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West of England &
North Somerset

LSIP Report

JUNE 2024



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Years of
Future
Thinking

"I welcome the publication of the Local Skills Improvement Plan Progress Report for the West of England and North Somerset. 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?

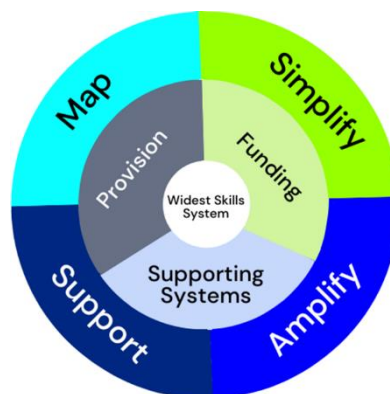
The annual Local Skills Improvement Plan Progress Report aims to illustrate the developments that have taken place in the West of England and North Somerset local area in Stage Two of the delivery of the LSIPs. This will look at progress towards actions identified in Stage One of the LSIP as well as any subsequent actions that have been highlighted by contributors to the LSIP. This report will also look at stakeholder and employer relationships in the 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 local area and align with the goals outlined in the West of England Combined Authority Employment and Skills Plan, as well as their complimentary objectives focusing on climate action and digital skills (<https://www.westofengland-ca.gov.uk/about-us/our-strategy/>).

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 West of England and North Somerset 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 local 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.

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.



Summary of the LSIP

This Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) is for the West of England and North Somerset local area: Bristol, Bath and North East Somerset, South Gloucestershire all within the Combined Authority's geographic coverage - as well as North Somerset.

The report has been produced by Business West Chambers of Commerce as part of the national LSIP delivery, producing a selective skills analysis aligned to sectors chosen collaboratively from the perspective of employers and incorporating views and input from stakeholders within the West of England and North Somerset, nationally and those from the skills sector.

Sectors were selected based on the following criteria:

- High Value (GVA) - as measured by most recent statistics.
- High Employment - as measured by most recent statistics.
- High Growth Potential – expected to be capable of significant above trend growth in near 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 regional capacity loss etc)

Based on the above criteria the sectors chosen as priority focus for the West of England and North Somerset are:

- Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering
- Construction
- Health and Social Care and Life Sciences
- Creative Industries

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, regional 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.

2. Strategic and Economic Context Update

This report is for the West of England and North Somerset local area, an area of over 1.1 million people with a labour supply of around 636,000¹ and a strong, diverse economy supporting one of the most productive city regions outside of London in England. The area has above average productivity and a highly skilled workforce supporting the growth of several nationally and internationally significant sectors and has seen significant investment into the area such as £1 million from the West of England Mayoral Priority Skills Fund to support gaps in provision that have been identified through research including via the LSIP. An additional £3.2 million has been awarded to the West of England Combined Authority from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund to support skills initiatives in the local area including addressing skills needs and identifying priority skills for the West of England and North Somerset. This section outlines some of the key strategic and economic changes in the local area since the release of the [2023 LSIP Report](#).



Since the production of the West of England 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 regional labour market and skills training.

National funding

The establishment of the UK's most powerful supercomputer, Isambard-AI, in Bristol represents a £225 million investment that positions the West of England and North Somerset as a leading

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) <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/lep/1925185566/report.aspx?town=west%20of%20england> In the public domain.

hub for artificial intelligence and high-tech research. This development is pivotal for the Creative and Digital sector, offering substantial opportunities for local businesses and educational institutions to engage in cutting-edge technology and research activities².

West of England and North Somerset funding

The West of England and North Somerset is poised to become a leader in green industry as part of its strategy to achieve Net Zero, with significant developments underway that impact both the business landscape and further education sectors.

Substantial investments are being channelled into this sector, not only to assist families in funding retrofit projects but also to enhance local economic opportunities by expanding the retrofit industry. Over £1 million is allocated to develop skills crucial for this sector. More than 700 individuals will receive training to become skilled retrofitters, enhancing the capacity of the workforce needed to upgrade approximately 250,000 regional homes to meet environmental standards.

The training, delivered by Retrofit West CIC in collaboration with Bath College, YTKO, the Green Register, and Future Leap, will provide a blend of practical and digital learning experiences. This effort is complemented by a broader engagement program that will educate an additional 5,000 residents on relevant topics such as sustainable materials and high-tech solutions, ensuring a well-informed community ready to support and benefit from the green transition. This initiative is particularly relevant for the construction sector, as it addresses the pressing need to upskill the workforce in response to increasing demands for energy-efficient housing³.

