of skills critical to effective work which proved to be a barrier to entering the workplace. Employers in the Digital and Creative sectors also highlighted a mismatch between the skills that graduates are being equipped with and the needs of the workplace and other sectors including Transport and Logistics highlighted a 'generational gap' between the attitudes of young people and those already in the workforce.

Employers consistently identified work readiness, employability and workplace behaviours as important alongside technical capability. Stakeholders also emphasised that many of these skills are already embedded throughout existing education and training provision. The LSIP therefore highlights the need not only to strengthen progression opportunities and placements, but also to increase employer engagement and recognition of the employability skills already being developed through education pathways. Limited awareness of career pathways in young people was also highlighted as a concern with employers in the local area, while reduced availability of entry level pathways such as level 2 and level 3 qualifications, reducing the entry level talent pool, was also raised as a cause for concern.

The West of England Baccalaureate, or West Bacc, is a proposed West of England work-readiness certificate for 16–18-year-olds, designed to help employers identify young people who have developed the behaviours, confidence and practical skills needed to succeed in the workplace. It will be developed with employers, schools, colleges and wider partners, and will recognise core employability skills such as communication, teamwork, problem-solving, organisation, resilience and adaptability.

For employers, the West Bacc is intended to provide a clearer and more consistent signal of work readiness, helping businesses look beyond formal qualifications alone and recognise young people's wider potential. This includes skills developed through volunteering, sport, caring responsibilities, part-time work, creative activity, community involvement and overcoming personal challenges. Business involvement will be central, including shaping the certificate, offering mentoring, work experience and employer engagement, and helping create clearer routes from education into work.

The aim is practical: to strengthen the local talent pipeline, reduce the gap between education and employment, and give businesses greater confidence when offering placements, apprenticeships and entry-level opportunities to young people across the West of England.

Stakeholders within the regional skills system (in particular, FE, HE and ITP input and via the Get West of England Working Group) also highlighted the importance of considering the full progression pipeline into higher-level technical skills. Providers noted that barriers to accessing Level 3 and Level 4 provision often begin significantly earlier within the education journey, particularly where learners have not achieved the qualifying factors needed to progress. This includes challenges around English and maths

attainment, confidence, accessibility and awareness of available pathways. Stakeholders emphasised that achieving ambitions around higher technical skills and productivity therefore requires a broader whole-system approach, encompassing schools, further education, adult learning, workforce development and progression support for those already in employment as well as new entrants to the labour market.

## **STRENGTHEN DIGITAL AND AI CAPABILITY ACROSS THE WORKFORCE**

There is a clear need for both advanced digital skills in the workplace and basic operational skills. Employers across all sectors, including Transport and Logistics and Everyday Economy, cited Microsoft Office proficiency, notably Excel, data handling, professional digital communication and the understanding of workplace software systems to be amongst the necessary skills needed within their workforce.

AI adoption was a frequently mentioned skills challenge with employers in the West of England and North Somerset area, who defined these skills as either sector specific or skills for AI – cross sector, transferable AI skills. Digital organisations in the area singled out data analysis, conversational AI expertise, systems integration and understanding of AI governance and oversight as their perceived skills gaps, while small and medium employers in other sectors including advanced manufacturing and engineering highlighted the need for knowledge and understanding around the safe and effective adoption of AI, including understanding its limitations and potential risks. Employers also stated a need for improved governance awareness, skills on how to productivity integrate AI into workflows and improved knowledge on the environmental impact of AI systems. There was a fear that reluctance to adopt AI and uncertainty around the correct usage would impact productivity, however employers in the Digital sector acknowledged there is a current climate of “fear and confusion” and the reputational risk of getting it wrong was also acknowledged with one digital employer stating in a one-to-one interview with the LSIP Engagement Team that the “potential public and sector-specific backlash against AI, particularly where it is perceived as harmful or unethical” was a barrier to adoption.

AI capability is now reported as a mainstream economic issue rather than a niche digital sector concern and the expectation of skills adoption in this area pan-sector is huge, yet with very little integration into existing (especially full time) provision. However, employers also raised emerging concerns regarding the environmental impact of digitalisation and AI, including energy consumption, data storage and wider digital carbon footprints. There is a growing need for businesses to understand how to balance productivity gains from AI adoption with sustainability considerations, including responsible usage, efficiency and governance.

## **ADDRESS PERSISTENT GAPS IN CRITICAL AND ENABLING SKILLS**

In the West of England and North Somerset employers across all key priority sectors consistently reported a lack in critical and enabling skills within the workforce. Written and verbal communication, email etiquette, critical thinking and problem solving were all highlighted skills gaps. These employers, operating in sectors such as Construction and the Built Environment, Transport and Logistics and Everyday Economy, also reported

workplace readiness and behaviours such as resilience, time management, punctuality and confidence in professional settings as areas where further development is required.

Employers in the local area attributed the lack of these skills and behaviours in new candidates as a contributing factor to slower onboarding completion and higher attrition among early-career entrants, leading to reluctance to recruit inexperienced candidates in some sectors including Health and Social Care and Digital.

Entrepreneurial skills in the creative industry were a key theme in the first iteration of the LSIP, due to the high proportion of freelancers in the industry with 33% of those working in the industry identified as self-employed<sup>7</sup>

This skills gap has continued to be reported as a need by those working in the sector, with understanding of the financial systems and requirements within the sector more broadly also highlighted as a particular need. It is believed that supporting with these skills will provide sole traders and micro businesses security for long term sustainability and growth.

### **ADDRESS ONGOING RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION CHALLENGES**

Skills shortages were highlighted by employers in the Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering and Construction sectors particularly in the building services engineering roles (mechanical, electric and plumbing), citing competition from the tech and digital sector as a possible reason for recruitment difficulties. Employers reported difficulty in filling technical vacancies with skills shortages in retrofit, heat pump installation and sustainable construction as notable gaps.

Health and Social Care employers highlighted barriers to recruitment such as low confidence in applicants, as well as workload pressures meaning that upskilling and reskilling are not prioritised, with a lack of training and progression opportunities being cited as the main reason for employees seeking alternative workplaces, by speakers at the Adult Social Care Skills for Care Summit, with those that receive upskilling “significantly more likely” to stay with an organisation. The health and safety and insurance implications of working in higher risk environments including Health and Social Care but also Construction and the Built Environment and Construction, means that employers are prioritising recruiting experienced workforce to alleviate the pressure on existing staff [8% workforce under 25, 25% over 55]. In contrast, a medium sized employer working in the Everyday Economy sector (specifically tourism) reported 30% of the workforce in their sector was aged 16-24 and they were struggling to recruit more experienced staff or attract career changers.

Health and Social Care employers also reported persistent vacancies, with Maintenance roles being the most in demand job vacancy in the sector (reported at the Adult Social Care Skills for Care Summit), highlighting the need for further work around career insights and job roles available in each sector.

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<sup>7</sup> [PEC.AC.UK](https://pec.ac.uk)

## IMPROVE EMPLOYER UNDERSTANDING AND NAVIGATION OF THE SKILLS SYSTEM

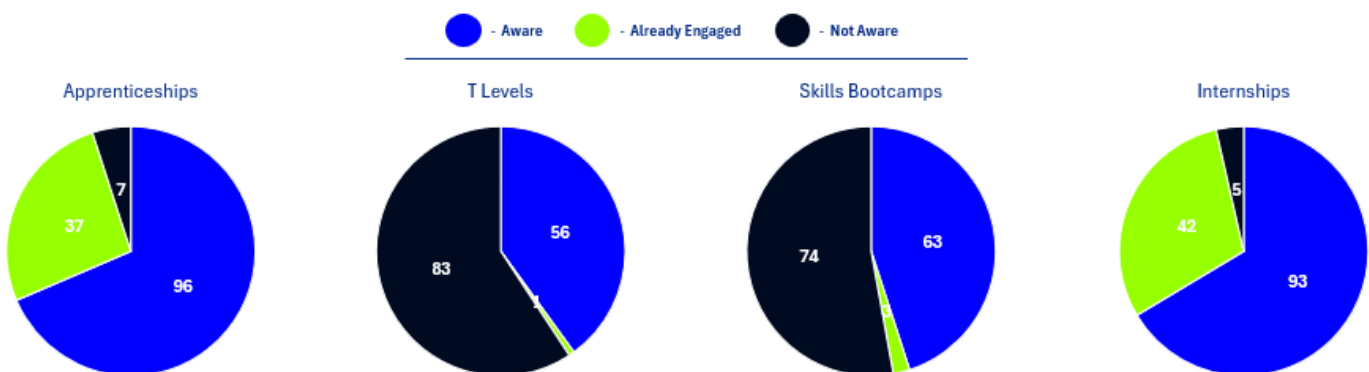
The West of England Mayor’s vision in the Skills Strategy incorporates the desire to support and develop the existing wider definition of the skills system (including provision, support, awareness and funding mechanisms and to build on the work already undertaken within the region, including the activity through Growth and Careers Hubs, Connect to Work, Skills Connect, Adult Skills and the Youth Guarantee, to continue to develop regional responses to employers need in this area.

The barriers employers have referenced across all sectors in the West of England and North Somerset to engaging with the skills system can be defined into three categories:

**Awareness issues** – there is reported limited understanding of training opportunities and pathways for employers in the local area. Green skills and Digital and AI training were particularly highlighted as in demand, but the confusion about what is available, the progression pathways and where to access this training were reported as reasons for lack of engagement. Employers in the digital and creative industries also reported being unsure about which digital skills they needed to prioritise for their individual and business needed, due to a crowded marketplace.

**Infrastructure challenges** – the West of England and North Somerset cover a substantial area, encapsulating urban and rural communities. Rural transport limitations were highlighted as a particular barrier to engaging with training, with bus connectivity being reported as a particular weakness. Employers also reported constraints with digital access – while online training has provided wider accessibility to some, those who are in weak connectivity areas are still struggling to access upskilling and reskilling initiatives.

**Employer barriers** – employers reported confusion around available training. It has been reported that the skills landscape is complex and that many of the training initiatives overlap so there is clarity and support needed to ensure employers can understand the available options, and what training is the right fit for their business. The confusion around the skills landscape extends to specific training methods, with employers reporting uncertainty about the apprenticeship reforms, such as apprenticeship units, and lacking knowledge about their options.



[Survey Responses on Awareness of Provision]

## **STRENGTHEN SKILLS AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT ACROSS THE EVERYDAY ECONOMY**

Everyday Economy has been highlighted as a key priority sector for the West of England and North Somerset. Within this priority the sectors represent the industries that are fundamental to the operational success of the local area, as well as key growth sectors. These sectors cover 57% of jobs in the region [[West of England Growth Strategy](#)].

While, collaboratively with the West of England Combined Authority, this LSIP has chosen to prioritise Health and Social Care, Childcare and Education, Building and Construction and Transport and Logistics in this first phase of activity, we recognise that the Everyday Economy sector covers numerous other sectoral activity and will require further attention as the LSIP progresses to support the region's economic and growth plans – hospitality and retail (and visitor economy more broadly) are likely to be the next priorities within this area.

## **STRENGTHEN HEALTH, WORK AND INCLUSIVE EMPLOYMENT CAPABILITY**

Employers and stakeholders across the West of England and North Somerset highlighted concern around the interactions between health, wellbeing and workforce participation that limit recruitment and effective work. Economic inactivity linked to long-term health conditions, disability, caring responsibilities, low confidence and wider socio-economic barriers was identified as a significant challenge affecting both employers and residents across the region.

Stakeholders noted that barriers to employment are often broader than skills alone, with transport limitations, digital exclusion, wellbeing and access to flexible opportunities all impacting residents' ability to enter, remain in and progress within work. Employers also reported increasing awareness of workforce wellbeing, retention and inclusive recruitment challenges, particularly within high-pressure sectors and the Everyday Economy.

There was strong recognition that improving labour market participation requires closer alignment between employment support, skills provision and wider regional initiatives including Connect to Work, WorkWell, Skills Connect and the Youth Guarantee. Flexible and modular learning approaches, clearer progression pathways and improved awareness of opportunities were all highlighted as important mechanisms for supporting more inclusive participation within the regional economy.

## **BUILD PROGRESSION AND RETRAINING PATHWAYS FOR ADULTS AT RISK OF DISPLACEMENT**

Employers and stakeholders across the West of England and North Somerset reported uncertainty regarding the impact of automation, AI, digitalisation and wider labour market change on numerous roles, particularly entry level and within the Everyday Economy but also across the spectrum of work. While employers recognised the opportunities associated with technological adoption, there was also increasing awareness of the need to support workforce adaptability and progression into emerging occupations.

Employers highlighted the growing importance of transferable skills, lifelong learning and workforce flexibility, noting that workers are likely to require more regular upskilling and reskilling throughout their careers. Stakeholders also reported that many adults remain unaware of progression opportunities linked to growth sectors including digital, clean energy, advanced manufacturing and the Everyday Economy.

Flexible and modular provision, including Skills Bootcamps, CPD and employer-led workforce development, were identified as important mechanisms for supporting adults to retrain while remaining economically active. There was broad recognition that clearer progression pathways and improved awareness of emerging career opportunities will be critical to ensuring workforce resilience and supporting long-term regional growth.

## Part 2: Changes and Actions Needed

**The actions and changes set out within Part 2** have been developed and refined collaboratively through ongoing engagement with employers, providers, the West of England Combined Authority, local authorities, higher education institutions, Further Education colleges, Independent Training Providers and wider regional stakeholders.

Through the LSIP governance process, including discussion via the Get West of England Working Group and sector-specific engagement activity, partners have collectively shaped and validated the priorities, recognising that many of the identified challenges require coordinated action across the wider skills and employment system rather than delivery by any single organisation alone. The actions therefore represent locally agreed areas of focus, intended to support shared regional ambitions around economic growth, workforce participation, productivity, inclusion and progression. Collectively, they support delivery of wider regional and national strategic priorities, including the West of England Growth Strategy, the Get West of England Working Plan, the emerging West of England Skills Strategy, the Government's Opportunity and Growth Missions, the Get Britain Working agenda and the Clean Energy Jobs Plan.

Throughout delivery, partners will continue to refine activities and implementation approaches to ensure actions remain responsive to employer need, labour market change and regional priorities. Feedback through provider engagement, including discussions facilitated through Colleges West, highlighted the importance of ensuring that LSIP actions remain practical, delivery-focused and reflective of existing activity already taking place across the further education system. Providers noted that substantial work is already underway to embed employability, work readiness, technical capability and employer engagement within curriculum delivery and student support. Stakeholders emphasised that addressing workforce readiness and progression challenges requires a genuinely shared responsibility across employers, providers and the wider skills system, rather than an expectation that further education alone can resolve broader structural labour market issues. Employers were identified as having a critical role in supporting clearer progression pathways, providing meaningful industry engagement opportunities, improving visibility of careers and workplace expectations, and recognising the employability and transferable skills already being developed through existing education and training provision.

Higher Education providers play an important role within the West of England and North Somerset skills system, particularly in relation to higher-level technical skills, workforce development, research and innovation, and progression into priority sectors. HE institutions have contributed to the development of the LSIP and support the need for stronger progression pathways between FE, HE and employment, particularly within sectors such as digital, advanced engineering, clean energy and health-related professions. The actions outlined within Part 2 therefore reflect the importance of continued collaboration between FE providers, HE institutions and employers to support progression opportunities, flexible and modular learning, and improved alignment between higher-level skills provision and regional labour market demand. Further detail regarding provider roles and delivery contributions will be included within Annex B.

Feedback through the Get West of England Working Group and wider provider engagement also reinforced that many of the identified challenges, particularly around employability, workforce readiness and progression, cannot be addressed by education providers alone. Stakeholders highlighted the importance of shared responsibility across employers, providers, strategic authorities and wider partners, including the role of employers in supporting realistic workplace expectations, industry engagement and progression opportunities alongside the continued development of technical and employability provision.

The actions below focus on improving the responsiveness, accessibility and coordination of the skills system, with particular emphasis on enabling clearer pathways, strengthening core and technical skills provision, and addressing systemic barriers to engagement. Collectively, they are intended to support improved workforce readiness, increased productivity and more effective alignment between skills provision and labour market demand.

We believe the outcomes of these actions will increase employer engagement with training, improve access to relevant provision, strengthen progression pathways and understanding of them, and create a more resilient and adaptable workforce, ready to meet the opportunities presented through understanding and preparing for economic change. Progress against these outcomes will be monitored through ongoing employer engagement, data tracking and agreed performance measures (see annex B). Further detail is also included in Annex C, where we continue to outline how needs can be addressed through specific Actions and Activities.

