



Buckinghamshire's Local Skills Improvement Plan

June 2026

Annex C: Background and Method



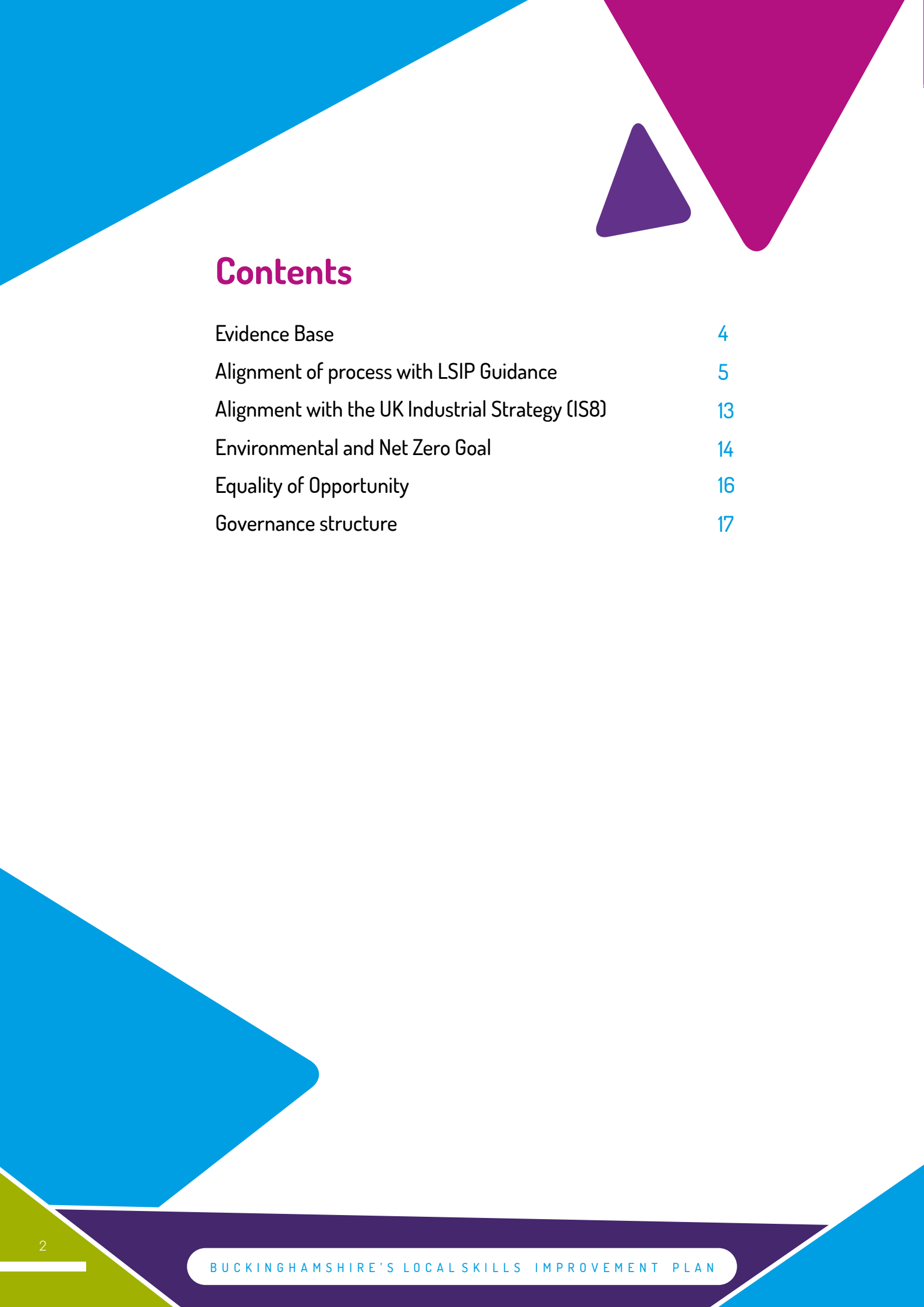
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Annex C:

This annex provides further detail on the background, evidence base, methodology and governance arrangements used to develop Buckinghamshire's Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) 2.0.

It is intended to support transparency and assurance by setting out how evidence on skills needs was gathered and analysed, how employer engagement was structured and sustained, and how governance and oversight arrangements were applied throughout the development of the LSIP. The content of this annex demonstrates alignment with statutory guidance while reflecting local delivery structures and place-based priorities.

Together, the sections that follow describe:

- The quantitative and qualitative evidence sources that informed the identification of priority skills needs.
- The approach taken to employer, provider and stakeholder engagement
- The alignment of the LSIP development process with relevant guidance
- The governance framework through which the LSIP was developed, approved and will be overseen during delivery.

This annex should be read alongside the main LSIP report and other annexes, which set out the agreed priorities, actions and implementation arrangements in full.



Evidence Base

The supporting evidence base for this LSIP has been informed by a broad range of sources, summarised as follows:

Labour demand and supply

- **Lightcast:** occupational employment and demand intelligence, informed by online job postings data.
- **Individual Learner Record** data, for 2023/24, DfE. Apprenticeship starts for 2024/25 have also been sourced from ILR data. Buckinghamshire residence-based figures have been used.
- **Labour market and skills projections: 2020 to 2035**, National Foundation for Employment Research (commissioned by DfE)
- **Sector group feedback** – used to inform qualitative evidence of shortages and gaps. Groups were created for each priority sector.
- **Sector employment:** Business Register and Employment Survey. Annual Population survey for self-employed analysis has been used sparingly, due to the high error margin on estimates at subregional level.
- **Various supplementary reports:** reports from training bodies and other sector representatives have been used to supplement our analysis of future trends in skills shortages and gaps. While these reports focus on regions and nations, they provide indicators of relevant industry trends relevant to Buckinghamshire.

Sector priorities

- **The UK's Modern Industrial Strategy 2025**
- **Skills England: skills for growth and opportunity** (2025) which evidences skills needs for the IS8 priority sectors plus Construction and Health and Social Care
- Buckinghamshire LSIP (2023)
- **Buckinghamshire Council resources:** to avoid duplication of research, and ensure consistency in definitions, various Buckinghamshire council resources have been used to support our determination of sector priorities and local specialisation. These resources have also supplemented our analysis of skills demand and supply. These include:
 - **Buckinghamshire Growth Plan 2025**
 - **Buckinghamshire: Labour Market and Skills Analysis**, August 2025, Buckinghamshire Intelligence Observatory
 - **The Buckinghamshire Economy: Industry, cluster and innovation strengths**, March 2025, Buckinghamshire Intelligence Observatory

Occupational demand and supply (technical education)

Tables for occupational demand set out the core occupations within each priority sector for this LSIP, not including occupations relevant across sectors (finance professionals, office administrators etc.). They compare existing employment and current demand (from online job postings), with apprenticeship and T Levels starts in courses or frameworks relevant for each occupation, by Buckinghamshire-based learners.

