



Buckinghamshire's Local Skills Improvement Plan

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Buckinghamshire LSIP 2.0 on a page

What is the LSIP?

The Buckinghamshire Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) 2.0 sets out the employer-led priorities for post-16 skills and training across the county for the next three years. It aligns education, training and employment support with what Buckinghamshire employers need now and in the future to support productivity, inclusive growth and good jobs.

LSIP 2.0 builds on the success of LSIP 1.0, moving from identifying skills shortages alone to addressing productivity, progression, work-readiness and workforce adaptation in a fast-changing labour market.

Why it matters for Buckinghamshire

- A strong economy with globally significant clusters (film & TV, high-performance engineering, space, life sciences)
- A predominantly SME business base, often struggling to recruit, upskill and adapt
- Rising numbers of young people who are NEET, and learners with SEND needing flexible pathways
- Rapid technological change, particularly the impact of AI across all occupations
- The LSIP provides a practical roadmap to help employers, providers and partners respond together.

Six overarching LSIP priorities

Six overarching LSIP priorities

LSIP 2.0 prioritises action to:

- Strengthen entry-level pathways (levels 1–2) into priority sectors
- Expand higher-level technical skills to support progression and productivity
- Embed strong work-readiness and professional skills across all provision
- Raise AI and digital capability across the workforce
- Improve leadership and management skills, particularly for SMEs
- Increase flexible upskilling routes for the existing workforce

What needs to change

The LSIP identifies agreed, employer-validated changes across the system:

- Better alignment of full-time, apprenticeship and HE provision with employer needs
- More high-quality work placements and employer engagement
- Increased access to short courses, bootcamps and modular learning
- Support for SMEs to adopt AI and digital technologies productively
- Greater flexibility for learners who are NEET (aged 16-24) or have SEND

How it fits with the wider system

LSIP 2.0 sits alongside:

- Buckinghamshire's Economic Growth Plan
- Buckinghamshire Works (local Get Britain Working plan) and Connect to Work
- Buckinghamshire Skills & Employment Strategy 2024–2029
- National reforms including The UK's Modern Industrial Strategy and the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor
- Together, these provide a coherent, employer-led approach to skills, employment and inclusive growth in Buckinghamshire.

Priority sectors



CONSTRUCTION



DIGITAL



ENGINEERING



FILM and TV



HEALTH and
SOCIAL CARE

Cross- sector priorities



Work-readiness and
professional skills



Management and
leadership skills



Digital and AI literacy



Green skills: climate
adaption and mitigation



Introduction

Buckinghamshire's first Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP 1.0), published in August 2023, focused on tackling acute skills shortages in several strategically important sectors. It supported over £11 million¹ of investment and enabled major advances: new provision and facilities in construction, engineering, digital, health and social care, and film and TV; the development of the Bucks Engineering Hub; the expansion of Skills Bootcamps; and the creation of Screen Bucks.

LSIP 1.0 established a robust baseline of employer engagement, improved pathways into priority sectors, and strengthened collaboration between businesses and local providers.

Building on the progress achieved through LSIP 1.0, LSIP 2.0 moves beyond identifying shortages in skills. It reflects a more complex set of challenges facing Buckinghamshire's economy and workforce: rising numbers of young people (aged 16-24) who are NEET, increasing support needs among learners with SEND, shifting qualification structures, and rapid technological change—particularly the growing impact of AI across all occupations. Employers are no longer focused solely on recruitment difficulties. They now emphasise the need to unlock productivity within the existing workforce, adapt job roles at pace, and strengthen core skills that underpin agility, confidence and progression. SMEs, which form the majority of Buckinghamshire's business base, consistently report that they need more accessible upskilling routes, trusted guidance on AI adoption, and practical support to navigate cost pressures and skill gaps.

Updated evidence shows that the priority technical pathways identified in LSIP 1.0—particularly in construction, engineering, digital, film and TV, and health and social care—remain essential to the county's future prosperity. These pathways now need to be strengthened, enriched and promoted, ensuring that young people, jobseekers, adults seeking to retrain, and those in Opportunity Bucks² wards are more aware of opportunities in high value sectors. Employers also highlight persistent shortages in work-readiness and professional skills, including communication, resilience, initiative, and critical thinking. These gaps affect both new entrants and the existing workforce and have become more pronounced since the pandemic.

Across all sectors, the influence of AI and digital technologies has become a defining theme. Businesses are looking to integrate AI into workflows, client services and operational processes, but many, especially SMEs, require tailored support to understand how AI can be implemented safely and productively. This has increased demand for applied digital capability, job specific AI skills, leadership and management capability, and flexible, modular learning that enables staff to adapt quickly. LSIP 2.0 also highlights several policy related issues that will influence delivery in Buckinghamshire.

¹ Buckinghamshire LSIP Progress Report 2023-4

² Opportunity Bucks is Buckinghamshire Council's place-based programme focused on improving opportunities and outcomes in ten wards across the county experiencing the greatest levels of disadvantage. <https://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/community-and-safety/opportunity-bucks/>

The introduction of V Levels presents a valuable opportunity to improve vocational pathways, but in Buckinghamshire's education landscape, with sixth forms and technical provision delivered through separate institutions, combining A Levels and V Levels within a single timetable is likely to be difficult, limiting the intended flexibility for learners. Similarly, the new Apprenticeship Units could provide an important mechanism for short, stackable upskilling aligned with employer needs. As these programmes have only recently been announced, employers and providers will need sufficient clarity on scope, eligibility and delivery arrangements in order to understand how they can support the growing demand for flexible learning and be incorporated effectively into planning over the next three years.

Through this evidence, LSIP 2.0 identifies a clear set of opportunities and challenges that will shape the next phase of delivery. Opportunities include expanding high quality work placements; improving work readiness through a refreshed professional skills model; promoting technical pathways through T Levels, V Levels and modular HE provision; clustering apprenticeship delivery around hubs such as Westcott and Silverstone; and supporting SMEs to adopt AI and digital tools to boost productivity. The challenges include low take up of some technical pathways, limited placement capacity in sectors such as construction and engineering, cost pressures that discourage SMEs from training and recruitment, rising numbers of young people who are NEET and SEND learners requiring more flexible support, and uncertainty created by national qualification reform.

LSIP 2.0 sets out a coordinated programme of employer validated changes to address these challenges. It prioritises:

- Strengthening full time, apprenticeship and higher level technical pathways in all priority sectors.
- Improving work-readiness and embedding a refreshed model of professional skills across education and training.
- Expanding high quality work placements and exposure to the workplace.
- Increasing access to short courses and modular learning to support upskilling, reskilling and lifelong learning.
- Supporting SMEs to adopt AI and digital technologies effectively.
- Ensuring that providers can respond flexibly to individual learner needs, particularly those who are NEET or have SEND.

Together, these actions create a practical, employer led roadmap for the next three years. LSIP 2.0 builds directly on the achievements of LSIP 1.0 while addressing new structural and policy related challenges. It aims to support Buckinghamshire's high value sectors, raise productivity across its predominantly SME economy, and ensure that learners and workers of all ages have the skills, confidence and support required to succeed in a fast changing labour market.

What is the LSIP?

Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs) aim to ensure that post 16 education and training responds to employer needs and supports local economic growth. They set out an agreed set of actionable, employer led priorities that businesses, providers and stakeholders can work on together to improve skills provision.

LSIPs are intended to:

- Place employers at the heart of the local skills system, ensuring their workforce needs shape future provision.
- Strengthen direct and dynamic collaboration between employers, providers and local stakeholders.
- Help people gain the skills needed for good jobs, supporting progression, productivity and opportunity.

The Government sees LSIPs as part of a ten year programme of change, delivered in rolling three year cycles. This report represents Buckinghamshire's second Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP 2.0), building on the foundations of LSIP 1.0 and incorporating updated evidence, deeper employer engagement and refreshed priorities for the next phase of delivery.

Who it is for?

This plan is aimed at stakeholders with a shared interest in strengthening Buckinghamshire's workforce and supporting local economic growth, including:

- Employers – to demonstrate the work underway to tackle skills gaps and shortages and highlight practical ways to shape and support emerging solutions.
- Education and Training Providers – to help identify priority areas for curriculum development, investment and partnership working.
- Learners and Jobseekers – to raise awareness of the opportunities in Buckinghamshire's high value sectors and pathways into good local jobs.
- Other key stakeholders – including local government, Skills England, DWP, careers bodies and voluntary organisations, to signal where continued collaboration and support can accelerate progress.

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

Strategic and economic context

The Buckinghamshire Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) is set within a dynamic and evolving economic landscape, shaped by both national priorities and distinctive local strengths. In line with Skills England's [Guidance for Developing a Local Skills Improvement Plan \(LSIP\)](#), this section outlines how the LSIP aligns with the broader strategic and economic context for Buckinghamshire, referencing the area's economic plans, employment strategies, and sector priorities.