### **West of England Priority Skills Needs:**

- Improve understanding and engagement with net zero and sustainability
- Improve work-readiness of young people and new entrants
- Strengthen digital and AI capability across the workforce
- Address persistent gaps in critical and enabling skills
- Address ongoing recruitment and retention challenges
- Improve employer understanding and navigation of the skills system
- Strengthen skills and workforce development across the Everyday Economy
- Strengthen health, work and inclusive employment capability
- Build progression and retraining pathways for adults at risk of displacement

## IMPROVE UNDERSTANDING AND ENGAGEMENT WITH NET ZERO AND SUSTAINABILITY

<b>Need Statement</b>	Employers in the West of England and North Somerset report confusion, fear of unmitigated risks or lack of Return on Investment when engaging with net zero and sustainability
<b>Actions/Changes Needed</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Green Jobs Clarity across the region</li> <li>• Understanding Skills Needs &amp; Pathways</li> </ul>
<b>Intended Outcomes/Illustrative measures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attract, Recruit &amp; Retain New Employees</li> <li>• Growth in climate resilience economy</li> <li>• Increase in green jobs, growth, innovation and skills development</li> <li>• Futureproof Sector Workforces</li> <li>• ESG &amp; Reputation</li> </ul>
<b>Longer-term future needs</b>	

### Green Jobs Clarity

Both providers and business highlighted that, while low carbon provision exists, uptake is constrained by limited market demand, policy uncertainty and unclear return on investment for smaller businesses. Actions should therefore focus not only on provision, but on clearer employer roadmaps, better demand stimulation, and practical advice that helps businesses understand what net zero means for them in operational terms. Employers in the West of England and North Somerset reported a need for clarity in regard to green skills, net zero and sustainability – specifically what the term ‘green jobs’ means, what green career pathways are available and how to transition into a green career from current job roles. This is compounded by a lack of consistent internal communication and confidence in articulating the business case for sustainability, including cost savings, efficiency gains and competitive advantage.

By working with the Combined Authority and Further Education colleges in the local area, we will seek to develop a clear and concise definition of ‘green jobs’ per key priority sector. We will also work to create example career pathways per industry and highlight ways to transition into sustainable careers, either through highlighting transferable skills for individuals to move into existing roles or suggest how current job roles can be adapted to include more sustainable elements.

The success of this intervention will be measured through the development of collaboratively created clear outcomes and engagement with informative career education materials such as infographics and webinars that can be shared via Skills Connect and with and through Colleges West. We will work collaboratively with WECA and FE providers in the region to monitor engagement with these resources over the course of the LSIP, with increased and sustained engagement being the primary metric of success for this objective.

## Understanding Skills Needs and Pathways

Reported skills gaps in the West of England and North Somerset included retrofit, heat pump installation, sustainable construction and infrastructure transition. There is also a need to show the impact of investing in green and sustainable training and highlight the return on investment for employers who may be reluctant to engage with training in this area.

Through highlighting existing provision delivered by the Strategic Authority, Further Education Colleges, Higher Education Institutes and Independent Training Providers in the area, we can showcase the benefits of this training to employers, while also identifying where potential further provision is needed to meet the skills gaps and the delivery methods best suited. We expect to adopt a methodology to track increased engagement with existing provision, and the development and uptake of improved or new curriculum and training to highlight whether this skills need has been met.

Improving understanding and engagement with net zero and sustainability in the West of England and North Somerset could have the following positive impacts:

**Attract, recruit and retain new workforce** – the emerging workforce has been reported by employers to prioritise organisational values, including sustainability, over traditional job role specifications such as salary. Outlining clear career pathways in green roles will both highlight commitment to sustainability, but also to progression opportunities and upskilling and reskilling staff, which has also been cited as a priority for employees.

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

**ESG goals and Reputation** – adopting more sustainable practices across departments will help embed into organisational culture, have positive financial, environmental and reputational impacts.

## IMPROVE WORK-READINESS OF YOUNG PEOPLE AND NEW ENTRANTS

<b>Need Statement</b>	Employers reported the transition from education into employment does not equip new workers with work readiness skills/employability, creating barriers and recognising the distinction between technical skills and work capability as a whole.
<b>Actions/Changes Needed</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Career Pathways and Progression</li> <li>• Work Readiness</li> </ul>
<b>Intended Outcomes/Illustrative measures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduction in NEET numbers</li> <li>• Improving the Future Talent Pipeline</li> <li>• Ensuring Provision Relevance to Work</li> </ul>
<b>Immediate workforce pressures</b>	

## **Career Pathways and Progression**

For the emerging workforce, clarity and availability of opportunity is a fundamental gap in the skills landscape. Development of entry level training opportunities, including level 2 and level 3 qualifications, will ensure adequate provision is available for those at the start of their career, allowing them opportunity to entry level technical skills, and develop transferable knowledge, skills and behaviours, before transitioning to higher level qualifications.

While availability of entry level provision is essential, awareness of career pathways, progression opportunities and the skills needed to advance through their careers is a highlighted need by employers, who report that even more experienced members of their workforce are unsure of progression opportunities and pathways that are accessible to them.

Success will be able to be measured through working collaboratively with the Combined Authority, local Further Education Colleges and Independent Training providers to develop entry level training opportunities and raise awareness of career pathways and personal development opportunities. These opportunities must be responsive to the skills gaps in the local area, providing distinct offerings across all key priority sectors, including those encapsulated by the 'Everyday Economy' sector. Previous success with the 'Demystifying' programme, delivered by Business West Skills Advisors in collaboration with City of Bristol College, will be built on with further sessions bridging the gap between education and the workplace. To specifically address those at risk of NEET status, Business West, as the LSIP ERB, will continue its collaborative work with the West of England Combined Authority and the Youth Guarantee Programme to raise awareness of career pathways and entry ways into work. We will continue to review data throughout the course of the LSIP, comparing current NEET figures with previous baselines to ensure the intervention is having a positive impact.

This activity should align closely with the emerging West of England Skills Strategy and Adult Skills Commissioning Plan, ensuring that entry-level provision, progression pathways and workforce development activity reflect wider regional priorities around inclusive growth, workforce participation and employer demand. Collaboration between the Combined Authority, providers and employers will help ensure that commissioned provision remains responsive to current and emerging sector skills needs, while supporting clearer progression routes across the regional skills system.

## **Work Readiness**

In addition to ensuring availability of opportunity at entry level, employers across all key priority sectors highlighted a need for improved employability skills and for the emerging workforce to be work ready. Employers highlighted a disconnect between the skills, knowledge and behaviours that young people gain in further education, compared with the skills that are needed within the workplace.

To best correct this disconnect, Further Education providers in the West of England and North Somerset should embed employability skills into curriculum, working with local employers to determine which skills are particularly valued within each sector.

Further opportunities for development of these skills, such as work experience placements and industry insight days, facilitated in collaboration with local employers and the West of England Combined Authority, would ensure employers' expectations of the new workforce are realistic. Engagement with these opportunities by local education providers and employers would prove to be the initial marker of success, with long term impact being shown through prolonged, meaningful engagement with these initiatives.

The positive impacts that could arise from addressing work-readiness skills gaps in the local area include:

**Reduction in NEET numbers** – ensuring entry level opportunities are available and exposing the emerging workforce to industry experience and realistic expectations would ensure that they are fully equipped with the fundamental knowledge, skills and behaviours needed to gain and retain employment or explore further training and education opportunities.

Delivery of the region's future skills ambitions as per the region's Skills Strategy will rely on close collaboration across employers, further and higher education providers, independent training providers and regional partners. Further education colleges and independent training providers have highlighted through discussions individually and via Colleges West and WTPN that they play a central role in responding to employer demand, supporting workforce progression and enabling access to technical and vocational pathways across both growth sectors and the Everyday Economy. Their role within local communities also positions them as key partners in supporting inclusion, progression and lifelong learning objectives identified throughout this LSIP.

**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.

**Relevant Provision** – employers collaborating with local Further Education Colleges and training providers to create provision that is relevant and meets the needs of the sector on a local level guarantee that young people are being taught skills that are immediately valuable to the employers in the local area, ensuring new entrants to the workforce are equipped with skills and realistic expectations of the industry and organisations are able to develop the existing entry level skills, providing personal development opportunities for their workforce.

## STRENGTHEN DIGITAL AND AI CAPABILITY ACROSS THE WORKFORCE

<b>Need Statement</b>	Employers report increasing demand for digital and AI capability, with gaps in both foundational digital skills and the ability to adopt emerging technologies safely and effectively.
<b>Actions / Changes Needed</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fundamental Digital Skills Development</li> <li>• AI Awareness &amp; Safe Adoption</li> <li>• Digital Upskilling Accessibility</li> </ul>
<b>Intended Outcomes/Illustrative measures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved Productivity &amp; Efficiency</li> <li>• Increased Digital Confidence</li> <li>• Enhanced Innovation Capability</li> </ul>
<b>Medium-term (3 year) priorities</b>	

### Fundamental IT Skills

The lack of basic IT skills has been highlighted as a fundamental gap in the skills landscape in the local area, with 66% of survey respondents citing a greater need for digital or data skills within their business. While the definition of 'fundamental IT' can vary from basic administrative skills such as word processing and data entry, for other employers, it includes data security and skills for AI, such as prompt generation and critical thinking, as well as how to use AI safely.

Establishing a baseline of what are the basic IT skills needed for business is necessary. Working collaboratively with Further Education colleges and the Combined Authority we can therefore ensure that the fundamental IT requirements are embedded into curriculum where feasible and relevant opportunities to upskill and reskill are available. Once this baseline has been developed, we will monitor engagement with upskilling and reskilling opportunities, periodically reviewing the results of the training opportunities and mapping results against the initial baseline to illustrate the impact. Digital and technology skills at all levels remain a key priority in the West of England and North Somerset, as AI, automation and wider technological change continue to reshape jobs, skills needs and business practices across the region and the wider economy.

### Awareness and Accessibility of Digital Upskilling

Employers in the local area highlighted that a barrier to engaging with upskilling was identifying what skills needed improving, understanding where to access this training and addressing the stigma regarding accessing digital upskilling.

By developing the one front door approach to training that Skills Connect has established and ensuring that upskilling and reskilling opportunities are available to all abilities, it will simplify the process of identifying and engaging with relevant training and remove some of the stigma associated.

## Support on Sustainable Digital Adoption

Develop and deliver targeted support on sustainable digital practices, including:

- Awareness of environmental impacts of AI and digital infrastructure
- Guidance on efficient and responsible use of AI tools
- “Meet the expert” sessions and workshops for SMEs

Provider input supported the distinction between AI skills and skills for AI. The LSIP should therefore avoid treating AI as only a standalone digital specialism. Actions should support sector-specific AI adoption, workforce confidence, critical thinking, data literacy and safe use, alongside practical employer guidance on AI policy, cyber resilience and responsible adoption.

The need for these skills is clear, and the impact that addressing gaps and challenges could have on the local area are as follows:

**Essential Skills for All Job Roles** – 82% of job vacancies in the UK in 2023 required digital or technology skills, a figure that will only increase with emerging technologies and the integration of AI into daily tasks; ensuring the region’s workforce, both existing workers and emerging ones, have the right basic skillset is essential to the daily operations of all sectors alongside baseline requirements for further adoption.

**Increased Operational Efficiency and Safety** – ensuring workforces are equipped with the skills they need to work more productively, reducing the pressure on those with more advanced skills needing to support and an increased awareness of digital safety will all contribute positively to the daily operations of businesses in the local area. Emerging workforces already having a baseline level of digital skills and understanding will reduce the training costs and time getting them to this level once they enter the workforce. One suggestion (to incorporate into Annex B) is to set up a joint BW and WECA working group to develop a suite of upskilling courses and programmes that can be delivered by employers to their employees, potentially funded through adult skills funding.

**Learning Culture** – providing upskilling opportunities for fundamental skills creates a learning culture within an organisation, encouraging further upskilling, reskilling and development of the workforce.

## ADDRESS PERSISTENT GAPS IN CRITICAL AND ENABLING SKILLS

Need Statement	Employers across all sectors report persistent gaps in critical and enabling skills, including communication, problem solving, resilience and professional behaviours.
Actions/Changes Needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Embedding Employability Skills in Curriculum</li> <li>• Entrepreneurial Skills Development</li> <li>• Awareness of Skills Importance</li> </ul>
Intended Outcomes/Illustrative measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved Workforce Capability</li> <li>• Increased Productivity</li> <li>• Enhanced Collaboration &amp; Teamwork</li> </ul>
<b>Immediate workforce pressures</b>	

## **Critical Skills within the Curriculum**

Employers across all sectors cited critical and transferable skills as the most prominent skills gap in their workforce, with Employability skills and Entrepreneurial skills being the most frequently mentioned. Building upon the work and recommendations developed in the first LSIP through the Creative Entrepreneurship sprint, we will continue working with local employers to further identify which specific skills are required for their business under the employability and entrepreneurial criteria to ensure that the development of these skills is embedded within the curriculum with local Further Education Colleges. To further ensure the access to training around these skills is available, we will work with the West of England Combined Authority and Independent Training Providers to ensure there is provision available for the reskilling and upskilling of individuals in these areas who are further away from education by reviewing relevant existing provision and identifying opportunity for integration/development towards this need and monitor engagement levels to ensure increased and sustained interaction with training opportunities.

## **Raising Awareness of the Importance of Critical Skills**

Employers overwhelmingly reported transferable skills to be the priority when recruiting for their vacancies, with the majority citing that technical skills are easier to teach within the workplace than key behavioural skills. Therefore, we believe there is an importance in raising awareness with the emerging workforce of these skills needed by their future employers.

As Further Education Colleges have a direct link into the next generation of workers, we expect that, in addition to raising awareness of the embedding of these skills more thoroughly in the curriculum, the importance of these skills and all parts in the development of them can be communicated. Local employers can further support this message by taking part in industry insight days and providing guest lectures to the students.

Stakeholders through the LSIP governance process highlighted the potential value of adopting a more consistent regional framework for employability and transferable skills development. There was particular support for exploring alignment with the NFER Essential Skills framework, which identifies six key transferable skill areas: communication, collaboration, problem solving, self-management, creativity and critical thinking. These skills strongly reflect the capabilities most consistently requested by employers throughout LSIP engagement activity across all priority sectors.

There is an opportunity for the West of England Combined Authority, providers and employers to work collaboratively towards embedding a shared essential skills methodology across relevant provision, careers activity and workforce development initiatives. Adopting a more consistent regional approach would help strengthen the visibility and understanding of these skills for learners, employers and providers alike, while supporting clearer progression pathways and improving workforce readiness across the regional economy.

Addressing gaps in critical and enabling skills could result in the following opportunities for the West of England and North Somerset:

**Career future proofing and flexibility** – these skills provide flexibility for both the individual and organisation, allowing for movement across departments and industries, with human skills remaining relevant and needed in the workplace despite the increased digitalisation of work.

**Increased productivity** – skills such as critical thinking, problem solving and confidence will all contribute to improved levels of efficiency and productivity within the workforce and reduced skills gaps across an organisation.

**Improved Collaboration and Teamwork** – these skills will help develop and maintain strong working relationships, both internally and externally, fostering productivity, productive teamwork and strong client relationships.

### ADDRESS ONGOING RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION CHALLENGES

<b>Need Statement</b>	Employers report ongoing recruitment challenges driven by skills shortages, competition for talent and difficulty filling technical and entry-level roles.
<b>Actions / Changes Needed</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Career Insights &amp; Awareness of Roles</li> <li>• Cross-Sector Pathways Development</li> <li>• Promoting Benefits of Early Talent</li> </ul>
<b>Intended Outcomes/Illustrative measures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved Recruitment Outcomes</li> <li>• Expanded Talent Pool</li> <li>• Better Workforce Retention</li> </ul>
<b>Immediate workforce pressures</b>	

Of the 140 respondents to the LSIP supplementary data survey, 59% reported recruiting new employees in the past 12 months to support their skills and workforce development. However 33% of these 140 respondents also reported difficulties with recruiting and retaining their workforce.

### Career Insights and Cross Sectorial Work Pathways

Feedback from employers stated that some of their hardest to fill vacancies were in roles not typically associated with that sector, for example maintenance roles within Health and Social Care, therefore more work needs to be done to show the full scope of roles available within sectors.

In addition to existing work being undertaken by Business West, both in collaboration with WECA for green careers pathways and through our Skills Advisors, to highlight career pathways, employers working in collaboration with Further Education Colleges to provide opportunities to raise awareness of the breadth of roles available within their industries either through guest lecturing, extended work placement opportunities or insight days will help the emerging workforce explore a more comprehensive range of work opportunities. Exposing young people to the full range of potential careers and progression opportunities within a sector would provide them with the vital insights to

expand their choice of careers, and transparency with career pathways would likely result in retention of staff who wish to progress within the industry.

The LSIP will work with FE education providers in the local area to determine the current engagement levels and create achievable targets for employer interaction with the education landscape. We will also monitor learner attendance levels and review destination data of those transitioning from education into work or higher education opportunities.