Vacancy information has been sourced from Lightcast for 2024. T Level and Apprenticeship starts have been calculated by matching 4-digit SOC occupations to **Skills England Occupational Maps**, and using Individual Learner record for starts by Buckinghamshire-based learners in the 2023/24 academic year.

Our desk-based analysis focuses on recent skills demand information and forecasts, rather than historic trends, to best predict skills shortages and gaps for the duration of LSIP 2.0. This is particularly relevant given the impacts of various shocks on local employment trends recently, such as industrial action and subdued economic growth.

To conclude, analysis has been used to supplement and validate the insights gained from our stakeholder engagement, ensuring that the identified occupational skills shortages and gaps are consistent with trends in the broader Buckinghamshire labour market.

Alignment of process with LSIP Guidance

Employer engagement

The development of Buckinghamshire's LSIP 2.0 has followed the process set out in the statutory guidance, ensuring extensive employer engagement across all priority sectors and active involvement from providers and local stakeholders. Engagement has extended well beyond the membership of the Employer Representative Body.

Sector Employer Groups

Employer insight has been primarily gathered through the Sector Employer Groups, which have continued to operate since LSIP 1.0 and have provided a structured forum for employers to review evidence, shape priorities and test proposed actions. These groups cover the priority sectors of:

- Construction – 74 employer members
- Digital – 56 employer members
- Engineering – 84 employer members
- Film and TV – 73 employer members

In addition, the Buckinghamshire Health and Social Care academy convened a workshop to inform the development of the LSIP on 27th January 2026. 45 representatives from the HSC sector were invited to this meeting, excluding BBF staff. Across these groups, 128 employers routinely participate, contributing to feedback on current provision, curriculum development, recruitment challenges, and priority skills needs. The groups also support broader LSIP activities, including curriculum reviews, Skills Show participation, and the development of Skills Bootcamps, demonstrating sustained employer involvement throughout the lifecycle of the plan.

Breadth and Depth of Employer Engagement

Engagement during LSIP 2.0 development has included:

- Routine Sector Employer Group meetings in all priority sectors
- Direct consultations with employers on sector-specific shortages and occupational needs
- Targeted conversations with SMEs, facilitated by Buckinghamshire Business First as the ERB
- Broader employer engagement through market-wide activities, including surveys, workshops, and film/TV industry consultation sessions
- Ongoing one-to-one employer discussions carried out as part of evidence gathering
- Attendance at BBF events such as the Business Showcase and AGM held at Garsington Studios, Stokenchurch, Buckinghamshire on 27th November 2025. Over 300 businesses attended.

This approach ensured that employer insight came from a wide range of businesses, including micro-firms, SMEs and large companies. In total over 450 businesses were engaged as part of the LSIP consultations.

Provider Engagement

All categories of providers have been involved, including those with statutory duties under the LSIP programme and those without. Activities include:

- Regular engagement with Buckinghamshire College Group, Buckinghamshire New University, and the University of Buckingham
- Engagement with adult learning providers, including Buckinghamshire Adult Learning
- The convening of a dedicated Skills, Education and Training Provider Forum, created to support collaboration between FE, HE, independent training providers and adult learning providers, allowing them to review LSIP evidence and identify shared barriers and opportunities. The Forum currently has 66 active members.

Stakeholder Engagement

A broad range of local partners have contributed to LSIP development – these include:

- Chartered Institute of Building
- Construction Industry Training Board
- Buckinghamshire Skills Hub (the Careers Hub for Buckinghamshire)
- Buckinghamshire Council
- Cressex BID
- DWP Jobcentre Plus
- HS2
- TechSkills UK
- Buckinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust
- Buckinghamshire Health & Social Care Academy
- Satellite Applications Catapult
- Film London
- British Film Institute
- Screen Skills
- UK Screen Alliance
- Into Film
- Community Impact Bucks

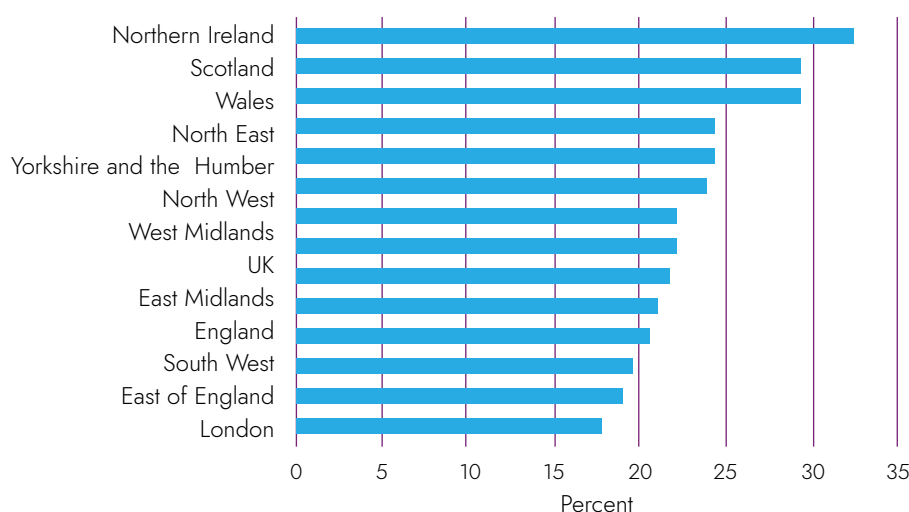
Collectively these stakeholders have helped validate the priority sectors, cross-sector skills, and occupational areas, and have informed the evidence base that underpins LSIP 2.0.

Trade Unions

As part of delivering this LSIP, BBF will engage with trade unions to improve our understanding of local workforce skills needs, and their implications for post-16 education and training.