Public-Private funding

Bristol City Leap represents a public-private partnership between Bristol City Council and Ameresco Ltd, designed to propel significant green energy investments throughout Bristol. This initiative is a pivotal component of the city's strategic plan to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030. Over the next five years, Bristol City Leap is committed to injecting nearly £500 million into developing and enhancing low carbon energy infrastructure. The development of green infrastructure and the associated technologies are expected to create over 1,000 local jobs, offering new employment opportunities in sustainable industries and supporting the city's economic growth⁴.

Private funding

In the South West, a significant investment initiative is underway, with a consortium of pension funds committing £230 million to develop solar farms throughout the area. This funding comes from six Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) funds—namely Avon, Cornwall, Devon, Gloucestershire, Oxfordshire, and Wiltshire. This investment forms part of a broader £330 million commitment by the consortium, aimed at establishing 11 solar farms with a combined generation capacity of approximately 140MWp⁵. Finally – although not located within the West of

² <https://www.bristol.ac.uk/news/2023/november/supercomputer-announcement.html>

³ <https://www.retrofitwest.co.uk/news-events/news-and-event-post-1/>

⁴ <https://www.bristolcityleap.co.uk/>

⁵ <https://www.business-live.co.uk/economic-development/pension-funds-invest-230m-south-28983530>

England and North Somerset LSIP boundaries - the planned gigafactory in Somerset, backed by a £4 billion investment, is set to dramatically transform the local and regional economy. By becoming the UK's largest producer of electric vehicle (EV) batteries, this initiative not only boosts the Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering sector but also aligns with national green energy goals. The expected creation of up to 4,000 jobs will significantly contribute to local employment and skills development.

3. Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) Roadmap

This section contains a summary of some of the priority actions developed in the West of England and North Somerset local area LSIP throughout 2023-24, both through discussion directly with employers and with key stakeholders, including through the West of England Combined Authority, local authorities, education and training providers and supporting agencies. 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
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Expand employer referral and signposting processes directly within LSIP activities	LSIP skills advisory supporting service developed Engaged employers receive direct support and greater awareness of opportunities	LSIP ERB to incorporate into engagement follow up activities and year 2/3 outputs	Complete but ongoing, integrated into LSIP engagement activities, skills advisory support commenced 2024	To develop internal provision and support map, set up skills clinics in the local area	Numbers of employers engaged, satisfaction, take up via referrals	Completed integration, ongoing delivery
Encourage and aid further collaborative initiatives between employers, providers and stakeholders as identified	Provision of brokerage for employers to access opportunities, support for constrained business to leverage initiatives	Partnership between LSIP ERB and primary stakeholders and providers	Ongoing, initial activities undertaken with the West of England Combined Authority e.g. Skills Bootcamps development and employer integration	LSIP ERB to set up working group to research and implement pilot solution, to discuss via Employment & Skills Advisory Panel	Terms of Reference (ToR) to be developed and approved by ESAP for tracking	Not started, on track to deliver
Assist in the integration of LSIP into the existing Employment and Skills Advisory Panel (ESAP) to ensure alignment across local area of intelligence, engagement, strategy and supporting systems	An integrative and cohesive system for strategy, procurement, intelligence, and development of response	West of England Combined Authority (CA) and LSIP ERB to incorporate LSIP into ESAP and wider CA internal requirements	Ongoing, LSIP to be integrated into ESAP Terms of Reference by March 2024	CA and LSIP ERB to develop agenda and methodology integrating LSIP into ESAP	Monitoring via ESAP and sub-group outputs, input into CA planning and strategy	Completed, ongoing integration
Work collaboratively to map employer journeys through support and provision, identifying diagnostic/analytic, short	Develop resource shared area-wide to assist in understanding of employers' routes to market, pinch points and requirements, to help	LSIP ERB to identify sectoral supporting agencies and incorporate into Stage 2 delivery	TBC, likely May 2024 onwards – to be developed as a 'sprint' activity with the ESAP	To work with ESAP and others to develop proposed resource to	Reported via ESAP with progress and output tracking	Not started, on track to deliver