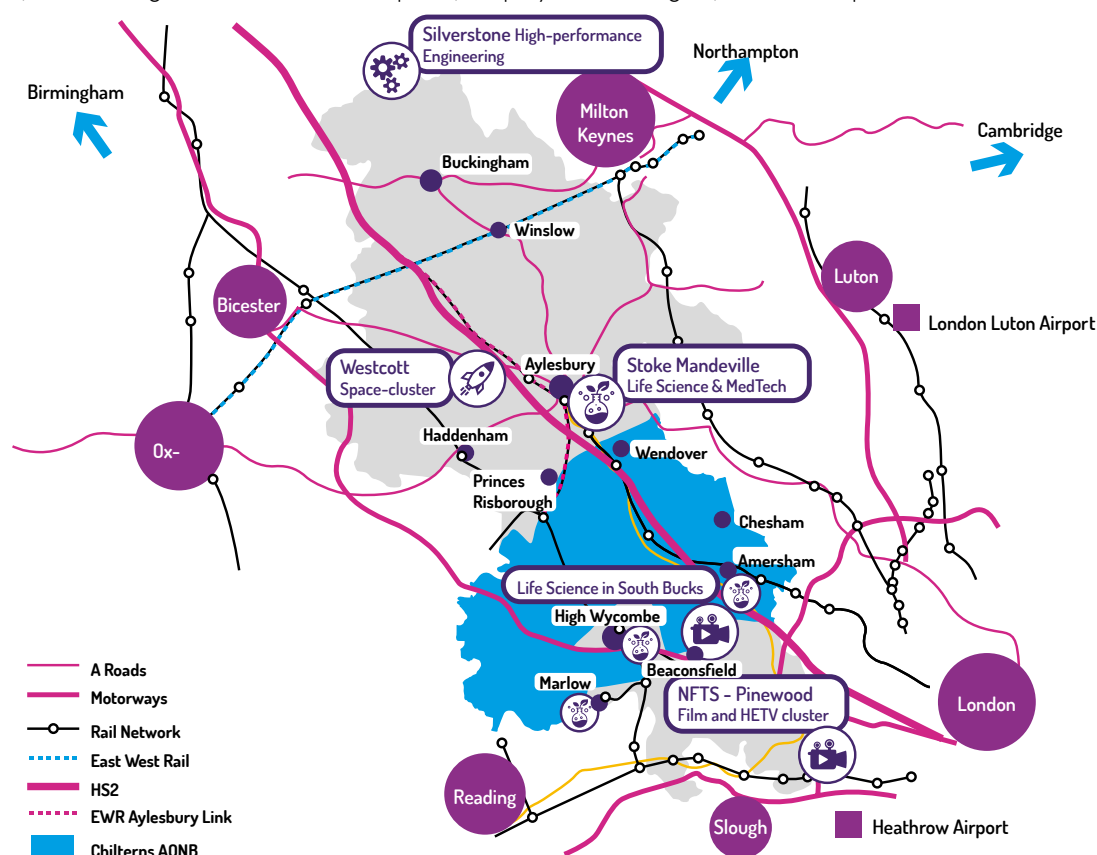


Fig. 1: Location of high-value sector clusters in Buckinghamshire. Source: Buckinghamshire's Economic Growth Plan, September 2025

Buckinghamshire's economic vision and priorities

[Buckinghamshire's Economic Growth Plan](#) (2025) articulates a bold vision for 2035: to secure a productive and prosperous future by leveraging the County's locational advantages and globally leading industries. The plan identifies five strategic priorities:

1. Growing high value sectors (notably space, high-performance technology, film and high end television, and life sciences)
2. Enhancing place and infrastructure
3. Investing in people and skills
4. Fostering innovation
5. Supporting partnerships and collaboration

The Buckinghamshire LSIP plays a central role in supporting delivery of these priorities by ensuring that education and training provision responds to the workforce and productivity needs of Buckinghamshire's priority growth sectors and its predominantly SME led economy. Buckinghamshire sits at the heart of the Oxford–Cambridge Growth Corridor, a strategic growth cluster for the UK with globally significant capabilities in science and technology. The county benefits from some strong transport links to London, and a network of innovation assets. The county's economy, valued at £19.2 billion Gross Value Added in 2023, is characterised by a high density of SMEs, resilience to recent economic shocks, and world class clusters in space and aerospace, including drone technologies (Westcott), high-performance engineering (Silverstone), and creative industries (Pinewood Studios and the National Film and Television School). Life Sciences and MedTech, as well as Digital Technologies, also represent significant and growing strengths. Much of the county is rural in character, particularly in the central and northern areas, with consequential implications for residents' access to employment and training provision. These structural characteristics reinforce the importance of flexible, employer led skills pathways and strong collaboration between employers, providers and partners.

Economic Challenges and Opportunities

Despite these assets, Buckinghamshire's productivity growth has lagged national averages over the past 15 years.

Key challenges include:

- A relatively small tradeable economy sector (43% of GVA, below the national average. This refers to businesses with products or services traded outside their immediate geography, which tend to have larger markets and be more productive than non-tradeable businesses).
- Historic under investment in infrastructure and innovation
- A shortage of large, productive firms and a dominance of micro and small businesses
- Recruitment difficulties, skills gaps, and high housing costs
- Out-commuting, particularly to London, as well as the area being a net exporter of young adults. As a result, the skills of the county's residents are not always accessible to the county's businesses.

The [Labour Market and Skills Analysis 2025](#) highlights that low productivity sectors are becoming increasingly dominant, while high-value sectors, though small, are critical to future growth. The county's workforce is highly skilled, with a greater proportion in managerial and professional roles than the national average, but there are persistent shortages in specialist technical skills, particularly in engineering, digital and other technical occupations. Employers also highlight ongoing concerns about work readiness, including communication, problem solving and broader professional skills, which remain barriers to effective recruitment. They consistently feedback that these skills issues shape their recruitment challenges and influence how well local education and training provision aligns with the needs of the modern economy. Addressing these issues is a shared priority across the Economic Growth Plan, Buckinghamshire Works and the LSIP, with the LSIP providing the employer-validated evidence to shape skills system responses.

Alignment with National and Local Strategies

The Buckinghamshire Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) aligns directly with the [Buckinghamshire Economic Growth Plan](#), the [Buckinghamshire Skills and Employment Strategy 2024–29](#) and [Buckinghamshire Works](#) (the county's local Get Britain Working plan). Together, these strategies form a coherent, place-based framework for improving skills, employment and economic participation across Buckinghamshire, with the LSIP providing the employer-led evidence and priorities that underpin delivery.

Alignment with the Buckinghamshire Economic Growth Plan

The Buckinghamshire Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) aligns with the priorities and sectoral focus of the Buckinghamshire Economic Growth Plan. The Growth Plan identifies key high-value clusters, including space, high-performance technology, and film and high-end television. Strategic Priority 3: of the Plan is "Investing in People and Skills", which focuses on strengthening skills supply and employer engagement, including targeted action in areas such as sustainable construction. The LSIP supports the Growth Plan through initiatives set out in the table below.

Economic Growth Plan requirement	LSIP response
Improve local skills supply pipelines through delivery of the Skills and Employment Strategy and LSIP	Establishes employer-led priorities to align post-16 education and training provision with labour market demand, supporting skills pipelines for Buckinghamshire's key growth clusters (including space, high-performance technology, and film and TV) and addressing priority skills needs identified under the Plan's "Investing in People and Skills" priority, including sustainable construction
Deepen collaboration between employers and education and training providers	Delivers structured employer engagement through Sector Employer Groups and wider business consultation, enabling employers in key growth clusters and across associated supply chains to shape curriculum and provision, in line with the Plan's focus on partnership working between industry and educators
Strengthen sector-specific skills provision (e.g. Screen Bucks for the creative industries)	Identifies sector-specific skills gaps within Buckinghamshire's key clusters (space, high-performance technology, and film and TV), alongside priority skills areas such as sustainable construction, and sets out targeted actions to improve technical pathways, training provision and progression routes, including initiatives such as Screen Bucks
Improve business productivity through workforce development, including leadership and management	Promotes upskilling, leadership and management development, and wider adoption of training aligned to employer needs, supporting productivity growth across Buckinghamshire's high-value sectors and ensuring the workforce has the skills required to support growth, infrastructure delivery and the transition to net zero

Alignment with Buckinghamshire Works

Buckinghamshire Works sets out how partners will reduce unemployment and economic inactivity and support residents to prepare for, enter, stay in and progress in work, with a focus on targeted, person-centred support. The LSIP supports these objectives by strengthening the skills system that underpins employment outcomes:

Buckinghamshire Works requirement	LSIP response
Address skills mismatches that prevent residents from accessing and progressing in work	Aligns education and training provision with employer demand, ensuring learners develop the skills required for available local jobs
Support residents in Opportunity Bucks wards and priority groups facing barriers to employment	Identifies gaps in participation and progression and promotes more accessible, inclusive and locally relevant training pathways
Enable residents to prepare for and sustain employment through coordinated support	Strengthens work-readiness, progression pathways and employer engagement to ensure training leads to sustained employment outcomes
Integrate employment support with wider provision (e.g. Connect to Work and other programmes)	Ensures that employment support activity is underpinned by accessible, employer-informed skills provision aligned to labour market opportunities

Buckinghamshire Works places particular emphasis on supporting residents with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and those facing persistent barriers to employment, including through programmes such as Connect to Work, which aim to support residents into sustained employment. Evidence from the LSIP's analysis of learner participation reinforces the need for this focus, highlighting disparities such as lower uptake of certain pathways and lower participation in advanced technical routes, including T Levels and apprenticeships, among learners with learning difficulties and disabilities.

Alignment with the Skills and Employment Strategy

The Skills and Employment Strategy establishes a shared vision for a future-focused, agile and collaborative skills system. It explicitly recognises the LSIP as a key mechanism for delivery. The LSIP supports this by:

- Providing employer-validated evidence and priorities to inform curriculum planning and reform
- Strengthening work-readiness and progression pathways for young people and adults
- Supporting expansion and improvement of apprenticeships, T Levels and technical pathways
- Enhancing lifelong learning and adult upskilling aligned to local labour market need

Alignment with National Priorities

The LSIP also supports national priorities set out in the Government's Modern Industrial Strategy, which identifies key growth sectors (the "IS8") including Digital Technologies, Creative Industries, Clean Energy (including retrofit), Advanced Manufacturing and Health and Social Care. Buckinghamshire's locally identified priority sectors show strong overlap with these national priorities, ensuring that LSIP activity contributes to nationally significant areas of economic growth.

National policy also emphasises the need to strengthen skills systems to support productivity, inclusion and technological change. The LSIP responds to these priorities as follows:

National priority	LSIP response
Strengthen digital and AI capability across the workforce	Embeds digital skills and AI awareness across sectors, with a focus on supporting adoption by SMEs and improving digital capability across occupations.
Expand flexible, modular and life-long learning pathways	Supports the development of more flexible provision, including shorter courses and upskilling opportunities aligned to employer demand
Reform apprenticeships and technical education pathways	Promotes expansion and improvement of apprenticeships, T Levels and sector-specific technical routes, aligned to local skills needs
Strengthen employer engagement and progression pathways	Uses employer-led engagement, including Sector Employer Groups aligned to key growth sectors (including those identified through the Industrial Strategy), to identify skills mismatches, inform curriculum development, and strengthen training pipelines and progression into employment
Improve access, inclusion and participation, particularly for disadvantaged groups and learners with SEND	Identifies participation gaps and promotes more inclusive and accessible pathways, including targeted action to support learners from disadvantaged communities and those with learning difficulties and disabilities

Further detail on the alignment between the LSIP and national sector priorities, including areas of overlap with Buckinghamshire's priority sectors, is set out in Annex C.

Delivery of the LSIP will also be supported by engagement with key workforce and employment partners. Jobcentre Plus has been engaged throughout the development of the LSIP, including participation in Sector Employer Groups and representation within local governance structures, and will continue to play an active role in delivery, including through alignment with the emerging Jobs and Careers Service and ongoing engagement with Work Coaches and Employer Advisers.