### **Diversifying your Workforce**

Employers have raised concerns about recruiting young people, citing reasons such as being ill-equipped to transition from education and into the workplace, retention in some sectors is low with younger recruits and sectors including Health and Social Care highlight the internal pressure of training people new to the industry, and so would favour experienced candidates.

This aligns with wider regional priorities identified within the West of England Growth Strategy and the State of the West of England report, both of which highlight the importance of reducing persistent inequalities in labour market participation and progression. The Get West of England Working Plan specifically identifies “ill-health and disability (including learning disabilities and autism), caring responsibilities, age, race, gender and intersectionality” as key factors contributing to economic inactivity and employment inequality across the region.

Employers, providers and regional partners therefore have an important role in supporting more inclusive recruitment, progression and workforce development practices, particularly for SEND learners, disabled residents and ethnic minority groups who may face additional structural barriers to entering and progressing within employment. Improving visibility of opportunities, strengthening employer confidence and widening access to progression pathways will support both inclusive growth and the development of a broader and more diverse regional talent pipeline.

Further Education Colleges, working in collaboration with the local Combined Authority to raise awareness of the benefits of accessing the future talent pipeline and diversifying their workforce is essential to removing the barriers to recruitment. This work, amplified by the LSIP ERB, will showcase the positive impact young people can have on an organisation such as fresh perspectives, new skills and innovative thinking.

Stakeholder engagement activity, especially with Providers via Colleges West, suggest that sector engagement could be more effective if undertaken collaboratively, the LSIP and other relevant regional structures. Rather than creating additional groups, the LSIP could support existing sector forums to periodically focus on FE, HE, technical skills, placements and curriculum alignment.

Immediate interventions that contribute to addressing recruitment and retention challenges in the local area would have the following positive impacts:

**Career Transparency** – showcasing the full scope of job roles within a sector will help expand and diversify the prospective talent pool, and highlighting the different progression pathways will improve staff retention. This activity should be aligned with the existing content on Skills Connect as a One Front Door methodology to share regional priorities within careers information and opportunities alongside provision.

**Building Talent Pipelines** – employers engaging with their local Further Education Colleges will build relationships with students, often having ‘first pick’ of potential new recruits, and builds a reputation as an organisation that will recruit and develop young talent. There is a need for this to be coordinated regionally, alongside identifying the current sources of this information and how to effectively fund this activity, potentially using LSIP resource to coordinate.

**Workforce Development and Long-Term Value** – while young people do offer lower initial wage costs, they are often a ‘blank slate’ that can be moulded, developed and trained to meet your specific skills needs, therefore providing high return on investment.

#### IMPROVE EMPLOYER UNDERSTANDING AND NAVIGATION OF THE SKILLS SYSTEM

<b>Need Statement</b>	Employers report that the skills system is complex and difficult to navigate, with limited awareness of training options, pathways and funding opportunities.
<b>Actions/Changes Needed</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clarity of Training Offer</li> <li>• Improved Skills System Navigation</li> <li>• Clear Progression Pathways</li> <li>• Address infrastructural barriers to access and understanding (digital &amp; transportation)</li> </ul>
<b>Intended Outcomes/Illustrative measures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased Engagement with Training</li> <li>• Improved Uptake of Provision</li> <li>• Better Employer Decision-Making</li> <li>• Improved access to opportunity</li> </ul>
<b>Immediate workforce pressures</b>	

#### Training Understanding and Opportunity

Employers reported confusion with the skills landscape as the main reason for not engaging. Barriers included firstly understanding what training the organisation and individuals needed, and then where to access this training.

As the LSIP ERB, Business West will continue its activities such a Workforce Development Planning through impartial Skills Advisors to help businesses understand the training they require, before signposting to the delivery model that would best suit their needs. Working in partnership with the West of England Combined Authority and local training providers, we will aim to strengthen the Skills Connect ‘one front door’ approach to training, with the objective to streamline and clarify the training offering in the local area, including progression pathways that can be accessed through upskilling and reskilling.

We will review baseline engagement data from Skills Connect to monitor any changes in uptake, with increased (and sustained) engagement with training opportunities through the portal being the key success metric for this need.

### **Barriers to Training Engagement**

With the West of England and North Somerset being such a large and varied area, accessibility to training proved to be a major barrier that could be defined into two criteria – transport challenges and digital challenges. Employers reported that the specific technical training they required was often geographically out of a travel area they would be willing to consider, especially those whose staff had to depend on public transport. While the obvious resolution to this issue may be online training modules, this also posed difficulties to employers who noted that their staff may not have the equipment, unstable connectivity or ability to access training online.

Aligning with the West of England Combined Authorities' Skills Strategy, as the LSIP ERB, we will strive to identify solutions to these hurdles, including ensuring training is accessible to all whether that be geographically, digitally or financially.

Providing employers in the local area with support understanding and navigating the skills system would see the following positive impacts:

**Clearer Training Landscape** – a more unified and easier-to-navigate 'one front door' to the skills landscape will help employers and residents identify the right training, funding and progression routes more quickly. This should reduce duplication, improve take-up of existing provision and make the skills system more responsive to employer demand.

**Increased Training Engagement** – reducing practical and perceived barriers to training should increase participation among employers, residents and priority learner groups. Better engagement data will also help identify where provision is working, where gaps remain, and where new or refined training is needed.

**Reduced Socio-Economic Inequality** – improving access to training and employment support should help economically inactive residents, low-paid workers and NEET young people move closer to learning and work. This would widen the regional talent pool, support inclusive growth and reduce the risk that opportunity remains concentrated among those already closest to the labour market.

## STRENGTHEN SKILLS AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT ACROSS THE EVERYDAY ECONOMY

<b>Need Statement</b>	Employers highlight the need to strengthen workforce development across the Everyday Economy, which represents a significant proportion of employment and underpins regional economic function.
<b>Actions/Changes Needed</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cross-Sector Collaboration</li> <li>• Targeted Everyday Economy Interventions</li> <li>• Targeted Workforce Development for Everyday Economy Sectors</li> </ul>
<b>Intended Outcomes/Illustrative measures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved Workforce Stability</li> <li>• Reduced Vacancy Pressure in High-Demand Roles</li> <li>• Enhanced Service Delivery</li> <li>• Inclusive Regional Growth</li> </ul>
<b>Immediate workforce pressures</b>	

### Cross Sectorial Collaboration

The Everyday Economy sector encapsulates a large portion of the local area's skills (57% of jobs in the region), resulting in a high volume of specific skills needs. While we are looking at some sectors in isolation; to support the wider Everyday Economy objectives and the local areas' economic and growth plans, we will continue to engage with the West of England Combined Authority and develop interventions such as regular employer groups, to understand the needs of the wider 'Everyday Economy' sectors and develop activities that support the wider regional objectives.

### Targeted Workforce Development for Everyday Economy Sectors

Employers across the Everyday Economy sectors highlighted the need for more targeted and sector-relevant workforce development, particularly in high-demand roles such as care, construction, childcare and transport. While these sectors represent a significant proportion of employment in the region, they often face persistent recruitment challenges, high turnover and limited progression pathways. There is a need to ensure that training provision and workforce development activity is more closely aligned to the specific operational needs of these sectors as well as improving recruitment and retention activity.

There is an opportunity for the Combined Authority, further education providers and employers to work collaboratively to develop targeted interventions that support both entry into and progression within these sectors, including role-specific training, modular provision and clearer career pathways. Strengthening workforce development in these areas will support improved retention, reduce vacancy pressures and enhance the resilience and sustainability of services that underpin the regional economy.

These approaches should align with existing and emerging initiatives led by the West of England Combined Authority and Local Authority delivery partners, including the delivery of the Youth Guarantee and Connect to Work, which together aim to support individuals—particularly those facing barriers to employment—into sustainable work and training opportunities.

The continued development of the Jobs and Careers Service and the Skills Connect portal provide key mechanisms for improving access to training, support and progression pathways, helping to simplify the skills landscape for both businesses and individuals. Alongside this, ongoing 'Employer Connect' activity currently being developed across the region will play an important role in strengthening employer engagement, improving intelligence flows and ensuring that provision is more closely aligned to real-time business need.

There is a clear opportunity to better integrate these initiatives with LSIP priorities—alongside existing provision such as Skills Bootcamps, Apprenticeship Units, and Careers Hub activity to deliver targeted, sector-specific workforce development. The development of provision aligned to the needs of Everyday Economy, and through monitoring of engagement with these training opportunities, the LSIP can highlight trends in uptake, further opportunities for training development and monitor engagement figures over the course of the LSIP.

Through this alignment, partners can create a more coherent, accessible and demand-led system that supports both entry into and progression within Everyday Economy sectors.

Developing targeted, bespoke interventions for the sectors that sit within the West of England and North Somerset's 'Everyday Economy' would see opportunities such as:

**Stronger Organisational Collaboration** – stronger collaboration between local authorities, employers, providers, business bodies and community partners will create a more joined-up skills offer for residents and businesses. This should reduce duplication, improve referral routes and help partners respond more consistently to regional priorities.

**More Impact-Focused Activity** – a clearer focus on impact across Everyday Economy sectors will help ensure skills activity is targeted at the areas of greatest need, including recruitment, retention, progression and workforce resilience. This should support better outcomes for both residents and employers, rather than funding activity based only on participation levels.

**Contribution to Regional Growth** – cross-sector skills support for Everyday Economy industries will help strengthen the workforce that underpins the region's economy, including care, childcare, construction, logistics, hospitality, retail and education. This should support improved productivity, business resilience, access to essential services and inclusive economic growth.

## STRENGTHEN HEALTH, WORK AND INCLUSIVE EMPLOYMENT CAPABILITY

<b>Need Statement</b>	Employers and stakeholders report that health conditions, disability, caring responsibilities, low confidence, transport barriers and wider socio-economic factors prevent residents from accessing, remaining and progressing in work
<b>Actions/Changes Needed</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve Inclusive Employment Pathways</li> <li>• Strengthen Health &amp; Work Integration</li> <li>• Improve Accessibility and Progression Support</li> <li>• Increase Employer Confidence and Awareness</li> </ul>
<b>Intended Outcomes/Illustrative measures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduced Economic Inactivity</li> <li>• Improved Workforce Participation</li> <li>• Increased Progression into Sustainable Employment</li> <li>• Greater Employer Engagement with Inclusive Recruitment and Workforce Support</li> </ul>
<b>Medium-term (3 year) priorities</b>	

### Improve Inclusive Employment Pathways

Employers and stakeholders highlighted that barriers to employment are often broader than skills alone. Health conditions, caring responsibilities, confidence, transport limitations and digital exclusion were all identified as factors limiting participation in work and training opportunities across the region.

There is an opportunity for the West of England Combined Authority, local authorities, providers and employers to continue to strengthen inclusive progression pathways through closer alignment between employment support, skills provision and wider initiatives including Connect to Work, the Youth Guarantee and local employability programmes. This should include clearer referral routes, flexible provision and targeted support for individuals furthest from the labour market. Monitoring engagement with these programmes, success will be measured through the number of referrals received and individuals engaged with these interventions.

### Strengthen Health & Work Integration

The Get West of England Working Plan identifies economic inactivity linked to long-term ill health as a significant regional challenge. Employers also reported increasing awareness of workforce wellbeing, mental health and retention challenges, particularly within high-pressure sectors including Health & Social Care, Construction and the Everyday Economy.

There is a need to strengthen employer awareness of workplace wellbeing support, reasonable adjustments, flexible working approaches and preventative workforce support. Existing regional initiatives including WorkWell and wider employment support programmes provide opportunities to better integrate health, skills and employment activity.

## Improve Accessibility and Progression Support

Stakeholders highlighted that progression routes are often unclear or inaccessible for residents balancing caring responsibilities, part-time work or health-related barriers. Flexible and modular learning approaches, alongside blended delivery models, were identified as important mechanisms for widening participation and supporting progression into work and higher-level training.

There is also a need to ensure that communication around opportunities is clearer and more accessible, particularly for adults returning to work or those lacking confidence in engaging with the skills system.

The positive impacts that could stem from improving health, work and inclusive employment capability include:

**Improved Workforce Participation** – strengthening inclusive pathways and reducing barriers to engagement will help more residents access sustainable employment and training opportunities.

**Reduced Economic Inactivity** – better alignment between employment, health and skills support should help more residents remain active within the labour market.

**More Inclusive Regional Growth** – improving access to progression opportunities will help widen participation across priority sectors and support the region's wider inclusive growth ambitions.

## BUILD PROGRESSION AND RETRAINING PATHWAYS FOR ADULTS AT RISK OF DISPLACEMENT

<b>Need Statement</b>	Employers and stakeholders report growing concern regarding the impact of automation, AI and labour market change on routine, administrative and lower-paid roles, alongside the need for clearer retraining and progression pathways into emerging occupations.
<b>Actions/Changes Needed</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthen Adult Retraining Pathways</li> <li>• Support Workforce Adaptability and Progression</li> <li>• Improve Awareness of Emerging Career Opportunities</li> </ul>
<b>Intended Outcomes/Illustrative measures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expand Flexible and Modular Upskilling</li> <li>• Increased Adult Participation in Upskilling and Reskilling</li> <li>• Improved Workforce Adaptability</li> <li>• Increased Progression into Growth Sectors</li> <li>• Reduced Risk of Labour Market Displacement</li> </ul>
<b>Immediate workforce pressures</b>	

## **Strengthen adult retraining pathways**

The Growth Strategy and wider labour market evidence highlight the increasing impact of automation, AI and digitalisation on the future workforce. While digital adoption presents opportunities for productivity and growth, employers and stakeholders also recognised the potential displacement risks for some routine, clerical and administrative occupations.

There is therefore a need to strengthen adult retraining pathways and improve awareness of opportunities for progression into emerging roles across growth sectors including digital, clean energy, advanced manufacturing and the Everyday Economy.

## **Support Workforce Adaptability and Progression**

Employers across sectors highlighted the increasing importance of transferable skills, adaptability and lifelong learning. Many businesses stated that technical requirements are changing rapidly and that workers will increasingly require opportunities to reskill and upskill throughout their careers.

Flexible and modular provision, including Skills Bootcamps, CPD, modular qualifications and employer-led workforce development activity, will play an important role in supporting adults to adapt to changing labour market demands and monitoring engagement with these initiatives will be a key success metric.

## **Improve Awareness of Emerging Career Opportunities**

Stakeholders noted that many adults remain unaware of the breadth of emerging opportunities linked to AI, digitalisation, sustainability and changing sector needs. There is an opportunity to improve communication around transferable skills, progression routes and cross-sector transition opportunities, particularly for workers currently employed in lower-paid or insecure roles.

This should align with wider Skills Connect and careers activity to ensure adults can more easily identify relevant training and progression opportunities.

Establishing progression and retraining pathways for adults at risk of displacement in the local area could lead to the following impacts:

**Improved Workforce Resilience** – supporting adults to retrain and upskill will help the workforce adapt to economic and technological change.

**Reduced Risk of Displacement** – clearer progression pathways and accessible retraining opportunities will help residents transition into sustainable employment.

**Improved Access to Growth Sectors** – strengthening adult progression routes into higher-demand sectors will support productivity and regional growth ambitions.

## **Annex A: Detailed Sector Skills Needs**

**This Annex provides additional, more detailed information** about the skills needs identified in the LSIP, where relevant and not included in the main body of the document.

It defines the key occupations and industries that are being targeted and map them to the most relevant SOC and SIC codes. While SOC codes remain essential for consistent analysis across areas, they may not capture the full breadth of emerging or highly specialised roles, particularly in sectors like digital and clean energy. Where roles are not currently assigned SOC codes, we have also highlighted emerging and specialist occupations that are not yet covered by SOC.

These definitions will be used as qualitative insights within our reports, helping to ensure that new and evolving occupations are accurately represented. For more information on SOC and SIC codes, see Annex D in the guidance.

### **Scope of Annex A**

This Annex provides additional sector-level evidence behind the priority skills needs identified in the LSIP. It is intended to sit behind the main narrative and should be used to evidence how the priority needs are expressed differently across the region's priority sectors. It also provides a starting point for SIC/SOC mapping and highlights where further labour market intelligence, provider validation or employer research should be undertaken before final publication.

The evidence base includes employer interviews, skills clinics, sector focus groups, provider engagement, stakeholder discussions, survey data and all work validating and exploring these needs with providers and stakeholders. Below we outline headlines against some of the priorities within the LSIP.

### **TOP 5 SECTORAL ACTIONS**

#### **Priority Actions Emerging from Sector Intelligence**

The sector intelligence gathered through the LSIP highlights a consistent message from employers, providers and stakeholders: while individual sectors face distinct workforce and skills challenges, many of the solutions required are shared across the regional economy. Digital capability, AI adoption, work readiness, progression pathways, leadership, sustainability and clearer navigation of the skills system feature repeatedly throughout the evidence base.

