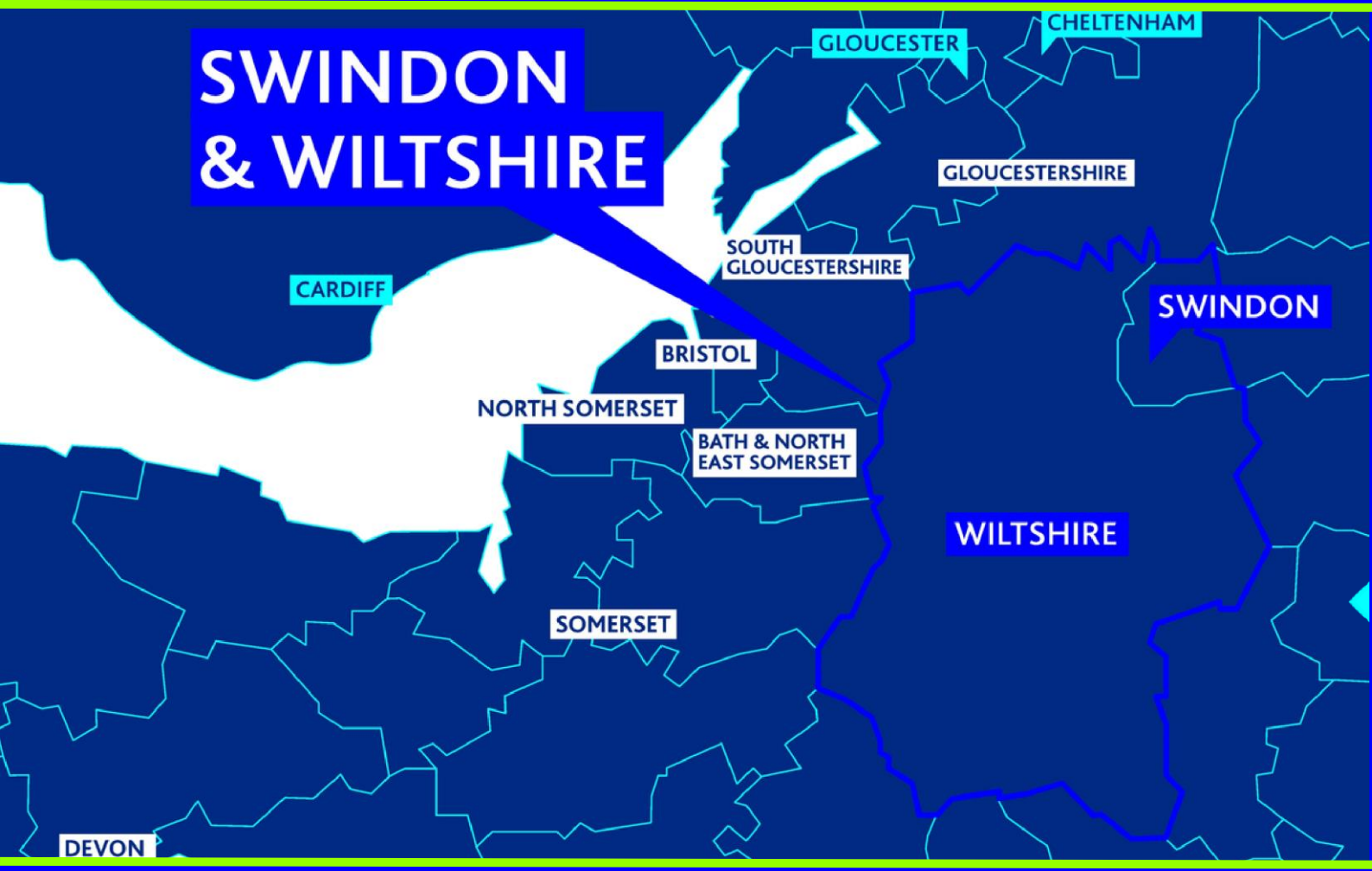
Business West

Swindon & Wiltshire

LSIP Report

JUNE 2024



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"I welcome the publication of the Local Skills Improvement Plan Progress Report for Swindon and Wiltshire. These reports set out progress made on meeting the skills needs of local employers. As well as being a valuable source of information for local skills deliverers, employers and stakeholders, the reports along with the LSIPs themselves, will provide important intelligence for the newly established Skills England."

Minister for Skills, The Rt Hon Baroness Smith of Malvern

This progress report has been prepared in accordance with Local Skills Improvement Plans: Stage 2 Guidance (dated November 2023) and is intended to review progress against the local skills improvement plan published in August 2023.

This report was produced in June 2024, but publication was delayed due to the pre-election period.

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1. Who is this publication for?

The annual Local Skills Improvement Plan Progress Report aims to illustrate the developments that have taken place in the local area in Stage Two of the delivery of the LSIPs. This will look at progress towards actions identified in Stage One of the LSIP as well as any subsequent actions that have been highlighted by contributors to the LSIP. This report will also look at stakeholder and employer relationships in the Swindon & Wiltshire local area, the expenditure of the Local Skills Improvement Fund (LSIF), what has been achieved to date and what we still want to achieve. It will also seek to contextualise any changes to the economy or local strategy in the area and highlight local improvements needed for improving the skills system and our collaborative efforts to enhance awareness, access, and engagement with existing training, such as the digital skills bootcamps by Wiltshire College and University Centre, directly responding to employer needs.