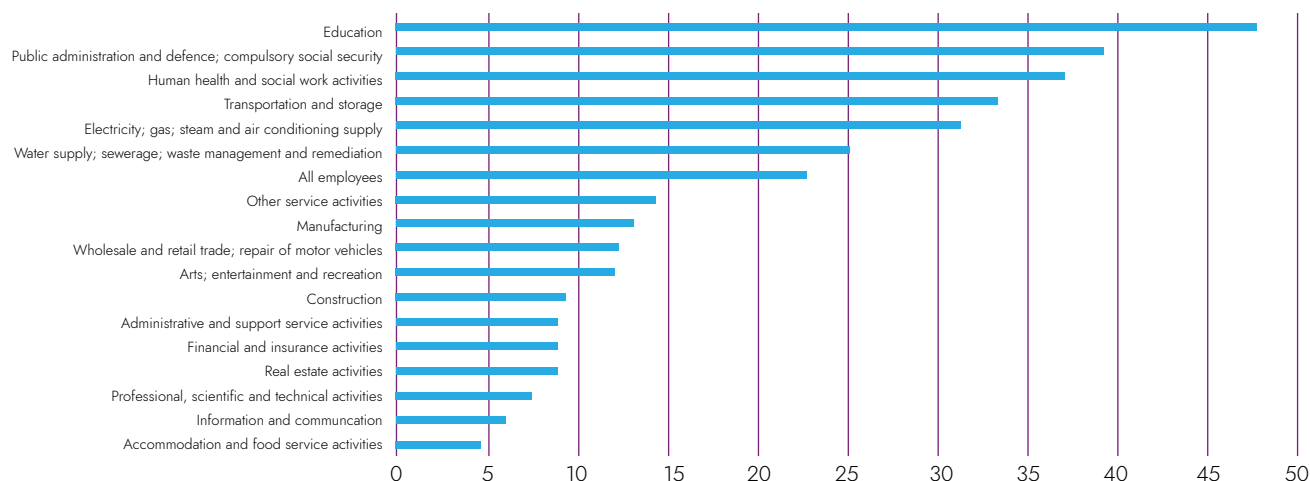
While there are no reliable estimates of trade union membership at the local authority level, national estimates¹ indicate that about 1 in 5 employees (19%) in the South East belong to a trade union. While this is below the UK average rate, this remains a significant proportion of the workforce, covering potentially over 47,000 workers in Buckinghamshire, such that insight from trade unions can be useful for understanding skills needs, even if this is limited compared to other UK regions.

¹ Trade union membership, UK, 1995 to 2025: statistical bulletin, DBT, 2026

Figure 1: trade union density by nation and region, 2025

Source: Labour Force Survey, Office for National Statistics

Furthermore, trade union job density is below the UK average within 4 of the 5 priority sectors in this LSIP (manufacturing (including engineering)); arts, entertainment and recreation (including film & TV); construction: information and communication (including digital technology). However, the density is significantly above average in the Health and Social Care sector, at 37%. As a result, trade union insights are likely to be particularly relevant for the HSC priority sector.

Figure 2: trade union density by industry, 2025

The following table maps the relevant national trade union bodies with the 5 priority sectors within this LSIP, and provides a short summary of their recent research work into workforce skills and training needs. As part of delivering this LSIP, BBF will engage with trade unions to improve our understanding of local workforce skills needs.

Sector	Trade Union(s)	Labour market and skills evidence summary
Construction	Unite Construction, Allied Trades & Technicians	Member magazines include commentary on workforce shortages, as well as training and apprenticeship opportunities for members. Unite also sits on the Construction Skills Mission Board (CSMB) alongside government, allowing their insights to influence national government policy. They have publicly committed to supporting the recruitment of 100,000 additional workers per year, and expand training placements and apprenticeships.
Engineering	Prospect (engineers) Unite – Engineering, Manufacturing & Steel	While Prospect does not publish evidence or research into workforce skills, they are active in providing policy commentary on themes relevant to the LSIP, such as: skills shortages in engineering, defence and energy sectors; retention challenges in the public sector and regulated industries; and the impact of government industrial and investment policy on workforce demand. Unite (Engineering, Manufacturing & Steel) published a major report into national manufacturing workforce skills shortages in 2024, titled 'Manufacturing Matters.' Key conclusions from this report, which are broadly reflected in this LSIP, include: ➤ The need to expand apprenticeships and technical training pathways for manufacturing and engineering ➤ Emphasis on upskilling and reskilling, especially linked to the net zero transition and advanced manufacturing technologies (AI, automation). ➤ The importance to coordinate skills policy with other strategic priorities for the sector, including R&D investment, strengthening domestic supply chains, and regional economic development. ➤ The report also encourages worker involvement in training design, as well as support for collective bargaining for skills, training, and career progression.
Digital Technology	Unite in Digital & Tech (Unite the Union) UTAW (United Tech & Allied Workers – part of CWU)	Both Unite in Digital and Tech and UTAW have not published any specific labour market or workforce skills intelligence, with their research output focused on worker wellbeing, job security, and risks of worker replacement by inadequate automated solutions.

Sector	Trade Union(s)	Labour market and skills evidence summary
Film & TV (Creative Industries)	Bectu Equity	Bectu (Broadcasting, Entertainment, Communications and Theatre Union) regularly publishes substantive labour market—relevant research, including large-scale surveys and sector reports. Their 'Big Bectu Survey 2025', with over 5,000 responses, provides insight into workforce skills and employment challenges for the sector, namely: ➤ High levels of precarity and insecure employment ➤ Heavy reliance on informal hiring networks ➤ Workers face challenges with financial insecurity, skills underutilisation, and poor career sustainability ➤ Identifies need for structured training pathways and upskilling opportunities, particularly during downturns Bectu have also supported calls for a freelancer commissioner, citing Creative UK's Forging Freelance Futures report as key evidence of low and unfair pay practices within freelance roles, and the high prevalence of freelancers within the creative industries (around 30%). Research and reports from Equity are more focused on minimum pay and working conditions issues, rather than skills and training issues. However, Equity has made significant contributions to DWP's "Young People and Work" report, DBT's "Make Work Pay" report, and the BBC Charter Review.
Health & Social Care	Community Trade Union (health & social care) Unison (healthcare)	The Community Trade Union (Health & Social Care) does not publish information on workforce skills and training. However, their work with the TUC's 2023 Strategy for the Care Workforce identified several priority issues within the sector, namely: acute recruitment and retention challenges; low pay relative to the wider economy; and limited progression and poor working conditions. Unison also publish a range of evidence regarding the workforce, identifying issues such as low pay as a key constraint for recruitment, issues with workforce wellbeing, and widespread staffing shortages. Research regarding skills and training, such as this written evidence contribution to parliament in 2022, uses Skills for Care data as a key source of their workforce intelligence, which has also been used in the development of this LSIP.