Recognising this, WECA has requested that the LSIP identifies a concise set of priority actions for each sector to focus delivery effort on activities likely to have the greatest immediate impact. These actions are intended to provide a practical bridge between the intelligence contained within Annex A and the implementation activity set out within Annex B.

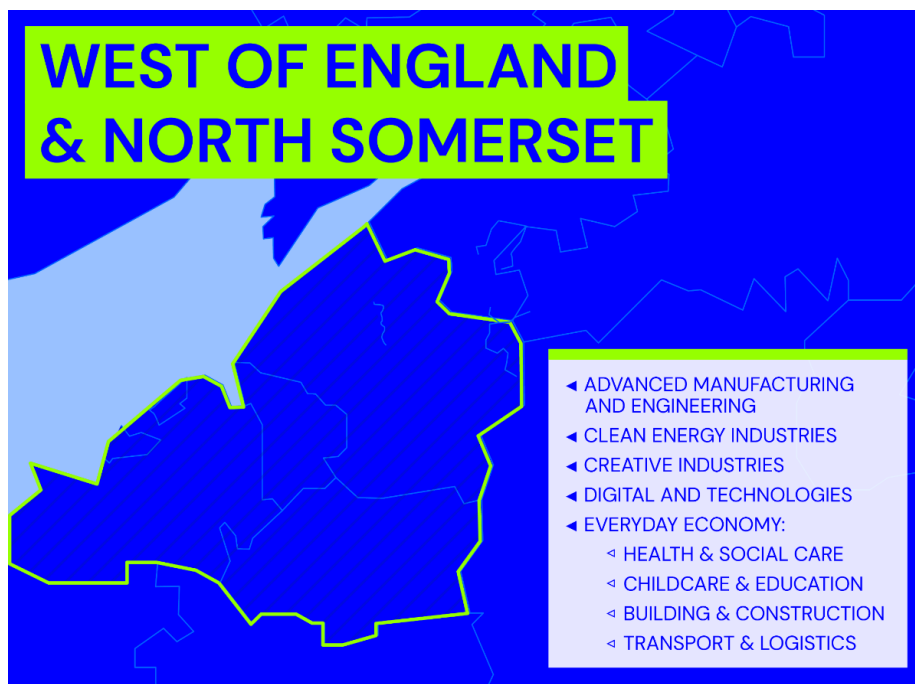
The actions below have been drawn from employer evidence, labour market intelligence and stakeholder discussions. Where WECA has already proposed specific actions, these have been incorporated directly. For sectors where actions were not yet formally

drafted, the recommendations below reflect the strongest themes emerging from engagement and are intended as an initial basis for discussion and validation through governance and delivery planning.

Given the significant overlap between sectors, many actions should be viewed as complementary rather than standalone interventions. For example, clean energy skills rely heavily on construction, engineering and digital capability, while employability, leadership and AI adoption are common requirements across both growth sectors and the Everyday Economy. As a result, these priorities should be delivered through a coordinated regional approach wherever possible.

<b>Sector</b>	<b>Top 5 Actions</b>
<b>Advanced Manufacturing &amp; Engineering</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Strengthen engineering technician, maintenance and advanced manufacturing pathways</li> <li>2. Develop digital engineering capability, including CAD, BIM, automation, robotics and AI-assisted manufacturing</li> <li>3. Build progression routes into EV, sustainable aviation fuels, advanced materials and low-carbon manufacturing</li> <li>4. Expand project management, quality assurance and regulatory skills provision</li> <li>5. Improve employer-led entry routes through placements, experienced worker pathways and sector-specific bootcamps</li> </ol>
<b>Clean Energy Industries (WECA proposed)</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Electrotechnical and clean energy installation skills</li> <li>2. Retrofit and low-carbon construction skills</li> <li>3. Clean energy data and digital skills</li> <li>4. Clean energy project and commercial skills</li> <li>5. Customer communication and trust-building skills</li> </ol>
<b>Creative Industries (WECA proposed)</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Validate demand with employers, freelancers and sector bodies</li> <li>2. Map provision across the full creative production ecosystem</li> <li>3. Develop freelance and creative business support</li> <li>4. Strengthen employer-led technical and production pathways</li> <li>5. Embed AI and sustainability within creative provision</li> </ol>
<b>Digital &amp; Technologies (WECA proposed)</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Build foundational workplace digital skills across all sectors</li> <li>2. Develop AI adoption and governance skills</li> <li>3. Strengthen data skills pathways</li> <li>4. Support specialist digital progression routes into priority occupations</li> <li>5. Develop digital communication and business translation skills</li> </ol>

<b>Sector</b>	<b>Top 5 Actions</b>
<b>Health &amp; Social Care</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Develop clear progression pathways from entry-level care roles into senior and specialist positions</li> <li>2. Expand leadership and registered manager development programmes</li> <li>3. Strengthen digital capability, including care systems, data and AI-enabled tools</li> <li>4. Improve recruitment and retention through career awareness and values-based recruitment</li> <li>5. Build workforce wellbeing, resilience and inclusive employment support</li> </ol>
<b>Childcare &amp; Education</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Strengthen recruitment pipelines into early years, teaching support and SEND roles</li> <li>2. Improve progression pathways from Level 2 through to leadership roles</li> <li>3. Expand placement opportunities and employer engagement activity</li> <li>4. Embed employability, resilience and communication skills within provision</li> <li>5. Improve digital confidence and adoption of education technologies</li> </ol>
<b>Building &amp; Construction (WECA proposed)</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Strengthen core trade and site-based skills pipelines</li> <li>2. Build retrofit, low-carbon and building performance skills into mainstream provision</li> <li>3. Develop construction digital skills at different levels</li> <li>4. Improve work readiness and site readiness for new entrants</li> <li>5. Strengthen construction leadership, project and business management skills</li> </ol>
<b>Transport &amp; Logistics</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Develop logistics, warehousing and transport operations pathways</li> <li>2. Strengthen HGV, fleet maintenance and EV maintenance skills</li> <li>3. Improve recruitment and progression into supervisory and management roles</li> <li>4. Expand digital logistics capability, including route optimisation, telematics and data systems</li> <li>5. Improve awareness of careers and progression opportunities across the sector</li> </ol>



Cross-cutting evidence signal	What this means
<p><b>Communication, confidence, resilience and work-readiness repeatedly appear as the most consistent employer-reported gaps and needs.</b></p>	<p>These should be presented as critical and enabling skills across every sector, not as a separate or lower-status employability issue. In the survey completions (which included specific questions about top 'soft' skills), communication ranked first on average, followed by teamwork, organisation, critical thinking, productivity/adaptability and resilience.</p>
<p><b>AI adoption is now a cross-sector issue.</b></p>	<p>AI should be treated as both a Digital &amp; Technologies priority and as a general workforce capability: prompt use, safe adoption, critical evaluation, governance, data protection, IP, cyber security and avoiding over-reliance. Our research showed use of ChatGPT, Copilot, Gemini and sector-specific AI tools, with most respondents either already integrating or actively considering AI solutions.</p>
<p><b>Green skills are often not understood as a coherent pathway.</b></p>	<p>The West of England and North Somerset should continue presenting green skills as both a standalone sector need and cross-sectoral challenge and opportunity, whilst ensuring clarity of understanding around green and sustainability terms, such as through the work undertaken by WECA in issuing the guidance for '<a href="#">Green Courses and Provision in the West of England</a>'.</p>
<p><b>Employers find the skills system difficult to navigate.</b></p>	<p>The region should reinforce the need for clearer pathway maps, role definitions, progression routes, funding guidance and a practical one-front-door approach for SMEs.</p>
<p><b>The Everyday Economy is fundamental to inclusive growth.</b></p>	<p>The four initial subsectors included are the first iteration of a much broader foundational economy, with clear links to the Growth Strategy, workforce participation and place resilience vital to continued prosperity</p>

## West of England and North Somerset Priority Sector Skills Evidence

The West of England labour market combines strong growth in knowledge-intensive sectors with continued dependence on foundational employment. The region's priority sectors span Clean Energy, Advanced Manufacturing, Digital and Technologies, Creative Industries, and the Everyday Economy. The source report notes that sectors overlap and therefore employment totals should not be aggregated.<sup>8</sup>

The labour market evidence suggests a dual challenge for skills planning. On one hand, high-growth sectors are expanding rapidly and creating demand for specialist technical and professional skills. On the other hand, the Everyday Economy continues to account for the majority of employment, creating substantial replacement demand and persistent workforce pressures across essential occupations.

### Everyday Economy overview

The Everyday Economy, as referenced in the West of England Growth Strategy, covers the foundational sectors and services that enable the wider economy to function. It includes high-employment sectors that support wellbeing, access to work, place resilience and inclusive growth. The Growth Strategy suggests that the Everyday Economy as a whole represents approximately 57% of jobs in the region and is identified as central to both labour market participation and the functioning of growth sectors.

For this LSIP cycle, four initial subsectors have been selected for investigation: Health & Social Care; Childcare & Education; Building and Construction, including electrotechnical roles and wider built environment skills; and Transport & Logistics. These should be presented as a first phase of focused analysis rather than as the full extent of the Everyday Economy. Retail, hospitality, professional services, tourism, sport, VCSE and food supply evidence gathered through engagement can be used to triangulate cross-cutting needs, particularly around management capability, customer service, digital adoption, sustainability, work-readiness and progression.

## ADVANCED MANUFACTURING AND ENGINEERING

### Introduction

Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering remains a key productivity and innovation sector for the West of England and North Somerset. Evidence from aerospace, automotive, advanced materials, modular infrastructure, manufacturing and climate-tech employers indicates that the sector increasingly requires hybrid capability: strong engineering fundamentals, applied digital competence, project management, quality control, sustainability awareness and the ability to work across disciplines. The sector should be treated as closely connected to clean energy, digital and construction rather than as a standalone manufacturing category.

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<sup>8</sup> West of England Combined Authority (2025); [State of the West of England](#), p.14.

## Labour Market Intelligence

Both the LSIP and MSA Growth Strategy identify advanced manufacturing as a regional priority and highlight the need to connect sector growth with skills provision. Local evidence shows demand for engineering technicians, mechanical and electrical trades, CAD and design technicians, manufacturing operatives, electronics and electrical engineers, project managers, regulatory specialists and data specialists. National Skills England and other central governmental research and analysis, such as the Industrial Strategy identifies manufacturing as a major employment and GVA contributor, with priority roles across production, technician, engineering, research and scientific occupations.

Advanced Manufacturing is a significant established high-value employment sector, supporting 17,800 jobs, equivalent to 3% of regional employment. Employment has remained relatively stable, growing by 1% since 2015, against a broader national backdrop of manufacturing decline.<sup>9 [5]</sup>

The sector generates approximately £2.9 billion GVA, representing 7% of regional output, and offers relatively strong earnings, with a median wage of £46,452, which is £1,637 above the national median for the sector.<sup>6 [6 West of England Combined Authority (2025): [State of the West of England](#), p.18.]</sup>

Employment is heavily concentrated geographically, with 65% of jobs located in South Gloucestershire, and the occupational profile shows a strong specialism in transport equipment manufacturing, which accounts for 51% of sector employment, compared with 16% nationally.<sup>10</sup>

### Skills implications

Likely workforce priorities include engineering technicians, aerospace manufacturing, precision engineering, maintenance engineering, robotics, automation, advanced manufacturing operations, and higher-level technical STEM skills. Stable employment alongside strong productivity suggests replacement demand and technical upskilling may be as important as net employment growth.

### Occupational Priorities

Priority occupations emerging from the evidence include engineering technicians, mechanical and electrical technicians, CAD/design technicians, manufacturing technicians, polymer/materials specialists, regulatory scientists, data scientists, project managers, export/freight specialists and automotive/EV technicians. For automotive, the language should reflect the increasing technical nature of the role: several employers stressed that the occupation is increasingly technician-led rather than traditional 'mechanic' work.

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9 West of England Combined Authority (2025): [State of the West of England](#), p.18.

10 West of England Combined Authority (2025): [State of the West of England](#), p.20-21.

## Occupational Opportunities

Occupational opportunities are strongest where technical expertise can be combined with commercial, digital and sustainability capability. Employers highlighted demand for people who can translate technical products into market opportunities, manage complex projects, communicate with non-technical stakeholders, use AI and data tools safely, and support transitions into EV, modular construction, sustainable materials and low-carbon manufacturing processes. There is also scope to promote non-STEM routes into manufacturing and climate-tech businesses, including operations, HR, marketing, quality, procurement and customer-facing technical roles.

## Reported Skills Needs

Employer-reported needs include practical lab and factory experience; engineering design and CAD/BIM skills; manufacturing process knowledge; quality assurance; regulatory literacy; export and freight documentation; project management; leadership; and experience of working in complex or high-security supply chains. Employers also reported that technical skills can often be taught where recruits have reliability, coachability, punctuality, practical aptitude and workplace behaviours.

Several SMEs stated that they need experienced hires because they do not currently have capacity to train new entrants from scratch. This is an element of reported need that warrants further investigation through LSIP activity to understand potential ramifications and opportunities to address. GS comments to incorporate –What does an entry level experienced hire look like – can we devise sector specific training packages to remedy this? This has been achieved by other MSAs, Greater Manchester is one example.

## Critical and Enabling Skills

The most consistent enabling skills are communication, reliability, punctuality, problem solving, critical thinking, teamwork, adaptability and confidence. Manufacturing employers also emphasised coachability, safety culture, professional writing, cross-team communication, and the ability to work with older experienced staff to capture tacit knowledge before retirement. Leadership and management capability is important for line managers, accidental managers and founders moving from technical roles into business leadership and represents a key opportunity to increase progression and productivity within work.

## Digital Skills

Digital and Technologies is the region's largest knowledge-intensive growth sector, employing 64,670 people, equivalent to 10% of regional employment. Employment has grown by 52% since 2015, the fastest growth among comparator strategic authorities <sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> West of England Combined Authority (2025): [State of the West of England](#), p.22

The sector contributes approximately £3.8 billion GVA, representing 8% of regional output. Median pay is £47,950, although this sits £8,791 below the national sector median, suggesting variation in occupational composition or business mix.<sup>12</sup>

The regional employment profile shows a concentration in engineering and technical consultancy, accounting for 29% of employment compared with 17% nationally, indicating strong crossover between digital capability and industrial applications. Bristol accounts for 50% of employment, with South Gloucestershire accounting for 29%.<sup>13</sup>

### **LSIP Skills Implications**

The scale and growth of this sector suggest continued demand for software development, digital engineering, AI capability, data analysis, cyber security, technical consultancy and higher-level digital STEM pathways.

Digital skills include CAD, BIM/3D design tools, data analysis, CRM and ERP systems, AI-assisted workflows, process automation, cloud systems, cyber awareness and digital documentation. Employers referenced AI adoption cautiously, particularly where customers include defence, government or regulated sectors. This suggests a need for practical AI governance and data security training, not just productivity-tool training.

In production environments, digital monitoring and measurement are increasingly linked to energy efficiency, waste reduction and continuous improvement.

### **Sector Specific**

Sector-specific needs include mechanical and electrical engineering fundamentals, automotive EV maintenance and diagnostics, process chemistry, polymer/materials science, modular building systems, production line management, export compliance, regulatory science and specialist technician training. Employers also raised the need for trainer supply: high-performing technicians can earn more in industry than in training roles, which creates a risk for provision in automotive and other technical areas. There is an opportunity to continue to investigate these demands with employers for the development of responsive regional initiatives.

### **Net Zero**

Net zero is both a product opportunity and an operational skills issue. Airbus evidence highlights alternative fuels, sustainable aviation fuels, compliance, biodiversity, transformation and culture change. Kelpi highlights sustainable materials, regulatory science and data science. Siniat highlights recycled materials, modular construction, heat recovery and measurement to reduce usage. Automotive evidence highlights EV training and the need for independent garages and training providers to keep pace with changing vehicle technology. Net zero skills should therefore include both technical low-carbon product knowledge and operational sustainability skills such as data monitoring, waste reduction, energy management and communicating the business case.

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<sup>12</sup> West of England Combined Authority (2025): [State of the West of England](#), p.22

<sup>13</sup> West of England Combined Authority (2025): [State of the West of England](#), p.24-25.

There is a reported need for clean energy specialists in Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering roles in the West of England and North Somerset area, particularly within alternative fuels such as hydrogen and biomass. Sustainable aviation fuels were also highlighted as a skills need in the area, due to the West of England and North Somerset holding the UK's largest aerospace cluster.

External secondary research to consider citing: Skills England sector skills need assessment: Advanced Manufacturing (2025); Skills England Assessment of priority skills to 2030 (2025); Clean Energy Jobs Plan (DESNZ, 2025) for overlaps with engineering, energy and technician roles.