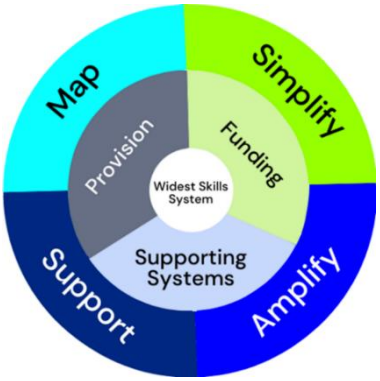
This report is written with the contributors of the LSIP in mind, including, but not exclusive to, employers, training providers, further education institutions, Local Authorities and stakeholders. The aim is to provide an overview of the second year of delivery, highlighting the knowledge and needs that have been identified, the actions that have been formulated in response to these needs and the positive impact that can already be seen across the Swindon & Wiltshire local area as a result of the LSIPs.

Employers may find it useful to see which skills needs are most widely reported and in demand in their sectors and areas. It is hoped that this will provoke further conversation and planning around workforce development and skills development.

Training providers and education institutions will be able to use the priorities and actions set out in this report to best modify and develop provision that will meet the skills needs of employers now and in the future. Local Authorities can also develop provision for those further away from the workplace or already in employment that require upskilling or reskilling to ensure their roles are suitable for the changing economic landscape.

It is hoped that this report will amplify the work that is already being done in response to these identified needs, promoting existing, and encouraging further, positive collaborations across the local area and galvanise further engagement with the wider skills system.

This report shows progress made in Year Two of the LSIP, however the initial LSIP report published in August 2023 will provide fundamental context for this report.



2. Summary of the LSIP:

This Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) is for the Swindon & Wiltshire local area. Produced by Business West Chambers of Commerce, it provides a selective skills analysis aligned to chosen sectors from employers' perspectives and includes input from local, national, and skills sector stakeholders. Although LEP core functions transferred to local government, the LSIP still operates on LEP geographies, with objectives and delivery unchanged except for advisory structures now within Wiltshire County Council.

Sectors were selected based on the following criteria:

- High Value (GVA) - as measured by most recent statistics.
- High Employment - as measured by the most recent statistics.
- High Growth Potential – expected to be capable of significant above trend growth in the future, subject to barriers being addressed.
- High Need/Change - expected to be or currently subject to significant barriers to growth or adverse business conditions in near future (e.g., workforce recruitment and retention, 9 technology including automation, skills development, significant local capacity loss etc)

Based on the above criteria the sectors chosen as priority focus for Swindon and Wiltshire are:
- Automotive, Transport, Logistics and Infrastructure
- Health, Social Care and Life Sciences
- Agriculture, Agritech and Land Management
- Construction
- Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering

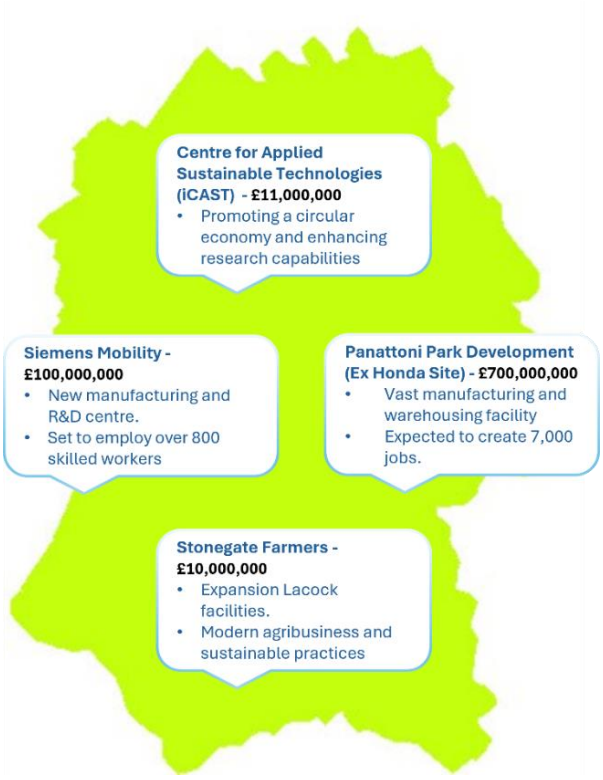
As well as looking at the sector specific skills needs for each of the sectors, the LSIP will also be looking at the following cross cutting themes:
- Sector Specific and Technological Change
- Critical Workplace, Core and Transferable Skills (including Core Digital)
- Net Zero Skills

The primary focus of the LSIP's intended outputs is towards Post16 Technical Education and providers of Post-16 education (Further Education), but the findings may be of use and benefit to others within the education, skills and support systems.

The aims of the LSIP are as follows:
- Gather and interpret employer intelligence about unmet skills needs within their existing workforce and for new entrants to the workforce.
- Assist providers to act on this intelligence alongside existing research into and understanding of shortages, local and occupational priorities, and known change to sectoral needs.
- Help with decision making for potential changes to existing core post-16 technical provision, to help close the gap between formal learning and work readiness.
- Identify skills needs within employers that may be met with additional non-core curricula delivery.

3. Strategic and Economic Context Update

This report is for the Swindon & Wiltshire local area, an area of almost 730,000 people with a workforce of around 378,000[1] and a strong, diverse economy with strengths in professional and financial services and high value manufacture amongst others.



