

SWLEP Higher Education Strategy

December 2018

Final



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I. Executive Summary

Meeting the higher level skills needs of the area is set out as a priority in the LEP Strategic Economic Plan (2016), and a clear strategy is required to achieve this. The strategy has been developed against the backdrop of an absence of a physical university presence in the area, significant change to the skills policy landscape and at a time when numerous local strategies are in development.

This Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership (SWLEP) Higher Education strategy will build on the recommendations set out in the [Direction of Travel](#) published in May 2017. An [evidence base](#) was subsequently commissioned which included analysis of a significant amount of qualitative and quantitative data and the final report was finalised in March 2018. Events have taken place across the LEP to share the evidence with stakeholders, to consult with them and to allow them to contribute to the agenda moving forward.

This evidence has resulted in the development of the following strategic aims:

1. Increase productivity:

- the area will have a sufficiently higher level qualified workforce
- employers will report fewer skills shortages
- the area will attract and retain talent and investment
- there will be a workforce pipeline at graduate level
- SWLEP will benefit from increased HE provision including a multi campus university and growth through the FE sector.

2. Raise aspirations and increase social mobility:

- residents will be inspired by strong local HE provision to continue their learning journey through to a higher level
- higher education is accessible i.e. flexible, affordable and proximal
- residents can relate the benefits of pursuing higher education to labour market opportunities, particularly in relation to STEM
- the route to higher education is navigable and seen to be achievable

These aims will be met through the following high-level actions:

- grow and promote HE provision within the area including developing a multi campus university
- ensure the strategy links to the emerging local industrial strategy and future research and investment opportunities
- promote SWLEP as a great place to live, work and study
- develop our approach to an employer led skills infrastructure, reflecting the national and local industrial strategies
- improve educational attainment and progression to higher education.

2. What do we want to achieve?

2.1. Strategy Vision

By 2028, Swindon and Wiltshire will meet employer demand for higher level skills through targeted provision and enabling opportunities for all residents to access higher education with clear pathways. The benefits of studying and working in the area will be clearly outlined and a strong university presence will attract students from outside the area and provide wider economic benefits. There will be enough skilled workers to fill job vacancies, making the area attractive to investors, retaining local talent and improving both productivity and social mobility.

2.2. Strategy Aims

The aims of the strategy are to have sufficient and appropriate HE provision that will:

1. Increase productivity:

- the area will have a sufficiently higher level qualified workforce
- employers will report fewer skills shortages
- the area will attract and retain talent and investment
- there will be a workforce pipeline at graduate level
- SWLEP will benefit from increased HE provision including a multi campus university and growth through the FE sector.

2. Raise aspirations and increase social mobility:

- residents will be inspired by strong local HE provision to continue their learning journey through to higher education
- higher education will be accessible i.e. flexible, affordable and proximal
- residents will be able to relate the benefits of pursuing higher education to labour market opportunities, particularly in relation to Science Technology Engineering and Maths (STEM)
- the route to higher education will be navigable and seen to be achievable.

2.3 Outcomes

This LEP wide strategy seeks to achieve the outcomes highlighted in the SEP as follows:

- **Ensure an appropriately skilled and competitive workforce to meet the needs of employers (in relation to higher level skills).**
- **Increase the proportion of the workforce qualified to level 4 and above (target of 52%).**
- **Achieve a higher proportion of individuals employed in higher skilled and higher value-added roles (Level 4 and above) in priority sectors.**
- **Increase the participation of residents in Higher Education (particularly young people).**
- **Raise aspirations and attainment of young people by age 19.**

3. Introduction

3.1 Developing the strategy

In May 2017, the SWLEP agreed a [Direction of Travel](#) for the development of a higher education strategy. This strategy builds upon that work and is underpinned by an extensive evidence base. Buckman Associates were commissioned to complete this piece of work, which includes significant and extensive primary and secondary data, some of which was purchased, as well as qualitative data obtained through conducting surveys of employers and learners. Stakeholders have been engaged throughout this process and the strategy incorporates their contributions.

