

2020

Swindon & Wiltshire Skills Plan



Swindon & Wiltshire LEP

7/29/2020

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I. Introduction



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Since the creation of Swindon & Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership in 2011, we have focussed on establishing a strong alliance between local business and the public sector. The balance between the skills supply and demand, with all our communities participating, has been a critical part of this alliance.

A flurry of activity to date – from investment in education premises through to delivering skills development, mentoring schemes and careers advice – has introduced numerous improvements. However, the continuous shifts in both skills supply and demand levels mean that we cannot rest on our laurels.

Responding to rapid and often unforeseen changes has never been more important than now, as we contend with the COVID-19 pandemic and its immense impact on the world of work.



A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'P. M.' followed by a stylized flourish.

Developed by our Skills & Talent Subgroup, which was established in line with the national guidance for Skills Advisory Panels from December 2018, this Skills Plan is a product of many months of work with numerous stakeholders, first to understand local skills and labour market needs, and then to develop action plans to respond to these needs.

Through this Skills Plan, we are pleased to introduce our shared approach to building a robust, employer-led and highly responsive local skills system, aligned to our emerging Local Industrial Strategy, further improving productivity of our area and ensuring that all our communities both contribute to, and benefit from, productivity enhancements.

2. Executive Summary

An overarching Skills Plan for the Swindon & Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership (SWLEP) brings together a range of existing strategies, programmes and plans, whilst removing duplication and gaps, reducing complexity and promoting a simple and clear message.

Driven by extensive analysis, which delivered deep insights into skills provision, demand and labour market intelligence, undertaken by the University of Bath on behalf of the SWLEP, the strategic choices outlined in the Skills Plan are founded on a robust evidence base.

The SWLEP's Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) and the People Foundation in particular, act as the key strategic drivers behind the Skills Plan.

The first priority is maintaining the balance between the skill supply and demand. The proportion of highly skilled jobs, which are typically coupled with higher productivity, is below the national average in Swindon and Wiltshire. We plan to address this structural weakness by increasing apprenticeship starts and achievements and improving Higher Education progression rates. This is expected to lead to more highly skilled people in our workforce, elevated average wages and higher productivity levels across Swindon and Wiltshire.

The second priority is inclusive growth, focusing on disadvantaged children and gender pay equality. Swindon and Wiltshire rank low amongst local authority

areas for social mobility, meaning that a child from a disadvantaged background is less likely to do well at school or in the labour market. The gender gap in hourly pay in Swindon and Wiltshire is relatively high when contrasted with the comparator LEPs and is higher than in England as a whole.