Since the production of the Swindon and Wiltshire LSIP report, the key changes not directly resulting from LSIP activities which could significantly affect the strategic and economic context of the area have primarily involved new investments, infrastructure, and programmatic initiatives. This section will outline some of the major announcements likely to influence the Swindon & Wiltshire labour market and skills training.

Local Governance and Institutional Changes

As part of a national strategy outlined in the February 2022 Levelling Up White Paper, Swindon and Wiltshire's local governance landscape is witnessing relevant changes. The government has announced the transition of functions and assets from the Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) to Wiltshire Council, effective April 2024. This move aligns with the government's aim to integrate LEPs into local democratic institutions by 2030, enhancing governance and accountability[2].

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[1] Labour Market Profile - Nomis - Official Census and Labour Market Statistics. (n.d.) HYPERLINK "https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/lep/1925185566/report.aspx?town=west%20of%20england"https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/lep/1925185566/report.aspx?town=west%20of%20england In the public domain.

[2] https://swlep.co.uk/news/news-story/wiltshire-council-to-take-on-business-support-functions-from-swindon-and-wiltshire-local-enterprise-partnership

Panattoni Park Development

One of the most significant new developments is the construction of Panattoni Park, a vast manufacturing and warehousing facility expected to create 7,000 jobs. This development is particularly noteworthy due to its scale and the anticipated positive impact on the local economy through job creation in the logistics and manufacturing sectors. The emphasis on sustainable construction practices, including the target of recycling about 90% of all materials, underscores a commitment to environmentally friendly development strategies1.
The closure of the Honda manufacturing facility in 2021 marked the end of an era for Swindon, with the site having produced over 3.7 million cars since its inception in 1985. The redevelopment of this site into a modern industrial park not only signifies a major shift in the use of the area but also in the local economic dynamics, transitioning from automotive manufacturing to diversified industrial activities[3].

University Collaborations and Research Developments

The establishment of the Innovation Centre for Applied Sustainable Technologies (iCAST) at the Carriage Works in Swindon, through a collaboration between the University of Bath and the University of Oxford, marks a crucial step towards fostering innovation in sustainable technologies. With an £11 million investment, iCAST aims to revolutionise sustainable practices across industries, aligning with Swindon & Wiltshire's strategic goals of promoting a circular economy and enhancing research capabilities[4].

Siemens Mobility Investment

In Chippenham, Siemens Mobility's decision to invest £100 million in a new manufacturing and R&D centre for rail signalling and control systems represents a significant enhancement to the technological and industrial capacity of the local area. This facility is set to employ over 800 skilled workers, further establishing Wiltshire's role as a key player in the UK's rail and transport sectors[5].

Stonegate Farmers Expansion

Stonegate Farmers Ltd in Wiltshire has announced a £10 million investment plan aimed at expanding its production facilities near Lacock. This expansion will not only increase production capacity but also incorporate advanced technological systems like robotics and solar panels, reflecting a modern approach to agribusiness and sustainable practices[6].
Isambard-AI: Supercomputing Advancements

Finally – although not located within the Swindon & Wiltshire LSIP boundaries - the establishment of Isambard-AI, the UK's most powerful supercomputer, in Bristol as part of a £225 million investment, is a transformative development for the local area. Located within proximity to Swindon, amidst the academic triangle of Oxford, Bristol, and Reading, this supercomputer offers unprecedented opportunities for local businesses and educational institutions. It positions the area as a leading hub for artificial intelligence and high-tech research, directly benefiting Swindon's growing creative and digital sectors[7].

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[3] https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-wiltshire-68452655
[4] https://www.gov.uk/government/news/siemens-announces-100m-investment-for-rd-facility-in-britain

[6] https://www.gazetteandherald.co.uk/news/23911867.stonegate-wiltshire-shares-10m-growth-investment-plans/
[7] https://www.bristol.ac.uk/news/2023/november/supercomputer-announcement.html

4. Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) Roadmap

This section contains a summary of some of the priority actions developed in the Swindon & Wiltshire LSIP throughout 2023-24, both through discussion directly with employers and with the local area's key stakeholders, including through Wiltshire County Council and Swindon Borough Council, education and training providers and supporting agencies including SWLEP prior to the transition of LEP service provision into local authority ownership.

There is a full Roadmap table which incorporates all reported sector specific education and training needs and additional actions available here; we have included in this report an indicative selection that are currently underway in various formats, and section 6 and 7 highlight some of the newer identified potential actions as well as progress against these.

Actions identified as required by the LSIP have been categorised as follows:

- Systemic Needs within the wider skills system (provision, support, funding)
- Improving Employer Engagement with post 16 education and training
- Messaging and Awareness to simplify and improve understanding of provision, support and funding
- Measuring Impact to ensure the LSIP has a tangible effect on the wider skills system
- Contractual Outputs as required by the Department for Education in the LSIP guidance
- Skills Needs Refinement as the basis for ongoing LSIP primary engagement activities
- Provision and Resourcing to highlight direct requests of post 16 providers

Systemic Needs:

Priority	Action/Activity/Milestone	Partners Involved (detail the role and responsibilities of the ERB and relevant partners)	Timescale (start and likely end dates – original and any revisions)	Method of Implementation and outcomes expected	Monitoring arrangements – (how is progress monitored and at what intervals?)	Progress Status