Priority sector selection

Priority sectors have been selected according to the following criteria, ensuring that priority sectors reflect local and national priority sectors, sectors with significance and relevance to local economic growth, and sectors with evidence of skills shortages and/or skills gaps. This reasoning was presented to the Buckinghamshire Skills Strategy Board for approval in November 2025, ensuring that relevant stakeholders were involved in shaping the direction of the LSIP. However, it should be noted that this was used to identify initial areas of focus for the LSIP, and we have adjusted our scope according to the outcomes of further research. As a result, Education and Training was not selected as a priority sector, given the limited impact of post-16 education and training on skill shortages in the sector.

Furthermore, it should be noted that, as well as being consistent with the Buckinghamshire Growth Plan 2025 priority sectors, the priority sectors in this LSIP are consistent with both the National Industrial Strategy sectors (the IS-8)² and the Skills England priority sectors (the IS-8 priority sectors plus Construction and Health and Social Care). However, priority sectors have been chosen only where there is strong evidence of local skills shortages and gaps. The priority sectors also reflect specific specialisations within the Buckinghamshire economy within broader priority sectors, such as Engineering within Advanced Manufacturing and Film and TV within Creative Industries.

² Advanced Manufacturing, Clean Energy, Creative Industries, Defence, Digital & Technologies, Financial Services, Life Sciences, Professional & Business Services

Our Analysis of the initial priority sectors is given below:

Construction

Factors informing inclusion in the LSIP	✓ or ✗
Priority set out in the Buckinghamshire Growth Plan	✗
Plays critical role in underpinning those sectors in Buckinghamshire Growth Plan	✓ - relevant for new and expanded premises and major infrastructure projects
Significant generator of GVA to Buckinghamshire	✓ - accounts for some 10% GVA
Significant employment in Buckinghamshire	✓ - over 13,000 employed
Experienced employment growth since 2020	✓ - but note slowdown in growth in 2023.
Projected employment growth by 2030	✓ - but subject to government policy.
Significant replacement demand projected by 2030	✓ - employers continue to report challenges with an ageing workforce.
Evidence of skill shortages	✓
Evidence of skill gaps	✗

Digital Technologies

Factors informing inclusion in the LSIP	✓ or ✗
Priority set out in the Buckinghamshire Growth Plan	✗
Plays critical role in underpinning those sectors in Buckinghamshire Growth Plan	✓ - digital services and innovations are vital for all priority sectors.
Significant generator of GVA to Buckinghamshire	✓ - £621m GVA, based on Digital cluster definition, at least 4% GVA, with digital capabilities impacting output in other sectors. (The Buckinghamshire Economy: Industry, cluster and innovation strengths, March 2025, Buckinghamshire Council)
Significant employment in Buckinghamshire	✓ - employs over 14,000 people. The area also has employment specialisation in the Digital sector, with a location quotient of 1.2.
Experienced employment growth since 2020	✗ - limited change since 2020, potentially due to employers downsizing, or issues with classification.
Projected employment growth by 2030	✓ - mainly in higher skilled occupations, linked with other science and engineering occupations.
Significant replacement demand projected by 2030	✓ - but difficult to evaluate this specifically for digital occupations
Evidence of skill shortages	✓ - particularly programmers and software developers, plus systems installers.
Evidence of skill gaps	✓ - qualitative feedback regarding AI skills gaps

Engineering

Factors informing inclusion in the LSIP	✓ or ✗
Priority set out in the Buckinghamshire Growth Plan	✓
Plays critical role in underpinning those sectors in Buckinghamshire Growth Plan	✓
Significant generator of GVA to Buckinghamshire	✓ - significant GVA contribution from Silverstone and Westcott Enterprise Zones (see Buckinghamshire Growth Plan). Manufacturing accounts for some 9% GVA (The Buckinghamshire Economy: Industry, cluster and innovation strengths, March 2025, Buckinghamshire Council)
Significant employment in Buckinghamshire	✓ - 16,900 employed in core occupations, higher if broader occupations in construction, and digital are included
Experienced employment growth since 2020	✓ - slight growth of employment in the sector. Long term growth in key occupations, but some evidence of weaker growth since 2019.
Projected employment growth by 2030	✓ - but mainly in higher skilled professional occupations. Trends in offshoring manufacturing explains overall forecast decline in employment.
Significant replacement demand projected by 2030	✓ - particular issue with ageing workforce
Evidence of skill shortages	✓
Evidence of skill gaps	✓

Film and TV

Factors informing inclusion in the LSIP	✓ or ✗
Priority set out in the Buckinghamshire Growth Plan	✓
Plays critical role in underpinning those sectors in Buckinghamshire Growth Plan	✓ - can support corporate events, marketing activities etc.
Significant generator of GVA to Buckinghamshire	✗ - about 2%, but highly specialised locally
Significant employment in Buckinghamshire	✓ - high local employment specialisation
Experienced employment growth since 2020	✓ - but important to note significant non-payrolled employment, plus challenges in post-production / SFX
Projected employment growth by 2030	✓ - but subject to industrial strategy policy, industrial strike action, and possible USA trade policy.
Significant replacement demand projected by 2030	✓ - high replacement demand is expected for culture, media, and sport occupations, from 2020-2035.
Evidence of skill shortages	✓
Evidence of skill gaps	✓

Health and Social Care

Factors informing inclusion in the LSIP	✓ or ✗
Priority set out in the Buckinghamshire Growth Plan	✗
Plays critical role in underpinning those sectors in Buckinghamshire Growth Plan	✓ - has a role in testing and developing new products for the Life Sciences sector, plus improving workforce productivity.
Significant generator of GVA to Buckinghamshire	✓ - some 6% GVA in Buckinghamshire
Significant employment in Buckinghamshire	✓ - largest broad sector by employment in Buckinghamshire, some 31,000 employed.
Experienced employment growth since 2020	✓ - high growth across most subsectors and core occupations
Projected employment growth by 2030	✓ - mainly in professional and care occupations
Significant replacement demand projected by 2030	✓ - relevant across various occupations in the sector, particularly social workers and managers.
Evidence of skill shortages	✓ - very high demand for skilled individuals, relative to technical education and HE pipeline.
Evidence of skill gaps	✓ - qualitative feedback regarding AI skills gaps, plus carers lacking formal qualifications

Life Sciences and MedTech

The Life Sciences and MedTech sector was explored as part of this LSIP, given its importance to the Buckinghamshire Growth Plan 2025 (the local growth plan for the county) and the National Industrial Strategy 2025, its complementarities with the local engineering and health and social care sectors, and the potential for the sector's high employment growth in recent years to lead to skills shortages in the medium to long term.