## **CLEAN ENERGY INDUSTRIES**

### **Introduction**

Employers repeatedly described clean energy roles as part of existing engineering, construction, electrical, roofing, energy and project development occupations rather than a completely separate labour market. Clean Energy Industries are a major regional opportunity, but the evidence shows that workforce demand is currently constrained by policy uncertainty, funding cycles, grid capacity, procurement delays, quality concerns and insufficient clarity about pathways. Our research suggests that clean energy should be seen as a modernisation and electrification pathway across existing sectors, with specialist upskilling layered onto robust core competencies.

### **Labour Market Intelligence**

The sector includes renewable generation, community energy, solar PV, heat pumps, battery storage, retrofit, energy management, grid infrastructure, energy data, offshore wind, hydrogen and supporting professional services. Local employers and trade bodies identified electrical competence, roofing, general construction, data analytics, project management, sales/persuasion, carbon management, sustainability communication and whole house retrofit as recurring needs. Nationally, the Clean Energy Jobs Plan provides an important policy anchor.

Clean Energy remains a relatively small but rapidly expanding strategic labour market. The report estimates up to 7,000 jobs, representing around 1% of regional employment, alongside approximately £550 million GVA.<sup>14</sup>

Employer demand appears to be growing rapidly. Job postings increased by approximately 140% between 2016 and 2025, the highest increase recorded among strategic authorities. Average advertised salaries are £40,100, identified as among the highest nationally for this sector.<sup>15</sup>

The sector spans hydrogen, wind, tidal energy, small modular reactors, grid optimisation, low-emission vehicles and retrofit technologies.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> West of England Combined Authority (2025): [State of the West of England](#), p.15.

<sup>15</sup> West of England Combined Authority (2025): [State of the West of England](#), p. 17.

<sup>16</sup> West of England Combined Authority (2025): [State of the West of England](#), p.13.

### **LSIP Skills Implications**

The labour market evidence suggests growing demand for electrical engineering, retrofit capability, energy systems engineering, construction trades, installation skills, low-carbon technical occupations, and higher-level STEM capability. The rapid increase in vacancies suggests workforce pipeline development will be important.

### **Occupational Priorities**

Priority occupations include qualified electricians and experienced worker routes; high-voltage and grid-related electrical skills; solar PV and battery installers with appropriate prerequisites; heat pump installers and maintenance roles; retrofit coordinators and assessors; roofers with solar awareness; energy data analysts; project developers; carbon and energy managers; sustainability consultants; sales/business development roles able to explain clean energy products; and project managers able to navigate funding, procurement and planning.

### **Occupational Opportunities**

Occupational opportunities include transition pathways for existing electricians, roofers, plumbers, construction workers, facilities managers, engineering technicians, data analysts and project managers. Employers also identified opportunities for veterans, career changers and people with practical experience to move into clean energy where training is structured, quality-assured and aligned to real work.

Clean energy sales and communications is an under-recognised opportunity: several employers highlighted difficulty finding people able to sell and explain technically complex clean energy products.

### **Reported Skills Needs**

Reported skills needs include electrical competence; DC/solar PV upskilling for AC electricians; heat pump installation and maintenance; battery storage; high-voltage skills; roofing and working at height; health and safety; whole-house retrofit; ventilation and damp/mould prevention; energy/carbon data; project development; procurement and tendering; customer communication; and the ability to make the financial, social and environmental case for clean energy. Employers reported that poor quality installs and short courses without sufficient prerequisites risk undermining trust, safety and long-term energy performance.

### **Critical and Enabling Skills**

Critical skills include communication, customer trust, persuasion, stakeholder engagement, project management, resilience, adaptability, problem solving and confidence. Employers repeatedly noted that the clean energy transition requires people who can explain options to households, businesses, funders and community partners in practical terms; the ability to translate technical, financial and environmental information into a clear business case is a priority skill.

## **Digital Skills**

Digital skills include energy monitoring, carbon accounting, data visualisation, Power BI/Excel, CRM systems, digital marketing, customer management, sensor data, modelling and AI-supported analysis. Housing and retrofit evidence highlighted the growing importance of data scientists and analysts to manage the 'digital era around energy' and use home/building data to inform interventions. Employers also raised the need for digital administration and marketing capability in small clean energy businesses.

## **Sector Specific**

Sector-specific needs centre on quality-assured progression routes. Evidence from ECA and clean energy focus groups suggests that core electrical competence should come first, with technology-specific upskilling second. This is particularly important for solar, battery storage, grid safety and high-voltage work. There is also a need to clarify MCS, PAS, TrustMark and other standards, and to help SMEs understand which qualifications, accreditations and funding routes are relevant.

## **Net Zero**

Net zero is the core sector driver, but employers report that the skills response cannot rely only on enthusiasm or generic green awareness. Demand stimulation, stable funding, quality assurance, public trust, grid capacity and clearer employer roadmaps are all required. The LSIP should support practical demystification of green jobs, promote quality pathways, and convene partners around electrotechnical, retrofit and clean energy role pipelines.

External secondary research also utilised: Clean Energy Jobs Plan (DESNZ, 2025); ECA Electrical Skills Index / electrical apprenticeship starts analysis (2026); CITB Construction Workforce Outlook 2025–2029; Energy UK workforce analysis; RenewableUK People and Skills Employment Plan / Skills Intelligence Model.

## **CREATIVE INDUSTRIES**

### **Introduction**

The Creative Industries remain a priority sector for the region and connect strongly to digital, culture, visitor economy, education, entrepreneurship and place identity. Evidence confirms that the sector is characterised by micro-businesses, freelancers, portfolio careers and blurred boundaries between creative, digital and commercial work. Skills needs therefore extend beyond creative production to include business management, IP, contracts, self-marketing, finance, collaboration, technical production, AI, sustainability and access to first opportunities.

## Labour Market Intelligence

Creative Industries are a major employment growth sector, supporting 40,980 jobs, equivalent to 6% of regional employment. Employment has grown by 82% since 2015, the fastest growth among the priority sectors.<sup>17</sup>

The sector contributes approximately £1.6 billion GVA, or 3% of regional output. Median earnings are £41,188, which is £7,897 below the national median for the sector.<sup>18</sup>

Bristol dominates employment concentration, accounting for 59% of jobs and 55% of output. The report also notes that employment growth has been accompanied by a doubling of sector output over the last decade.<sup>19</sup>

## LSIP Skills Implications

Likely workforce priorities include digital content production, visual effects, animation, game development, creative software capability, design, production technologies and entrepreneurial/self-employment skills.

The draft LSIP builds on previous creative entrepreneurship work and the national Creative Industries Sector Plan. Local evidence from theatre, film, performance, videography, creative consultants and provider discussions shows persistent needs around progression routes, experience, work placements, freelancer support and clearer job role visibility. The sector also has supply-chain links to construction, engineering, electrical, events, hospitality, digital marketing and professional services.

## Occupational Priorities

Priority occupations include creative and design professionals, marketing and digital communications professionals, video/content producers, technical theatre and backstage roles, film/screen production roles, creative technologists, event production roles, freelancers and creative entrepreneurs. The region also needs to recognise tertiary occupations supporting creative production, including electricians, carpenters, lighting technicians, finance, box office, legal/IP and digital marketing roles.

## Occupational Opportunities

Occupational opportunities include diversifying routes into backstage, technical, production, events, design and digital content roles; supporting young people to understand the full range of jobs beyond visible performance roles; and strengthening freelance career resilience. The sector also offers opportunities for collaboration between creative businesses and other sectors needing storytelling, marketing, sustainability communication, digital content and visitor engagement.

## Reported Skills Needs

Reported skills needs include creative entrepreneurship, self-promotion, pitching, financial literacy, contracts and IP awareness, business development, collaboration,

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<sup>17</sup> West of England Combined Authority (2025): [State of the West of England](#), p.26.

<sup>18</sup> West of England Combined Authority (2025): [State of the West of England](#), p.26.

<sup>19</sup> West of England Combined Authority (2025): [State of the West of England](#), p.27; p.29.

stakeholder management, strategic planning, marketing, networking, technical production skills and access to work experience. Employers and stakeholders highlighted that young people often do not know what jobs exist in theatre and creative production, how to find opportunities, or how to support themselves as freelancers.

### **Critical and Enabling Skills**

Critical skills include communication, confidence, pitching, resilience, tenacity, networking, self-awareness, feedback, collaboration and professional behaviours. The creative skills survey responses specifically highlighted visibility, self-promotion, personal brand, confidence, industry hierarchy, perseverance and a 'black book' of contacts/resources as valuable additions to core skills development.

### **Digital Skills**

Digital skills include AI-aware creative practice, digital marketing, content creation, editing software, data-led marketing, social media, CRM, IP protection and the safe use of AI tools. AI is expected to change creative workflows and technical roles, but employers also raised concerns around copyright, over-reliance and the need to keep human judgement central.

### **Sector Specific**

Sector-specific needs include IP and contracts, production management, technical theatre, lighting, sound, stage/film production, portfolio/freelance practice, creative business models, audience development, and the ability to work with clients and stakeholders before production begins to reduce rework and improve clarity.

Provider and employer evidence suggests that real-world briefs, placements, mentoring and industry talks are particularly important.

### **Net Zero**

Net zero evidence for creative industries is less developed locally than for some other sectors, such as construction and clean energy, and we recognise that there is likely further activity that would be beneficial in this area, particularly in production and venue management. However, sustainability skills are relevant to design, events, music, theatre, tourism, production, procurement and venue operations. There is a need to identify practical green creative pathways, promote case studies, and help creative organisations communicate environmental impact without greenwashing.

There has been insufficient research and policy development both nationally and locally on the technical, financial, business and cultural issues needed for Creative Industries to reach Net Zero. Within the sector, specific industries that are frequently overlooked in terms of Net Zero include design, however this industry is recognised to require a unique set of skills, such as systems thinking, user-focus, creativity and innovation that would be ideal for trialling Net Zero principles. There are two systemic challenges highlighted as a barrier to the design industry engaging with Net Zero – a lack of green skills and knowledge and organisational (or policy) barriers to considering those with the required

knowledge for roles, however with some 80% of the environmental impacts of a product being tied to the design phase, the need to engage with Net Zero is clear.<sup>20</sup>

Supporting campaigns and initiatives around green skills and career pathways in the creative industries will help to increase awareness and understanding of green design skills in the sector and utilising positive case studies of organisations in the industry that have already started successfully transitioning to net zero practices will provide tangible evidence and best practice. Improved communication around net zero within the industry will help highlight the potential opportunities including job roles, positive impact and potential added value. This can be done organically and through collaborative opportunities with the LSIP, such as Meet the Expert webinar series and blog posts.

External secondary research considered: Creative Industries Sector Plan (DBT/DCMS, 2025); Skills England sector skills needs assessment: Creative Industries (2025); Culture Hive: Creative Industries and the Climate Emergency; BFI Skills Review / BFI Skills Clusters resources; Creative PEC analysis on sector plan and skills.

## **DIGITAL AND TECHNOLOGIES**

### **Introduction**

Digital and Technologies is both a priority sector and a cross-sector capability. Employers reported demand for specialist digital roles, but also for general digital confidence across all parts of the economy. AI has moved from a niche digital issue to a mainstream productivity, governance and workforce challenge. The sector evidence therefore needs to cover both technical digital occupations and the enabling digital skills required across non-digital roles, not only to ensure fluidity and skills transfer into the sector.

### **Labour Market Intelligence**

The LSIP research identifies foundational digital skills, data, AI adoption, AI governance and environmental impacts of AI as key needs. Local evidence from AI, software, digital marketing, cybersecurity, education providers and SMEs highlights an increasingly mixed picture: some employers are actively developing AI tools and data products, while others lack confidence, policy, skills or safe adoption practices and there is work to be done to bring more people into effective understanding and adoption of AI. National Skills England analysis also identifies AI and quantum as future-growth areas within Digital and Technologies, while recognising that digital skills are relevant across many occupations and sectors.

Digital and Technologies is the region's largest knowledge-intensive growth sector, employing 64,670 people, equivalent to 10% of regional employment. Employment has grown by 52% since 2015, the fastest growth among comparator combined authorities.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Culture Hive, 'Creative Industries and the Climate Emergency The path to Net Zero' (Culture Hive, October 2022) [Creative Industries and the Climate Emergency: The Path to Net Zero](#)

<sup>21</sup> West of England Combined Authority (2025): [State of the West of England](#), p.22.

The sector contributes approximately £3.8 billion GVA, representing 8% of regional output. Median pay is £47,950, although this sits £8,791 below the national sector median, suggesting variation in occupational composition or business mix.<sup>22</sup>

The regional employment profile shows a concentration in engineering and technical consultancy, accounting for 29% of employment compared with 17% nationally, indicating strong crossover between digital capability and industrial applications. Bristol accounts for 50% of employment, with South Gloucestershire accounting for 29%.<sup>23</sup>

### **LSIP Skills Implications**

The scale and growth of this sector suggest continued demand for software development, digital engineering, AI capability, data analysis, cyber security, technical consultancy and higher-level digital STEM pathways.

### **Occupational Priorities**

Priority occupations include software and programming professionals, IT network and cyber security professionals, data analysts and data professionals, cloud specialists, digital marketers, AI enablement specialists, conversational AI specialists, systems integrators, digital project managers and technical support roles. The sector also includes digital roles embedded in employers outside the digital sector, including health, construction, manufacturing, logistics, finance and tourism.

### **Occupational Opportunities**

Occupational opportunities include reskilling experienced workers from other sectors into digital roles, strengthening Level 4–6 progression routes, supporting SMEs to adopt AI safely, and building data capability across sectors. Employers value non-linear pathways: career changers with maturity, customer understanding, business context and communication skills can be strong recruits where supported by targeted technical training.

### **Reported Skills Needs**

Reported skills needs include AI literacy, prompt engineering, safe and ethical AI use, cyber security, data analysis, Power BI, Python, SQL, cloud computing, digital marketing, software development, data governance, customer communication, project management and the ability to translate technical capability into practical business outcomes. Employers also raised the risk of over-reliance on AI, poor critical thinking, weak assessment design and confidentiality/GDPR breaches.

### **Critical and Enabling Skills**

Critical skills include communication, persuasion, customer-facing confidence, stakeholder management, maturity, critical thinking, curiosity, resilience and the ability to ask good questions. In software roles, employers highlighted the need to speak up, set

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<sup>22</sup> West of England Combined Authority (2025): [State of the West of England](#), p.22

<sup>23</sup> West of England Combined Authority (2025): [State of the West of England](#), p.24-25.

expectations, manage blockers and advocate for technical teams. In AI adoption, critical evaluation and fact-checking are as important as technical tool use.

## Digital Skills

Digital skills include foundational IT, Microsoft Office, Excel, email, CRM, digital collaboration tools, data visualisation, coding, cyber awareness, AI tools, cloud platforms, digital accessibility and sector-specific software. Digital should not be framed only as programming: several employers and providers emphasised administration, data handling, professional writing and safe use as the most immediate gaps.

## Sector Specific

Sector-specific needs include AI enablement, conversational AI, SaaS product development, data analysis, cybersecurity, cloud computing, software development, digital marketing, UX, digital apprenticeships and Level 6 progression. Providers reported that younger learners may be strong smartphone users but less confident with workplace computers, email, file management and professional systems.

## Net Zero

Net zero issues in digital and technologies include the environmental impact of AI, data centres, water and energy use, sustainable software development, efficient digital infrastructure and the need to consider digital carbon footprints alongside productivity gains. This is an emerging area and should be included as a research and curriculum development priority rather than a fully mature local evidence base.

AI is a prominent skills need across all priority sectors in the West of England and North Somerset LSIP, however for employers in the Digital and Technologies sector, “awareness is needed around the growing environmental impact of AI “such as data centres, water usage and energy consumption. This knowledge can be shared through embedding greener practices early on in AI integration, supplemented with guidance documents and practical tools to ensure continued support is available.

*External secondary research considered: Skills England sector skills needs assessment: Digital and Technologies (2025); Skills England Assessment of priority skills to 2030 (2025); UK Government AI Opportunities Action Plan / digital skills policy where relevant; World Economic Forum Future of Jobs Report 2025 for global technology trend context.*

## EVERYDAY ECONOMY

The Everyday Economy is the largest labour market by far, supporting 379,840 jobs, equivalent to 57% of all regional employment. Employment has grown by 17% since 2015.<sup>24</sup>

The sector contributes approximately £16.1 billion GVA, representing 33% of regional output, but median pay is relatively low at £29,074, which is £1,086 below the national median.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> 14 West of England Combined Authority (2025): [State of the West of England](#), p.30.

<sup>25</sup> West of England Combined Authority (2025): [State of the West of England](#), p.30.