The strategy has been developed against the backdrop of unprecedented change to the national further and higher level skills landscape. It has been written at a time when the uncertainty created by Brexit has become a barrier for employers when planning and investing, particularly in relation to skills. It also covers two areas which are geographically, socially, economically and politically different. This HE Strategy needs to be read in the context of other key LEP strategies that enable economic growth and improve productivity, for example the Digital Strategy. The strategy provides key evidence for work on the industrial strategy and the refresh of the SEP.

The area presents a complex picture with future skills shortages and below average participation shared across Swindon and Wiltshire, however, there are key differences in outcomes and needs, as well as differing travel to learn patterns. In addition, the perception of Swindon as a 'place' and the rurality of Wiltshire present challenges to the area.

3.2 Drivers for Change

The SEP identifies that 30,000 additional jobs are forecast between 2010 and 2020 across Swindon and Wiltshire, twice the rate of growth predicted nationally. The employment projections indicate that the occupational profile of the area is predicted to continue to shift towards higher-level occupations, with the greatest levels of growth expected among managers, professionals and associate professionals. Currently, the average number of residents qualified to level 4 and above is below national average and productivity in the SWLEP area is below comparators. There are existing recruitment challenges, and without a physical university presence, there is a limited ready graduate pool to recruit from, placing SWLEP at a significant disadvantage to other comparator areas¹. The wider economic advantages of having a university in an area are well documented in national research and higher level skills is a key driver of increasing productivity and an important means of increasing social mobility.

¹ <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/industrial-strategy-boosts-university-industry-engagement-funding>

Both local authorities with their **(Education), Employment and Skills strategies** cite the need for increased participation in higher education and the growth of higher and degree level apprenticeships to meet the needs of local economy.

The post 16 area review recommended that local higher education provision in the area should be developed in collaboration with universities.

4. National and Local Context

4.1 National Context

There has been significant change across the skills landscape during the past year and the higher education sector is entering a period of reform. This is in addition to the qualification reform being implemented in the further education sector through the post 16 skills plan.

Industrial Strategy

The [Industrial Strategy](#) White Paper published in November 2017 is intended as a key driver in skills reforms, recognising the country's low productivity, higher level skills shortage and the changing nature of jobs forecast for the future. The strategy recognises the key role that universities play in research, development and innovation. Key features of this strategy are that it:

- Commits the government to increasing Higher Education Innovation Funding, which supports university engagement with businesses, to a total of £250 million a year by 2020-21.
- Recognises the key role of growing a successful economy. There is a commitment to introduce “a new competitive £115 million Strength in Places Fund to support areas to build on their science and innovation strengths through “collaborative programmes proposed by universities, local employers, LEPs and their counterparts”.
- Sets out the approach to technical education reform which includes Institutes of Technology.
- Highlights the importance of the Higher Education sector in meeting higher level skills needs.
- Places emphasis on employers to help shape and develop provision and;
- Places a renewed focus on digitisation and research and development.

Role of universities in Economic Growth

One of the key routes to increased productivity is through more highly skilled graduates, and universities are seen as anchor institutions for growth in their localities. The Industrial Strategy outlines a key role for universities in regional growth and a drive for them to undertake more work, alongside businesses, to address the skills needs and also drive innovation and research. Research confirms the key strategic role that universities play in economic growth and the role to provide ecosystems for innovation and research. Universities are able to channel some of the resources required for growth, providing knowledge, talent and routes to finance and space.

Further work will be undertaken prior to the consultation which will assess the economic benefits to local areas of a university and how local HE provision interfaces with productivity. This will be incorporated into the final draft.

Higher Education

In 2017, the **Higher Education and Research Bill** passed through parliament bringing reforms to the HE sector that aim to deliver greater competition and choice that will promote social mobility and boost productivity. These reforms are considered to be the most significant to HE in decades. A current national review of post 18 education and funding is underway, which is focussing on choice, accessibility, skills needed by the country and value for money and is expected to conclude in early 2019.

The £30m **National Collaborative Outreach Programme** began last year and aims at raising aspirations of 13 to 19 year olds, and supports the governments goals around the participation of disadvantaged, ethnic minority groups and gender under-representation. Projects have recently received notifications of extensions to funding beyond 2018.