The Life Sciences sector plays a significant and growing role in Buckinghamshire's economy, employing around 5,300 people and generating nearly 4% of the county's economic output in 2022³. While small, Buckinghamshire has a highly specialised and fast-developing Life Sciences and MedTech presence, with a core of around 85 biopharma and MedTech companies operating locally. This includes a strong group of around 20 high growth or high potential SMEs, contributing to specialist scientific and technical skills demand in the county. The sector consists of both pharmaceuticals, including major employers such as GE Healthcare and Danaher, and a diverse MedTech base spanning devices, diagnostics and digital health.

However, further consultation with the sector has indicated that there were no specific skills shortages issues with this sector. Despite relatively low levels of provision of HE graduates in Life Sciences subjects, employers reported a sufficient supply of graduates from local universities, such as Oxford and Reading, despite these institutions not being within Buckinghamshire. Furthermore, challenges with recruiting roles in research, regulatory, and quality control are already covered under actions for the broader engineering sector. While employers reported challenges with work-readiness skills in graduates, this was not to an extent which would warrant a bespoke intervention for the sector.

As a result, this sector was not included as a priority sector, but will be supported by broader cross-sector interventions within this LSIP, particularly work-readiness interventions. The sector will also be reviewed annually to confirm where additional support may be necessary for this sector.

³ The Buckinghamshire Economy – Industry, cluster and innovation strengths – 2025, Buckinghamshire Council

Education & Training

The education and training sector was also explored in this LSIP, due to the local sector's size, importance for the delivery of skills, significant forecast growth, and high current demand for teachers relative to supply. While sector feedback indicates these recruitment and staffing challenges are generally driven by labour market challenges, rather than lack of post-16 education, there are some actions within the scope of this Local Skills Improvement Plan which could support this sector. Education and training sector challenges, within the scope of the LSIP and identified by conversations with the sector, include a lack of work-readiness skills of new teachers, similarly to all sectors, with a particular lack of motivation and positive attitude from new teachers, as well as digital literacy and AI skills. Furthermore, challenges with providing adequate transport to schools to support the Buckinghamshire School-Centred Initial Teacher Training (SCITT) were also reported.

In conclusion, it should be noted that, given the significance of recruitment challenges in the education sector, it would not be appropriate for this plan to ignore local recruitment and skills challenges. However, given the limited ability of the LSIP to address these challenges, we will not include a formal analysis or action plan for this sector, given that we expect challenges to be addressed under general work-readiness interventions, namely Local Skills Needs 3 and 4.

Alignment with the UK Industrial Strategy (IS8)

The table below sets out how the LSIP supports priority sectors identified in the UK Industrial Strategy and Department for Education priorities. It highlights both Buckinghamshire's sector strengths and how LSIP actions contribute to addressing national skills needs.

Skills England priority sector (IS8+2)	Buckinghamshire context	LSIP response
Advanced manufacturing	Engineering is a priority sector, incorporating advanced manufacturing and high-performance engineering activities, including employers such as Martin-Baker	The LSIP supports this sector through actions to expand engineering provision (e.g. T Levels and apprenticeships), increase employer engagement in curriculum delivery, and develop higher-level and modular provision, including AI-related skills
Clean energy industries	Green skills are a cross-sector priority, particularly in construction (e.g. retrofit and low-carbon technologies)	The LSIP supports the transition to net zero through actions to expand retrofit training, promote Skills Bootcamps and develop modular provision aligned to low-carbon construction and engineering needs
Creative industries	Film and TV is a priority sector, supported by assets such as Pinewood Studios and the National Film and Television School	The LSIP supports this sector through actions to expand sector-specific provision (including T Levels and craft roles), improve access to work placements, and develop higher-level and modular provision in areas such as production, VFX and AI
Defence	Not a standalone priority sector; defence-related skills needs reflected within engineering and digital, including employers such as Martin Baker	The LSIP supports defence-related needs indirectly through engineering and digital actions, including expansion of apprenticeship pathways, AI skills development and employer-led skills provision
Digital and technologies	Digital is a priority sector, covering specialist roles and wider digital and AI capability	The LSIP supports this sector through actions to expand digital provision and apprenticeships, deliver Skills Bootcamps, improve completion rates, and support businesses to adopt digital and AI technologies
Financial services	Not identified as a priority sector based on current evidence of skills needs	No targeted LSIP interventions; skills needs addressed through wider leadership, management and digital skills actions
Life sciences	Sector present locally, including major employers, but no significant skills gaps identified requiring targeted intervention	No sector-specific LSIP actions; workforce needs supported through cross-sector interventions (engineering, health, and work-readiness) and ongoing monitoring
Professional and business services	Not identified as a priority sector based on current evidence of skills needs	No targeted LSIP interventions; addressed through cross-sector leadership, management and digital skills provision
Construction	A priority sector, driven by major infrastructure projects and housing growth, with significant and persistent skills shortages	The LSIP supports this sector through actions to expand provision at all levels, increase apprenticeship starts, promote T Levels, develop retrofit and green skills provision, and improve access through careers activity and transport solutions
Health and Social Care	A priority sector, with workforce challenges and a focus on non-clinical roles and digital transformation	The LSIP supports this sector through actions to expand provision (including T Levels and higher-level pathways), deliver Skills Bootcamps, strengthen work-readiness, and develop modular provision including digital and AI skills.

Environmental and Net Zero Goals

UNESCO defines green skills as ‘the technical knowledge and skills that enable professionals to effectively use green technologies and processes (i.e. resource efficient technologies or processes that reduce waste and minimise the environmental impact of human action); and transversal skills, as well as knowledge, values and attitudes that help them take pro-environmental decisions in their work and lives.’

According to the LSE Grantham Institute,⁴ about one in five current jobs are likely to be affected by the transition to a green economy, with workers experiencing either an increase or decrease in the demand for their skills.