Map post 16 technical education funding streams into local area to ensure de-duplication and maximisation of impact of funding streams	Survey developed and sent to providers for completion via area employment and skills oversight working group (formal structure TBC following completion of LEP service transition)	FE and other education and training Providers, area skills oversight group	Expected completion Q1-2 2024, progress delayed by LEP transition	Survey developed and approved by oversight group, completion driven by oversight group	Survey completion to be overseen by skills group (tbc)	Not on track but expected completion Q3-4 2024
Create a database or other resource platform of post 16 technical provision in local area	Provide clear understanding of Swindon and Wiltshire training provision available to employers	All FE and ITPs, relevant HEIs and supporting agencies, administrative support to be delivered by LSIP ERB	Initial completion expected end of 2024, minimum annual review	Self-completion system to be developed/approved, resource to be shared following with stakeholders	Internal LSIP project team reporting to skills oversight group	Not yet started, on track for completion
Create a database or other resource platform of employer supporting agencies and initiatives within local area to provide clear understanding of employer support provision	Resource shared with stakeholder, provider and employer audiences in multi-agency campaign to provide clear understanding of employer support provision to aid in county-wide supporting mechanisms	LSIP ERB to initiate first draft, take to skills oversight group post LEP transition for input, approvals and alignment of activities	First documentation completed, resource to be shared Q3/4 2024 for approval and next steps	To investigate existing awareness and resourcing, utilise internal signposting resources and external agencies e.g. Growth Hubs	LSIP ERB to ensure on skills oversight group agenda once reformed	Underway, on track for completion
Develop cohesive and shared multi-agency approach in local area for support and awareness	Initial topic scope via agreed via skills oversight group to ensure shared agreement for assistance across Swindon and Wiltshire for employers to understand need and support routes	All stakeholders and supporting agencies, with integrated support from providers and Growth Hubs	Ongoing, initial discussions underway, *expected first proposal to be put forward June 2024*	Skills oversight group to set scope and ToR for county-wide working group	Local authority and LSIP ERB co-ownership of working groups to be set via skills oversight group	On track to deliver

Employer Engagement:

Priority	Action/Activity/Milestone	Partners Involved (detail the role and responsibilities of the	Timescale (start and likely end dates – original and any revisions)	Method of Implementation and outcomes expected	Monitoring arrangements – (how is progress	Progress Status

		ERB and relevant partners)			monitored and at what intervals)	
Improve employer awareness of and engagement with post 16 provision, utilising case studies and best practise for content, more accessible information to give a better understanding of need, greater incorporation of training into growth strategies	Comprehensive internal and partner marketing campaigns aligned to specific priority elements of post 16 technical education Production and dissemination of case studies and testimonials received and developed through providers and supporting agencies Research and develop shared resource outlining importance of skills and workforce development in growth strategy with local area support	With partner ERBs, sector representative organisations, Training Providers and Local Authorities, including Growth Hubs, supporting agencies, and to integrate into local area response	Ongoing for duration of LSIP project, with intelligence on impact shared for further development	Marketing, shared vision, strategy, direct engagement and dissemination of resource	To be overseen by skills oversight group once reformed	Not yet started, on track to deliver
LSIP integrated and expanded referrals and signposting service for all engagements, to be aligned with existing support ensuring collaboration and respect for those already delivering something similar in the local area's areas of responsibility	Comprehensive direct and tailored signposting and referrals to be built into LSIP activities, additional resource within LSIP team for workforce development requirements as identified	LSIP ERB to develop and share bespoke and comprehensive follow-up, potential to develop specialist support via LSIP team	Ongoing, to align with existing support	LSIP ERB will have specific additional capacity for this, to liaise with stakeholders to ensure value-add	LSIP internal monitoring, to be regularly reviewed	Complete, ongoing
Encourage employers to provide opportunities to learners and to improve Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG)	Work with Careers service to develop pre- and post-16 careers information reflecting changed roles, technical skills and entry pathways Share and promote opportunities to employers	LSIP ERB via direct engagements, to work with partners including careers service across various formats to raise awareness of opportunity and benefit	To develop county-wide strategy post LEP transition, in delivery post April 2024	To work with Swindon and Wiltshire advisory panel in development of strategy and outputs	LSIP ERB to work with careers service to monitor progress and impact	Ongoing, on track to deliver

Incorporate into LSIP engagement and signposting where appropriate, the Multiply scheme and provision towards those with additional needs	More opportunities for Special educational needs and disability (SEND) incorporated into direct LSIP signposting, greater access to potential labour market	LSIP ERB, to incorporate into engagement follow up activities	Complete, ongoing delivery	LSIP ERB to review existing support and incorporate	Bi-annual review, to be shared with skills oversight group for alignment	Ongoing, on track to deliver

Messaging and Awareness:

Priority	Action/Activity/Milestone	Partners Involved (detail the role and responsibilities of the ERB and relevant partners)	Timescale (start and likely end dates – original and any revisions)	Method of Implementation and outcomes expected	Monitoring arrangements – (how is progress monitored and at what intervals)	Progress Status
Collaborative clear messaging to simplify employer understanding of provision – changes, needs, involvement, amplify and encourage take up	More engagement, more referrals, facilitation introductions, and ensure a higher take-up of provision	To be agreed via external advisory mechanisms	Ongoing during LSIP delivery	Need shared vision to enable clear and concise prioritised multi-agency messaging	To be reviewed and agreed by skills oversight group once reformed	Not yet started, on track to deliver, Year 3