In addition, as part of LSIP delivery, Buckinghamshire Business First will engage with trade unions to strengthen understanding of workforce perspectives, including sector-specific skills needs and their implications for post-16 education and training. Further detail on stakeholder engagement and delivery arrangements is set out in Annex C.

1. Local skills needs

The identification of Buckinghamshire's priority sectors and overarching skills needs was informed by the full Stage 1 evidence gathering process, including data analysis, employer engagement, provider insight and alignment with Buckinghamshire's Economic Growth Plan. Using criteria agreed jointly with Buckinghamshire Council, we reviewed all major sectors against factors such as their contribution to GVA, scale of employment, recent and projected growth, replacement demand, and clear evidence of skills shortages and gaps. This process identified seven sectors as being of critical importance to the county's economy and appropriate for intervention through the LSIP. As with LSIP 1.0, the intention was to focus on those areas where coordinated action could have the greatest impact on economic performance and labour market outcomes. Taken together, this evidence ensures that the LSIP's prioritisation of sectors and skills directly supports the delivery of Buckinghamshire's Economic Growth Plan 2025 and complements Buckinghamshire Works by addressing both growth driven demand and barriers to labour market participation.

Subsequent consultation with employers enabled these initial findings to be refined. While the education and training sector met several of the inclusion criteria, employers and providers agreed that its recruitment difficulties were driven largely by national labour market dynamics and were, therefore, unlikely to be addressed successfully through the LSIP. Employer insight also confirmed the continued relevance of the priorities established in LSIP 1.0, including persistent shortages in technical roles, the need to strengthen work readiness, and the increasing influence of digital literacy and technological change — helping to shape our 6 overarching skills priorities presented in this section. Together, this evidence base provides a clear rationale for the skills needs that the LSIP will address over the next three years.

Priority sectors

The identified priority sectors in the LSIP are as follows. A fuller overview of the approach taken to identify the priority sectors can be found at Annex C.



CONSTRUCTION



DIGITAL



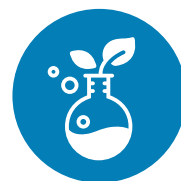
ENGINEERING



FILM and TV



HEALTH and
SOCIAL CARE



Occupation-
specific high
priority needs

Occupation-specific high priority needs includes three occupations that are the sole occupations identified as a priority skill need in their respective sectors. They include:



Chefs



HGV Drivers



Landscape Gardeners

As part of the LSIP consultation employers in Life Sciences and Medtech were engaged given the sector's importance to Buckinghamshire. Whilst there is no significant provision in Buckinghamshire, the county is strongly supported by specialist higher level skills provision in neighbouring counties, allowing employers to access skilled labour with ease. However, this will be reviewed annually to ensure this continues to be the case.

Cross-sector skills

In addition to sector specific needs, employers consistently highlighted cross sector skills that underpin recruitment, retention and progression. These skills are particularly important for supporting young people (aged 16-24) who are NEET, learners with SEND and adults seeking to re enter or progress in work, reinforcing the shared objectives of the LSIP and Buckinghamshire Works.

Four cross-sector skills were also initially identified and validated with businesses in Buckinghamshire are as follows. A fuller overview of the approach taken to identify the cross-sector skills can be found in Annex C.



Work-readiness and professional skills



Management and leadership skills



Digital and AI literacy

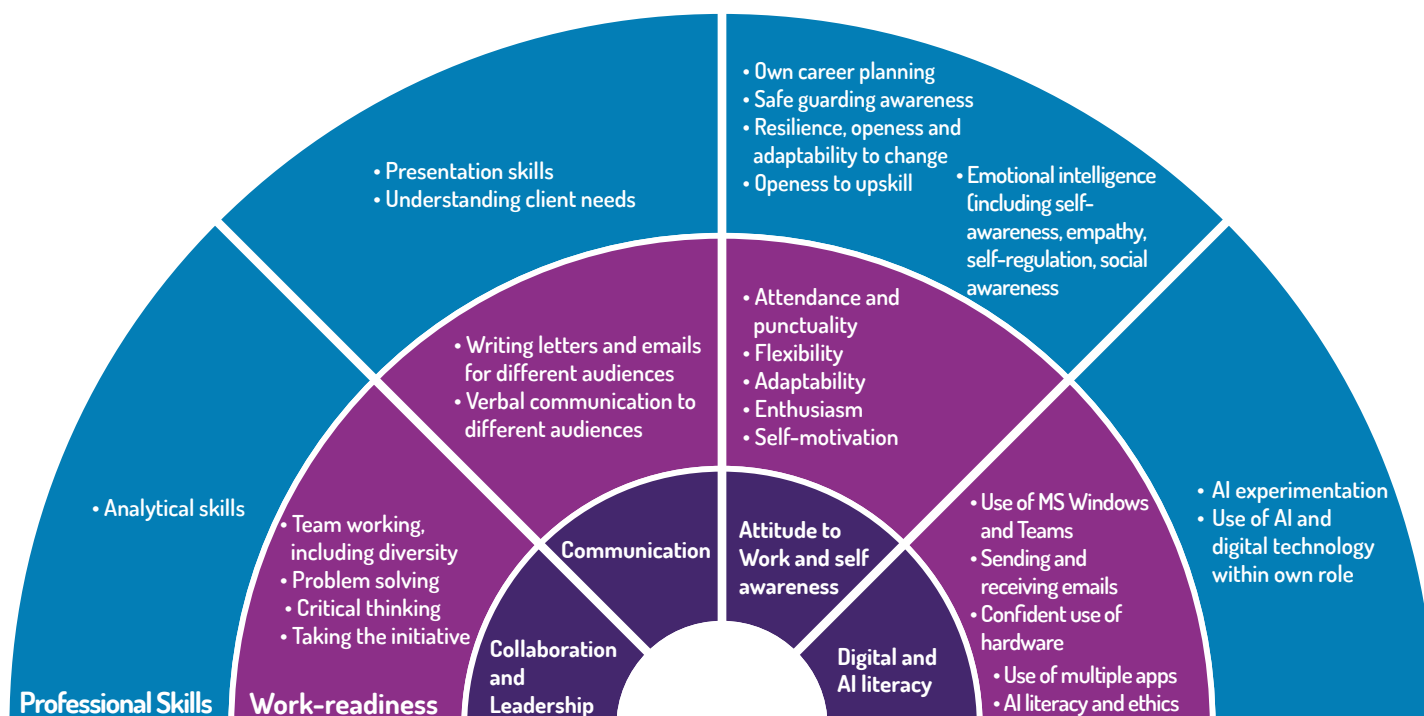


Green skills: climate adaption and mitigation

These cross-sector skills underpin delivery of the six overarching LSIP priorities and cut across all priority sectors, rather than forming standalone sector-specific interventions.

Buckinghamshire work-readiness model

Fig 2. Buckinghamshire Work-Readiness model



LSIP overarching priorities

An analysis of the priority sectors and consultation with businesses and partners in the county have identified the following six priorities:

Priority	Rationale
1 Ensure sufficient entry level skills provision ³ in construction, engineering, digital, film & TV, and health & social care to meet growth and replacement demand.	The construction, engineering, and health and social care sectors continue to require additional entry level workers to meet growth and replacement demand. The film and TV sector is predicted to have significant elevated demand in the next 18 months following a volatile economic period.
2 Ensure sufficient higher level skills provision in the same priority sectors as above to support progression, productivity and specialist workforce needs.	As part of their need to fill vacancies to meet growth and replacement needs, various sectors, including construction, engineering, film and TV, and health and social care require new entrants with higher level skills.
3 Ensure new entrants and existing employees develop strong work-readiness and professional skills, aligned to what employers consistently identify as essential.	Businesses across Buckinghamshire continue to require new entrants to possess a wide range of work-readiness skills including punctuality, communication, and team working. A model was developed during the first LSIP which has been updated (see Fig.2 below). However, businesses in Buckinghamshire are also reporting the need for new entrants, and their existing workforce, to possess a range of 'professional skills'. These build on work-readiness skills, and include critical thinking, adaptability, and willingness to upskill. These professional skills underpin the need for employees to be adaptable and flexible, as well as to continuously upskill to respond to changing businesses needs and technological developments.
4 Strengthen AI and digital literacy skills across the workforce, reflecting increased employer demand for these capabilities in all occupations.	Digital literacy continues to be important, but the development of AI means that all workers need to be confident using AI tools and understand its limitations and ethical use. They also need to be able to possess job-specific AI skills, as AI is integrated to augment specific tasks.
5 Ensure flexible and responsive leadership and management provision, enabling managers to maximise team performance and business resilience.	Management and leadership skills are in high demand across sectors. Buckinghamshire businesses, especially SMEs, that make up most of the county's businesses, need managers to have the skills to navigate a challenging and fast changing landscape. People management skills have also been identified for line managers at all levels to be better able to motivate and coach employees as businesses need to become more agile and employees need to adapt to changing skill needs and job design.
6 Provide flexible upskilling routes for the current workforce, especially for roles affected by technological change and evolving job requirements.	Digital technology, innovation, and the need for more sustainable practices are changing the skills needs of a wide number of job roles that are likely to require a combination of on-the-job training and off-the-job development, linked to short, stackable provision from levels 3 to 7.

³ Including entry level, level 1 and level 2



Construction

Sector profile



Over 16,000 people work in the Buckinghamshire construction sector, across infrastructure, building construction, and building services.⁴

Overall, the sector accounts for some 7% of employment within the county, and the sector contributes some 9.2% of Buckinghamshire's annual Gross Value Added (GVA).



Between 2019 and 2024, the number of construction sector employees remained broadly stable, although employment decreased significantly in 2022.



Major infrastructure projects in the county include HS2 and East West Rail. The draft Buckinghamshire local plan includes a requirement to deliver 95,000 homes by 2045.



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.⁵ 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.

⁴ This does not include self-employed construction workers not registered for PAYE or VAT. There are approximately 9,500 people (or between 5,600 - 13,400) self-employed construction workers contributing to local employment. However, this estimate should be treated with caution.

⁵ Domestic Retrofit Market Intelligence and Skills Assessment (January 2023), Greater South East Net Zero Hub

⁶ The high labour turnover is a reflection of both people moving between construction businesses and people choosing to leave the sector is driven by pay and conditions and wider labour market factors.