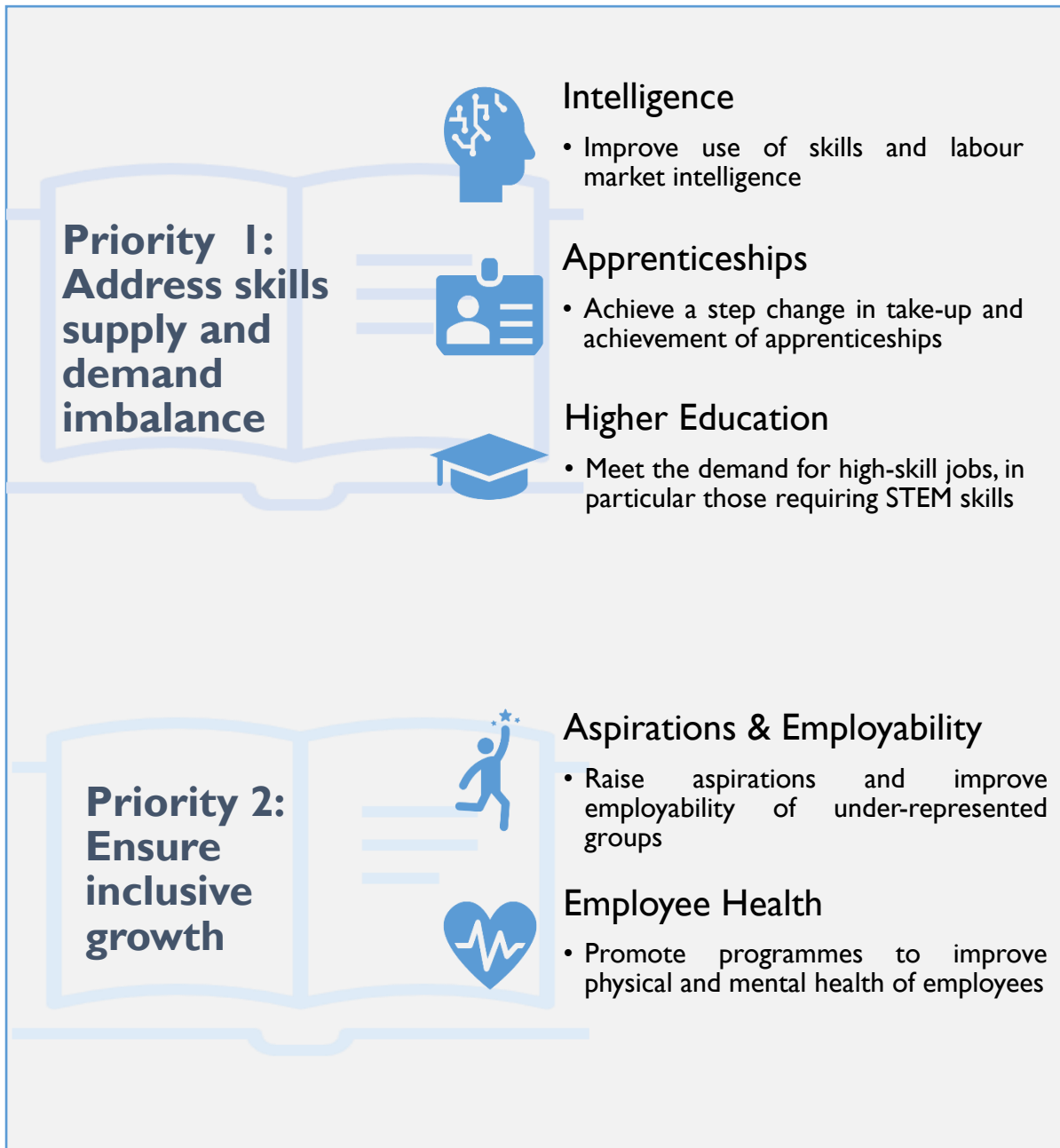
The first step towards addressing these inclusion challenges will focus on raising aspirations, which is expected to lead to increased education participation, especially for those from disadvantaged backgrounds, allowing them to get better jobs and increase their earning power.

These two priorities are underpinned by five strategic objectives, which can be seen in Figure 1. A number of resources will be employed to deliver our Skills Plan. Alongside the Growth Hub, Higher Futures and Careers Hub, this plan will also coordinate resources from the two local authorities, different government departments, local colleges, universities and businesses.

This document outlines the key drivers behind our strategic priorities, objectives and actions we are planning to undertake to address our skills supply and demand imbalance and deliver inclusive growth.

This is a forward-looking plan, focussing on the next five years. Therefore, the list of actions outlined is not exhaustive and will continue to evolve, with other actions arising in the future, driven by both internal shifts and external labour market changes.

Figure 1: Swindon & Wiltshire Skills Plan



3. Audit of provision, demand and labour market intelligence



We have analysed the economy of Swindon and Wiltshire in detail, to understand the key trends relating to the skills supply and demand. We have contrasted our performance with that of our comparator LEPs, including: Buckinghamshire Thames Valley, Dorset, Enterprise M3, Gloucestershire, Heart of the South West, Oxfordshire, Thames Valley Berkshire and West of England, as well as the national averages, to identify any aspects that require additional support. We have also highlighted any differences

between our two local authority areas, Swindon and Wiltshire, and plan to undertake specific actions to address these disparities.

Overall, we have a dynamic economy in Swindon and Wiltshire, with a number of strong and competitive sectors. The economy has grown at a compound annual rate of 3.1% since 2013, to reach £21.4bn Gross Value Added (GVA) in current basic prices in 2018. The area benefits from a diverse sectoral mix. The five largest sectors are: Manufacturing; Real Estate Activities; Wholesale and Retail trade; Professional, scientific and technical activities; and Financial and insurance activities. Together they generated 55% of GVA in 2018. Compared to the England average, Manufacturing accounts for a considerably larger share of GVA in Swindon and Wiltshire. Professional and Financial activities are also above the national average. Wholesale and Retail GVA is broadly in line with the national average, whilst Real Estate is slightly behind.