and long provision, support/navigation and brokerage	shape supporting systems and initiatives			understand employer journey		
Create a resource of locally accepted employer skills support bodies and initiatives in the local area	Resource shared with stakeholder, provider and employer audiences in multi-agency campaign to provide clear understanding of employer support provision to aid in area-wide supporting mechanisms	Multi agency working group ownership via ESAP, supporting agencies and education and training providers to understand existing support, potentially for integration into Growth Hub or Skills Connect activities	TBC, likely May 2024 onwards – to be developed as a ‘sprint’ activity with the ESAP	To investigate existing awareness and resourcing, utilise internal signposting resources and external agencies e.g. growth hubs	LSIP ERB to ensure on agenda for ESAP in Year 3	Not yet started, on track to deliver
Develop ‘no wrong front door’ multi-agency approach in terms local area for support and awareness, similar to Skills Connect Hub and Spoke model for individuals	Ensure consistency in response for employers across local stakeholders	ESAP leadership and via Skills Connect model to ensure cohesive approach to support and awareness	Ongoing, initial activities including strategic and operational alignments commenced July/August 2023 via ESAP	LSIP ERB supporting via virtual team methodology	Monitoring via ESAP and sub-group outputs, input into CA planning and strategy	Ongoing, 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 monitored and at what intervals)	Progress Status
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		ERB and relevant partners)				
Advanced Manufacturing & Engineering / Construction & Built Environment: Investigate programme to attract lecturers from industry to improve access to industry expertise for Further Education providers and learners	Develop a proposal to scope and propose potential campaign solution to attract industry talent into FE teaching	To raise via the CA ESAP as collaborative local area/sectoral approach	LSIP ERB to investigate via sector forums in Year 3	Develop proposal, take to ESAP for approval, support working group, output/position to be discussed and used for further activities	Monitoring via ESAP and sub-group outputs, input into CA planning and strategy	Not yet started, on track to deliver
Construction & Built Environment: Explore returners and movers programme into sector, develop resource for employers to identify and address soft skills	Improve labour market liquidity and reduce barriers to work	LSIP and ESAP to investigate potential, to discuss via employer forums for first iteration of initiative	Ongoing, likely to be integrated into ESAP and CA April 2024	Set up of a sectoral working group to look at minimum requirements in skills and support	Via ESAP	Not yet started, on track to deliver

Improve employer awareness of, and engagement, with post 16 provision, utilising case studies and best practise for content	Better understanding of need, greater incorporation of training into growth strategies	Stakeholders and LSIP team, ERBs, Training Providers, Local Authorities, Growth Hubs, supporting agencies	Ongoing with regular updates via LSIP and partner channels	Marketing, development of shared local vision, strategy, and direct engagement	LSIP ERB to utilise quarterly campaign in comms with partner take-up/sharing of content	Ongoing, on track to deliver
Highlight collaboration opportunities between employers and careers service providers to improve access to potential workforce and raise awareness of opportunity	Better employer understanding of post 16 education, additional opportunities and greater awareness for learners	Coordination via LSIP, primary stakeholder buy-in via careers service providers, sector representative bodies and FE	Ongoing, initial proposal to the West of England Combined Authority by June 2024	LSIP ERB to develop coordinated opportunity proposal	Record referrals and potential increase in employer engagement via Careers Hub	Ongoing, on track to deliver
Increased employer signposting via LSIP core activities	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 incorporate into all employer engagement activities	Completed, ongoing refinement	LSIP ERB to use prior engagement with and understanding of widest skills system to provide value to employers	Minimum bi-annual review of signposting	Completed, ongoing, to be reviewed
Encourage employers to provide opportunities to learners and to improve Careers Education, Information Advice and Guidance (CEIAG)	Better pre- and post-16 careers information reflecting changed roles, technical skills and entry pathways	LSIP ERB to incorporate, potential for pan-area resource development in partnership with Careers Hub	Ongoing, LSIP incorporation complete Aug 2023	LSIP ERB to work with Careers Hub staff and ESAP to coordinate/review / refresh as required	Minimum bi-annual review	Completed, ongoing, to be reviewed