⁷ UK Construction Industry Picture, CITB, February 2026



Priority skills needs

In the infrastructure sector, the HS2 project will continue for the life of this LSIP and will continue to drive demand for skilled labour. Skills shortage occupations include civil and mechanical engineers, quantity surveyors, plant operators and control managers. There will be significant demand for fence erectors, cost controllers and plant machinery drivers. Other major construction planned will absorb a major part of the demand for labour, but there are also opportunities to support the transition of skills craftspeople living locally who wish to remain working in the county, as demand increases for house building.



High staff turnover continues to be a challenge in the building services sector⁶ and a lot of recruitment is being driven by poor retention rates. This was a factor also identified in recent CITB research⁷. An ageing workforce also contributes to high replacement demand.

As well as technical skills, employers consulted emphasised the need for work-readiness skills, but also higher level analytical and problem solving skills, resilience, emotional intelligence and career awareness.

Major infrastructure projects such as HS2 are generating demand for skilled labour in the short and medium term and the impact of AI and technology augmenting tasks for many roles in the sector is beginning and this will become increasingly important in the medium term:

Short-term

- Demand for trade and professional occupations for the infrastructure sector
- Work readiness and professional skills
- Digital and AI literacy

Medium to long-term

- Demand for trade and professional occupations for the infrastructure sector continues
- Growth of demand in house building for trade and professional occupations
- Integration of AI into specific job roles
- Continued focus on work readiness and professional skills, digital and AI literacy



Digital

Sector profile



Over 14,000 people work in core digital occupations in Buckinghamshire. The county is home to several large digital sector employers, such as Softcat, Arqiva, and Causeway.



The digital sector remains important for Buckinghamshire with an employment location quotient of 1.2, which indicates that the County has a higher concentration of sector employment compared to the average found across the country. The digital sector is dominated by small and microbusinesses that largely offer a range of business-to-business (B2B) services including cyber security, web and app development, cloud and technical support.



Priority skills needs

Sector employers consulted for the LSIP were generally not currently recruiting, owing to uncertain economic conditions and a range of increase costs pressures.

However, digital businesses were actively exploring how AI could be better integrated into their businesses to increase their own productivity. They were also exploring how they could expand their services to clients by adopting AI solutions. Many businesses emphasised that there was an expectation that those digital businesses offering B2B services needed to be ahead of the curve in how they are adopting and offering AI services.

Whilst the sector is largely not recruiting, skills shortages were identified for a variety of roles, such as support and sales roles, automation and robotics programmers, and software programmers and testers. Many of the smaller businesses were looking to take on apprentices as this allowed them to develop a multi-skilled workforce. They also needed a workforce that combined technical skills with good customer service skills and commercial awareness. Larger businesses were more likely to target graduate students, but not necessarily in a digital field. A degree was seen to indicate that someone possessed the critical thinking skills required.

Short-term

The short-term focus is building capacity within organisations to maximise and integrate AI. This is placing emphasis on management and leadership skills, AI governance and developing AI competencies in house.

Medium to long-term

In the medium to long-term there will be a need for new entrants to come with knowledge of AI and its application within a business. This will mean its integration into all specialist functional and occupational areas.



Engineering

Sector profile



High performance engineering is critically important to the Buckinghamshire economy and is one of the priority sectors outlined in the Buckinghamshire Economic Growth Plan. There are three high-performance engineering specialisms in the county:

- Space and Aerospace, in particular major employers such as Martin Baker and businesses based at the Westcott Venture Park
- Automotive and High-Performance Engineering; largely based in and around Silverstone
- Specialised manufacturing, including electronics and foam manufacturing



It is estimated that the high-performance engineering sector employs over 6,000 employees, including space and aerospace, with 16,000 employed in manufacturing more broadly. Over 14,000 were employed in core engineering occupations in 2024 and between 2019 and 2024, the aerospace sector saw the highest growth.



Employment in manufacturing decreased by 3,000 jobs between 2019-2024. However, replacement demand for workers leaving the sectors is expected to be significant. According to the National Foundation for Education Research a projected 3,400 workers in “skilled metal, electrical, and electronics trades” will be required to replace existing workers in Buckinghamshire. Similarly, the county is projected to require 11,400 total workers in “Science, research, engineering and technology professionals.”



Most engineering businesses consulted for the LSIP are expecting to recruit in the next three years, and this is likely to exacerbate existing skills shortages. These include skills shortages for mechanical, electronic, electric, design and development, automation and robotics, and civil engineers. There are also skills shortages for engineering and electrical and electronic technicians and welders. These skills align closely with those identified in a recent study such as that conducted by Cressex Business Park BID and Buckinghamshire Council.



Priority skills needs

The needs of the sector continue to change significantly as a result of technological changes, including AI. Employers engaging in the LSIP processes highlighted that the pace of technological change meant that employers and learning providers needed to be agile as specific skills such as AI and drones had been important over the past three years but were in their infancy during the development of the last LSIP.



The speed of technological change also meant that skills gaps were emerging in the existing workforce. It was felt by those consulted for the LSIP that the requirement of AI skills would be very specific to individual job roles. Management skills were also felt to be critical to ensure the agility to keep pace with technological change but also maximise the performance of teams to engage with and innovate using AI and other technologies.



The largest employment in the sector continues to be ‘engineering activities and related technical consultancies’, which reflects mainstream engineering and manufacturing activities, whilst still accounting for the highest amount of employment, the number of workers has fallen between 2019 and 2024.

Employment in ‘air and spacecraft and related machinery’ employs the second largest amount and has increased since 2019.

Short-term

The demand for higher level skills continues in the engineering sector, including space and aerospace, form engineering, electronic engineering and automotive engineering and high-performance engineering.

In addition to these pathways being in place and supporting new entrants there is a need to develop the existing workforce, particularly management and leadership skills, AI and digital literacy and its integration into existing tasks.

Medium to long-term

As the sector grows there will be need for specialist skills at higher levels, including drone, aerospace, space and higher performance manufacturing skills.

Film and TV

Sector profile



The Film & TV sector employs an estimated 3,500 people in Buckinghamshire. While this only accounts for approximately 1.4% of the workforce in the county, the sector is highly concentrated in Buckinghamshire with an employment location quotient of 2.8. This indicates that the proportion of employment in the Buckinghamshire film & TV sector is 2.8 times that found nationally.

These figures are likely to underestimate employment in the sector, as it does not include those that are self-employed. Freelance workers continue to account for a large proportion of the workforce, potentially accounting for almost 30% of the Creative industries workforce⁸, with workers normally moving from production to production, rather than having a permanent employer or workplace, reducing incentives for employers to make a long term investment in training their workforce. Some large productions may require up to 1,000 to 1,500 people.



The Buckinghamshire Investment Pipeline, published in September 2025⁹, mentions projects aimed at increasing the productive capacity of the county's Film & TV sector, notably the Pinewood Studios and Creative Cluster as an investment priority, owing to its capabilities in gaming, virtual reality and on-screen entertainment. The £1bn expansion of the studios was confirmed in December 2025 and will include 21 new stages and a 55,030 sq. m data centre.¹⁰ Marlow Film Studios was granted planning permission in 2025. The project will include 18 sound stages over 472,000 sq. ft, 410,000 sq. ft of workshops, and 280,000 sq. ft of production offices over a 36 hectare plot. It aims to support 4,000 jobs in the area.¹¹



Whilst the sector experienced significant employment growth of 36% between 2019 and 2024, the sector has undergone significant disruption owing to the US Writers Strike in 2023 which halted production in many areas, as well as creating ongoing cost pressures in production and a slowdown of commissioning in the TV sector. This has resulted in a lack of employment opportunities for many freelancers. Concern was expressed by many consulted in the LSIP processes that skilled freelancers had been forced to leave the sector due to these challenges.



Priority skills needs

Whilst recruitment has been low, those consulted as part of the LSIP process predicted that this would change over the next 18 months and there would be significant demand and skill shortages for roles in VFX and set building, and for electricians, sound designers, and production directors.

Across the three years of the LSIP, those consulted identified a wide range of roles that will be required across 2D and 3D design and production, post-production roles, and roles in VFX. Consultees stressed that pathways needed to be in place to support more people to enter the sector in these roles.



A strong theme emerging from the consultation was the likely impact of technology and AI. It was consistently viewed that AI would not reduce the need for employment in the short-term, but instead would augment existing skills and tasks, such that workers need to develop new skills to work with the technology. For example, traditional craft skills, such as carpentry were seen as important, but that 3D printing and CNC manufacturing of sets would grow in importance.



It was emphasised that given the range of technological changes, freelancers and workers needed to better understand these changes, continuously develop new skills and be able to sell their transferable skills, in a self-employed capacity. It was therefore important that they were agile and sufficiently motivated to continuously develop new skills. In addition, more sustainable practices and cost reductions were forcing productions to experiment and innovate and it was important that workers and freelancers had the level of creativity and problem solving to embrace these changes.



In addition, line managers should continue to develop their people management and HR skills, aligned with the agenda of decent work and creating safe working environments.

The sector continues to look at ways it can increase the diversity of its workforce as it looks to attract new talent. Various LSIP consultees expressed frustration that young people and career changers were unaware of the wide range of job roles available and the transferability of skills across the sector to undertake a variety of roles.

Using official classifications, the sector's workforce increased in Buckinghamshire by 930 to 3,505 by 2024. The biggest employment increase was seen in those involved in the production of films and TV.

Short-term

The focus is on work readiness and professional skills, AI and digital literacy to support freelancers. Pathways need to be built for trade occupations that combine traditional skills as well as the integration of AI and digital skills.

The integration of AI and digital technology into higher level courses will also continue to be important to ensure those entering the labour market have the skills sought by the sector.

Medium to long-term

Demand is predicted to grow across production, post production and VFX as productions are expected to increase and the county expands its capacity with the development of Marlow Studios.

Freelancers will need to continuously update their skills to reflect changes in job roles as a result of AI and technological changes.

⁸ Forging Freelance Futures Report, Creative UK, 2025

⁹ Council launches ambitious Growth Plan to drive economic prosperity, September 2025, Buckinghamshire County Council

¹⁰ Pinewood: James Bond studio given £1bn licence to build, City AM, December 2025

¹¹ Film studio on green belt land approved on appeal, BBC News, November 2025



Health and Social Care

Sector profile



Health and social care is one of Buckinghamshire's largest sectors, employing around 31,000 people and contributing roughly 6% of GVA. The sector grew by 1,350 workers in the 5 years to 2024. Demand for labour continues to rise, but the sector faces persistent shortages across clinical and social care roles, along with high vacancy and turnover rates.