Apprenticeships

The government is committed to the reforms to the apprenticeship system identified in its apprenticeships vision 2020 plan published in 2016 which aims for 3 million apprenticeships by 2020. Higher and degree apprenticeships are integral to this, and more and more standards at this level are being developed and delivered by training providers, colleges and universities in partnership with employers.

4.2 Local Context

The SEP’s first Strategic Objective is: ‘Skills and talent – we need an appropriately skilled and competitive workforce to achieve our growth ambitions’.

The plan outlines the need to ‘**deliver options to enhance higher education participation across Swindon and Wiltshire meeting the demand for higher level and degree-level qualified employees locally**’. With the changing needs of the economy and future requirements both nationally and locally, the skills system needs to respond to the increasing demand for jobs at higher levels and ensure pathways and progression to university level provision including apprenticeships are available.

The projected areas for growth include:

Priority Sectors	Sectors to Watch
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advanced engineering and high value manufacturing • Health and life sciences • Financial and professional services • Digital and information and communication technology • Land-based industries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visitor economy • Adult health and social care • Low carbon economy • Construction

SWLEP Growth Sectors (SEP)

An SWLEP apprenticeship growth plan is in place which seeks to drive growth in the number of apprenticeships at all levels including higher and degree apprenticeships.

4.2.1 The Current HE Landscape

Swindon and Wiltshire is the only LEP area in the country without a physical university. The main providers of HE within the area are the three Further Education colleges, who are working with a number of university partners, along with the Open University and private training providers. There are sites in the LEP area where specialist provision is delivered by providers from outside the area. These include the Oxford Brookes Swindon campus, Cranfield University COTEC facility and Bath Spa University at Corsham Court. From the four designated touch points of Salisbury, Swindon, Trowbridge and Chippenham, there are universities within 50 miles commutable distance. There are also a number of developments in train, including FE College growth strategies for HE, plans for the University of Wales Saint Davids to deliver Cultural Heritage provision in Swindon and a bid for an Institute of Technology to serve Swindon, North Wiltshire and South East Gloucestershire. The SWLEP has supported Local Growth Fund investment to increase HE provision through the FE College sector.

4.2.2 Higher Education as a local priority

Higher Education has long been seen as a priority for both Swindon Borough Council and Wiltshire Council;

Swindon Borough Council (SBC) has had a long term ambition to have a university presence and 'secure a range of options to access higher education' is one of its pledges. The direction was set by cabinet in 2012 which was followed by commissioned work on the evidence base. In 2016 bids were submitted to the Local Growth Fund for a HE centre in Swindon and to develop facilities linked to sustainable technology. SBC has developed a partnership with the University of Wales St David's to deliver Cultural Heritage provision from the newly renovated Carriage Works site.

In Wiltshire, developing higher education provision is a priority as evidenced in the two Wiltshire College Local Growth Fund 3 bids to develop facilities in Salisbury and Lackham to enhance and increase HE provision. There have also been plans in the past to develop a university in Salisbury. In 2009, a bid was made to HEFCE by the University of Bath and partners for a university hub and spoke model centred in Salisbury and providing for 5000 learners. The bid focussed on promoting higher level skills in STEM subjects.

Furthermore, following the recommendation in [The Post 16 Area Review](#) published in August 2017, the LEP and its partners have submitted a bid for an Institute of Technology (IoT) to meet the needs of residents and employers in Swindon and North Wiltshire and South East Gloucestershire. with the main base planned to be within the Swindon College campus, the IoT is a partnership between Further Education Colleges, universities and employers. The bid outlines plans for the delivery of university level, employer led provision focusing on Digital, Engineering/Manufacturing and Life Sciences.

FE providers across the SWLEP continue to play an important role in the higher level skills landscape through the expanding offer at level 4 and foundation level and the introduction of some degree apprenticeship provision.

The pipeline to higher education has been supported through investment in projects funded through the European Structural Investment Fund (ESIF) and the City Deal funded Higher Futures service provides a unique offer to employers across the LEP to support with brokering higher level skills with university partners.