Measuring Impact:

Priority	Action/Activity/Milestone	Partners Involved (detail the role and responsibilities of the ERB and relevant partners)	Timescale (start and likely end dates – original and any revisions)	Method of Implementation and outcomes expected	Monitoring arrangements – (how is progress monitored and	Progress Status

					at what intervals)	
Review responses to LSIP via accountability and the Local Skills Improvement Fund (Lead is Wiltshire College & University Centre) to ensure alignment and maximise impact	Ensure FE providers are aware of and responding to LSIP outputs . Track response and change to provision as direct impact of LSIP Provide responsive provider insight throughout LSIP delivery to ensure timely integration of employer need and raise demand	LSIP ERB to lead, ensure FE and other providers are aware of LSIP findings and employer needs	Requests to FE Providers for updates and response April 2024 and 2025, review of accountability statements June/July 2024	LSIP ERB to propose and coordinate in partnership with Wiltshire County and Swindon Borough Council intelligence and skills oversight group	LSIP ERB to review on ongoing basis	Underway, on track to deliver
Utilise additional quantitative metrics to both measure impact and better understand need (including via course take up and change from learners and employers, available provision and demand from learners and employers.	Utilisation of locally agreed (and known) metrics towards post 16 technical provision uptake and change in provision	To be agreed via skills oversight group post LEP transition	Timescale and scope to be discussed and approved via skills oversight group, April 2024 onwards	LSIP ERB and skills oversight group to agree joint methodology of utilisation and analysis of metrics	LSIP ERB to propose, develop and support once skills oversight group reformed, expected June 2024 onwards	Not yet started, on track to deliver

Skills Needs Refinement:

Priority	Action/Activity/Milestone	Partners Involved (detail the role and responsibilities of the ERB and relevant partners)	Timescale (start and likely end dates – original and any revisions)	Method of Implementation and outcomes expected	Monitoring arrangements – (how is progress monitored and at what intervals)	Progress Status

Research: deep dive themes for further research exploration and continuation, understanding employers' needs	Refine and develop understanding of local skills needs against priority deep dive topics outlined in LSIP Report 2023-24	LSIP team in partnership, utilisation of secondary research	Initial findings March 24, updated report Jun 24	Internal function, ongoing, ongoing discussion with local authorities, and FE colleges	LSIP ERB to outline intended activities with skills oversight group once reformed	Initial decisions made, outline operational plan in preparation
Further investigative work into needs for the 'green economy'	Shared clear understanding of priority sectors for green aligned skills needs, timescales and requirements approved by skills oversight group	LSIP ERB to review green skills action plan draft, work with the local area's skills oversight group	Review of green skills delivery and demand underway March 2024 as preliminary activity. Post LEP transition to align with Swindon & Wiltshire strategic intent	See 'green skills action plan draft 2022' (currently in draft format, not available publicly)	Project outputs to be decided with skills oversight group	On track to be delivered

Provision and Resourcing:

Priority	Action/Activity/Milestone	Partners Involved (detail the role and responsibilities of the ERB and relevant partners)	Timescale (start and likely end dates – original and any revisions)	Method of Implementation and outcomes expected	Monitoring arrangements – (how is progress monitored and at what intervals)	Progress Status
The Swindon & Wiltshire LSIP has reported numerous in-depth and granular current and expected skills needs which are currently under consideration for response, current development of provision and further refinement of need and response. The Priority Findings Documentation previously released in March 2023 and 2024 breaks down these skills needs into sectoral and workforce requirements and therefore these are not included here. Directly reported and underlying needs are being addressed through FE Colleges, Independent Training Providers and Higher Education Institutions. Some of these activities that are currently underway are highlighted in Section 6 of this report, with further releases to follow based on both direct input and review of FE Accountability Statement updates. Business West as the designated ERB for the Swindon & Wiltshire LSIP will continue to review and input into the response from education and training providers to ensure alignment with needs as reported via the LSIP and identified through other routes.						

5. What Has Been Achieved So Far?

In the Swindon and Wiltshire local area, we are excelling at making changes for employers, learners, and residents. We have already seen significant impacts from some of the more tangible new provisions and changes made in response to and aligned with the LSIP, such as through the Local Skills Improvement Fund (LSIF) and FE provision as a whole.
Below, we highlight a small selection of activities that are underway or completed that address needs identified through LSIP activities to date. These include:

- New, improved, or changed provisions
- New relationships
- Changes to the way support and training are described
- New partnership activities

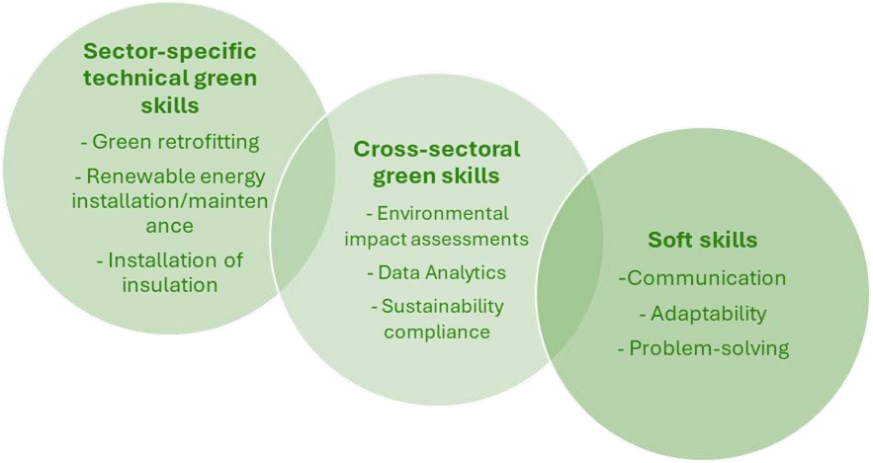
The LSIP is a great opportunity to galvanise change and raise awareness of the responsiveness and flexibility of the post-16 FE system, as well as those who support employers, employees, and learners.
Through the LSIP to date, Business West has had 253 meaningful engagements, resulting in 397 hours of conversation with employers, partners, and providers.