Replacement demand is particularly high: an ageing workforce means around 2,900 adult social care roles are expected to reach retirement age within the next decade.



As per national trends, the sector is experiencing significant staff shortages at all levels, in both traditional and emerging health and social care roles. Jobs postings levels are high for various occupations within the sector, from nurses, adult social carers, and health care and practice managers, with forecasts suggesting high demand for workers across various roles in future, as well as significant replacement demand.



In Adult Social Care, specifically, an ageing workforce is expected to drive particularly high levels of replacement demand. Adult social care workers aged 55 and above represented 24% of the workforce in Buckinghamshire, such that approximately 2,900 posts will be reaching retirement age in the next 10 years¹².

Priority skills needs



Technology and the use of AI continue to drive transformation of services and the consultation through the LSIP and research from Buckinghamshire Health and Social Care Academy identified that digital and technical skills are growing skills gaps, as well as being important skills that new entrants need to possess.



Work-readiness skills such as confidence, stress management, teamworking and cross-departmental awareness continue to be critically important and have been identified as skills shortages.



Management and leadership have been identified as skills gaps, particularly in relation to people management.

Specific occupations experiencing acute skills shortages included: Care Workers, Support Workers and Homecare Workers; Occupational Therapists (OTs); Social Workers; Child Psychologists; Mental Health Support Workers; Podiatrists; Radio pharmacists.

Short-term

The demand for entry and higher level skills continue to be acute.

Management and leadership skills are critically important

Digital and AI literacy is crucial as more processes become digitalised and roles augmented by AI

Medium to long-term

AI and digital skills will continue to be important and there is a need for them to be integrated into all courses and apprenticeships to reflect changing skills and job roles.

¹² Skills for Care Local Area Summary reports – Buckinghamshire, 2024/25

Occupation-specific high priority needs

Chefs



- Hospitality employers have frequently reported severe shortages to Buckinghamshire Business First, with several businesses at risk of closure.
- Net employment growth: +402 (2019–2024). (Lightcast, 2025)
- There were 837 online job postings in 2024, compared to 2,588 employed. (Lightcast, 2025)
- There is also limited training available in the county. 16–19 funded provision is based in Milton Keynes College, with only 17 Buckinghamshire residents starting a Commis Chef Apprenticeship in 2023/24, and 31 achieving a Commis Chef Apprenticeship. (ILR, DfE, 2023/24)
- Given the low levels coming through relative to demand, there may be a skills shortage issue in the county.
- While Chefs are considered eligible for a skilled worker visa, as a medium skilled role, tightening of immigration rules may add to current skills shortages in the sector.

Short-term

The demand for chefs currently high given the lack of visible career pathways in the county and current turnover of chefs

Medium to long-term

The demand is expected to continue in the medium to long-term.

Digital technology is not expected to have a significant impact on their skill needs.

HGV Drivers



- Similarly to national trends, some businesses have reported to BBF that they face supply challenges due to aging workforce and difficulty training younger drivers. This applies to both transport and logistics HGVs.
- Net decrease of 46 jobs for LGV drivers (2019-2024), but a 183 increase in Bus and Coach Drivers. However, this may be linked to changes in the ageing workforce, challenges replacing workers, and changes to IR35 rules making it difficult to employ experienced drivers.
- 515 job postings in 2024 vs. 2,280 employed. (Lightcast, 2025)
- Some provision is available through nationally funded DfE Skills Bootcamps, but this may be insufficient relative to demand.
- Heavy and large goods vehicle drivers are currently ineligible for a skilled worker visa, such that domestic training for these roles is relevant for resolving skills shortages.

Short-term

The demand for HGV drivers is currently high across the logistics and agriculture sectors.

Medium to long-term

The demand is expected to continue in the medium to long-term.

Landscape Gardeners



- Employers report recruitment issues for land-based qualifications. Landscaping is particularly relevant for HS2 works and is likely to drive most of the demand.
- Employment growth: +428 jobs (2019–2024) (Lightcast, 2025).
- 314 online job postings were recorded in 2024, compared to 1,393 employed. (Lightcast, 2025)
- There is limited provision locally, with relevant diplomas delivered out of area; and only 30 Bucks residents are enrolled on these courses (ILR, DfE, 2023/24).
- There were 74 apprenticeships starts, by Buckinghamshire residents, in the land-based/agriculture sector in 2023/24. (ILR, DfE, 2023/24).

Short-term

The demand for landscape gardeners is high and will continue in the short-term

Medium to long-term

The demand is expected to continue in the medium to long-term. There will be a growing need to incorporate climate mitigation and adaption in pathways to ensure gardeners can use these skills to address water conservation, plant resistance etc.

Cross-sector skills themes - Overview

Work-readiness and professional skills

Work-readiness skills continue to be critically important, with the long term impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic likely exacerbating the difficulties for young people and some adults to acquire these skills.

Key work-readiness skills include¹³:

1. Collaboration and leadership: including team working, problem solving, critical thinking, taking initiative
2. Communication: including written and verbal communication
3. Attitude to work: including flexibility, adaptability, enthusiasm, self-motivation
4. Digital and AI literacy: including use of MS Windows and Teams, sending and receiving emails, confident use of hardware

Professional skills build on from the work-readiness skills are required by new entrants and the existing workforce:

1. Collaboration and leadership: including analytical skills, resilience, openness and adaptability to change
2. Communication: including presentation skills, understanding client skills
3. Attitude to work: including own career planning, openness to upskill
4. Digital and AI literacy: including AI experimentation and use of AI and digital technology aligned to own role.

Management and leadership skills

Management and leadership have emerged strongly across all priority sectors. The specific skills needs fall within two main areas.

Strategic skills: aimed at senior managers and owners of smaller businesses. This includes skills to understand the changing economic landscape, the threats and opportunities from AI and technological change, identify strategic opportunities, harnessing the business to make strategic changes.

People management: aimed at line managers at all levels. This includes moving away from more traditional management styles to developing coaching and motivating skills, intergenerational communication, conflict resolution etc.

Digital and AI literacy

The increasing adoption of AI and digital technology more generally, means that there is a growing need from Buckinghamshire businesses for new entrants and existing staff to have generic digital and AI literacy skills, including the use of AI chatbots and tools, understanding the limitation of AI, AI ethics.

AI and digital literacy provides the foundation for employees to develop AI and digital skills that are aligned to specific job-roles and support the AI augmentation of specific tasks.

Note: in the short-term, employers generally expected that it is unlikely that AI will reduce the need for specific work-readiness skills, such as written communication. Employees will be expected to check the accuracy of AI but use tools to improve their productivity.

Green skills: climate adaptation and mitigation

Green skills, in terms of climate mitigation and adaption, continue to be important for all sectors. But, unlike the other cross-sector skills, skills requirements will differ from sector-to-sector. For example:

- Construction: the demand for retrofit skills in building construction and servicing
- Digital: energy usage modelling, particularly in relation to AI
- Engineering / Life Sciences: carbon literacy and ability to innovate in net zero technology
- Film and TV: sustainable set construction
- Health and social care: energy usage

Employers do not currently report widespread skills shortages in green skills, apart from retrofit skills for buildings, which continues to be a latent skills need. Whilst the need continues, weak consumer demand and trade professionals being busy with traditional services means that there continues to be a weak demand for retrofit training.

¹³ A model of the work-readiness skills and professional skills can be found at annex A.

2. Agreed changes / actions needed

In this section we explain the agreed changes or actions required to address each of the key skill needs identified and describe the expected outcomes and impacts, and how they will be measured. Detailed action plans for each priority sector can be found at Annex B.

Construction

What is currently happening

T Levels and other full-time courses

Buckinghamshire College Group (BCG) offers a T Level in Civil Engineering. Employer feedback highlights difficulty securing suitable industry placements, with apprenticeships often seen as a more attractive route. Most construction provision is at levels 1 and 2, with diplomas in plumbing, carpentry, bricklaying and construction skills for employment being the most popular.

Take-up at level 3 is limited, with the Advanced Technical Diploma in Electrical Installation the most common programme. This is largely due to learners progressing from level 2 provision directly into apprenticeships.

Apprenticeships

The most popular apprenticeships are trade related, including carpentry, plumbing, bricklayer etc.

Degree apprenticeships for chartered surveyor were popular, with 14 starts in 2023/24. This is closely aligned with quantity surveyor role, which is also in high demand.

Undergraduate

Buckinghamshire New University (BNU) is offering a BSc in Architecture Design and Technology.

Skills Bootcamps

Uptake and outcomes for Skills Bootcamps have improved since 2023/24. Flannery's Plant Operator Bootcamp recorded 142 starts in 2024/25, with 90% completing milestone 2 and 79% achieving job outcomes at milestone 3. However, expanding provision may be needed to ensure training remains responsive to demand.

What should happen

T-Levels and other full-time courses

Current T Level provision should continue, with employers working with BCG to enrich delivery and promote take-up. Levels 1–3 provision should be reviewed alongside new V Levels to ensure alignment. The early success of BCG's Cornerstone Employer approach should be built on to strengthen employer engagement in programme design and delivery.

Apprenticeships

There needs to be co-ordinated efforts to encourage more businesses to take-on apprenticeships and encourage apprenticeships as viable employment pathway for young people.

Undergraduate and Postgraduate

Provision should continue, be reviewed for AI readiness, and modularised where possible to support short-course upskilling of the existing workforce.

Careers promotion

Careers promotion remains critical and the Bucks Skills Hub should broaden its scope to reflect wider career opportunities in the sector.

Skills Bootcamps

Skills Bootcamps should continue to be to support entry into construction employment.

AI adoption

Support needs to be provided to businesses to help identify how AI can best be introduced into business strategies and processes and support needs to be provided around AI governance and ethics.

Management and leadership

Short courses need to be available at levels 3-7 to upskill line managers on people management skills and strategic management skills to senior managers and owner managers.

Work-readiness and professional skills

The revised work-readiness model should be embedded, where possible, across full-time, apprenticeship and into-work programmes, with the professional skills model further developed for higher-level provision and shared with employers to support induction and in-house training.

Digital

What is currently happening

T Levels and other full-time courses

BCG is delivering two digital T level pathways: Digital Software Developer and Digital Support and Security. There were 27 learners in 2023/4, which while low is higher than across other subject areas that form the priority sectors. Other qualifications are also being delivered full-time, including a 38 week level 2 Digital Study programme

Apprenticeships

Uptake for Apprenticeships is generally low, with the exception of the Data Analyst and Data Technician standards. Completion figures are low in relation to starts.