5 Summary of Evidence Base: Key Findings

5.1 Development of the evidence base

The [evidence base](#) commissioned by the LEP and delivered by Buckman Associates in 2018 includes qualitative and quantitative data and bespoke data purchased from HESA. The final report includes analysis of surveys conducted with students in years 11 to 13, adult learners and local employers. It should be noted that the evidence presents a complex landscape accentuated by the distinct geographic differences. Below is a *summary* of the key findings from this research. It is recommended that the full evidence base and appendices are referred to for a greater level of granularity. A comprehensive presentation of the evidence base was given to stakeholders at events held in April 2018, and to the LEP Skills and Talent Subgroup and LEP board members in February 2018.

5.2 Summary of evidence base: key findings

Key conclusions are highlighted in bold. The survey findings have been included at the end of each sub-section where appropriate.

5.2.1 Employers and the Workforce & the Economy

The SEP has a priority to increase the percentage of its workforce with a level 4 qualification to 52%. Currently this figure stands at 39.4% which is above the national average (38.2%). There are geographical differences within the LEP both in terms of age and level 4 qualification and residing parliamentary constituency.

The % of L4+ qualified residents in Swindon is lower than the national average.

Higher skilled workers are demonstrated to travel further to work, and although Wiltshire has a higher than average % of residents qualified to level 4+, there is also evidence to suggest that the higher skilled residents leave the area to work.

Residents in Swindon travel shorter distances to work.

That said, SWLEP has to attract graduates into the area for work to replace the higher qualified residents who live here and work outside of the area, to account for the absence of a ready pool of graduates, and 46.6% of all graduates employed in the SWLEP area originated from outside the area and are more likely to be employed within the education sector.

Skills shortages

UKCES data shows that the LEP has a higher proportion of skills shortage vacancies than the national and regional averages.

Employers responding to the survey represented a range of sectors but over 42% were not confident that they would be able to recruit to higher skilled occupations in the future. The majority of employers felt that the reasons for this were insufficient numbers of highly skilled people are attracted to the area (Swindon) and insufficient applicants for positions was cited by many employers particularly in Chippenham, Wiltshire.

Almost a quarter of employers responding to the survey felt that a lack of HE institutions in the area was a barrier to fulfilling their skills needs.

Apprenticeships

We know from data in the SWLEP apprenticeship plan that volumes of apprenticeships have been increasing in the area in recent years and the impact of the levy has yet to be realised. There is still work to be done in promoting the benefits of apprenticeships at all levels to employers including degree apprenticeships as more standards become available.

The proportion of young people surveyed not considering an apprenticeship highlights an area to focus on. Less than half of employers responding to the survey were participating in apprenticeship schemes and this was particularly low for higher and degree level apprenticeships. Employers are utilising a range of training providers to deliver training, but less than a third currently work with a HEI, this is interesting given the national research² which highlights the role of universities in local growth and productivity.

5.2.2 SWLEP pipeline to higher education

Attainment

Attainment is an important but not only factor for progression to and participating in higher education.

At level 2 and 3 Swindon performs lower than national average, whilst for Wiltshire it is higher than average. Evidence tells us that the 'by age 19 data'³ is below average for both authorities and that there exists a gap between disadvantage and non-disadvantaged groups.

The % of young people progressing to Apprenticeships from A level or equivalent study nationally and locally is relatively low with 9% in Swindon and 6% in Wiltshire. This compares with 26% and 29% respectively going into employment. Apprenticeship is an important and necessary area for growth and a priority for the area as outlined in the SWLEP Apprenticeship Growth Strategy. Given the high percentage of young people choosing employment options, pathways through to higher education through work based learning is of high importance.

² https://www.unialliance.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/UA_Creating-innovative_regions_web.pdf

³ That is the proportion of young people who had not achieved level 2 qualifications including English and maths by age 19

Progression

The progression of level 3 students to HE at the end of key stage 5 is below average for both local authorities, although Wiltshire has a high proportion progressing to Russell Group universities. Progression to employment is higher than the national average in the SWLEP area.

A lower than average proportion of level 3 LEP students progress to higher education (despite higher than average attainment in Wiltshire)

A higher than average proportion of level 3 LEP students progress to employment

Participation

Participation in higher education of students on free school meals is consistently and significantly behind the national average.