What are we doing?

Identified Need: The importance of sustainability and green skills planning within the curriculum has been acknowledged by LSIP contributors. However, it has also been raised that there needs to be **a better understanding of the upskilling needed for green skills and roles, and more clarity for employers.**

Action: As part of Stage 2 of the LSIP, Business West are running a Green Skills demand project sprint examining the green skills provision in the Swindon & Wiltshire Local Area, utilising the updated Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education pathways and delineation of light to dark green to identify existing sector-specific technical green skills courses and forecast potential gaps and industry demands in the short term.

Impact: The intention of this subproject is to raise awareness of existing provisions in the local area and identify demand and gaps in delivery. Once this has been determined we will amplify the existing provision and provide the data around preferable topics and methods of delivery to training providers and further education, to help inform the modification and development of provision going forward. There has been a clear preference towards short, sharp training courses, as opposed to longform training such as apprenticeships, when looking at Green Skills provision in the area.



Identified Need: For many employers in the local area, **understanding their skills needs. the scope of existing support and routes to access and engage with existing provision** is a barrier to engaging with the wider skills system.

Action: During Stage Two of the LSIP, Business West introduced Business Skills Advisors to provide bespoke skills analysis and advice for businesses on a one-to-one basis, both in person and online.

Impact: The in-person sessions have been held at co-working spaces across the area to further promote the LSIP within its representative area and to ensure the resources developed in response to Stage One LSIP actions are accessible to all employers. In addition to raising awareness of funded support and amplifying existing provisions, the Business Advisors can advise on:

- People and skills needs
- The most relevant training providers
- The best training solutions for your business
- Apprenticeships/apprenticeship levy
- Upskilling your existing workforce
- Internships and work experience
- Low carbon and green initiatives
- Workplace culture and wellbeing

These sessions will continue into Year Three of the LSIP on a rolling basis, available both by appointment and as drop-in sessions.

Identified Need: Improving employer awareness of and engagement with post 16 education is an ongoing LSIP priority, as well as maintaining the involvement of partners and providers. By establishing a sense of ownership in the programme from Growth Hubs, Training Providers and supporting agencies, the actions and priorities will be better integrated into Swindon & Wiltshire strategy.

Action: Throughout the LSIP, we've maintained a collaborative approach, working with employers, partners, and providers across Swindon & Wiltshire to drive change by soliciting input and investment for the future planning of the wider skills system. In the second year of the LSIP, this involved publishing updated findings and facilitating discussions through written responses, one-on-one meetings, or participation in our three local area Co-Design sessions

Impact: *"The Business West LSIP focus group was time really well spent. It was attended by a really interesting, diverse group of businesses, all experiencing their own issues and having questions around the journey to Net Zero. The discussions and suggestions that came out of it were both thought provoking and informative – and everything was skillfully managed, captured and summarised by the LSIP team."* - Sue Skeats, Founder, 100 Ways in 100 Days

<u>What is the LSIF doing?</u>
Swindon and Wiltshire were awarded £2.5 million in funding from the Department for Education through the LSIF for the period of April 2023 to March 2025. Wiltshire College and University

Centre, as the lead provider, has overseen the funding, enabling the four campuses within the local area (Trowbridge, Chippenham, Lackham, and Salisbury) to collaborate and create a county-wide approach to narrowing skills gaps and avoiding duplication while completing their own internal projects.

Identified Need: **Promote the benefits of digital technology** to businesses across Swindon and Wiltshire, ensuring digital skills are accessible to all and supporting them in embracing advancing technologies.

Action: 'Tech Trowbridge' will involve creating a multi-purpose venue capable of hosting theatre performances and Esports competitions, with live broadcast and streaming capabilities, including a video wall display for interactive learning. Another area will see the creation of a large flexible workspace across two floors, featuring collaborative and private state-of-the-art workstations, providing students and businesses access to the latest digital resources. Specialist furniture and IT equipment have already been procured ahead of installation over the summer, including a large digital screen measuring 18.5 square meters, a 10-person Esports arena, and 70 high-specification gaming computers. Tender submissions for carrying out the main refurbishments were received in mid-April, and the college will soon select their preferred contractor for undertaking the works.

Impact: This equips the current workforce with the skills to support key business decisions and innovation, ultimately driving efficiency.

Identified Need: Further **investigative work into needs for the 'green economy**,' shared clear understanding of priority sectors for green aligned skills needs, timescales and requirements approved by skills oversight group

Action: At Lackham, an Eco House will be created through the renovation of a three-bedroom detached cottage situated within the campus to meet energy efficiency standards aligned with net-zero goals. Renovations will include external wall insulation, installation of an air source heat pump, solar panels, and battery storage. All work will be conducted in consideration of the heritage significance of the Lackham estate.