BNU is delivering the Digital and Technology Solutions Professional Degree Apprenticeship (level 6) and the Digital and Technology Solutions Specialist Degree Apprenticeship at level 7.

Undergraduate

The University of Buckingham offers undergraduate courses in Computing, including Computing (Artificial Intelligence and Robotics) and Computing (Cybersecurity)

Postgraduate

The University of Buckingham offers a MSc in Data Science

Skills Bootcamps

There has been a good take-up of Skills Bootcamps relative to other sectors. There were 84 starts, with the level 3 bootcamps the most popular in 2023/24.

What should happen

T Levels and other full-time courses

Current T Level provision should continue. Employers should work with BCG to enrich provision and promote and encourage take-up. Current level 2 provision needs to be considered against the introduction of new V Levels in 2027.

Apprenticeships

There needs to be co-ordinated efforts to encourage more businesses to take-on apprenticeships and co-ordinated effort between employers and learning providers to understand and address low completion rates.

Undergraduate and postgraduate

Provision needs to continue but be reviewed to ensure it equips students with the skills to maximise the use of AI. Provision should where possible be modularised to increase the take up of short courses to upskill the current workforce.

Careers promotion

Careers promotion remains critical and the Bucks Skills Hub should broaden its scope to reflect wider career opportunities in the sector. There is also the potential for a careers fair to showcase digital students completing their courses with potential employers.

Skills Bootcamps

Skills Bootcamps should continue to focus on digital-related upskilling and employment opportunities.

AI adoption

Support needs to be provided to businesses to help identify how AI can best be introduced into business strategies and processes and support needs to be provided around AI governance and ethics.

Management and leadership

Short courses need to be available at levels 3-7 to upskill line managers on people management skills and strategic management skills to senior managers and owner managers.

Work-readiness and professional skills

The revised work-readiness model needs to be adapted with learning aims and criteria and embedded where possible into all full-time, apprenticeship and into work programmes. The professional skills model also needs to be expanded on and built into higher skills programmes and given to employers to enrich induction and in-house training.

Engineering

What is currently happening

T Levels and other full-time courses

There is currently no 16-18 full-time provision. BCG is due to open new facilities for engineering at its new High Wycombe campus in 2028. The opening of the new campus was due to be in 2026 and so interim solutions need to be found.

Apprenticeships

Apprenticeship take up continues to be low but has been steadily increasing.

BNU offer degree apprenticeships including manufacturing engineering, civil engineering and embedded electrical systems design and development. It also offers a post graduate engineering apprenticeship at level 7.

Undergraduate

Undergraduate provision has expanded with the opening of the Faculty of Engineering at BNU. Full-time courses include Beng (Hons) Engineering Design, Civil Engineering.

Postgraduate

Post graduate provision includes the MSc in Sustainable Electric Power Engineer and the MSc in Engineering Design, at Buckinghamshire New University.

Note: Employers, students and apprentices currently rely on the support and provision from learning providers outside of the county, such as Milton Keynes College that supports a number of engineering employers in the north of the county.

What should happen

T Levels and other full-time courses

The new BCG campus at High Wycombe will address the need to make available T Level and more occupational pathways at 16 through V Levels. However, opportunities should be explored to allow as much provision to be delivered before 2028 when the campus is due to open.

There needs to be activities to encourage and co-ordinate work placement to support full-time provision.

Apprenticeships

Apprenticeship provision needs to be expanded and delivery explored at key hubs including Westcott and Silverstone.

Engineering Apprenticeships need to be promoted as an alternative to post-16 full-time pathways.

Undergraduate and Postgraduate

Provision needs to be made available for modular delivery that allows individual courses to be delivered. All provision needs to be reviewed to ensure that it reflects how AI can be used to augment specific tasks.

Careers promotion

There needs to be co-ordinated activities to promote careers in the engineering sector and as part of this the Bucks Skills Hub should broaden its scope to reflect a wider variety of job roles to help people understand the wide range of career options available.

Management and leadership

Short courses need to be available at levels 3-7 to upskill line managers on people management skills and strategic management skills to senior managers and owner managers.

Work-readiness and professional skills

The revised work-readiness model needs to be adapted with learning aims and criteria and embedded where possible into all full-time, apprenticeship and into work programmes. The professional skills model also needs to be expanded on and built into higher skills programmes and given to employers to enrich induction and in-house training.

Film and TV

What is currently happening

Given the nature of the sector and its reliance on freelance workers, traditional vocational pathway are not as effective as in other economic sectors.

T-levels and other full-time courses

BCG offers a T level in Media Production alongside a number of level 2 and 3 qualifications in media production, sound production, gaming development, special effects and special effects make-up. In addition, BCG offers specialist level 4 provision in set design, prop making, screenwriting, hair makeup and costume, directing and cinematography and production management. These are delivered at Pinewood Studios.

Apprenticeships

There is limited take-up of apprenticeships given that employment is often freelance and revolves around specific productions.

Undergraduate

BNU offer BA (Hons) programmes in SFX Props and Model-making for Film and TV; Set Design for Stage and Screen; Film Production, Media Production, Film and TV Production and Film and TV Production.

Postgraduate

BNU also offers MAs in Film Making and Music and Audio Production.

Skills Bootcamps

According to reporting on Wave 5 of Skills Bootcamps in Buckinghamshire, up to 30th September 2025, strong recruitment, completion, and job outcomes were achieved. Programmes delivered by the National Film and Television School (NFTS) and All Spring Media recruited between 16 and 42 participants per course, with completion rates ranging from 88% to 100% and milestone 3 job outcomes between 44% and 72%. Bootcamps covered production, assistant director, VFX, production co-ordinator, and location manager roles. Two planned bootcamps were not commissioned due to a lack of providers.

Note: Pinewood Studios plays an important national role in supporting innovation and skill development, such as through CoSTAR National R&D Lab. Similarly, the National Film and Television School (NFTS) plays an important national role to develop specialist skills in the sector. Despite their national outlook, both institutions also benefit local learners.

What should happen

T-levels and other full-time courses

Current T level provision should continue with employers working with BCG to enrich provision and promote and encourage take-up. Current level 2 provision, in digital subjects aligned to film & TV, should be considered against the introduction of new V levels in 2027.

Undergraduate and Postgraduate

Provision needs to be made available for modular delivery that allows individual courses to be delivered. All provision needs to be reviewed to ensure that it reflects how AI can be used to augment specific tasks.

Careers promotion

There needs to be co-ordinated activities to promote careers in the engineering sector and as part of this the Bucks Skills Hub should be updated to reflect a wider variety of job roles to help people understand the wide range of career options available.

Management and leadership

Short courses need to be available at levels 3-7 to upskill line managers on people management skills and strategic management skills to senior managers and owner managers.

Work-readiness and professional skills

The revised work-readiness model needs to be adapted with learning aims and criteria and embedded where possible into all full-time, apprenticeship and into work programmes. The professional skills model also needs to be expanded on and built into higher skills programmes and given to employers to enrich induction and in-house training. The focus on career adaptation and preparedness is particularly acute for freelancers and specific provision needs to be available.

Health and Social Care

What is currently happening

T Levels and other full-time courses

Buckinghamshire College Group (BCG) offers a T level in Supporting Healthcare (Clinical route) and courses at level 2 in Social Care and Dentistry. It also offers a range of Level 1 and Level 2 courses in Health and Social Care, alongside the Level 3 Extended Diploma and the Health and Science T Level, supporting progression into further study or employment in the sector. For adults seeking to enter nursing, BCG also delivers an Access to Higher Education Diploma in Nursing. In addition, BCG's HealthTec provides a broad portfolio of flexible training, including programmes designed to support unemployed adults into the health and social care workforce, as well as extensive upskilling and professional development opportunities for those already working in the sector and related fields.

Apprenticeships

Buckinghamshire Healthcare Trust offers apprenticeships to support progression. These are typically offered to those in entry level roles. BNU offer a wide range of degree apprenticeships, including Diagnostic Radiographer and Physiotherapy. In addition, BCG also offers the Lead Adult Care Worker apprenticeship, Senior Healthcare Support Worker apprenticeship and the Dental Nurse apprenticeship.

Undergraduate

BNU offers a wide range of degree programmes in areas such as Diagnostic Radiography, Public Health, Operating Department Practice and Paramedic Science.

Postgraduate

BNU offers a range of master's degree programmes most of which provide progression from degree courses. These include Diagnostic Radiography, Public Health, Physiotherapy and Physician Associate Studies.

What should happen

T Levels and other full-time courses

Current T Level provision should continue. Employers should work with BCG to enrich provision and promote and encourage take-up. Current levels 1, 2 and 3 provision needs to be considered against the introduction of new V Levels to ensure alignment.

Careers promotion

Careers promotion remains critical and the Bucks Skills Hub should broaden its scope to reflect wider career opportunities in the sector. More work should be undertaken to encourage work placements and opportunity for people to experience working in the sector and developing essential work-readiness skills.

Management and leadership

Short courses need to be available at levels 3-7 to upskill line managers on people management skills and strategic management skills to senior managers and owner managers.

Work-readiness and professional skills

The revised work-readiness model needs to be adapted with learning aims and criteria and embedded where possible into all full-time, apprenticeship and into work programmes. The professional skills model also needs to be expanded on and built into higher skills programmes and given to employers to enrich induction and in-house training. Volunteer programme using the work-readiness model also should continue



Occupations

Occupations	What is currently happening	What should happen
Chefs	There is currently no full-time provision for chefs in the county. There are learning providers delivering relevant apprenticeships but the take-up is low.	There needs to be co-ordinated action to promote chef careers, put in place dedicated into-work programmes, signpost apprenticeship provision and bring employers and learning providers together to support careers activities and monitor the effectiveness of the into-work and apprenticeship provision.
HGV Drivers	There are a number of learning providers delivering the Certificate of Professional Competence (CPC) training required of HGV Drivers, but there are no co-ordinated activities to stimulate demand into the profession.	There needs to be co-ordinated activities to bring together businesses seeking HGV-drivers to promote job opportunities to job-seekers and ensure that the relevant support is available to provide relevant driving courses and CPC provision.
Landscape gardeners	Whilst there are no specific professional landscaping qualifications being delivered in Buckinghamshire, there is nearby provision available from Windsor Forest College and Bedford College. The largest demand for workers in this area is for entry level workers with good work-readiness skills that can physically undertake the role.	There needs to be co-ordinated activities to bring together businesses seeking landscape gardeners to promote job opportunities to job-seekers, ensure that relevant into-work programmes are in place and working effectively and ensure that employers are aware of and are engaging learning providers delivering relevant landscaping and horticulture provision.