Modelled data prepared by HEFCE provides evidence that:

North Swindon has the lowest young participation rate and the most wards in the lowest quintile in the UK.

The participation of young people shows significant geographical variance and there are fewer cold spots in Wiltshire.

A second set of HEFCE modelled data provides evidence that:

Even when data is adjusted for attainment, free school meals, ethnicity and drive time to the nearest HE provider, participation in HE is worse than expected in Swindon and Wiltshire.

There is another factor other than FSM, ethnicity, drive time and attainment which is affecting participation

There are inter-geographical differences in participation between North Swindon and South Wiltshire.

5.2.3 Overall student demographics and profile

Overall student demographics and profile

The evidence tells us that in the academic year 2015/16 the numbers of students originally from SWLEP, 18,240, decreased in line with national trends. Other age groups reflected national trends.

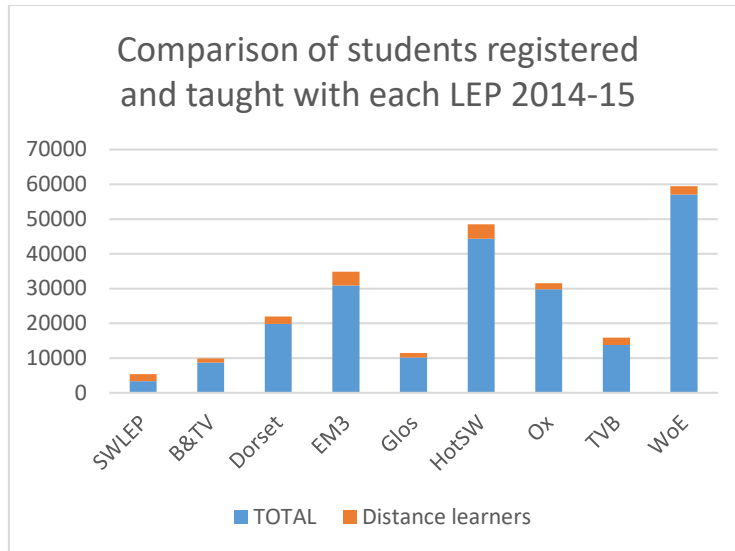
Overall Swindon has a greater proportion of students age 25+.

Registered and taught within SWLEP

In absolute and relative terms there are considerably fewer students registered and taught within the SWLEP than any of the comparator LEP areas. In 2014/15 the total was 3,350.

The number of residents studying within the LEP is declining and from 2012/13 to 2015/16 there was a decrease in 6% from 30% to 24%.

The evidence also shows us that over almost 60% of resident learners access distance learning this compares to 8% nationally.



Comparison of students registered

15% of students are university registered and FE taught and this figure is increasing. This is much higher than comparator LEPs where the average is 4%. Data also suggests that 21% are FE registered and FE taught. The SWLEP is significantly different in this respect from other comparator LEPs where on average 80% of provision delivered in the area is university registered and university taught.

5.2.4 HE provision offered within the LEP

The area is one of the few areas without significant HEI presence.

There are fewer students registered and taught within SWLEP than any other comparator LEP and this number is decreasing.

Provision is offered through Oxford Brookes at their Swindon campus (subjects allied to medicine), the 3 FE Colleges, several alternative providers have registered undergraduates, training providers offering professional qualifications and apprenticeship provision. Other niche provision is delivered by other institutions and Higher Futures brokers provision between employers and partner HEIs.

26 HNDS and HNCs are offered at the colleges but there is overlap between these and the majority of provision is in non-STEM subjects. There are 8 foundation degrees, the majority of which are non-STEM and the number accessing this provision is decreasing, again there is overlap although additional foundation degrees will be provided in the future through Wiltshire College.

Overlap in provision, scope for more STEM, some provision in development (LGF Wiltshire College) and a limited offer.

Surveys indicated that a third of young people were interested in taking a STEM subject and would like to work in STEM.

Surveys also indicated that there was a greater awareness of the higher education courses offered by the colleges by adult learner than young people and they showed a preference towards studying higher level vocational qualifications and professional qualifications. 61.9% were aware of the higher level college provision.