Impact: The project has been developed in collaboration with local employers. Once completed, it will serve as an accessible center for individuals, students, building services engineers, and employers to upskill in renewable technology.
Once final comments from the local planning office have been received, the main refurbishment works package can be released to contractors for review and tender. Some early internal strip-out work has already been undertaken in the house. Additionally, the college is in early partnership with a large employer to utilise the space as a training facility for the installation of heat pumps in place of heating oil boilers.

Aligned with the LSIP cross-cutting themes for the local area, these improvements enable local businesses to recruit from a skilled workforce and help residents secure good jobs. Both projects are slated for completion in August, ahead of the new academic year starting in September.

What is FE and Other Training Doing?

"There has never been a more important time for Further and Higher Education to work hand in glove with employers to train people for the skills we need. The Swindon and Wiltshire LSIP will

turbo charge our current and future relationships with employers to boost skills levels and drive the regional economy." - Carole Kitching, prior Principal and Chief Executive at New College Swindon and Swindon and Wiltshire Institute of Technology

Wiltshire College and University Centre, as well as leading the Swindon & Wiltshire LSIF bid, which prioritised extensive partnership activity, have made significant changes and additions to facilities and content in line with and through collaboration with the LSIP and other employer activities. They have invested through other means in the development of innovative and partner integrated initiatives such as the Salisbury Healthcare Zone in partnership with the NHS and are offering new T Levels, higher level nursing programmes, university partnerships and have created training wards. WCUC are also providing new provision in business at various levels that sits across identified critical work skills needs and sectors.

New College as the lead organisation in the Swindon & Wiltshire Institute of Technology has made significant investments into facilities identified as needed by employers to future proof workforces and to provide technical provision towards changing work requirements. Wider employability skills being embedded into all curricula area was highlighted as a Strategic Aim in their accountability statement, in line with LSIP priorities.

What is the Local Area Doing?

Identified Need: Improve employer awareness of and engagement with the local area's existing post 16 education and training

Action: The LSIP team have recently agreed following the transition of LEP services (and through this the postponement of the Skills and Talent subgroup) to work with a small team representing Wiltshire and Swindon councils as an LSIP alignment oversight group, with the expectation this will operate in an interim position.

Impact: Through and with this group we are working on the further development of secured bootcamp delivery aligned with LSIP priorities in leadership, sustainability and digital. We are also in discussion of the potential for levy transfer and SME support schemes for apprenticeships and setting up a working group for the development of a campaign of coordinated communications aligned with local priorities and changes to the post 16 skills landscape.

What is Industry Doing?

"Clients are struggling to find not only the skills they need but the soft skills and understanding of the workplace are also missing. The opportunity to change this and develop the future workforce will lead to growth in the region." - Julie Brewster, Generation Z workplace mentor at HR Support 4U Ltd

Identified Need: Encourage employers to provide opportunities to learners and to **improve Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance** (CEIAG)

Action: Yeovil College has initiated changes by collaborating with Leonardo Helicopters to drive systemic change through a local value proposition and create a more tailored training offer for businesses. Through their STEM pilot project and work placements for students in years 10-12, the college is facilitating student-industry relationships and connections with future employers to sustain required skills within this local area.
Colleges within Swindon & Wiltshire are leveraging additional complementary funding for LSIP adjacent activities. This includes replicating patient management systems in college learning

environments to ensure seamless off-the-job training and collaborating with local hospitals to establish recruitment hubs on campuses, directly advertising NHS roles.

Impact: This collaborative approach helps students navigate the application process, validates their training, provides career pathway evidence for parents, and fosters strong relationships between students and local employers, ensuring a sustained workforce.

Identified Need: Contributors to the LSIP have reported that it would be useful to have an **awareness of the funding available** for training.

Action: In addition to the amplification of existing provision within our signposting activities, industry bodies have also begun highlighting their support that aligns with the LSIP priorities. CITB have published a document mapping the products, grants and services they identified to support the delivery of the LSIP and feed into the priority sector of the construction industry, including information of technical education, careers education, CITB grants and funding.

Impact: By ensuring that the existing support is readily available, along with support mechanisms such as funding, it enables employers to easily obtain training and support that aligns with the LSIP priorities, ensuring they are keeping up with expected industry standards.

Testimonials and Partner Impact

To measure the impact of the LSIP, we have collected testimonials and case studies with employers, local authority and further education in the local area to share their experience, how they are involved and the changes they have already seen. Testimonials can be found in full here.

In a video testimonial with Business West, Darran Marks, Managing Director of Swindon and Wiltshire Institute of Technology explained his input with the LSIP so far and the impact he's already seen:

"We've engaged with plenty of meetings which have come to some benefit around engaging with opportunities to enhance our facilities, but also more importantly take on board what employers are going to need to bridge their skills gaps. We've been able to take the information, build curriculum around what they want, what they need, invest and into facilities.

We can adapt current curriculum to meet needs moving forward, we can bring new courses in, we can bring new skills in, we can bring your equipment in to upskill and retrain and develop workforces.

It's allowed us to work together to identify both a localised skills gap but also a little bit more in the region.

It's allowed us to really invest in some fantastic pieces of equipment and kit and actual physical buildings to reinvigorate them, to give the best opportunity for skills development.