Cross-sector skills

Cross-sector skills

What is currently happening

What should happen

Work-readiness and professional skills

A module of work-readiness was developed during the first LSIP. This has been used by Buckinghamshire College Group to prepare students for entry into employment, providing an opportunity for students to assess their own skills and inviting employers to provide feedback on the skills of students through various interactions. It has also been used by Buckinghamshire New University to enrich their undergraduate courses.

The work-readiness model continues to reflect the work-readiness skills that employers are seeking. It needs to be used and embedded in all post-16 provision and apprenticeships, as well as into work programmes.

The professional skills model also needs to be further developed to set out learning aims under each area to help embed it in undergraduate courses and appropriate provision at further education. The model should also be disseminated to employers to allow them to incorporate it into induction and training programmes.

Whilst not formally part of the LSIP, the work-readiness model should also be shared with schools in the county to help them prepare students as they go on to further study or employment.

Management and leadership skills

Management and leadership provision is relatively limited. BCG offers a CIPD People Management Course.

There needs to be management and leadership provision identified/developed and delivered aimed at line managers and senior managers. This should be developed at available from levels 3-7.

Employers are not necessarily looking for qualifications but are looking for flexible delivery and some sort of certification.

Digital and AI literacy

Digital literacy courses at foundation and level 1 are currently being delivered by Buckinghamshire Adult Learning and it is built into relevant courses at further and higher education.

The digital literacy programmes need to be updated to include AI awareness, ethics and the ability to use AI chatbots and other tools.

Digital and AI provision need to be continued to be embedded or delivered alongside full-time courses at further and higher education as well as with apprenticeships.

Green skills: climate adaption and mitigation

Buckinghamshire College Group has developed the Bucks Green Energy Skills Hub (BGESH) with funding from the LSIF to offer provision in solar panel and heat pump installation. Whilst this is used by students, take-up by the sector is still low, but increasing. The Skills Bootcamp offer has had a positive take-up

There needs to be continued engagement with trade professionals to stimulate demand and to align this with activities being undertaken by Buckinghamshire Council and incentives and interventions being co-ordinated nationally to encourage retrofit activities.



Summary of actions required across key areas of provision

This LSIP comes at a critical and transitional time, which if effectively responded to can create profound opportunities for individuals and business alike.

The pace of change for skills is accelerating as a result of AI and technological adoption and job redesign. The number of young people (aged 16-24) who are NEETs and those with SEND continues to rise and employers are reinforcing the critical importance of work-readiness and professional skills for employment. Yet, anecdotally, these skills are often lacking more than in the previous LSIP as a result of COVID

Buckinghamshire shares these challenges with the rest of the country, but in addition, it has a high percentage of SMEs who are currently reluctant to add additional costs for recruitment and training and a lack of public transport which makes it difficult for younger people who cannot drive to reach work and placement opportunities.

The LSIP needs to respond effectively to these challenges:

- a)** SMEs need incentives to take on apprentices and upskill their current workforce
- b)** Learning providers need the flexibility to respond to individual learners' needs to support and develop their skills in order for them to secure employment. The qualifications system needs to help facilitate this, rather than reduce the opportunities to re-respond to the needs of young people and job seekers. Qualifications and programmes also need to reflect changing skill needs
- c)** It needs to support people into work, but at the same time underpin lifelong learning to help people develop the skills that they need to stay and progress in the labour market

The LSIP provides a real opportunity with the right provision and funding for local partners to continue to work together to build on LSIP 1.0 and create an effective support architecture to enables young people and not so young people into work. As well as supporting businesses and their workforce to become more productive and competitive, whilst ensuring that employees have access to the right support and provision to remain agile and employable.

Opportunities

T-levels and other full-time provision

For most sectors, T Levels have already been introduced. Given that in most cases take-up remains low there are opportunities to increase employer engagement in order to enrich the programme and promote it to prospective students, parents, guardians and teachers.

There are also opportunities for employers to support BCG in terms of providing sufficient placements. In many sectors level 2 and 3 qualifications remain popular. There are concerns that the introduction of the V level could undermine the benefit that the existing qualifications at level 3 provide as an alternative to T levels and A levels.

Apprenticeships

Buckinghamshire is largely made up of SMEs and many perceive that apprenticeships are costly and burdensome. Recent policy announcements have removed some of the costs and there are opportunities to collectively make the case to employers.

There are opportunities with Silverstone and Westcott to cluster delivery around the county.

The New Apprenticeship Units have the potential to respond to bite sized areas of provision identified in the LSIP, in particular in relation to identified cross-sector skills.

Undergraduate

Undergraduate provision largely reflects demand at higher levels. However, there are opportunities to modularise courses to allow employers and employees to access short courses that also provide opportunities to build into larger programmes.

Post graduate

Undergraduate provision largely reflects demand at higher levels. However, there are opportunities to modularise courses to allow employers and employees to access short courses that also provide opportunities to build into larger programmes.

Short courses

There are opportunities to make available existing courses and qualifications and develop fresh content to upskill the current workforce. This is critical given the growing skills gaps reflecting the changing nature of jobs owing to AI and other technological developments.

Changes to Skills and Growth Levy may provide some opportunities to make provision available through this route.

Challenges

The T Level fails to compete effectively with level 3 qualifications in many sector areas, mainly as a result of barriers to securing industry placements for learners making the option less accessible.

The introduction of the V Level could undermine the viability and importance of the existing level 3 qualifications which play a critical role in helping young people into employment.

The delay to opening BCG's High Wycombe campus means that full-time engineering provision will not start until 2028.

Apprenticeships remain a hard sell given that many businesses, especially SMEs, are trying to reduce costs.

Furthermore, persistent real terms funding cuts to apprenticeship standards limit the ability to deliver sustainable high quality apprenticeships, particularly in Construction and Health and Social Care sectors.

Given the fast changing skills needs there is need for apprenticeships to be updated to reflect these changes.

The pace of roll out of the new Apprenticeship Units needs to be fast and responsive to address identified needs.

University processes can mean that changes to content and structure can take some time which may mean that provision does not meet labour market needs.

University processes can mean that changes to content and structure can take some time which may mean that provision does not meet labour market needs.

Despite the skills gaps, employers need to be incentivised and without available funding there may not be the extent of upskilling that is required to support businesses take advantage of AI, protect jobs and become more productive.

Opportunities

Bootcamps and into work programmes

Skills Bootcamps have been growing in popularity as fresh rounds of funding have been launched.

BC has decided to focus available funding on three areas that have proved impactful in the past: construction, digital and film and TV.

V Levels

V Levels are a new vocational qualification being introduced from 2027. They will sit alongside A Levels and T Levels, and be equivalent to one A Level, allowing students to mix and match academic and vocational subjects if they want to. Existing BTECs will remain in place as V Levels are phased in. Subjects in the first wave, from 2027, will include: education and early years, finance and accounting, and digital. From 2028, V Levels will be introduced in Business and administration; Care services; Construction; Engineering and manufacturing; Health and science; Legal (as part of legal, finance and accounting route); Sales, marketing and procurement; Sports, fitness and exercise science. There is a clear overlap between V Level subjects, in the first two waves, and the priority sectors in this LSIP, (Digital, Construction, Engineering, and Health and Social Care). Given the demand for vocational training in Buckinghamshire, V Levels could be a valuable option for provision.

Provision at levels 6 and 8

Provision at levels 6 and 7 continues to expand and respond to skill needs at these higher levels, both in terms of full-time provision and apprenticeships.

There are opportunities for more modular full-time provision at these levels.

Currently there are no skill needs at level 8, but these will be kept under review.

Youth Jobs Grant and Jobs Guarantee

The new Youth Jobs Grant aims to provide businesses with £3,000 for every young person they recruit aged 18-24 who have been on Universal Credit and looking for work for six months.

This obviously provides some further incentive to businesses, particularly SMEs to take on job seekers.

SEND

Learning providers have become agile and responsive to SEND and employers have become more aware and supportive.

Challenges

The amount of money for Skills Bootcamps in Buckinghamshire has been significantly reduced which means that the opportunity to use the Skills Bootcamp as a means it support people into employment has been reduced.

While the government's ambition is for students freely to combine V Levels and A Levels, no national guidance has yet addressed how this will work in areas such as Buckinghamshire where provision has traditionally been institutionally separated. This creates significant risks around timetable integration, transport, capacity building, teacher recruitment, and equality of access, which must be considered in local planning. Overall, while V Levels present an opportunity for resolving occupational skills shortages, barriers to delivery may limit their relevance for Buckinghamshire. Opportunities to use V Levels to mitigate occupational skills shortages will be reviewed continuously during this LSIP.

Whilst higher education institutions in the county continue to respond effectively to the LSIP, it can often take time to respond to labour market changes and the demand for modular provision.

Whilst the Youth Jobs Grant and Jobs Guarantee are welcome, it is unlikely to change the views of some employers who have calculated that the additional cost of employing another worker to be too high following recent minimum wage and tax changes.

Despite progress in supporting people with SEND, the number of individuals requiring support continues to rise, increasing demand for skilled support staff and associated funding. After age 25, access to funded learning and employment support becomes more discretionary and fragmented across adult skills, employment, health and social care systems, making it more challenging to support older people with SEND into sustained employment.



Impact and measures

LSIP 2.0 will be overseen in each of the priority sectors through existing Employer Sector Groups which are made up of employers in those sectors, key partners and learning partners delivering sector-relevant provision. The overall progress will be monitored by the Buckinghamshire Skills Strategy Board, which is made up of Buckinghamshire Council, BBF, key delivery partners, key employers and the chairs of our sector employer groups from each priority sector.

The action plans outlined at annex B set out the specific action, the lead organisation responsible for taking it forward, key partners that should be involved and key measures to assess the output (i.e. the deliverable of the action (such as a learning programme being available, the number of learners undertaking the programme etc.) and the outcome i.e. the impact of the initiative (such as a reduction in skills gaps, fewer employers identifying that applications lack work-readiness skills). Evidence against the measures will be collected through a combination of primary and secondary research.