Incorporate additional CEIAG awareness into LSIP activities – opportunities and integration into workforce development to ensure employers understand and utilise opportunities to raise awareness of opportunities and vacancies	Assist in the development of up-to-date pre- and post-16 careers information reflecting changed roles, technical skills and entry pathways	LSIP ERB to incorporate existing intelligence, working with Careers Hub leads and CEC on potential for pan-area resource development	Ongoing, to be integrated into engagement signposting and refined during year 3	Ensure aligned with changing local supporting initiatives and careers hub activities	LSIP ERB to ensure on ESAP agenda once reformed	Ongoing, on track to be delivered
Incorporate into LSIP engagement/signposting where appropriate, Multiply and provision towards those with additional needs	More opportunities for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), greater access to potential labour market	LSIP ERB to ensure mapping and signposting resources exist internally for this purpose	Ongoing, first resource completed Jan 2024	To work via ESAP to see if wider recognised benefit to externally shared	To be monitored internally and via CA staff and ESAP	Ongoing, on track to be delivered
Incorporate direct support of Skills Connect into LSIP delivery and raise awareness of hub and spoke delivery model with employers, including the development of an Apprenticeship Hub	Comprehensive direct and tailored signposting and referrals aligned with employer needs in primary skills portal and search functions	LSIP ERB to support the West of England Combined Authority Skills Connect team in iterative development	Ongoing, first keyword tagging project completed by Feb 2024, second technical keyword tagging project to be commenced April 2024	Requires Skills Connect team liaison and guidance	LSIP ERB included in Skills Connect steering group, bi-monthly meetings	Ongoing, on track to be delivered

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
Investigate initiatives to stimulate awareness of and demand for green skills provision to align with local imperatives	Complete first report on short course green skills provision, demand and gap identification, to share with CA and refine strategy in partnership to drive demand for green skills provision to align with local net zero imperatives	LSIP ERB and CA to develop proposals for activity, approved via the ESAP	Ongoing, first activities completed by April 2024	Proposal to be shaped by ESAP	Green skills projects to be discussed and agreed via ESAP, working groups to be established via ESAP	First iteration complete, second ‘sprint’ activities in development
Raise employer understanding of FE and technical education, including but not limited to apprenticeships, T Levels and bootcamps	Accessible resources for employers in different formats, with area-wide utilisation to ensure shared understanding	Sectoral stakeholders to lead via ESAP with LSIP ERB coordination	Commencement in year 3, to be approved via ESAP	Working groups to be established in priority areas, LSIP resource allocated for creation/input and administration as required	Project to be developed agreed and reported to ESAP	Not yet started, on track to deliver
Collaborative clear messaging to simplify employer understanding of provision – changes, needs, involvement, amplify and encourage take up – no wrong front door approach	Improve employer engagement and understanding, to improve awareness, referrals and take-up of provision and support	To be agreed via ESAP, potential for significant range of stakeholders to take ownership	Ongoing and will be an iterative process	Need a shared vision of wider system to enable clear and concise prioritised multi-agency messaging	Project to be developed agreed and reported to ESAP	Ongoing, on track to be delivered

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 at what intervals)	Progress Status
Review responses to LSIP - Accountability and the Local Skills Improvement Fund (LSIF)	<p>LSIP ERB to analyse, discuss and share reviews of accountability updates and informal updates from ITPs</p> <p>Ensure FE providers are aware of and responding to LSIP outputs</p>	<p>LSIP Project Management and Research team</p> <p>LSIP ERB to undertake internally, reliant on FE and ITPs, to discuss with WTPN for ITP input</p>	<p>To review 2024 accountability statements for progress and set agenda for non-applicable provision</p>	<p>LSIP ERB to review in-house, with summative report for ESAP</p>	<p>LSIP ERB to share updates with ESAP for discussion/next steps, Q2-3 2024</p>	<p>Not yet started</p>
Utilise additional quantitative metrics to both measure impact and better understand need	<p>Utilisation of locally agreed (and known) metrics towards uptake, change, requirements and behaviour change</p>	<p>LSIP ERB to liaise with CA and providers for shared intelligence, potential access to RCU Vector</p>	<p>Ongoing, iterative process</p>	<p>CA ESAP to provide baseline statistics to review change</p>	<p>LSIP ERB to report via ESAP</p>	<p>Ongoing, on track to be completed</p>
Undertake analysis of existing baseline data within post 16 provision to ensure measurable change in system	<p>Ensure area-wide understanding of demand for provision</p>	<p>Work in partnership with providers and CA to share understanding of baseline data</p>	<p>Ongoing, first analysis to be completed Apr 2024</p>	<p>CA ESAP to provide baseline statistics to review change</p>	<p>LSIP ERB to report via ESAP</p>	<p>Apprenticeship data currently in review, ongoing, on track to be completed</p>

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 dives 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 CA, local authorities, ITPs and FE colleges	LSIP ERB to outline intended activities with SAP	Initial decisions made, outline operational plan in preparation
Further investigative work into needs for the ‘green economy’ in the local area	Clear understanding of priority sector (for green) aligned skills needs, timescales and requirements	LSIP ERB to support CA in green skills supply and demand mapping, to align with additional initiatives	First green provision supply and demand sprint to be completed by March 2024	Additional activities to be identified following first sprint	Project ToR submitted and approved by ESAP; outputs decided in partnership	First round completed, second round on track to be complete

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
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Since the West of England Plus Trailblazer LSIP and during the national LSIP rollout, numerous skills needs have been directly reported by employers in the local area and are under consideration for response 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 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 designated ERB for the West of England and North Somerset 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.