With this we're allowed to focus on three specific lines of inquiry, really Invest in those three actual activities with some real tangible outcomes both from capital investment, resource investment and also upskilling and CPD for our own teams.

6. What Still Needs to be Achieved

The focus on year three activities will move away from research and data gathering, towards actions that have been identified in the LSIP to date and evidencing the impacts of these actions, as well as actions that have already taken place. In addition to the actions outlined in the Roadmap tables in section 5 of this report, we will also be looking to address the items below.

Integrate LSIP into Changed Local Planning Structures
Following the LEP service transition into local authority, skills advisory groups are being reestablished within the local area to follow the new council structure and relationships. We will continue to support and be integrated into these functions to help them achieve their objectives and provide guidance and additional knowledge based on the findings of the LSIP to date and the capacity to continue to support area needs, including highlighting priority areas of action needed within Swindon & Wiltshire as highlighted through the LSIP so far.

Business West are currently in conversations with Wiltshire County Council, as the accountable body for the Swindon and Wiltshire local area, and Swindon Borough Council, to investigate and refine a proposal for an AI powered, automated workforce development portal. The Swindon and Wiltshire Online Development Support Portal will provide users with regionally tailored recommendations and results.

Reviewing, refining and measuring impact of the LSIP
As Business West moves into year three of the LSIP, our main objective is to ensure that the LSIP actions are achievable and can lead to long-term impact beyond June 2025. We will work closely with employers, partners, and providers to support any actions allocated to them through the LSIP and to highlight the project's impact in the local area. We are also increasing our activities and promotions to showcase the project's achievements to date.

Through 'Where Are You Now?' surveys, we will reconnect with employers and partners we initially engaged with in year one to monitor the impact of the LSIP priorities and any changes they have implemented. Additionally, we will continue to produce video and written testimonials to illustrate the range of businesses and partners involved and the variety of actions taken as a result of the LSIP.

Furthermore, we will publish an impact dashboard to display ongoing changes and measure them against existing baseline data, providing a clear picture of the LSIP's impact to date.

Ensuring a flexible and modular response to employers' immediate needs
Many contributors to the LSIP have advocated for shorter, modular training as an alternative to longer programs like apprenticeships. This approach is expected to facilitate further upskilling and reskilling, ensuring that staff maintain relevant industry skills. Wiltshire College and University Centre have already started offering Skills Bootcamp programs, demonstrating the strong demand for this type of training. Business West will continue to ensure that responses to need are in line with the needs of Swindon & Wiltshire employers and maintain an appropriate balance between short-term need and long term growth.

Industry collaboration; industry placement needs, T Levels and employer engagement

Employers have expressed concerns about their limited understanding of educational placements in newer programmes like T Levels. To address this, we will work to assist in the launch of support for employers to provide Technical Education Placements, designed to enhance their understanding and capacity, and ensure relevant placement opportunities. This programme will be developed in close collaboration with employers, further education providers and stakeholders. If successful, it will not only boost investment from employers in technical education placements in the Swindon & Wiltshire area but also increase the number of industry placements available to students.

Review post-16 Education response to the LSIP priorities
FE Colleges in the Swindon & Wiltshire local area are in the process of publishing their Accountability Statements, in which they will respond to the actions outlined in the 2023 LSIP Report, as well as the 2024 Priority Findings Updates. We will review these statements, to monitor progress of existing actions and identify any potential opportunities for collaboration or areas we can support the colleges to achieve these objectives. To amplify, and further encourage, the collaborative working that is being reported through these Accountability Statements, we want to create and promote collaborative messaging around the changing skills needs and the importance of planning delivery collectively to ensure skills gaps are being addressed, reassuring employers and students in the area that there is a joined up approach to skills planning and delivery.

Skills Disconnect in ICT
A common theme that was identified throughout engagement with employers, partners and providers has been the skills gap in regard to IT. While we focused on emerging technology throughout the LSIP to date, in order to address the introduction of technologies such as AI into the workplace and the potential impact on skills needed, it has become apparent that there is a skills gap around fundamental, functional IT skills that needs to be addressed. In order to properly understand the need for these functional skills, identify existing provision and the creation of new provision to assist with closing this skills gap, we will be undertaking a task and finish subproject in the Autumn of 2024 and assigning actions to the relevant parties as a result of this.

LSIP Value and Engagement
The engagement with employers, partners, and providers so far has given us a comprehensive understanding of how the Swindon & Wiltshire area perceives the skills system and its current needs. As we move into the next phase of the LSIP, our focus will shift to demonstrating the added value through actionable steps rather than further in-depth research. In the third year of the LSIP, we will adopt a lighter engagement approach, concentrating on gathering additional insights via survey responses and broader skills discussions. These surveys will help us quantify the data collected to date, provide a regional perspective on national data, and assess the impact on employers, partners, and providers in Swindon & Wiltshire by capturing their reflections on changes since the LSIP began.

Further Skills Needs Refinement
Whilst we are moving away from conducting further extensive 121 interviews, we will be continuing with Deep Dives and Refinement activities on topics and themes that were determined to be of interest to the sector and the local area, that we felt required further exploration including Engineering for the Energy Transition, Smart Farm Management, Transport

and Logistics and Electrification and Alternative Fuels. As with year two, this will be done through continued engagement with employers and partners via 121 interviews and focus groups. We will also be continuing our Meet the Expert series of events, expanding the themes to incorporate topics that have been referenced in the latter portion of stage two of the LSIP.