We have a low unemployment rate, standing at 3.5% in 2018 and significantly below the national 4.1%. The median gross hourly earnings for full time workers in Swindon and Wiltshire were £14.00 in 2019, slightly higher than in 2018, but still below the England average of £15.01. Although incomes are relatively low in Swindon, house prices are also low, meaning that it is a relatively affordable place to live. In Swindon, the housing affordability ratio, calculated by comparing the median house price to median gross annual residence-based earnings, was 7.53 in 2019 compared to the national average of 7.83. In contrast, Wiltshire was considerably less affordable with a 9.19 ratio in 2019.

Claimants, as a proportion of economically active residents aged 16+, have been steadily increasing in Swindon and Wiltshire since 2015, but are still lower than the UK or England average. In May 2020, 7.9% of the UK's economically active people were claiming benefits, compared to 5.8% in Swindon and Wiltshire. Based on the index of multiple deprivation for 2015, the area experiences greater levels of deprivation relative to comparator LEPs, but with low levels of extreme deprivation.

The Further Education (FE) participation and achievements in our area have declined recently, with increases in Swindon more than offset by Wiltshire's declines. In contrast to our comparator LEAs, Swindon & Wiltshire LEA has a lower percentage of young people staying for Higher Education (HE) or FE study or employment in the area in which they grew up. Local HE provision does not offer the capacity or range of study for local residents, which drives below-average uptake for foundation degrees and Higher Education.

Core STEM subjects, such as Engineering and Technology and Computer Sciences, are identified as the most popular subjects that employers would like to see delivered by Higher Education institutions. However, this demand is not being met by FE colleges, with non-STEM courses accounting for approximately two thirds of total learners in the academic year 2014/15. This was one of the key reasons behind the successful bid to establish the Government-backed Institute of Technology (IOT) in 2018, which is due to open in 2021.


Higher National Diplomas and Certificates have good levels of uptake in the area, as do apprenticeship schemes. In both cases, employers have been increasingly engaged in their promotion.

From September 2021 onwards, New College Swindon will offer T-levels, with the Wiltshire College joining it from 2022. Both will deliver T-levels in industry areas that have been identified as having skills shortages, most notably digitalisation.


Swindon and Wiltshire have a lower overall number of employees with a European Union (EU) background. The estimated proportion of the workforce that were non-UK EU nationals in 2017 was 8%, lower than the national average of 10%. Also, reliance on EU nationals for 'hard-to-fill' vacancies was below the national average. Of the SWLEP employers that recruited non-UK nationals into "hard-to-fill vacancies", 37% hired EU nationals, compared to 46% for England overall. Because of this, Swindon and Wiltshire are expected to be less exposed to possible future restrictions on migration from the EU countries due to Brexit. Nonetheless, with the introduction of EU duty, Brexit will pose significant challenges to local businesses whose export focus is predominantly or wholly EU.



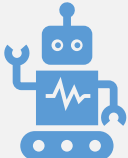
Figure 7: Anticipated Long-term Impact



A 2019 report from the Migration Observatory showed that 17% of the 2018 UK workforce was born abroad. Among the longer-term impacts arising as a result of the lockdown and the restrictions placed on national and international movement, we will continue to investigate the impact on migrant workers, although the historic data analysis has suggested that Swindon and Wiltshire area is less dependent on the EU workers than the country overall. We will especially focus on those sectors that are more dependent on the migrant workers. The Migration Observatory analysis showed that in 2018 the migrant workers were more prevalent than those born in the UK in several sectors, including Hospitality, Information & Communication, Admin & Support services, Health and Professional & Scientific services.



Remote working is expected to become more of a norm following from the lockdown, which will affect the operations, systems and processes of organisations, but also the skillset required to work efficiently and effectively.