The Green Jobs Taskforce⁵ Report identifies specific sectoral groups where change will be crucial to meet net zero ambitions. Of the sectors identified, those with potentially the greatest growth potential in Buckinghamshire are:

- Buildings retrofit sector
- Building fabric energy efficiency
- Modern methods of construction for retrofit and especially new builds
- Hydrogen
- Automotive

More recent analysis confirms that green skills are likely to be most relevant in the local construction and engineering sectors. Local analysis commissioned by Buckinghamshire Council⁶ identified some 151 green economy businesses in the county, creating some 40,000 jobs and £9.7bn turnover annually (in 2023). Key sectors specialised within the county’s green economy included: low carbon transport, circular economy innovation, recycling (mainly from Biffa based in the region), and energy (due to various solar and biomass companies based in the area). All of these key sectors are within the broader engineering sector, or require engineering, science, and research skills to function.

Beyond engineering, it should be noted that the draft local plan for Buckinghamshire has set a target for 95,000 additional homes to be delivered by 2040, leading to significant demand for construction workers. Skills in this sector will also need to adapt to match the demand for greener construction methods and more energy efficient buildings, allowing the UK to meet its commitment to net zero by 2050. Research suggests that there are 220,300 households that could benefit from retrofit services in the county. The mean cost of each retrofit is £12,982 and the total cost across Buckinghamshire would be £3.7bn. The same research estimates that the total number of days work to fulfil the retrofit work required is in the region of 7,191,765 days.

The ‘Greater South East Net Zero Hub Retrofit Skills Plan’ published in March 2025 with input from Buckinghamshire Business First, identified various challenges with the local supply of retrofit skills, namely:

- Low awareness among construction businesses of retrofit services and opportunities.
- Insufficient training capacity for retrofit skills within local providers.
- Need to integrate retrofit skills into existing full-time and apprenticeship programmes.
- Limited workforce pipeline, requiring more careers and engagement activity to build interest.
- Delayed starts to interventions, restricting the ability to deliver the full set of planned activities.

Buckinghamshire will continue its activities to address these challenges in retrofit skills supply, such as promoting opportunities in the sector, delivering tours of LSIF-funded training facilities, and continued engagement with employers to ensure skills provision matches employer demand.

More broadly, research conducted by the Local Government Association, would suggest that Buckinghamshire requires 1,350 heat pump jobs by 2030⁸. To put this into perspective, Nesta estimated that in 2022 there were around 3,000 heat pump engineers in the whole of the UK, with a need for 27,000 by 2028 and 62,000 by 2035.⁹

⁴ Microsoft Word - IJT UK Policy Report January 2019 FINAL NEW FOR PRINT 28 Jan.docx (lse.ac.uk)

⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/green-jobs-taskforce-report/>

⁶ An Audit of Buckinghamshire’s Green Economy – 2023. Report commissioned by Bucks LEP to assess Buckinghamshire’s green economy strengths.

⁷ Domestic Retrofit Market Intelligence and Skills Assessment (January 2023), Greater South East Net Zero Hub

⁸ Local green jobs - accelerating a sustainable economic recovery in Buckinghamshire | LG Inform

⁹ The heat pump installer gap | Nesta

According to the CITB,¹⁰ other construction roles aligned to net zero, which experienced skills shortages nationally, in 2021, are listed below. A refreshed version of this report has not been published, such that we would assume that the following priority net zero roles remain relevant for the construction sector.

- Energy assessors, as the use of Energy Performance Certificates increases.
- Retrofit coordinators, who will be essential to ensure quality as different systems are installed alongside each other.
- Project managers with an understanding of the retrofit process.
- Insulation installers
- Heat pump installers

Since publication of the Buckinghamshire LSIP 2023, new policy announcements and funding have been made available to support the transition to green jobs. The Clean Energy Jobs plan¹¹, published in 2025, includes a range of policies with implications for future construction skills. As part of this, the Warm Homes Skills Programme includes £8m in funding for 9,000 training places, up to July 2026, to deliver skills in solar panel installation, heat pump installation, and retrofit coordination. The plan also proposes to develop new apprenticeship frameworks for retrofit occupations. The implications of this plan for the local Construction sector have been considered, chiefly the opportunities to use funding for training programmes to reskill existing construction workers, and availability of funding for new construction workers skilled in greener construction methods. Indeed, the Warm Homes Plan, published in January 2026, aims to create 180,000 additional high-quality, well-paid, future-proofed jobs in energy efficiency and clean heating by 2030. The plan aims to unlock £38 billion in total investment across the Parliament, with additional funding for skills, innovation and UK manufacturing to support growth in the sector.¹² We have incorporated this intelligence into our assessment of skill shortages in the local construction sector.

Finally, regarding civil engineering and construction project design, employer evidence suggests that education and training is already responding to increased demand for green skills and awareness, driven by demand from various local councils declaring climate emergencies. Skills include considering carbon impacts in design and construction, minimizing embodied carbon, adopting natural solutions (such as Sustainable Urban Drainage Solutions (SUDs) and healthy streets which mitigate urban heat island effects), with some requirements for landscaping designers to achieve greener settlement design. However, demand for these skills is contingent on project budgets, as green measures can be prohibited by cost constraints.

Whilst many of the skills required for the net zero transition are specific to certain industries or trades, the transition will require and support an array of skills not unique to green roles. In particular, Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) skills will underpin jobs that are key to progressing the green recovery and delivering net zero. As a result, other skills that are expected to be critical for the workforce to deliver net zero include¹³:

- Digital and data skills – such as modelling and interpreting datasets for measuring and monitoring the carbon footprint of a business in the drive to net zero.
- Project and business management skills – such as lifecycle analysis/costing; carbon literacy for procurement; planning, impact and risk assessments etc.
- Leadership, education and communication skills – such as disseminating climate change projections and impacts etc.

Overall, adjustments will be required in future to current training and qualification frameworks to reflect the ‘greening’ of job roles. Likewise, new economic activity will also generate new occupations which will subsequently need new qualification and training frameworks. To conclude, green skills have been addressed in this LSIP by:

- Supporting new skills required in the construction sector to respond to demand for housing retrofit and modern construction methods.
- Supporting digital and data analysis roles, supporting businesses active in net zero to model and measure impact.
- Supporting engineering roles, highly relevant for supporting local businesses active in net zero innovation, such as transport, circular economy, and energy.