4. What Has Been Achieved So Far?

In the West of England and North Somerset area, we are achieving significant progress in effecting change for employers, learners, and residents. We've already witnessed considerable impacts from various tangible new provisions and changes implemented in response to and aligned with the LSIP, notably through initiatives such as the Local Skills Improvement Fund (LSIF) and overall Further Education (FE) provision.

Below, we highlight a selection of ongoing or completed activities addressing needs identified throughout LSIP activities to date. These encompass new, improved, or altered provisions, establishment of new relationships, adjustments to support and training descriptions, and formation of new partnership activities. The LSIP serves as a remarkable opportunity to catalyse change and enhance awareness of the responsiveness and adaptability of the post-16 FE system, as well as those who support employers, employees, and learners.

Please note, skills needs and their subsequent actions that were identified in Stage One of the LSIP are still relevant, a summary of all needs identified to date can be found in the [Priority Findings](#) for each sector by local area.

What are we doing?

As the Employer Representative Body overseeing the LSIP, Business West has conducted a range of engagement activities, including individual broad sector-based interviews, topic-focused deep dive interviews (refining topics explored in year one), focus groups, wider skills discussions, and codesign sessions with employers, partners, and providers.

We have compiled the most prominent needs in the area, focusing particularly on our core areas of need identified in the earlier stages of the LSIP: Sector-Specific and Technological Change, Net Zero Skills, and Critical Workplace, Core, and Transferable Skills.

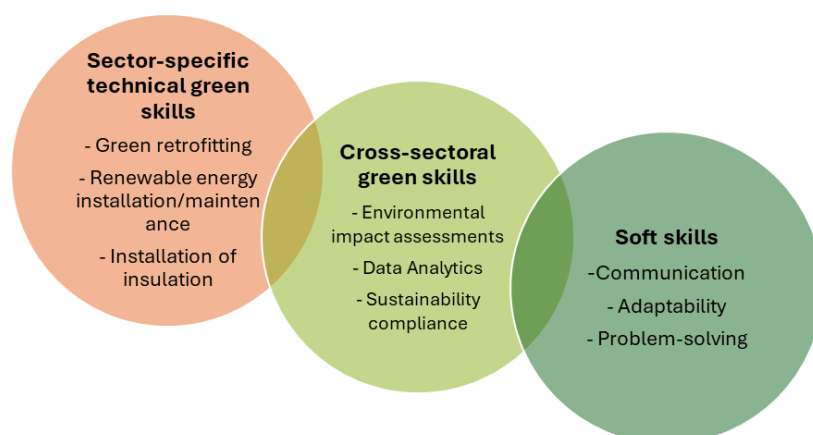
Throughout the LSIP process, Business West has undertaken 445 meaningful engagements, totaling 748 hours of conversation with employers, partners, and providers.

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: During year two of the LSIP, Business West ran a Green Skills subproject. This subproject was developed in response to the actions identified in year one of the LSIP, to run alongside the core research project for a shorter period of time, aligning with the LSIP priorities and are complimentary to all focus sectors. In this subproject, we began examining the green skills provision in the West of England and North Somerset, aiming to define green skills and identify sector-specific technical green skills courses.

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 in the West of England and North Somerset 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 local area.



Identified Need: Both employers and partners have repeatedly emphasised the need for **earlier careers guidance interventions and awareness and understanding of pathways and progression routes**. The current engagement method, starting at Year 10, is considered too late. LSIP contributors advocate for engagement before secondary school, with engagement before GCSE subject selection seen as an absolute necessity. Additionally, there is a frequent request for more support and guidance for parents and carers navigating careers advice. LSIP contributors emphasised the importance of exposing students and parents to a variety of career talks from individuals representing diverse roles and levels within different industries.

Action: In collaboration with Access Creative College, Business West is hosting a webinar series aimed at parents, young people, and other professionals interested in careers in the creative industry. The goal is to enhance understanding of the creative industry's skills needs. This webinar is scheduled outside traditional working hours to make it more accessible to parents and carers, thereby raising awareness of career pathways in the creative industry. If successful, this pilot can be extended to other sectors with the support of partners in those industries.