5.2.5 HE provision outside SWLEP

The four designated touch points of Salisbury, Swindon, Trowbridge and Chippenham have HEIs within 50 miles and within commutable distance of 2 Russell Group Universities. There is a broad range of subject provision offered, however, the study revealed much less choice for part time study.

Options for part time study at a HEI outside of the LEP is limited

5.2.6 Where and what do students study

Interestingly, of those who study outside of the SWLEP area, eight of the top 10 choices are consistently within commutable distance of the LEP (the others being Plymouth University and The Open University). This is even more interesting given that the survey of young people revealed that, given the choice, they would prefer to study at a location much further away. The top three choices are the Open University, The University of the West of England and Oxford Brookes

Quantitative and qualitative data are opposed; young people say they want to move away from the area to pursue higher education but trend data suggests this is not what happens in reality and HEIs attended are within a 50 mile radius

A large proportion of students living in the SWLEP continue to do so during term time.

What do they study

Within the LEP in 2014-15, by far the highest volume of prescribed courses studied are in media studies and related courses, social sciences, art and design. Non prescribed provision is mainly across accounting and finance, human resources management, counselling and strategic management.

The evidence indicates that the subjects with higher volumes of students are in sectors not considered a priority by the SWLEP

Students studying outside of the LEP are choosing subjects in humanities and languages, creative art and design and, business and administrative studies. 38% of students from the LEP studied STEM subjects. HESA data suggests that nationally this figure is 48%.

STEM subjects are not pursued by students either studying within or outside of the LEP, this is despite average uptake of STEM based courses at level 3

5.2.7 Graduate flows: graduate talent pool

Nationally it has been found that students who study in their home area are much more likely to remain there for work after graduation, however when graduate flows in SWLEP

are considered, this presents an issue. 84.1% of SWLEP students moved away to study and this figure was only surpassed by 2 other comparator LEPs. However, not only did 84.1% leave to study, 57% did not return. Nationally this figure is 33%.

Additionally, where other comparators attract students into the area creating a net gain of students, SWLEP is a net exporter of students (there is no HEI to attract students to study in the area).

In other comparator LEPs there is a net import of students thus a naturally larger graduate talent pool for employers to recruit from

Higher than national average % of students leave the area to study

Higher than national average % of students leave the area to study and do not return

5.3 Qualitative data

The survey sample sizes were relatively small for adults and employers. There are over 30,000 businesses in the SWLEP area, the majority of which employ fewer than 10 people. The employer sample size represents less than 1% of the employer base indicating that some additional work is required to fully engage employers in the development of the full strategy.

Attitudes to higher learning

Survey data revealed that 70% of young people would consider higher education, and those not considering would prefer to get a job or an apprenticeship.

For adults the appetite to study higher level qualifications was highest amongst those from lower skills occupational groups or those without a higher level qualification. The motivations are career driven for adults and for young people to pursue their career goals and enhance job prospects. Securing employment was one of the main reasons given by young people not considering higher education.

Barriers to higher education

When asked about the barriers to pursuing higher education, as expected responses differed between the younger people and the adult learners. Young people more generally responded that finance was the biggest barrier for them. During learner panels it was established that it is often a misconception associated with finance that presented a barrier, the lack of information available to them and also in numerous responses the inability or lack of willingness of the respondent to leave the area. For particular subgroups of young people, progressing to higher education is not seen as an attractive option and further research into this would be beneficial. Interestingly, over 30% of young people responding to the survey said that where they live has limited their career choices.

The rurality of the Wiltshire and logistical access to provision presents a barrier to many young people particularly those from certain groups.

Adults responded that their biggest barriers were work and family commitments, lack of time and support from their employer.

Survey respondents' views on developing local provision

- Reputation, academic standing and courses offered were of most interest to adults and young people. This was reaffirmed by the students participating in the stakeholder events.
- Locality and flexibility were more important to adults than to the younger respondents.
- Young people would prefer to travel away to university than study at a university in SWLEP if there was one, however this option was more popular with adult learners.
- Interestingly, more than a third of young people felt that where they live had limited their choices so far, this links to the two distinguishing features of place experienced by the SWLEP area- the rurality of Wiltshire and the place shaping legacy of Swindon.