In the longer-term, it is also expected that more institutions will investigate opportunities for further automation, in an effort to reduce costs. Based on the FISS report, it is the same two sectors most exposed to the EU workers that have the highest proportion of jobs at risk from automation: Transport and storage (55% job) and Accommodation and food services (58% jobs). According to a McKinsey report, almost 50% of jobs displaced through automation, are at risk of displacement through COVID-19 as well.

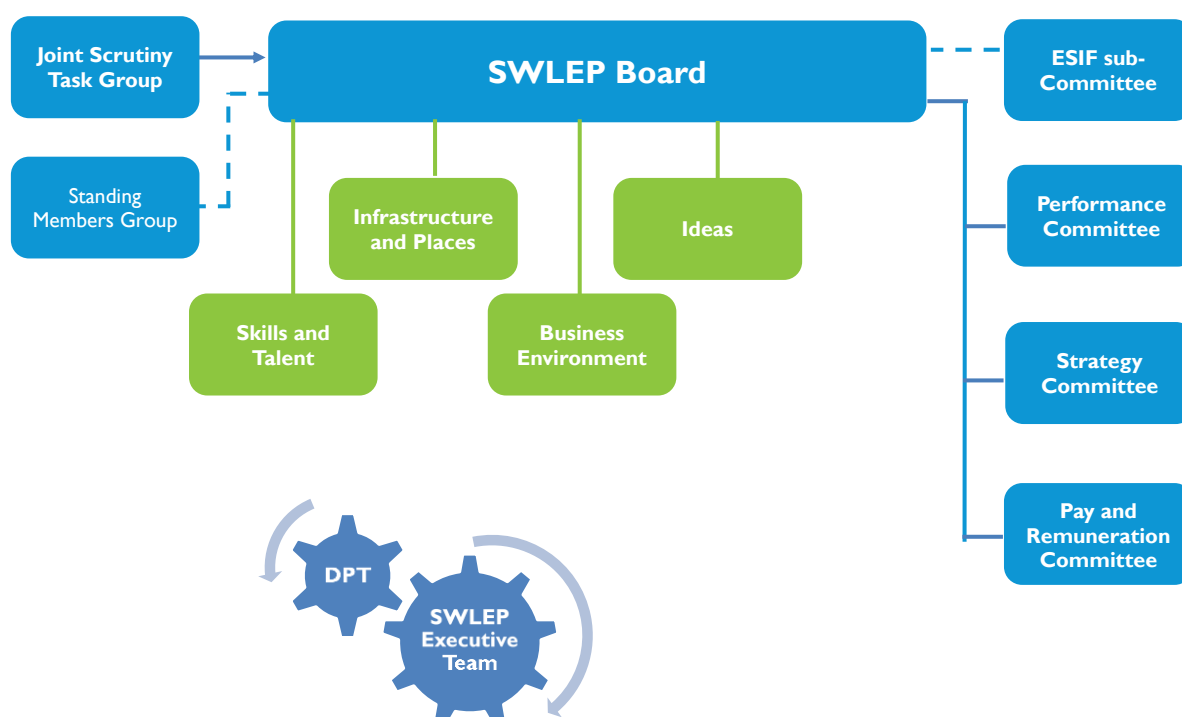
A more local analysis of the job vacancies shows that several occupations have seen a growth during April 2020, driven by the Covid-19 outbreak. The fastest growing occupations in Swindon and Wiltshire were: Care Workers and Home Carers, and Nurses. Amongst the fastest declining were: Sales, Customer Service, Chef and various business and management jobs. Both the increases and decreases have been broadly in line with the national averages and the SWLEP and its partners are working relentlessly on supporting the businesses affected, through the Growth Hub and other available resources. We will continue to monitor job vacancies as the lockdown continues to ease off and the recovery begins.

6. Governance, reporting and monitoring

Successful implementation of the Skills Plan will require close collaboration between local and national government, local businesses, universities, colleges and other local organisations.

To ensure that the intended outcomes are reached, Swindon & Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership will implement the Skills Plan through its existing governance and delivery structures. (See Figure 2.)