In Stage Two of the LSIP, we have organised a series of 'Meet the Expert' events aimed at showcasing the wide spectrum of roles present across industries in the West of England and North Somerset. These events cover topics such as Electrical Skills for Energy Transition in the Construction sector and Mastering Leadership and Management in Health and Social Care, along with pan-sector discussions like Mastering B2B Sales Essential Skills.

Impact: This exposure would provide a comprehensive understanding of the array of career opportunities available. Additionally, there was a consensus that engaging with professionals at various levels within a company would inspire young individuals by demonstrating achievable

career trajectories. Beyond merely highlighting job roles, these webinars also offer insights into the crucial skills required within each sector. Such events will continue throughout the third year of LSIP delivery.

The image is a promotional poster for a webinar. On the left, there is a large blue arrow pointing to the right. Inside the arrow, the text reads: 'Business West' in blue, 'Impact of Creative Education' in a larger blue font, and 'Wednesday 15th May 2024', '6:30pm - 7:30pm', and 'Online' in a smaller black font. Below the text are five logos: 'access creative college', 'fable', 'theBottleYard STUDIOS', and 'TBY'. To the right of the arrow is a photograph of three people (two women and one man) looking at a document on a table in a modern office setting.

Identified Need: For many employers in the local area, **understanding their bespoke skills needs and the scope of existing support and where to access it** 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. These sessions will continue into Year Three of the LSIP on a rolling basis, available both by appointment and as drop-in sessions.

Impact: The in-person sessions have been held at co-working spaces across the West of England and North Somerset 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 help identify skills needs and advise on the best training solutions for your business, apprenticeships/apprenticeship levy and low carbon and green initiatives.

What is the LSIF doing?

The West of England and North Somerset local area was awarded a total of £2.9 million in funding for April 2023 to March 2025 from the Department for Education through the LSIF. The West of England Institute of Technology, as the lead provider for the area, has overseen this funding. It enabled six FE colleges and an independent training provider within the West of

England and North Somerset to collaborate on creating an area-wide approach to narrowing skills gaps and avoiding duplication while also completing their own internal projects.

Identified Need: Learners need to be trained using relevant technologies and equipment, so their skills are transferrable to a workplace

Action: As a direct result of the LSIF funding, equipment was purchased to help modernise learning environments, such as 3D scanners, camera equipment, and flatbed A3 scanners. Learning spaces have also been updated to better reflect employer premises. Staff have participated in CPD around mental health training to provide improved holistic support for students, as well as training on the new specialist equipment to ensure they can efficiently train the students.

Impact: By updating provision and resources in education environments, providers are best preparing learners, ensuring a seamless progression from education to the workplace.

Identified Need: One of the outputs of the 2023 LSIP Report was the need for **more teachers to be aware of apprenticeships and skills** when advising young people in secondary education.

Action: Funds were also allocated to support improved messaging and awareness for employers, students, and parents/carers. This was achieved through the production and printing of a guide (also available online) made up of best-practice case studies to provide employers with examples of how tertiary education has supported local employers' needs. As part of the LSIF response, a 20-minute module on apprenticeships and technical education was developed for secondary school teachers with tutor responsibilities. This module aimed to upskill teachers on what apprenticeships are, the local job opportunities, and technical education more broadly post-16.

Impact: The project was rolled out in March 2024, with impact reports expected in the coming months.

What is FE and other training doing?

The West of England and North Somerset FE Colleges have been thoroughly integrated into LSIP wider impact, through partnership activities, directly through their own commitments referenced in accountability statements and strategic documentation and through their work with the Combined Authority.

“The work we undertook as part of the LSIP pilot has been a real catalyst for change in driving the employer voice further into the discussions around skills and technical learning and the future workforce skills needs. We are looking forward to seeing what comes forward as part of the next phase of the Plan process and supporting employers across the region to develop their current and future workforce.” - Claire Arbery, Director at West of England Institute of Technology

Identified Need: There is a need for **stronger Career Education Information Advice and Guidance for workforce development** to ensure employers understand and utilise

opportunities to raise awareness of job roles, technical skills and **entry pathways**, as well as support for learners around work readiness.

Action: The Institute of Technology has sought to build additional level 2 and 3 provisions to ensure opportunities for entry-level students to progress into higher-level education, creating a talent pipeline that doesn't solely rely on graduates. They have also seen a stronger than expected uptake of level 4 HTQs, reinforcing the need for more modular training through lifelong learning.