:

¹⁰ net-zero-and-construction-perspectives-and-pathways-november-2021.pdf (citb.co.uk)

¹¹ Clean Energy Jobs Plan, DESNZ, 2025

¹² Warm Homes Plan, DESNZ, 2026

¹³ Skills for a Green Economy (publishing.service.gov.uk)

Equality of Opportunity

During our assessment of skills shortages and gaps within the priority sectors, we have identified circumstances where barriers to equal opportunity may play a role in the challenges faced by these sectors.

Structural Barriers

- High entry costs (Film and TV)
- Qualification and progression barriers (Health & Social Care)
- Digital literacy (cross-sector)
- Transport and logistical access issues to rural / remote sites (cross-sector)

Socioeconomic Inequalities

- Freelancing instability deters those without financial safety nets.
- Awareness gaps limit access for young people and career changers.
- Differences in sector subject area course uptake between Opportunity Bucks Wards and non-Opportunity Bucks Wards

Underrepresentation in Key Sectors

- Women in construction and engineering
- Lower-income groups in Film and TV
- Ageing workforce challenges in Health & Social Care, Construction, and Engineering.

Our report consistently emphasises the need for widening participation, removing barriers, and improving outreach, given that this is essential for increasing the available talent pool for employers. Indeed, analysis by the Buckinghamshire Economic Intelligence Observatory¹⁴ concludes that the local labour market may be constrained by a lack of young people: 'Buckinghamshire has a smaller proportion of residents aged 19 to 37 than the England average, particularly in the 19- to 22-year-old age group. This is common in predominantly rural English counties.' Furthermore, 'on an annual basis, around 2,000 more 19-year-olds move out of Buckinghamshire than move in., the majority of them doing so to attend out-of-county universities.' These factors limit the availability of young people in the local talent pool, such that equality of opportunity becomes a critical part of maximising the local labour supply and resolving skills shortages.

This LSIP is also aligned with the Buckinghamshire Works Plan, the local Get Britain Working plan for Buckinghamshire, published **in 2026. Buckinghamshire Works sets** out how partners will reduce unemployment and economic inactivity and ensure residents can 'prepare for, enter, stay in and progress in work', emphasising the need for a skilled, healthy, and adaptable workforce to boost productivity and address persistent barriers to employment. We will align our interventions with this plan to ensure that economically inactive individuals can access relevant post-16 education and training relevant for this LSIP's priority needs, namely through focus on Opportunity Bucks wards where these issues may be more pronounced.

The Buckinghamshire Works plan recognises acute challenges with economic inactivity in designated Opportunity Bucks (OB) ward areas. These are the wards, identified by Buckinghamshire Council, in which residents are experiencing significant economic hardship. As the Buckinghamshire Works plan is prioritising these wards for supporting individuals into work, the LSIP will also recognise residents from these communities may require additional support to access post-16 education and training, to access jobs in priority sectors for local economic growth.

Indeed, there is some evidence to suggest differences in course uptake by learners from Opportunity Bucks (OB) ward areas, and non-OB wards, suggesting potential barriers to certain career options. For example, according to Individual Learner Record data for 2023/24, 41% of Buckinghamshire learners starting a 16-19 funded course¹⁵ in Health and Social Care subjects were from an OB ward, compared to 28% for all courses. For art, media, and communication 16-19 courses, the rate was even lower at 21%, reflecting broader challenges with including individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds into the creative industries sector, as evidenced by the British Film Institute¹⁶. For Manufacturing and Engineering 16-19 funded courses, 26% of Buckinghamshire learners starting a 16-19 course were from an OB ward, slightly lower than the all-course average, and only 22% of Manufacturing and Engineering apprenticeship starts, by Buckinghamshire residents, were from an OB ward (compared to 25% for all apprenticeships). As a result, it will be important to ensure post-16 education options are promoted fairly across OB wards, recognising that some courses may be less visible or popular within OB ward areas.

¹⁴ Buckinghamshire: Labour Market and Skills Analysis, 2025, Buckinghamshire Economic Intelligence Observatory

¹⁵ Includes diplomas, BTECs and other qualifications. T Levels are not included.

¹⁶ <https://core-cms.bfi.org.uk/media/22344/download>

Furthermore, analysis of ILR data for Buckinghamshire, in the 2023/24 academic year, may suggest that learners with learning disabilities or other health / disabilities were less likely to start a T Level or Apprenticeship than 16-19 funded provision more broadly. In 2023/24, 34% of Buckinghamshire learners starting a 16-19 funded course (not including T Levels) described themselves as LLDD (Learners with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities). However, only 18% of T Level starters were LLDD, for Buckinghamshire learners in 2023/24. Similarly, only some 17% of apprenticeship framework starts were by Buckinghamshire learners with LLDD. In addition, the emerging 'Get Buckinghamshire Working Plan,' being developed by Buckinghamshire Council, has identified that local residents with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) were more likely to not be in education, employment or training (NEET). Given that LLDD status may act as a barrier to uptake of these post-16 education and training options, it remains important for provision to reflect the needs and preferences of LLDD individuals, to ensure equality of opportunity and improve the supply of appropriately skilled individuals.

Finally, we recognise that lack of information on training and career opportunities can also be a barrier to access to opportunities. Throughout the action plan in this LSIP, we have identified opportunities for promoting careers opportunities through the Bucks Skills Hub website, as well as working with the Careers and Enterprise Company to promote opportunities in priority sectors in schools.

In conclusion, we have identified areas where individuals with certain characteristics may experience additional barriers to accessing training and employment opportunities to resolve skills shortages in the county's priority sector. These are reflected in a range of actions within the action plan; the detailed implementation of these will also be informed by alignment with the Buckinghamshire Works plan.

- **Work-readiness and professional skills provision**, particularly important for SEND and NEET learners, and individuals with mental health conditions, where lack of these skills may act as a barrier to work.
- **NEET-focused programmes** for the construction sector
- Careers activity aimed at schools, parents/guardians, teachers and career changers, to challenge sector stereotypes, resolve information barriers, and encourage young people from a range of backgrounds to work in priority sectors.
- **Placement strategies and expansion of work placements**, to support work-readiness skills and careers awareness for individuals from groups underrepresented in priority sectors, from disadvantaged backgrounds etc.
- **Transport solutions for apprentices and learners** for the Construction and Engineering sector, to support learners from disadvantaged backgrounds without private car access.
- **Flexible modular provision (Levels 3–7) across sectors**, to supports learners with caring responsibilities, work commitments, disabilities, and other special requirements.
- **Into-work programmes and Skills Bootcamps** (for Construction, Digital, Film and TV, Health & Social Care) to support individuals to enter or change careers, without requiring traditional qualifications.
- Level 2 and 3 entry provision across sectors, relevant for OB wards where educational attainment is relatively lower.
- **Leadership, management, coaching and confidence-building modules**, particularly beneficial for career progression in individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Governance structure

Overall governance framework

The development of Buckinghamshire's Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) 2.0 has been overseen through a clear and well-established governance framework, jointly operated by Buckinghamshire Business First (BBF), as the Employer Representative Body, and Buckinghamshire Council, as the Strategic Authority.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between BBF and Buckinghamshire Council sets out the respective roles and responsibilities for LSIP development, approval and oversight, including arrangements for sign-off, progress reporting and ongoing collaboration.