Figure 8: Swindon and Wiltshire LEP Governance Structure, 2020/21

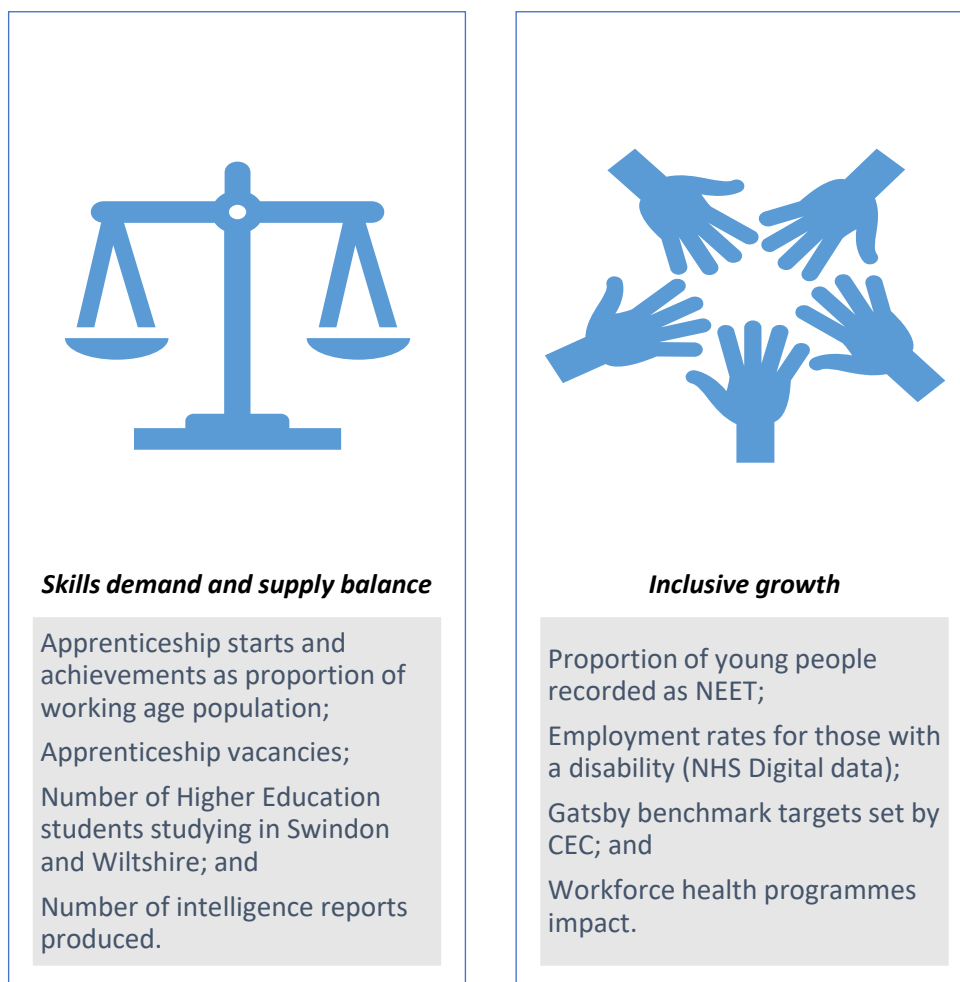


In line with the governance framework, the Skills Plan will be recommended to the Board for approval. The Skills & Talent Subgroup will be responsible for overseeing the effective implementation of the Skills Plan by monitoring its progress and reporting back to:

- the SWLEP Board on a regular basis, including in-depth, end-of-year reports;
- the Performance Committee, which has been formed to scrutinise our progress against targets and spend;
- the Strategy Committee, which will meet twice a year to oversee the delivery of the Swindon and Wiltshire Local Industrial Strategy, of which the Skills Plan is a key component; and
- the Department for Education, through a Local Skills Report setting out what we have done and how effectively we have implemented our plan.

The following Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) will be used to monitor the progress of the Skills Plan delivery:

Figure 9: Swindon and Wiltshire Skills Plan KPIs



The Swindon and Wiltshire Skills Plan is designed to be responsive to emerging challenges and short-term action plans will be developed by the Skills & Talent Subgroup to address these. We intend to undertake annual review of the Swindon and Wiltshire Skills Plan.

Finally, this Skills Plan will be used to guide the allocation of existing and future funding opportunities.