The occupational mix includes health and social care, education, retail, logistics, hospitality, construction and food production. The report identifies particularly high employment concentrations in human health and education, both at 16% compared with 14% nationally.<sup>26</sup>

### **LSIP Skills Implications**

For LSIP purposes, this sector is critical because of scale, workforce churn and replacement demand. Likely workforce priorities include health and care occupations, teaching and education support roles, logistics, construction trades, hospitality, customer-facing service occupations and entry-to-intermediate level progression pathways.

## **HEALTH & SOCIAL CARE**

### **Introduction**

Health & Social Care is a foundational sector for inclusive growth, labour market participation and community resilience. Evidence from care summits, provider engagement, VCSE health organisations and employers (including through college employer boards) shows persistent workforce pressure, low participation of young people, progression challenges, digitalisation, and the need to treat values, empathy and resilience as core sector capabilities. The sector also includes non-clinical roles, maintenance, administration, digital, data and leadership roles that are often overlooked in careers messaging.

### **Labour Market intelligence**

LSIP research identifies Health & Social Care's importance for workforce stability and inclusion. Skills for Care evidence and local engagement show recruitment, retention, progression, digital upskilling, registered manager development and health/wellbeing of staff as priority issues. Local provider engagement also emphasises the need to embed NHS/care digital systems, care note software, iPads/surfaces and realistic workplace simulations.

### **Occupational Priorities**

Priority occupations include care workers, senior care workers, registered managers, health care assistants, support workers, maintenance roles, digital/data roles, care coordinators, safeguarding leads and learning disability/autism specialists. The evidence also suggests a need to recognise cross-sector occupations such as maintenance, administration, IT and facilities management as important to the care sector workforce.

### **Occupational Opportunities**

Occupational opportunities include Care Academy models, registered manager development, skills escalators, VR/AR simulation for care environments, day-in-the-life career content, SWAPs, progression pathways into management and retention-focused

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<sup>26</sup> West of England Combined Authority (2025): [State of the West of England](#), p.32.

upskilling. Employers and stakeholders highlighted that a lack of progression and training opportunities are major reasons for leaving the sector.

### **Reported Skills Needs**

Reported skills needs include safeguarding, mental capacity, basic life support, wound care, learning disability and autism awareness, end-of-life care, digital care records, Microsoft/CRM systems, session planning, conflict management, de-escalation, motivational interviewing, suicide prevention, domestic abuse awareness, resilience and empathy. In drug and alcohol support trauma, conflict management and outreach skills were highlighted strongly.

### **Critical and Enabling Skills**

Critical skills include empathy, listening, communication, resilience, professional boundaries, emotional regulation, adaptability, conflict resolution, safeguarding judgement and confidence to work with people experiencing trauma or barriers to care. Values and interpersonal fit were repeatedly emphasised as more important than qualifications alone for entry into some parts of the sector.

### **Digital Skills**

Digital skills include care records, NHS referrals, CRM systems, Microsoft Office, iPads/surfaces onwards, digital data review, AI transcription, safeguarding technology, VR/AR simulation and digital confidence for staff at all levels. Digital upskilling is reported as high demand and high value but sometimes low uptake, suggesting that provision must be accessible, relevant and linked to efficiency and care quality.

### **Sector Specific**

Sector-specific needs include regulated care knowledge, safeguarding, CQC readiness, registered manager capability, care certificate content, mental health and learning difficulty communication, manual handling and first aid, and sector-specific software. The sector requires blended provision that can work around staffing ratios and release constraints.

### **Net Zero**

Net zero skills include sustainable procurement, waste reduction, circular economy, carbon reporting, social value, estates/facilities energy efficiency, transport planning and supply chain awareness. Larger health and care organisations may have procurement capacity, while smaller care providers may need practical guidance and simple operational sustainability tools.

The Health and Social Care sector in the West of England and North Somerset has highlighted key skills needs around sustainable/green procurement, including supply chain management, circular economy and the reduction of waste, social value and

carbon reduction <sup>27</sup>. There is a need for these increased green skills in staff of all levels of seniority and their supply chains.

An understanding of the breadth of green skills and how these apply to the Health and Social Care sector is also necessary – encapsulating not only sustainability practices but the ability to gather and interpret data and understanding the environmental impact of their activities. For larger organisations with a procurement team there is a need to understand the importance of the circular economy and the carbon impact of their purchases. Helping organisations to develop the skills and understanding to make informed choices and by selecting the most suitable solutions which ‘design out’ waste and pollution, stay in use for longer, and use natural systems, they are then in turn contributing to the circular economy <sup>28</sup>

The LSIP will seek to work with providers and accredited bodies to identify the extent to which these skills, as well as core green skills needs, are covered in existing course delivery, and highlighting any areas where there is a need for additional provision.

External secondary research considered: Skills for Care: A Workforce Strategy for Adult Social Care in England (2024); Skills for Care State of the Adult Social Care Sector and Workforce in England; NHS Green Plan / Greener NHS resources for procurement and estates; IEMA / ABHI resources on green jobs and skills in healthcare.

## **CHILDCARE & EDUCATION**

### **Introduction**

Childcare & Education is fundamental to workforce participation, inclusive growth and long-term skills supply. Evidence shows the sector faces recruitment and retention challenges, perception issues, funding/cost pressures, high emotional labour, digitalisation and an urgent need for communication, resilience and employability skills. The sector also plays a dual role: it is both an employer with its own skills needs and a pipeline builder for the rest of the economy.

### **Labour Market Intelligence**

Engagement with childcare, education and training providers highlights turnover, difficulty attracting entrants, digital poverty, SEND and inclusion barriers, the importance of vocational pathways and the need for clearer progression routes from Level 2 to Level 5 and beyond. City of Bristol College evidence adds concerns about high dropout/failure rates, placement fragility, pay, retention and the gap between perceived and actual work.

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<sup>27</sup> ABHI, HealthTech and Sustainability: the opportunities and challenges for the sector (April 2024); <https://www.abhi.org.uk/media/2yfbgwe1/sustainability-paper-02.pdf>; Health Industry Leaders, Decarbonising Life Sciences Event, 25 November 2025

<sup>28</sup> Jo Watson, IEMA Guest Blog: Green Jobs and Skills in Healthcare (17 May 2022) <https://www.abhi.org.uk/membership/members-area/updates/2022/may/iema-guest-blog-green-jobs-and-skills-in-healthcare/>

## **Occupational Priorities**

Priority occupations include early years practitioners, room managers, childcare managers, teaching assistants, SEND support roles, learning and skills mentors, trainers/assessors, apprenticeship tutors and leadership roles in education and childcare settings. There is also a need to include digital and administration roles in education settings, given growing use of registration, attendance and tracking software.

## **Occupational Opportunities**

Occupational opportunities include progression pipelines from Level 2 to Level 5, apprenticeships, operational management and business administration apprenticeships, leadership academies, SEND specialisms and digital administration. Employers described childcare as a career for life, but also noted that poor pay, limited progression recognition and perception issues undermine retention.

## **Reported Skills Needs**

Reported skills needs include communication with children, parents and colleagues; resilience; employability; punctuality; SEND and inclusion; safeguarding; digital administration; Microsoft Office; sector-specific software; application writing; cover letters; presentability; mentoring; teaching/coaching; and emotional regulation. Providers also highlighted the need for staff to understand theory and deploy it in practice through observation and assessment.

## **Critical and Enabling Skills**

Critical skills include communication, listening, empathy, calmness, initiative, common sense, resilience, emotional intelligence, confidence, teamwork and the ability to ask for help. Employers noted that learners may be technically trained but still need support to become workplace-ready and to understand professional expectations.

## **Digital Skills**

Digital skills include Microsoft Office, email, attendance/registration software, Canva/social media tools, digital records and the ability to use AI appropriately without over-reliance. Digital is best framed as a core skill in this sector rather than a purely technical specialism. Tech poverty and access to devices/connectivity should also be recognised as barriers.

## **Sector Specific**

Sector-specific needs include child development, attachment theory, behaviourism, food hygiene, first aid, BSL, safeguarding, SEND, room management, care certificate elements where relevant, and mentoring/assessment capability. Placements are crucial but fragile: T Level placement rules and limited placement options can create failure risks for learners even when the learner is not at fault.

## **Net Zero**

Net zero in childcare and education is currently more operational than occupational, including reduction of single-use materials, wooden toys, recycling/reuse of books and toys, sustainable procurement, and embedding sustainability awareness in curriculum and institutional practice. Further evidence is needed on the specific green skills required by childcare and education employers.

## **BUILDING & CONSTRUCTION**

### **Introduction**

Building & Construction is a priority Everyday Economy subsector and a critical delivery mechanism for housing, retrofit, infrastructure, regeneration and net zero. Evidence shows a sector dominated by SMEs and subcontracting, with significant skills pressure in trades, electrical, roofing, groundworks, project management, digital adoption, leadership and business management. This sector also supports clean energy delivery, grid upgrades and low-carbon building performance includes built environment and electrotechnical roles, as delivery depends on these core competencies in built environment and electrotechnical roles.

### **Labour Market Intelligence**

LSIP evidence identifies digital transformation, sustainability, workforce trends, training priorities, SME/large employer differences and wellbeing as key themes. CITB and FMB evidence reinforces barriers around apprenticeships, transport, driving, planning delays, business costs, training navigation and the need to demystify green skills. Evidence provided by ECA adds that electrical pathways and apprenticeship-to-employment conversion are critical regional and national issues.

### **Occupational Priorities**

Priority occupations include construction trades, electrical trades, electrotechnical engineers, building services roles, roofers, groundworkers, plant operators, site supervisors, project managers, quantity surveyors, retrofit coordinators, CAD/BIM technicians and construction SME owners/managers. Non-construction roles in construction businesses, including HR, finance, administration and marketing, should also be acknowledged because SMEs often lack these capabilities.

### **Occupational Opportunities**

Occupational opportunities include experienced worker routes for electricians, shared apprenticeship/agency models, work experience on live sites, retrofit and low-carbon construction pathways, BIM/digital design, drone surveying, SME business support, and transition routes from existing trades into clean energy technologies. There is also an opportunity to use major projects and social value obligations to showcase roles and create local pipelines.

## **Reported Skills Needs**

Reported skills needs include electrical competence, roofing, groundworks, carpentry, plant operation, building safety, H&S, working at height, project management, leadership and management, digital basics, BIM, CAD, drones, CRM, procurement, environmental law, sustainability knowledge, retrofit, heat pumps, solar PV, battery storage and whole-building performance. Employers also highlighted the need for business basics: finance, marketing, quoting, tax, local government contracts, AI for admin and customer communication.

## **Critical and Enabling Skills**

Critical skills include punctuality, communication, resilience, initiative, professionalism, client communication, attention to detail, self-management, problem solving and understanding site realities. Employers reported that young people may lack awareness of construction working conditions, travel requirements and workplace behaviours, while employers also need support to adjust expectations and provide constructive onboarding.

## **Digital Skills**

Digital skills range from basic phone/email/admin use to BIM, CAD, drones, AI-assisted quoting and risk assessments, digital H&S, project management systems, CRM, content creation and digital marketing. SMEs are often interested in where technology saves time or reduces admin, but need practical, plain-language support rather than abstract digital transformation messaging.

## **Sector Specific**

Sector-specific needs include greater understanding of apprenticeship routes, recognition of competence standards, construction technology, building science, moisture movement, ventilation, alternative energy principles, refurbishment, sustainable materials /low-carbon methods, electrotechnical prerequisites, and the practical science behind why particular membranes, insulation or ventilation systems are used. It was also raised that short courses can be useful only where they build on proper core competencies and industry input.

## **Net Zero**

Net zero needs include retrofit, whole-house approaches, fabric-first understanding, solar PV, heat pumps, battery storage, ventilation, low-carbon materials, modular/offsite construction, waste reduction and climate adaptation. Employers warned that retrofit demand is inconsistent and that training without demand stimulation or clear ROI may not be taken up by SMEs, so the region should therefore focus on highlighting practical benefits, cost savings, compliance, customer demand and quality outcomes.

The Building and Construction sector has been impacted by the changing – more extreme – weather and rising temperatures that have occurred due to climate change.

This has had an effect on all aspects of the industry, from building materials availability to process and the changes in work conditions, all of which impact skills needs for the sector. By developing resources and signposting businesses to climate adaptation support, the West of England and North Somerset LSIP aims to raise awareness of these impacts, as well as support pre-emptive, rather than reactive, climate adaptation measures for future proofing businesses in the sector.

To underpin this, it is acknowledged that the LSIP needs to respond to the skills gaps that occur due to lack of understanding and exposure to Net Zero, and ensuring that this is embedded into all relevant Building and Construction courses, alongside low carbon or eco-friendly building materials, clean energy and retrofit <sup>29</sup>. This will also include a review of existing provision to ensure it is fit for purpose and highlight opportunities for revision or development to ensure that the knowledge, skills and behaviours that young people are developing through their training is relevant for the industry they are working towards.

Employers and Further Education providers in the local area have highlighted an appetite of the emerging workforce to embrace net zero and sustainability. Therefore, creating a baseline level of understanding of clean energy, net zero and wider sustainability concerns such as life cycle analysis and waste reduction for learners will ensure all young people in the local area who go into careers in the Building and Construction industry will have the same foundational knowledge. This should also include information on environmental certifications, job roles and progression pathways and current and expected demand for roles in the industry to provide the emerging workforce with a robust understanding of the sector.

It is acknowledged that the net zero landscape is complex and many of those working in the Building and Construction sector may not be engaged due to a lack of understanding, therefore we feel there is an opportunity to support the development and delivery of a clear communications campaign, providing guidance on what green skills means, how it impacts their business and the opportunities that are available, with the objective to demystify the net zero skills landscape and ease the transition into more sustainable practices.

## **TRANSPORT & LOGISTICS**

### **Introduction**

Transport & Logistics is both an Everyday Economy subsector and an enabling sector for advanced manufacturing, clean energy, retail, construction, food, health, tourism and wider growth. Evidence shows that the sector is experiencing digitalisation, AI adoption, decarbonisation, driver shortages, CRM/process change, warehousing/logistics pressures and a need for clearer skills visibility. Because logistics underpins all sectors, it should be framed as a strategic enabler rather than only as a support function.

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<sup>29</sup> AtkinsSearch, **Top 5 Skills in Demand for Careers in Sustainable Construction (17 April 2025)**  
<https://www.atkinssearch.co.uk/insights/green-construction-skills-uk-2025/>

## **Labour Market Intelligence**

Engagement with business, providers, Logistics UK, retail/transport focus groups and Essential Trading suggests the sector is affected by AI, data, e-commerce, ethical supply chains, HGV driver shortages, remote/hybrid working where viable, electric fleets, sustainable logistics and skills navigation.

## **Occupational Priorities**

Priority occupations include logistics and transport operatives, HGV drivers, transport managers, logistics coordinators, supply chain managers, warehouse roles, fleet maintenance and EV technicians, data/Power BI roles, procurement specialists and sustainability/green logistics roles. Include food and beverage process/distribution roles where they are vertically integrated with wholesale and retail operations.

## **Occupational Opportunities**

Occupational opportunities include green logistics, electric fleet maintenance, supply chain analytics, ethical sourcing, warehousing, last-mile delivery, sustainable procurement and cross-sector logistics management. There is also a need to promote logistics careers more clearly to young people and career changers, because the sector is often invisible despite being fundamental to regional economic function.

## **Reported Skills Needs**

Reported skills needs include HGV driving, reliability, transport management, customer service, AI use, data handling, Power BI, digital marketing/online presence for retail-related businesses, CRM system transitions, supply chain understanding, sustainable procurement, ethical sourcing and business management. Essential Trading evidence highlighted a shortage of qualified and reliable HGV drivers and challenges competing on pay in a scarce market.

## **Critical and Enabling Skills**

Critical skills include communication, adaptability, critical thinking, reliability, customer service, planning, problem solving, ethical judgement, data interpretation and confidence using technology. Retail/transport focus group evidence also highlighted the risk that AI recruitment may disproportionately affect neurodivergent applicants, making inclusive recruitment and assessment practice a relevant skills-system issue.

## **Digital Skills**

Digital skills include AI tools, Copilot/Gemini/ChatGPT, Power BI, data visualisation, CRM, logistics systems, e-commerce, online presence, recruitment systems and digital communication. Employers want practical AI and data training that improves productivity but also preserves human judgement and inclusive access.

## Sector Specific

Sector-specific needs include HGV licensing, transport management, warehousing, fleet maintenance, EV maintenance, supply chain planning, freight/export documentation, procurement, ethical sourcing and compliance. Logistics also needs training that recognises operational constraints, shift work and the need to balance remote support with face-to-face delivery where workplace experience is important.

## Net Zero

Net zero skills include electric fleets, route optimisation, sustainable procurement, ethical supply chains, green logistics analytics, carbon accounting, waste reduction, non-airfreight sourcing and customer communication. There is a need to understand how green logistics is embedded in FE/HE and to develop case studies showing job roles and pathways, as the draft Annex already notes.