Weston College has created Career Excellence Hubs and adopted a more holistic approach to career guidance. Tutors now provide extra support to students, helping them adjust to various aspects of work readiness, such as teaching about traveling, ensuring they have a suitable breakfast, and preparing food on a budget.

To further support workplace readiness, Weston College has increased its efforts to raise awareness about careers by hosting Apprenticeship Awareness Events and Technical Education Roadshows. These events aim to better inform students, parents, and carers about apprenticeship opportunities and improve industry knowledge. Digital resources, such as 'Meet the Apprentice' videos featuring apprentices from different employers, sectors, and career stages, were also created to showcase the breadth of opportunities available.

City of Bristol College has reviewed each LSIP priority sector, mapping routes through training and into employment, and reviewing their provision to ensure that delivery is relevant to industry. They have adjusted methods where appropriate and worked with employers to embed project-based learning into qualifications, providing necessary skills and knowledge for entering the industry. In addition to this sector-specific review, City of Bristol College is also addressing themes they consider priorities across all sectors, such as English as a second language, to ensure all students have access to the necessary support to pursue the same opportunities as their peers.

In addition, all colleges in the West of England and North Somerset area have committed to creating capacity by training new teachers with a reduced teaching caseload. This allows them to learn pedagogical skills with the support of a quality supervisor.

Impact: This initiative was trialled in LSIP year one and expanded to all colleges in year two to help grow their own talent and deliver the technical skills needed locally, particularly in hard-to-recruit skill sets, retaining required skills in the area. The IoT Plus group of colleges is also addressing themes that run throughout the priority sectors. In line with the government's strategy to grow math capacity and employer feedback on the lack of mathematical skills in some sectors, LSIF funding has enabled colleges to train staff in math skills and apply them to vocational learning. This has increased student confidence in mathematics and built teacher capacity.

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

Action: Yeovil College has taken steps towards earlier intervention by launching a pilot project for STEM subjects aimed at primary school-aged students up to Year 9 of secondary school. Additionally, they have introduced work placement opportunities for students in years 10-12 to sustain interest in these subjects throughout their academic journey.

Impact: By providing earlier opportunities to engage with careers pathways for pre-16 learners and reflecting changed roles, technical skills and entry pathways allows visibility for all roles and sectors especially those that are prominent in the local area and encourages talent retention.

What are the West of England and North Somerset doing?

Identified Need: Collaborative clear messaging to **simplify employer understanding of provision** – changes, needs, involvement, amplify and encourage take up – no wrong front door approach, with the view to improve employer engagement and understanding, to improve awareness, referrals and take-up of provision and support

Action: FE colleges in the local area, including SGS College, City of Bristol College, and Weston College, have reported improved communication and stronger working relationships as a result of the LSIP, particularly for large projects requiring collaborative efforts, such as those in the Avonmouth and Severn Side area.

Weston College has acknowledged the strengths of each institution and, through the Local Skills Needs duty, has begun mapping available provisions. This effort, highlighted by City of Bristol College, aims to reduce sector burdens and overlap in delivery by identifying gaps where new provisions are needed.

Impact: Accountability Statements have also contributed to strengthening these relationships. By emphasising how the local area reflects the needs of employers and responds through their delivery, these statements help ensure that students and communities are well served by the provisions in their area.

Identified Need: Additional funding to **identify need and develop provision in the local area that is aligned to LSIP priorities**, though not directly within the focus sectors.

Action: The West of England and North Somerset has seen significant investment such as £1million from the West of England Mayoral Priority Skills Fund to support gaps in provision that have been identified through research projects including the LSIP.

Impact: An additional £3.2million has been awarded to the West of England Combined Authority, from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, to support their skills initiatives in the area including addressing skills needs and identifying priority skills for the local area.

What is industry doing?

Identified Need: Raise employer understanding of FE and technical education, including but not limited to apprenticeships, T Levels and bootcamps. Ensure accessible resources for employers are available in different formats, with area-wide utilisation to ensure shared understanding

Action: The Institute of Technology is examining roles throughout the supply chain and forecasting future demand to identify potential collaboration opportunities with employers for future training.

City of Bristol College is also collaborating with local employers, incorporating their input when mapping provisions in the LSIP priority sector areas to ensure that training is relevant to industry needs.

Additionally, they are working with WTPN and Asdan on a jointly funded independent research project. This project enables students to work closely with employers, gaining industry skills, knowledge, and a qualification. The program also supports other aspects of work readiness, such as navigating the application process, finding apprenticeships, and understanding the apprenticeship system.