Making local higher education more attractive;

Both adults and young people felt that to make HE more attractive important factors include financial help with the costs, a university in the area and a wider range of higher education courses

5.4 Stakeholder engagement with evidence base

The emerging evidence was presented to the LEP board and the Skills and Talent Sub-Group in February. Workshop style events with wider stakeholders from sectors including employers, training providers, FE colleges, schools and HEIs took place in Wiltshire (Devizes) and Swindon in April.

The purpose of these workshop events was to share the evidence base with the stakeholders including the identified areas of strategy focus, to sense check the findings with them and to provide them with an opportunity to shape and influence the development of the strategy. In total over 120 delegates attended the events and each group was well represented.

Tables were asked to consider the questions relating to the evidence base and strategy focus around learners, young and adult, aspirations and CEIAG employer perspectives and implications for provision.

Stakeholder contribution was rich and well informed and an interactive poll gauged their views on the priorities needed.

The top two priorities considered by stakeholders (at both events) for moving forward to retain talent and meeting employer demand were to:

- Increase the local offer of flexible and part time study
- Increase higher and degree apprenticeship options

A high proportion of stakeholders at both events felt that the strategy should focus on developing more employer led provision.

The top two priorities considered for increasing participation in HE (at both events) were:

- Focus heavily on raising aspiration and improving educational attainment with young people
- Supporting more adult learners to access higher level skills related to their work especially those without existing level 4+ qualifications

From the discussion that took place during these sessions, several key themes emerged:

1. The need for more employer led provision, which is flexible and accessible and affordable for learners
2. The importance of the place shaping agenda in raising aspiration, developing provision and recruitment
3. Raising attainment at 16 and by 19
4. CEIAG at all ages to enable people to understand the alternative routes to higher education, the implications and the relevance to the local labour market
5. The importance of engaging employers in school and college programmes to improve the link between learning opportunities and employment.

Work is currently underway to process all of the stakeholder feedback and a full report will be included as an appendix to the full consultation strategy.

5.5 Overview of evidence relating to areas for strategy to focus on and how this will be achieved

Evidence	Strategy focus	How to achieve
<p>HE Provision</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Below average percentage of workforce qualified to L4+ in some of the LEP area • Current local provision not sufficiently meeting employer and student needs • Low percentage of students progressing to STEM HE courses (despite average participation in STEM courses at level 3) • Few STEM courses offered locally • Lack of part-time provision in neighbouring Higher Education Institutes • Few local foundation level courses 	<p>Grow local HE provision including a multi campus university and increase the numbers of students studying in the SWLEP</p> <p>Continue to work with the FE sector to grow provision</p> <p>Develop our approach to an employer led skills infrastructure, reflecting the national and local industrial strategies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commission a feasibility study into a multi campus university for the SWLEP • Align the HE curriculum with LEP priorities including STEM • Develop flexible part-time options along with progression pathways • Ensuring the development of provision has a balance between being attractive to students and meeting employer needs • Proactively engage employers in any new design or delivery so that provision is employer led • Ensure there is access to HEIs to meet needs in the area for

Evidence	Strategy focus	How to achieve
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Net loss of graduates • Very low numbers of students both LEP registered and taught by a university (unlike comparator LEPs) • Young people prefer to study at a university • Only LEP in country without a university • Strong employer appetite for involvement in developing provision • Student choice not matching employer need • Challenges of rurality, accessibility and cohort viability • Role of universities in increasing productivity 		<p>example, niche provision building on the work of Higher Futures</p>
<p>Awareness of current HE offer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High proportion of survey respondents were unaware of higher level provision already on offer within the SWLEP 	<p>Increase awareness of current provision</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote existing local offer
<p>Swindon and Wiltshire as a place</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The employer survey revealed that employers have difficulty recruiting to the area, and they are not confident of being able to recruit in the future • The survey of young people indicated that people want to leave the area • Graduate flows remain an issue in this area in that a higher than average proportion of learners leave the area and do not return. Graduates are attracted to the area from elsewhere, but overall the LEP currently experiences a net loss of graduate talent 	<p>Focus on the place shaping agenda</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategy for making SWLEP an attractive place to live, study and work • Develop the wider student offer e.g. accommodation, lifestyle
<p>Attainment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attainment is below average, particularly in Swindon. Attainment at aged 16 is strongly correlated with progression to 	<p>Increase educational attainment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Swindon Challenge • LEP investment in STEM, careers and Labour Market Intelligence (LMI)