Monitoring the implementation of the LSIP

Sector Action Plans will be developed for each of the priority sectors outlining the activities to be taken forward in each year. For each activity, impact measures have been agreed and at each meeting members of the Sector Employer Groups will review progress and provide support where required. A “RAG rating” will be applied to each activity, with green for activities on target, amber for those encountering some difficulties or time slippage and red where they are encountering significant challenges.

The logic chain for establishing impact measures is as follows:

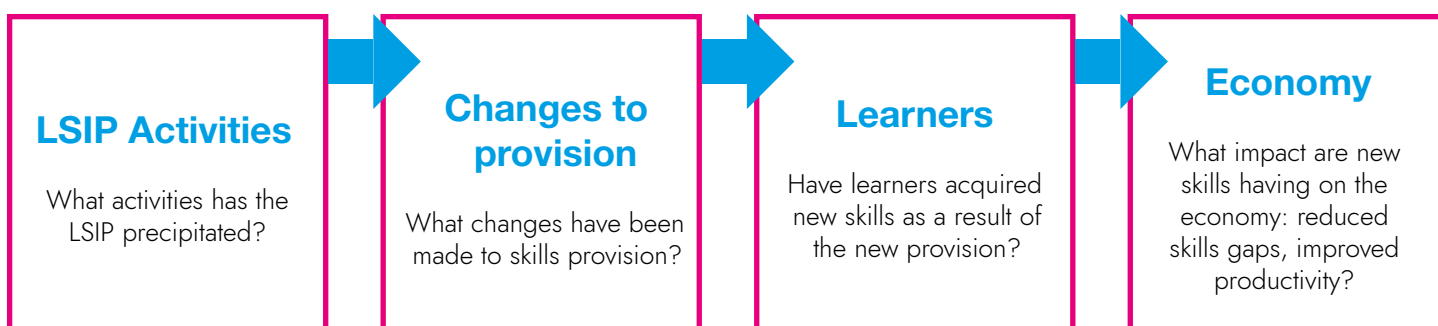


Fig 3. LSIP impact assessment logic chain

This logic chain is reflected in the following diagram which sets out the measures that be used to report against to assess the progress and impact of the LSIP.

Draft LSIP impact measures

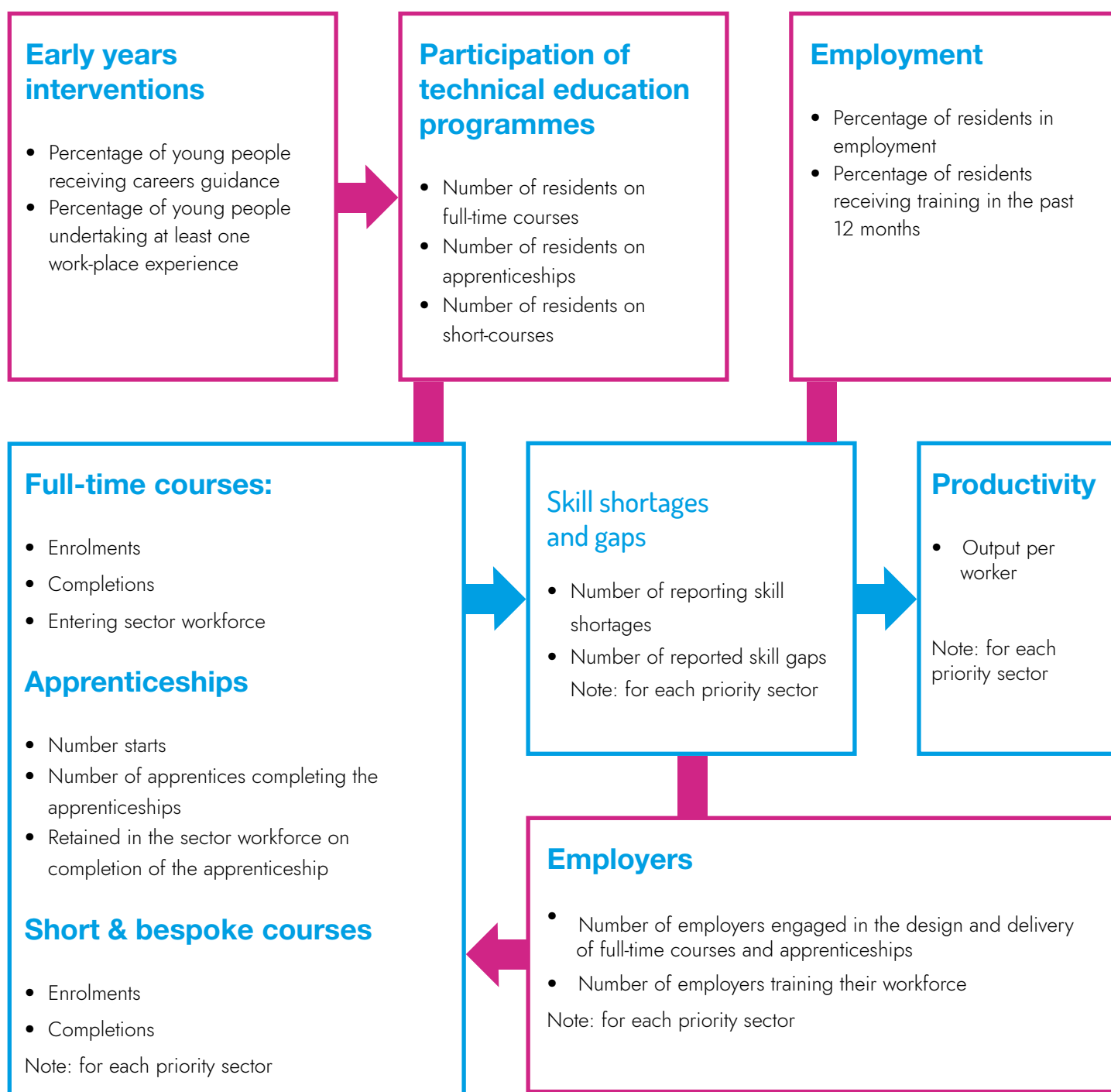


Fig 4. Draft LSIP impact measures



Realising the Full Potential of the LSIP

The main LSIP report sets out the agreed priority skills needs for Buckinghamshire and the actions required to address them. The accompanying annexes provide the detailed evidence base, methodology and delivery framework that underpin these conclusions and support effective implementation and monitoring.

The LSIP demonstrates that Buckinghamshire is well placed to deliver accelerated impact in nationally significant sectors, with employer engagement highlighting substantial opportunity where appropriate resource alignment supports local delivery capacity.

Annexes

- **Annex A: Further explanatory information on skills needs**
 - Provides detailed sector-by-sector analysis of skills demand and supply across Buckinghamshire's priority sectors, including occupational demand, workforce projections, training provision, and identified skills shortages and gaps.
- **Annex B: Action Plan**
 - Sets out the agreed actions to address identified skills priorities, including lead partners, timescales, outputs, and mechanisms for delivery, monitoring, and review.
- **Annex C: Background and method**
 - Describes the evidence base, analytical approach and engagement process used to develop LSIP 2.0, including labour market data sources, sector selection criteria, employer and provider engagement, and alignment with statutory guidance.

Term	Definition
AI	Artificial Intelligence; digital technologies that perform tasks normally requiring human intelligence.
BAL	Buckinghamshire Adult Learning
BBF	Buckinghamshire Business First; the Employer Representative Body responsible for developing the LSIP.
BC	Buckinghamshire Council
BCG	Buckinghamshire College Group; a further education provider delivering technical education and training.
BGESH	Bucks Green Energy Skills Hub; a facility supporting training in green technologies such as solar and heat pump installation.
BHSCA	Buckinghamshire Health and Social Care Academy; a partnership supporting workforce development in health and social care.
BNU	Buckinghamshire New University; a higher education provider delivering undergraduate, postgraduate and degree apprenticeship provision.
Bootcamps (Skills Bootcamps)	Short, intensive training programmes aligned to employer demand.
BSH	Buckinghamshire Skills Hub
CIPD	Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development; a professional body for people management and development.
CPC	Certificate of Professional Competence; a qualification required for HGV drivers.
Cross-sector skills	Skills required across multiple sectors, such as digital literacy and leadership.
Degree apprenticeship	A programme combining university study with employment leading to a degree.
DfE	Department for Education; the UK government department responsible for education and skills policy.
DWP	Department for Work and Pensions; government department responsible for employment support and welfare.
Employer engagement	Structured interaction with employers to inform skills planning and provision.
Employment growth	An increase in the number of jobs within a sector over a defined period.
Evidence base	The combined quantitative and qualitative inputs used to support LSIP findings.
GVA	Gross Value Added; a measure of economic output used to assess sector or regional performance.
HE	Higher Education; education delivered by universities and higher education institutions.
HGV	Heavy Goods Vehicle; used in reference to logistics and transport occupations.
ILR	Individual Learner Record; dataset used to track participation in further education and training.
ITPs	Independent Training Providers
Labour demand and supply	The relationship between employer demand for workers and the availability of suitably skilled individuals.
Labour market projections	Forecasts of future employment patterns based on economic modelling.
Location quotient	A measure of the concentration of employment in a sector relative to the national average.
LSIF	Local Skills Improvement Fund; funding to support delivery of LSIP priorities.
LSIP 1.0	The first Local Skills Improvement Plan for Buckinghamshire, published in 2023.
LSIP 2.0	The second Local Skills Improvement Plan, covering the 2026–2029 period.
MKC	Milton Keynes College
n.e.c	Not elsewhere classified
NEET	Not in Education, Employment or Training; typically used to refer to individuals aged 16–24.
NFTS	National Film and Television School
Online job postings data	Data derived from advertised vacancies used to assess employer demand.
Professional skills	Higher-level behavioural and cognitive skills such as critical thinking and adaptability.
Provision mapping	Analysis of existing education and training provision against skills needs.
Replacement demand	The need to recruit workers to replace those leaving the workforce.
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities; individuals requiring additional support in education or employment.
Skills gaps	Situations where the existing workforce lacks required skills.
Skills shortages	Situations where employers cannot recruit suitably skilled individuals.
SME	Small and medium-sized enterprise; businesses below a defined size threshold.
SOC codes	Standard Occupational Classification codes; a system used to classify occupations for statistical analysis.
T Levels	Technical qualifications combining classroom learning with industry placements.
UoB	The University of Buckingham
V Levels	Proposed vocational qualifications intended to sit alongside A Levels and T Levels.
Work placements	Structured periods of workplace experience as part of education programmes.
Work-readiness	The skills, behaviours and attributes required to enter and sustain employment.



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