Impact: Employer involvement strengthens relationships between colleges and industry, allows students to build connections with employers, and provides progression routes into work.

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](#).

Naomi Logan, Head of Employment and Skills at the West of England Combined Authority:

"We are meeting on a regular basis so that we can be absolutely aligned with what LSIP is doing and how we are building that into our learning and our delivery.

The granular evidence that's come out through the LSIP process has informed directly some of our Mayoral Combined Authority programmes. We have lots of flexible funding, we have government funding that comes into the Combined Authority, and we've been able to use the evidence backing up with our other labour market intelligence... to be able to form the right type of training provision to address business needs.

Skills bootcamps is something where this 16 week training course is designed around employer need and that's been shaped around some of the work that's come out of the LSIP has helped us to really hone down on the skills needs and the skills gaps that employers are reporting they have right here, right now."

5. What Still Needs to be Achieved

In year three, our focus will shift from research and data gathering to implementing the actions identified in the LSIP and demonstrating their impacts, as well as assessing actions already

undertaken. Alongside the actions outlined in the Roadmap tables in section 4 of this report, we have included a selection of additional actions we aim to address below.

The need for short, modular and flexible delivery

Many contributors to the LSIP have requested shorter, modular training as an alternative to longer options like apprenticeships. This approach is believed to facilitate additional upskilling and reskilling, ensuring staff maintain relevant industry skills. Through our topical subproject sprints, we will continue to analyse key areas such as EDI and Digital Skills. We aim to assess existing provisions, identify the demand for further training, and determine the best delivery methods, working collaboratively with training providers and local authorities to integrate these findings into future delivery. Our [Green Skills](#) subproject has already revealed that bootcamps and modular training, such as the SGS College Retrofit program, are highly in demand. We are now focused on enhancing green skills provision in the West of England and North Somerset area and working closely with local authorities on further actions from this research. This includes clarifying what green skills entail and collaborating with other LSIPs to understand the national demand for such training.

T Levels and industry engagement

Employers have reported concerns with their lack of understanding around educational placements such as T-Levels. We intend to provide support and guidance for employers to improve their knowledge through a Technical Education Placements Support Programme, liaising directly with further education providers and employers to ensure there is relevant, knowledge and placement opportunities and to ensure provision is meeting the expectations and needs of businesses in the local area, including through Employer Partnership Boards at SGS College. If successful, this programme will encourage further investment from employers into the technical education placements in the area and increase industry placements available for students.

Review post-16 Education response to LSIP priorities

FE Colleges in the West of England and North Somerset 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 the 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 area-wide 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 West of England and North Somerset 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, 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. 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.

Review of LSIP Value and Engagement

The employer, partner and provider engagement we have undertaken to date has given us a broad understanding of how the West of England and North Somerset views the skills system and the skills needs that are currently in place. As the focus for the next stage of the LSIP is to show the value that has been added to the local area, we think the best way to illustrate this is through action rather than additional in-depth research at this stage. Therefore, we will be moving to a lighter method of engagement for the third year of the LSIP, focusing on gaining additional detail through survey responses and wider skills discussions. These survey responses will also allow us to quantify the data that we have obtained to date, as well as provide a local perspective to national data and show the impact on employers, partners and providers in the West of England and North Somerset by asking these parties to reflect on changes that have occurred since the inception of the LSIP.

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 the Effective Rollout of Digital System, Smart Farm Management and CAD, Digital and Design Engineering. 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.

Turning Need into Action, Reviewing Impact

The main objective for Business West moving into year three of the LSIP is to ensure that LSIP actions are achievable and can be taken forward for long term impact in the period following June 2025. We will be working closely with employers, partners and providers to support any actions they have been allocated as a result of the LSIP and to amplify this work to show the project's impact in the local area. We are also undertaking further activities and increased promotion to illustrate the impact of the project to date. Through 'Where Are You Now?' surveys for both employers and partners we will be speaking with employers who we initially spoke to in year one of the LSIP to monitor the impact they have seen and changes that they have embedded as a result of the LSIP priorities.

In addition to these conversations, we will continue to create video and written testimonials to show the full scope of businesses and partners we have been working with, as well as the variety of actions that have occurred as a result of the LSIP. In order to show the ongoing impact of the LSIP to date, we will be publishing an impact dashboard to show change as it happens, and measure against existing baseline data to ensure measurable change in the skills system.