Role of Buckinghamshire Council as Strategic Authority

Buckinghamshire Council has played an active and continuous role in the development of LSIP 2.0. Regular monthly meetings have taken place between BBF and the Council's Corporate Director of Resources, who oversees the LSIP on behalf of the Council, providing strategic leadership, ensuring alignment with wider Council priorities and supporting effective and timely decision-making.

These arrangements have ensured that statutory responsibilities have been met while maintaining the employer-led nature of the LSIP.

Skills Strategy Board oversight

BBF reports formally on LSIP progress to the Buckinghamshire Skills Strategy Board, which provides strategic oversight and assurance.

The Skills Strategy Board includes:

- the chairs of the Sector Employer Groups, the Director of the Buckinghamshire Health and Social Care sAcademy (BHSCA)
- the Buckinghamshire Customer Service Leader, Department for Work and Pensions

ensuring that employer-led sector insight and system-wide health and care perspectives directly inform LSIP governance and decision-making. The Skills Strategy Board, in turn, reports to Buckinghamshire Council's Place-Based Growth Board, embedding the LSIP within the Council's wider economic and growth governance arrangements. The relationships between BBF, the Skills Strategy Board, Sector Employer Groups and the Council are illustrated in Fig. 1 below.

Engagement with Jobcentre Plus and DWP

Jobcentre Plus (JCP), as part of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), has been engaged as a key partner in the development of LSIP 2.0. JCP representatives have contributed to Sector Employer Group discussions and wider stakeholder engagement activity, providing insight into local labour market conditions, jobseeker needs and barriers to employment. In addition, DWP representation within local governance structures, including the Buckinghamshire Skills Strategy Board, has supported alignment between employment and skills priorities.

This partnership will continue through the delivery phase of the LSIP. JCP will play an important role in aligning employment support with skills provision, including through engagement with Work Coaches and Employer Advisers across local Jobcentres in Aylesbury, Chesham and High Wycombe. Buckinghamshire Business First will also work with JCP on the development of the emerging Jobs and Careers Service, ensuring that LSIP priorities are reflected in future delivery arrangements.

Alignment with local strategies and place-based priorities

The development of LSIP 2.0 has been closely aligned with Buckinghamshire Council's Skills and Employment Strategy, drawing on shared intelligence, consistent sector priorities and complementary policy objectives. This has ensured a coherent, joined-up approach to skills planning across the county, avoiding duplication and reinforcing shared outcomes.

The LSIP has also been designed in part to support the aims of Opportunity Bucks, particularly in relation to improving access to skills, supporting progression into employment and ensuring that provision aligns with local labour market opportunities and inclusion objectives.

Sector engagement and officer involvement

Relevant officers from Buckinghamshire Council have actively contributed to all Sector Employer Group meetings throughout the development of LSIP 2.0. This direct involvement has supported the testing of evidence, shaping of sector priorities and alignment of employer-defined needs with wider place-based strategies and delivery mechanisms.

This approach has strengthened both the quality of the LSIP and its integration into the wider local skills system.

Approval arrangements and delegated authority

To support timely and effective governance, Sarah Murphy-Brookman, Corporate Director of Resources at Buckinghamshire Council, was provided with delegated authority to approve the LSIP draft on behalf of the Council, in accordance with the governance arrangements set out in the MOU. This ensured that the LSIP could progress efficiently while maintaining appropriate statutory oversight.

Ongoing delivery, monitoring and review

These governance arrangements are designed to support not only the development but also the ongoing delivery, monitoring and review of the LSIP. Through regular reporting, shared oversight and continued employer and Council engagement, the framework provides a robust basis for tracking impact, responding to emerging skills needs and refining priorities over time.

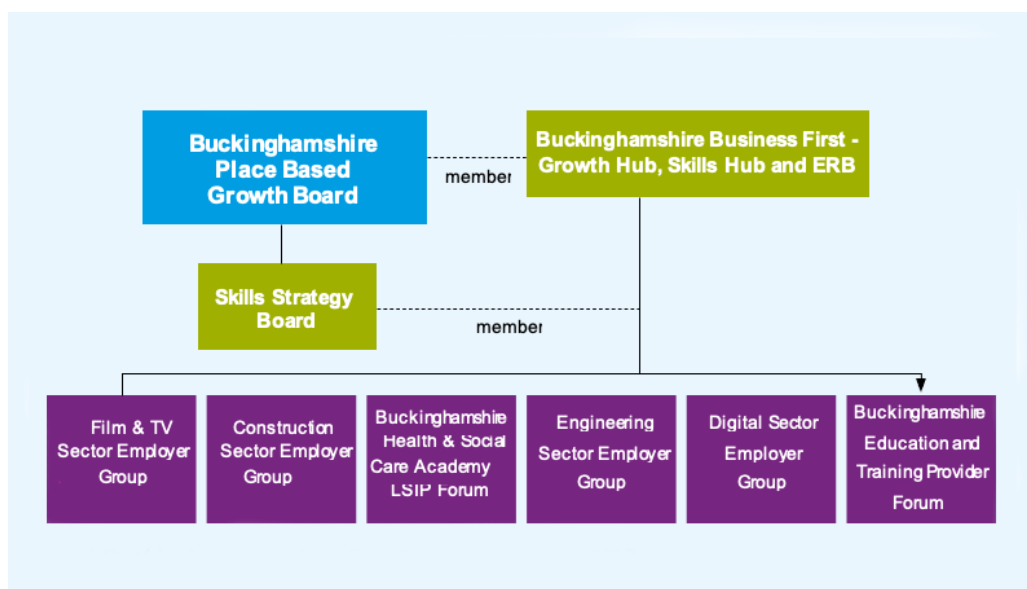


Fig.1 Buckinghamshire Skills Structure from 1st April 2023



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