Evidence	Strategy focus	How to achieve
HE and closely related to productivity		
HE Progression <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Below average progression to HE, low participation in HE in certain areas and for some groups 	Improve progression to HE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Through the delivery of good quality IAG, address the issues around awareness and aspirations Showcase the benefits of continued learning Further understand and address barriers to progression Develop pathways taking into account learner starting point
Work and learn options <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A high percentage of learners prefer work options There is a low percentage of employers participating in apprenticeships 72% of employers felt that any new provision should involve employers in its development 	Maximise and increase opportunities for work and learn options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with employers to develop apprenticeship opportunities at all levels (pathways to HE) Work with employers by sector
The current workforce <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employers are reporting skills gaps and recruitment challenges and not confident about recruiting to higher skilled occupations Forecast skills shortages as identified in the SEP and by employers The adult survey indicates appetite to learn with support from employer 	Upskilling the workforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support more adults to access higher level skills related to their work Advice and Brokerage solutions to workforce skills through Higher Futures

6 Strategy moving forward

6.1. High level actions to meet the strategic aims of increasing productivity and raising aspirations and social mobility

I. Grow and promote local HE Provision:

- Work with current providers to develop their provision to meet the needs of residents and employers and raise awareness of their current offer

- Commission a feasibility study to develop a multi campus university in the SWLEP which will; supplement and complement FE provision; meet the needs of residents; be employer led; strengthen STEM provision and align with the principles of Institutes of Technology; and attract people from outside the LEP
 - Work with employers on a sector basis to develop provision to meet their needs
 - Ensure a strong focus on the growth of higher and degree apprenticeships
 - Ensure there is access to HEIs to meet the needs of employers in the area e.g for those with niche requirements building on the work of Higher Futures
2. Ensure the strategy links to the emerging local industrial strategy and future research and investment opportunities
 - Evidence from this strategy will feed into the wider LEP local industrial strategy work and the LEP-wide task group
 3. Improve educational attainment and progression to higher education:
 - Continue focussed work through Swindon Challenge
 - Through the LEP strengthen the work of the Enterprise Adviser Network to improve employer engagement in Careers Education Information and Guidance (CEIAG), including the importance of STEM and maths and local labour market information
 - Ensure a comprehensive programme of activity is in place to raise aspirations, working with key stakeholders including addressing barriers for all residents and for specific groups
 - Further understand and address barriers to progression
 - Develop pathways to HE taking into account learner starting point and including flexible and part-time options
 4. Promoting SWLEP as a great place to live, work and study
 - Identify and promote key strengths of the area
 - Target campaigns to promote the key strengths of the area
 - Develop a wider student offer
 - Address the negative perceptions of place evidenced by some groups
 5. Developing our approach to an employer-led skills infrastructure, reflecting the national and local industrial strategies
 - Take a sector and targeted approach to higher apprenticeships
 - Employers, universities and providers work together in a more systemic way to develop provision and ensure innovation in design/delivery
 - Work with SMEs and narrow the gap between learner choice and employer demand
 - Support employers to harness research and innovation opportunities with universities
 - Proactively engage employers in any new design or delivery so that provision is employer-led

7 Governance and Accountability

7.1. How will the strategy be governed?

Overall accountability for the implementation of the Higher Education Strategy sits with the Skills and Talent Sub-Group which reports directly to the LEP Board.

7.2 Key Stakeholders

The involvement of key stakeholders is essential in order to ensure successful implementation of the strategy. Stakeholders will also be consulted with and engaged in the delivery of the implementation plan. Stakeholders consist of training providers including FE colleges, schools and head teacher representative groups, employers, employer representative groups, local authorities, higher education institutions and learner representatives.

8 Next steps

8.1 Implementation plan

The implementation plan will be used for the delivery of activity to support this strategy. The Skills and Talent subgroup will oversee the progress.