Transport and Logistics employers in the West of England and North Somerset have highlighted the numerous challenges in working towards a greener workforce. Many reported that there is a lack of understanding about green roles in the sector and that more needs to be done to show the breadth of roles available. By developing case studies highlighting the range of job roles, and the career pathways into those roles, it will help to showcase the opportunities for individuals in the sector, as well as the steps the industry has taken to help the UK achieve its net zero goal.<sup>30</sup> Potential job roles in the sector include Supply Planners, Sustainability Specialists, Procurement/Sourcing Managers, Logistics/Supply Chain Managers and Green Logistics Analysts<sup>31</sup>

In addition to highlighting the scope of roles available, a need for ‘technicians and drivers to be familiar with new technologies and maintenance procedures’ was highlighted. It has been acknowledged that ‘investing in training programs and ensuring a smooth transition for employees is crucial for the successful implementation of green initiatives.’<sup>32</sup>

Therefore, further investigation needs to be done in the local area to understand how sustainability logistics is embedded in current Further and Higher Education Provision and a review of the delivery to ensure that curriculum content is relevant and fit for purpose, providing the emerging workforce with awareness of potential job roles and career pathways, as well as the foundational knowledge they need to pursue a career in this field.

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<sup>30</sup> [Logistics UK, 3.24 million Brits want green role (Logistics UK, 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2025) <https://logistics.org.uk/green-mile-homepage/news-features/27-01-25/3-24-million-brits-want-green-role>]

<sup>31</sup> <https://www.hw.ac.uk/news/blog/2025/lead-the-change-green-logistics-for-a-sustainable-future>

<sup>32</sup> Sara Lambert, The green revolution in the transport and logistics industry (Asset Go) [https://assetgo.co.uk/future-technology/green-revolution-in-transport/.](https://assetgo.co.uk/future-technology/green-revolution-in-transport/)

## Indicative SIC/SOC mapping for Annex A

The following table builds on the mapping already included in the draft LSIP. It is intended as an illustrative working table for review by the research team and WECA. Final SOC/SIC codes should be validated against ONS coding guidance and any Skills England requirements before submission.

LSIP occupation name	Definition within LSIP	Relevant SOC code(s)	LSIP sector	Relevant SIC code(s)	Mapping limitations / notes
Software and programming professionals	Developing software, applications and digital systems, including AI, automation and web development	2134	Digital and Technologies	62	Broad role; AI and software sub-fields not fully distinguished by SOC/SIC.
IT network and cyber security professionals	Maintaining digital infrastructure, networks and cyber resilience	2135; 2137	Digital and Technologies	61; 62	Cyber roles may be embedded across sectors.
Data analysts and data professionals	Analysing and interpreting data for operational, commercial, sustainability and energy decisions	3544	Digital and Technologies / cross-sector	62; also embedded across all SICs	Data roles are cross-sector and often not isolated in SIC.
Engineering technicians	Supporting engineering design, production, testing and maintenance	3113	Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering	25-30; 71	Distributed across manufacturing and engineering consultancy.
Mechanical and electrical trades	Installation, maintenance and repair of mechanical/electrical systems; includes transferable clean energy relevance	5223; 5241	Advanced Manufacturing / Construction / Clean Energy	25; 27; 28; 43	Strong cross-sector overlap; electrotechnical roles should be explicit.
CAD/BIM and design technicians	Using CAD, BIM and digital modelling tools for manufacturing, construction and design	3120	Advanced Manufacturing / Construction / Creative	28; 43; 71	Cross-sector role.
Manufacturing operatives and production line roles	Production, assembly, quality control and manufacturing operations	8111; 8119	Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering	10-32	Broad category; needs subsector detail where possible.

LSIP occupation name	Definition within LSIP	Relevant SOC code(s)	LSIP sector	Relevant SIC code(s)	Mapping limitations / notes
Automotive technicians / EV technicians	Maintenance, repair, diagnostics and servicing of vehicles including EVs	5231 / validate current SOC	Advanced Manufacturing / Transport	45; 29	EV roles require additional validation against current coding.
Electricians and electrical installation roles	Core electrotechnical installation and maintenance; prerequisite for solar, batteries and grid-related work	5241	Clean Energy / Construction	43; 35	Vital to clean energy; short-course mapping must not obscure competence requirements.
Roofers and solar-aware roofing roles	Roofing, working at height and solar interface roles	5313 / validate	Construction / Clean Energy	43	Solar-related roofing may not be captured in standard codes.
Retrofit coordinators and assessors	Whole-house retrofit assessment, coordination and quality assurance	2433 / 3120 / validate	Clean Energy / Construction	71; 43	Emerging/specialist role; coding may be imperfect.
Environmental and sustainability professionals	Environmental management, carbon, sustainability reporting, procurement and compliance	2152	Clean Energy / cross-sector	36; 71; embedded	Often embedded in large organisations and professional services.
Creative and design professionals	Creative production, design, multimedia and artistic/content creation	3429; 2142	Creative Industries	59; 73; 90	Freelance/portfolio work undercounted by vacancies.
Marketing and digital communications professionals	Marketing, advertising, digital content, audience development and AI-supported communications	3554; 2494	Creative / Digital / Everyday Economy	73	Increasing digital/AI overlap.
Care workers and home carers	Care and support roles across residential, domiciliary and community settings	6135	Health & Social Care	87; 88	Add care manager and senior care roles separately if possible.
Early years practitioners and childcare roles	Early years, childcare and nursery provision	6121 / validate	Childcare & Education	85; 88.91	Progression and pay issues require qualitative context.
Construction trades	Building, installation, repair and maintenance trades	5315; 5319	Building & Construction	43	Broad group; split by trade where possible.

LSIP occupation name	Definition within LSIP	Relevant SOC code(s)	LSIP sector	Relevant SIC code(s)	Mapping limitations / notes
Civil and structural engineers	Designing and overseeing infrastructure, building and environmental systems	2121	Construction / Advanced Manufacturing	71; 43	Also relevant to transport infrastructure.
Logistics and transport operatives	Movement, storage and distribution of goods including driving and warehousing	8214; 9252	Transport & Logistics	49; 52	Wide range of skill levels; split HGV where possible.
Logistics managers and coordinators	Planning, managing and coordinating supply chains and distribution systems	1243	Transport & Logistics	52	Often embedded in retail/manufacturing.
Sales and technical business development professionals	Combining technical knowledge with persuasion, customer engagement and commercial growth	3552	Cross-sector / Everyday Economy	46; 70; 74	Important for clean energy, sustainability and SMEs.

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

This table highlights the specialised and newly emergent occupational profiles driving the £53.7 billion West of England and North Somerset economy. Characterised by a highly qualified working-age demographic (with over 56% holding Level 4 credentials or above) and a world-class cluster of creative technologies, aerospace engineering, and professional services, the region serves as an incubator for advanced workforce practices.

Despite this high educational baseline, sub-regional employers report significant friction when trying to source talent capable of managing the horizontal convergence of technology and environmental sustainability. Artificial Intelligence has rapidly transitioned from an isolated digital sector concern into a cross-sector operational challenge, demanding universal governance and prompt literacy across all management tiers. Concurrently, the regional commitment to net-zero carbon targets has forced a radical restructuring of logistics, product design, and healthcare delivery networks. The profiles compiled below demonstrate how modern job descriptions frequently layer highly technical data or green competencies onto legacy professional titles, creating systemic classification gaps that obscure the region's true technical skills deficits.

Role / Occupation	Sector	Context & Employer Demand	Closest SOC Code(s)	Classification Gap / Limitation	Cross-Cutting Themes	Classification Status
AI Enablement & Governance Specialists	Digital & Technologies (Cross-sector application)	AI has rapidly moved from a niche digital concern to a mainstream productivity and workforce challenge. Employers across all sectors require personnel to manage practical AI-assisted workflows, prompt engineering, safe data governance, intellectual property boundaries, and critical evaluation to avoid over-reliance.	2133 IT Business Analysts; 2134 Programmers & Software Developers.	Legacy codes capture standard software programming or IT analysis but entirely fail to represent AI/ML as a distinct operational function or account for the fast-evolving nature of AI adoption frameworks.	Digital & AI Capability; Technology Integration; Data Protection & Security.	Not classified – role is genuinely new or entirely cross-disciplinary.
Clean Energy Systems & Grid Engineers	Clean Energy Industries	Rooted in regional low-carbon opportunities, including offshore wind, nuclear capability, and major hydrogen infrastructure developments. Employers report localised demand for technical specialists who can orchestrate energy storage, complex generation, and grid balancing networks.	2122 Mechanical Engineers; 2123 Electrical Engineers; 2152 Environmental Professionals.	Standard codes isolate engineering disciplines into rigid traditional categories, failing to map multi-technology systems-level knowledge or the specific green utility infrastructure skillsets demanded.	Net Zero & Sustainability; Infrastructure Innovation; Industrial Transitions.	Partial / Fragmented – closest codes exist but do not fully capture the role.

Automation & Advanced Manufacturing Technicians	Advanced Manufacturing & Engineering	The region supports a highly productive, high-value manufacturing cluster with 17,800 jobs heavily specialised in aerospace and transport equipment. Demand has shifted toward engineering technicians skilled in precision automation, robotics, materials, and digital manufacturing process integration.	3113 Engineering Technicians; 2126 Design and Development Engineers.	Traditional classifications treat electrical, mechanical, and software assembly as independent pathways, missing the modern operational reality where technical expertise seamlessly converges with industrial digital software.	Advanced Manufacturing; Engineering Technical STEM; Digital Crossovers.	Partial / Fragmented – closest codes exist but do not fully capture the role.
Retrofit Coordinators & Green Building Physics Leads	Building & Construction (Everyday Economy)	Critical for supporting the sub-regional decarbonisation agenda, regional housing targets, and local SME trade evolution. Focus is pivoting sharply from single manual trades to holistic building optimisation, moisture movement, air quality, and sustainable materials.	3440 Retrofit Coordinators; 3114 Building and Civil Engineering Technicians.	Standard building trade classifications treat fields like carpentry or plumbing in complete isolation, completely missing the multi-disciplinary systems-thinking and quality assurance certifications (e.g., PAS frameworks) required for full-property retrofits.	Net Zero & Sustainability; Foundational Economy; Whole House Infrastructure.	Transition gap – SOC captures adjacent roles but not the developmental bridge between them.
Green Logistics Analysts & Ethical Supply Chain Planners	Transport & Logistics (Everyday Economy)	Logistics acts as an essential strategic enabler for the region's broader manufacturing and food sectors. Employers report emerging demands for transport leads who can manage electric fleet transitions, route optimisation software,	3543 Transport and Distribution Managers; 2424 Business and Financial Project	Traditional transport manager or logistics coordinator codes fail to track or distinguish the specific competencies tied to carbon tracking, green logistics analytics, and environmental supply chain compliance.	Net Zero & Sustainability; Everyday Economy; Technology Adoption.	Partial / Fragmented – closest codes exist but do not fully capture the role.

		sustainable procurement models, and non-airfreight sourcing.	Management Professionals.			
Sustainability Communications & Design Specialists	Creative Industries / Culture & Visitor Economy	Over 80% of a product's environmental impact is locked in during the design phase. Creative and design employers are seeing a distinct demand for professionals who can use systems thinking, manage green venue operations, and successfully communicate environmental impacts to customers without greenwashing.	2431 Advertising Accounts Managers and Creative Directors; 3411 Graphic Designers.	No classification tracks environmental metrics or green design integration within the creative, culture, or tourism sectors. Roles remain structurally hidden or masked inside legacy creative or administrative titles.	Net Zero & Sustainability; Creative Industries; Inclusive Growth.	Not classified — embedded in existing titles.
Digital Healthtech & Integrated Care Leads	Health & Social Care (Everyday Economy)	Triggered by an aging regional demographic and inclusion mandates. Employers report an operational shift toward health-tech adoption, digital care records management, telecare platforms, and utilising virtual reality simulation setups for staff training.	3239 Welfare and Housing Associate Professionals n.e.c.; Care Managers.	Standard care codes focus almost exclusively on traditional values-based physical care and personal support, dropping the structural data management and healthcare technology competencies required by the modern sector.	Digital & AI Capability; Foundational Economy; Care System Resilience.	Transition gap — SOC captures adjacent roles but not the developmental bridge between them.

External secondary research references for inclusion:

- Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (2025), Clean Energy Jobs Plan and technical annex.
- Department for Business and Trade / Department for Culture, Media and Sport (2025), Creative Industries Sector Plan.
- Skills England (2025), Sector skills needs assessments: Advanced Manufacturing; Digital and Technologies; Creative Industries.
- Skills England (2025), Assessment of priority skills to 2030.
- CITB (2025), Construction Workforce Outlook 2025–2029.
- ECA (2026), Electrical skills gap / apprenticeship starts analysis and Electrical Skills Index materials.
- Skills for Care (2024), A Workforce Strategy for Adult Social Care in England; State of the adult social care sector and workforce.
- Logistics UK (2025), Skills Insight Report: Building the future logistics workforce and green logistics resources.
- RenewableUK, People and Skills Employment Plan and Skills Intelligence Model resources.
- Culture Hive (2022), Creative Industries and the Climate Emergency: The Path to Net Zero.
- World Economic Forum (2025), Future of Jobs Report 2025, for wider AI/digital transformation context.

## 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 the West of England and North Somerset. 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
Improve understanding and engagement with net zero and sustainability	Green Jobs Clarity across the region	Green Careers – St Andrews Church youth group, Avonmouth, hosting the Spear Programme for NEETS	Business West	St Andrews Church youth group, Spear Programme for NEETS	Delivered by December 2026	Awareness raised around green career pathways	Intro businesses/green event/new skills for youth.
	Understanding Skills Needs and Pathways	Identify sector specific green skills gaps	Business West	Employers	Completed by January 2027 – June 2027 (TBC)	Understanding of sector specific green needs	Support businesses across the West of England and North Somerset
		Referral model	Business West	Future Leap	Ongoing until June 2028 (TBC)	Referrals for sustainable business support	Report outlining sector specific needs and additional actions identified
							Regular reporting on referrals made and positive outcomes

		ROI – Sustainability Plan/Social Value offering	Business West	Local Authorities	Ongoing until June 2028 (TBC)	Awareness raised on Sustainability ROI	Number of employers engaged
		Map LSIP actions to Growth Strategy growth zones	Business West	WECA, Local Authorities, Providers	Completed by January 2026 – June 2026 (TBC)	Clear understanding of Severn Estuary, Somer Valley and North Somerset Gateway etc development and skills implications.	Completed roadmap
<b>Improve work-readiness of young people and new entrants</b>	Career Pathways and Progression	Health and Social Care Demystifying Events	Business West	City of Bristol College	Delivered by December 2025	Awareness raised around Health and Social Care career pathways	Survey before/after the event, College metrics, Employer/Stakeholder testimonials, Changes to the delivery of courses ensuring early employer involvement and early career opportunity awareness
		Early Years Demystifying Events	Business West	City of Bristol College	Delivered by November 2026	Awareness raised around Early Years career pathways	Survey before/after the event, College metrics, Employer/Stakeholder testimonials, Changes to the delivery of courses ensuring early employer involvement and early career opportunity awareness

		Construction Demystifying Events	West of England Combined Authority Growth Hub	Business West, Bath College, Weston College, SGS College	Delivered by September 2026	Awareness raised around Construction career pathways	Hosting content on the LSIP Resources Page
	Work Readiness	Benefits of Employer/Education Engagement webinar	Business West	FE Colleges	Delivered by March 2027 – June 2027 (TBC)	Awareness raised of Employer/Education Engagement opportunities. Increased employer engagement with FE Colleges.	Amount of webinar attendees
		Determine priorities of Gen Z (platforms used, considerations) via survey and share this intel with local businesses through infographics and webinars	Business West	FE Colleges	Completed by January 2027 – June 2027 (TBC)	Report to share with employers and stakeholders highlighting opportunities for Gen Z outreach and engagement methods	Amount of survey responses

		Youth Guarantee Codesign Event	Business West	West of England Combined Authority	Delivered by June 2027 (TBC)	Connections made between young people and employers.	Survey before/after the event, College metrics, Employer/Stakeholder testimonials, Changes to the delivery of courses ensuring early employer involvement and early career opportunity awareness
		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.
		Explore CEIAG from an earlier age, linked to Youth Guarantee	WECA / Careers Hub	Schools, colleges, employers	Ongoing until June 2028	Improved careers advice; reduced NEET risk	Number of learners advised
		Develop apprenticeship pathways aligned to regional opportunities	WECA	Employers, providers	Ongoing until June 2028	More apprenticeship starts/completions	Baseline College data
<b>Strengthen digital and AI capability across the workforce</b>	Fundamental Digital Skills Development	Strengthen fundamental digital skills provision	FE Colleges	Business West	Ongoing until June 2028	Relevant, up to date and industry aligned provision	College baseline metrics
		Develop baseline digital skills threshold/needs matrix	Local Authorities	Business West, FE Colleges	Developed by June 2027 (TBC)	Digital skills matrix developed	Adoption by FE colleges in the region

	Digital Upskilling Accessibility	Digital and Cyber Skills Breakfast	Business West	Stakeholders, Employers	Delivered by June 2026	Improved digital skills knowledge.	Sign up for Cyber Security Training & Digital Bootcamp/ new module training, Tech4adoption referrals and Techspark, Techosaurus, Tech for Good, overlapping intel and referrals
		Digital and Cyber Skills Online Event	Business West	Stakeholders, Employers	Delivered by December 2026	Improved digital skills knowledge.	Sign up for Cyber Security Training & Digital Bootcamp/ new module training, Tech4adoption referrals and Techspark, Techosaurus, Tech for Good, overlapping intel and referrals
	AI Awareness & Safe Adoption	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.
		Develop universal digital skills and reskilling support, including an AI & Automation Skills Centre	WECA	FE, HE, employers	Ongoing until June 2028	Increased digital/AI literacy and reskilling	Number of employers engaged
<b>Address persistent gaps in critical</b>	Entrepreneurial Skills Development	Employer Boards	Business West	FE Colleges	Ongoing until June 2028	Developing employer skills needs intel. Review and amendment of	Employability units created and incorporated within the curriculum

<b>and enabling skills</b>						provision to ensure industry alignment	
	Embedding Employability Skills in Curriculum	Embed CV skills and interview preparation into the curriculum, highlighting the importance of critical and enabling skills	FE Colleges		Ongoing until June 2028	Increased employability skills in emerging workforce.	Review destination data and work placement uptake.
	Awareness of Skills Importance	Careers and Enterprise Company Stakeholder Group	Business West	Careers and Enterprise Company	Developed by January 2028 – June 2028 (TBC)	Develop Stakeholder Working Group	Employability units created and incorporated within the curriculum
<b>Address ongoing recruitment and retention challenges</b>	Promoting Benefits of Early Talent	Recruitment Entry/Apprenticeships – Marketing campaign/modules/incentives	Business West	Employers	Ongoing until June 2028	Marketing campaign highlighting entry level pathways and provision	Contribute to referrals to Youth Guarantee programmes. Support businesses across WoENS. Add intel and facilitate sector forums
		Recruitment/Retention info website resources	Business West		Completed by June 2027 – June 2028 (TBC)	Downloadable resources to support recruitment and retention	Contribute to referrals to Youth Guarantee programmes. Support businesses across WoENS. Add intel and facilitate sector forums
		Workwell partner addressing retention challenge	Workwell	Business West	Completed by June 2027 – June 2028 (TBC)	Addressing entry level recruitment and retention challenges. Return to work and preventative	Programme targets (700 by March 2027, 501 achieved so far)

						support for mental health and MSK risk.	
	Career Insights & Awareness of Roles	Day in the Life Videos/Career Blogs marketing campaign	Employers	Business West	Ongoing until June 2028 (TBC)	Development of a bank of career insights resources	20 careers insights outputs created and hosted on the Business West LSIP Resources Page
		Sector Events – Delivery/Talks/ Workshops	Business West		Ongoing until June 2028	Sector specific insight events - topics based on demand from intel	Contribute to referrals to Youth Guarantee programmes. Support businesses across WoENS. Add intel and facilitate sector forums
	Cross-Sector Pathways Development	Bromford – Skills Academy project (link with Youth Guarantee, Connect to Work, Social Value models)	Business West	Bromford Housing Association	Completed by June 2027 – June 2028 (TBC)	Tenants moving off benefits and claiming Job Seekers. Access to new training and upskilling.	Engagement with new training and upskilling opportunities
<b>Improve employer understanding and navigation of the skills system</b>	Clarity of Training Offer	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 the WOE

		Delivery of Skills Clinics and development of additional resources to help navigate the Skills System	West of England Combined Authority	Business West	Ongoing until June 2028	Continued promotion and engagement with Skills Connect	Support businesses across the WOE
	Clear Progression Pathways	Promotion of modular upskilling and retraining opportunities linked to AI and sector transition	Business West	FE Colleges, ITPs, WECA	Ongoing until June 2028	Increased adult engagement with retraining	Baseline engagement data
		Sector Events – Delivery/Talks/Workshops	Business West		Ongoing until June 2028	Sector specific insight events – topics based on demand from intel	Contribute to referrals to Youth Guarantee programmes. Support businesses across WoENS. Add intel and facilitate sector forums
	Address Infrastructural Barriers to Access and Understanding	Review transport infrastructure in rural areas	West of England Combined Authority		Ongoing from August 2026 – June 2028 (TBC)	Review and identify areas of improvement	Request for intel and update via Governance
		Review digital infrastructure in rural areas	West of England Combined Authority		Ongoing from August 2026 – June 2028 (TBC)	Review and identify areas of improvement	Request for intel and update via Governance
	Improved Skills System Navigation	Increased LSIP presence in community to expand engagement	Business West		Ongoing from August 2026 – June 2028 (TBC)	Increased event attendance, Skills Clinic attendance and 121s	Hours of engagement. Amount of employer engagements. Number of events delivered.
		Cross-stakeholder working group to strengthen One Front Door approach to skills system and governance	West of England Combined Authority	Business West, Local Authorities	Ongoing from June 2026 – June 2027 (TBC)	Develop and maintain working group – cohesive	Reviews at Governance meetings

						messaging and marketing	
		Evolve Skills Connect / Future Bright “no wrong door” referral model to One Front Door	WECA / local authority partners	Providers, Business West	Ongoing from June 2026 – June 2028 (TBC)	Simpler referral routes, increased progression	Reviews at Governance meetings
<b>Strengthen skills and workforce development across the Everyday Economy</b>	Cross-Sector Collaboration	Bromford – Skills Academy project (link with Youth Guarantee, Connect to Work, Social Value models)	Business West	Bromford Housing Association	Delivered by June 2027– June 2028 (TBC)	Tenants moving off benefits and claiming Job Seekers. Access to new training and upskilling.	Engagement with new training and upskilling opportunities
	Targeted Workforce Development for Everyday Economy Sectors	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 the WOE
	Target Everyday Economy Interventions	Deep dive research sprints into Everyday Economy areas including Childcare & Education and Defence	Business West	West of England Combined Authority	Completed by June 2027 – June 2028 (TBC)	Sprint report into Everyday Economy priority sectors	Proposal and outline of deadline with monitoring requirements embedded
		Early Years project	Business West	City of Bristol College	Delivered by November 2026	Greater understanding of workplace and Early Years careers. Potential jobs and placement opportunities.	Numbers on new training/jobs/ placements. College and employer metrics. Number of businesses supported.

		Support and Develop Launch of 'Essential Work' campaign	WECA	Employers. providers	Developed from January 2028 – June 2028 (TBC)	Increased awareness and recruitment into essential roles	Employers engaged with campaign
	Improve Inclusive Employment Pathways	Alignment activity with Connect to Work, WorkWell and Youth Guarantee initiatives	WECA	Business West, Local Authorities	Ongoing until June 2028	Improved engagement from economically inactive residents	Referral and participation data

## Annex C: Background & Methodology

### 1. Evidence Base

As with the previous LSIP, we have adopted an agile methodology – adapting our research gathering methods to best suit the employers, stakeholders, further and higher education and independent training providers in the local area – ensuring we are engaging with as many representatives as possible across the skills landscape and best representing their needs. This methodology means we have reviewed previous engagement methods and those that did not garner the response we had hoped, have been refined, such as the Signposting Local Provision service has been replaced with a more streamlined approach of 121s with the LSIP Engagement Team, providing bespoke reskilling and upskilling signposting for the local area. Key regional stakeholders, further and higher education and independent training providers were invited to feedback on the findings of this LSIP through an online forum, which also offered them the opportunity to feed into the annex of activities (Annex B), reflecting on the activities that they are currently doing, or could be doing, that respond to the LSIP priorities.

The previous LSIP provided extensive qualitative data, however it was acknowledged that further qualitative data was required to support these findings. 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, and Skills England intelligence and datasets, within research ensures alignment with both regional and national priorities.

We have also adopted methods such as surveys through mailers, social media promotion and external telemarketing to ensure that the quantity of engagement recorded with this LSIP matches the quality of the data we are receiving. We have also chosen to review our data recording methods to best represent the volume of outreach that has been conducted to build this LSIP. Previously only engagements over 40 minutes in duration were reported in our figures, with the conversations under that duration were included but not reported. All engagement figures will now be reported, categorised as high, medium or low impact to ensure that the quantity of engagements is reflective of the quality of the outreach.

This review and adjustment will be continued throughout the course of this LSIP to ensure our outreach methods remain effective, efficient and representative of the local area's skills needs.

### 2. Alignment with the LSIP Guidance

The development of this Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) has followed the process outlined in statutory guidance, ensuring that it is employer-led, evidence-based and reflective of the full breadth of the local skills system. Business West, as the designated

Employer Representative Body (ERB), has led the development of the LSIP through a structured and iterative process of engagement, analysis and validation. This has ensured that the plan reflects both current and emerging skills needs, and that it is grounded in robust employer insight alongside wider labour market intelligence.

We have continued to integrate the research principles where the LSIP can add most value is within extending known understanding and identifying areas for further 'deep dive' methodologies to be extended throughout the three year LSIP cycle, and will continue to extend the region's understanding, such as the [creative entrepreneurship reporting](#), or [green skill provision mapping](#). Where we have utilised structured and longer engagements, we have developed wide spectrum qualitative questioning routes that focus both on business need and change and direct employment and skills intelligence.

Business, employer and partner engagement has been the central tenet of the development of this LSIP and has extended significantly beyond the existing membership of Business West.

A wide range of engagement methods have been used to ensure both depth and breadth of insight, including:

- One-to-one employer interviews and advisory-focused discussions
- Sector-based workshops and roundtables
- Surveys distributed through digital channels and targeted outreach
- Stakeholder events and partnership-led engagement

This approach has enabled engagement with employers of different sizes, sectors and geographies across the West of England and North Somerset, including small and medium-sized enterprises, which are critical to the regional economy. This LSIP has also mapped the national Trade Unions that align with key priority sectors for the region for The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and JobCentre Plus have also been engaged through the development of this LSIP, working collaboratively with the Business West Skills Advisors to develop activities that work towards LSIP priorities, notably inclusive recruitment.

We have widened our engagement methodology to ensure all intelligence gathered from engagement integrates into the LSIP, utilising a high to low impact breakdown focussed on the calibre of intelligence gathered, length of time engaging and opportunity for probing and discussion, allowing us to integrate more intelligence from more primary sources.

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

The LSIP identified Clean Energy as a priority industry across all LSIP local areas. This meant that resource was allocated to specifically focus on research and engagement for Clean Energy sector needs. Questions were tailored to each business, generally covering the following main areas:

- 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

We will be publishing a separate report consolidating key Clean Energy LMI and secondary research, alongside business insights and recommendations in May.

The LSIP fed green skills questions into all engagements across sectors, including 121, wider skills discussions, focus groups, telemarketing, surveys (including surveys shared by stakeholder organisations), etc regardless of sector. Including questions on:

- 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

In the West of England and North Somerset, engagement identified an emerging theme regarding the environmental impact of digitalisation and AI. Employers expressed uncertainty around how to balance increased productivity with sustainability considerations, particularly in relation to energy usage, data storage and digital infrastructure. This represents a developing skills and knowledge gap that cuts across sectors and will require further exploration through targeted engagement and support. Engagement also highlighted varying levels of understanding of sustainability terminology, including 'green skills' and 'net zero'. To address this, engagement approaches were adapted to use clearer, business-focused language (e.g. environmental sustainability), alongside open questioning to enable employers to articulate needs in their own context.

### **Lesson Learnt in Year One**

We found mixed receptiveness and understanding of businesses to provide insight on their sustainability goals, barriers or actions taken. Some of the reasons for this were 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. We found using language such as 'environmental sustainability' and providing definitions of 'green skills' helped with understanding as well as keeping the questions open and not too specific to allow for more response. For future engagements on the LSIP, we will explore including one mandatory question on sustainability with all engagements to collect further insight.

## **4. Equality of Opportunity**

The implementation of this LSIP will continue to align with wider regional strategies focused on inclusive growth, workforce participation and reducing inequalities across the West of England and North Somerset. This includes the West of England Growth

Strategy, the Get West of England Working Plan and the WECA Equality Framework, all of which emphasise the importance of ensuring residents can access good work, progression opportunities and the benefits of economic growth regardless of background or circumstance. Together, these strategies recognise the interdependencies between skills, employment, health, transport, childcare and wider social factors in shaping labour market participation and economic inclusion. LSIP delivery activity will therefore continue to consider accessibility, progression and participation barriers as part of a more coordinated regional approach to skills and employment support.

Employers in the local area highlighted a lack of career pathway knowledge and entry level opportunities, with a possible consequence being a widening of socio-economic inequality. This LSIP will work collaboratively with the Combined Authority, local stakeholders and Further Education and Independent training providers in the area to ensure these entry level pathways are available and raise awareness levels so that they are accessible to all.

Health and Social Care employers in the area highlighted the functional skills requirements of their industry as a barrier to level 2 and level 3 training, stating that it was excluding candidates from reskilling and upskilling. Furthermore, they reported concern that the funding models are increasingly weighted towards level 4 and higher qualifications – limiting those that can engage with training opportunities and career progression and widening the inequality in the area.

Infrastructure and access have been raised as concerns by employers across all key priority sectors – referring to both transportation and digital access. The rurality of some parts of the region has found some unable to engage with in-person placement and employment opportunities, while others reported that inconsistent digital access has prevented them from engaging with online training options.

In addition to identifying structural barriers, this LSIP recognises the importance of broadening participation across the region's diverse population. This includes supporting clearer pathways into priority sectors for young people, career changers and those with lower prior attainment, as well as improving visibility of opportunities across different communities. Working with providers, local authorities and employer networks, activity will focus on strengthening outreach, improving communication of pathways, and ensuring that training provision is accessible and aligned to the needs of a wide range of learners. Particular emphasis is placed on ensuring that progression routes are clear and navigable, supporting individuals to move into and within employment.

## **5. Governance Structure**

Governance of the West of England & North Somerset LSIP is founded on employer leadership, joint working and strategic alignment, with Business West retaining statutory accountability as the designated Employer Representative Body and contract holder, operating within its internal governance and assurance arrangements. Strategic oversight of the LSIP is provided through the Get West of England Working Group, which is used as the LSIP's steering group. This forum brings together Business West as the

LSIP Employer Representative Body, the West of England Combined Authority and key regional partners to ensure the LSIP is clearly anchored in regional growth priorities, aligned with Skills England statutory guidance, and informed by robust employer insight. The Working Group provides a structured mechanism for shared oversight without duplicating formal decision-making responsibilities, utilising a cascading methodology to ensure input and intelligence aligns across other boards, such as the Business Board. Business West and the West of England Combined Authority are also progressing a formal Memorandum of Understanding to support collaborative delivery, governance and monitoring arrangements for the LSIP, strengthening alignment between employer-led skills priorities and wider regional economic and skills strategies.

The Get West of England Working Group plays a steering, assurance and challenge role across the LSIP lifecycle, supporting the development, publication and delivery of the plan. It provides a space to test emerging findings, consider risks and dependencies, and ensure that priorities remain relevant and deliverable. Governance through the Working Group is proportionate and enabling, focusing on strategic direction and impact rather than operational management. This approach supports effective collaboration across employers, providers and stakeholders, ensures transparency and readiness for external scrutiny, and helps maintain alignment between LSIP delivery and wider skills, employment and growth initiatives in the region.

The specific governance process is currently expected to include the submission of a report prior to all GWEW group meetings alongside an Actions and Activities tracker, highlighting progress, raising concerns and asking requisite questions of the group, for feedback prior to and during the GWEW meetings. This group will also have a say in deep-dive methodologies and specific project foci as required. The Group has also provided a forum for challenge, validation and refinement of emerging LSIP findings and actions throughout the drafting process. This has included discussion around progression pathways, employability, qualification accessibility, labour market participation and alignment with wider regional strategy development, ensuring that the LSIP reflects both employer demand and wider system insight.

As the GWEW group is predominantly stakeholders and training providers, Business West will ensure it continues to use its board (composed of members from within the Business Community) to provide further business perspective in project and internal governance.

<b>The GWEW Group is composed of:</b>		
WECA	B&NES Council	TUC
JCP	South Gloucestershire Council	WTPN
Skills England	City of Bristol College	CBI
DfE	Weston College	Voscur
Bristol City Council	Bath College	BSWN
UWE	SGS College	Business West
NHS Bristol	University of Bath	Partners in Bristol