7. SWLEP Skills Action Plan 2020-21

Priority	Objectives	Actions	Lead Person	Partners	Start	Finish	Cost and Resources	Success Measures	Impact			
1	Address skills supply and demand imbalance	1.1	1.1.1	Establish "real-time" source of labour market intelligence (LMI)	SWLEP CEO		Mar-20	Apr-20	£ 10,000	Gained access to data sources, used to inform Covid skills response	Using data to understand skills supply and demand and develop appropriate and impactful response, including for Covid-19	
			1.1.2	Share skills plan and underlying evidence base and promote participation in use of LMI data	SWLEP Skills Lead	Employer /provider reps on Skills and Talent Subgroup		Apr-20	Jul-20	6 days	Partners engaged and aware of skills supply and demand issues and what we are doing to address them	Partners use data sources and key insights to inform curriculum development and skills response; STEM learners increase; SME owners access training
			1.1.3	Develop a dashboard on the SWLEP website accessible to everyone	SWLEP Head of PII Implementation	SWLEP Growth Hub Manager		Aug-20	Dec-20	£20,000 for a 3rd party to develop the tool, 6 days for initial set up, 5 days per annum for manual data updates, 5 days for Growth Hub to promote	Website analytics show that the tool is regularly used	Wide range of stakeholders able to use data to understand the local skills supply and demand to underpin their decision-making
			1.1.4	Produce monthly LMI update reports	SWLEP Head of PII Implementation	SWLEP Director of Strategy and Policy, Swindon / Wiltshire Intelligence Cells		Apr-20	Mar-21	15 days	Reports produced and presented to the Skills & Talent Subgroup	Skills and Talent members use the data to inform their plans
			1.1.5	Produce an annual skills supply and demand and LMI report	SWLEP Head of PII Implementation	SWLEP Director of Strategy and Policy, Swindon / Wiltshire Intelligence Cells		Jan-21	Mar-21	15 days	Annual report provided	Report demonstrates the impact the use of LMI has had on the skills supply and demand
			1.1.6	Use the SWLEP platforms, including developing new virtual tools, to promote apprenticeship and career opportunities to young people and career changers	SWLEP Marketing Exec	Careers Hub Manager, LA Skills Teams, schools, FE colleges, DWP reps on Skills & Talent Subgroup		Jul-20	Jul-21	15 days	Regular reports produced, SWLEP website hosts information which is linked to SM activity	Gatsby BM achievement meets targets set by CEC, unemployment figures improve
	1.2	Achieve a step change in take-up and achievement of apprenticeships	1.2.1	Acquire LMI tool for Careers Hub to promote apprenticeships to school leavers	Career Hub Manager	ASK, SWAAN, FE, GWP Providers, SASH and WASH		Apr-20	Mar-21	£5,000 5 days	YoY increase in school leavers on intermediate and advanced apprenticeships	More apprenticeship starts in the areas of skills shortage
			1.2.2	Use all available resources to promote apprenticeships to SMEs and encourage more SMEs to employ an apprentice	SWLEP Skills and Enterprise Advisor	Growth Hub, SWLEP Marketing Exec, GWP Providers		Apr-20	Mar-21	12 days	More SMEs employing an apprentice and the actions need to go to providers who have large teams of employer engagement staff for this purpose	More SMEs benefiting from the apprenticeship scheme
			1.2.3	Leverage the use of nationally available resources to promote the benefits of apprenticeships	SWLEP Skills Lead	Head of Skills and Employment, Wiltshire Council, SWLEP Skills Lead, Growth Hub		Jul-20	Jul-21	6 days	Clear sign posting to nationally available resources in all of our comms	Progression pathways employed in a way to achieve maximum benefit in closing skills gaps
			1.2.4	Work to secure investment to support apprenticeships to counteract the impact of Covid-19	SWLEP Skills Lead	LA Skills teams, GWP Providers		Jul-20	Dec-20	20 days	Increase in the number of apprenticeship opportunities and take-up	Apprenticeships for young people and those that lost their jobs used to close skills gaps
			1.2.5	Run a marketing campaign, targeting parents and students, to increase awareness of apprenticeships as a key career choice; aligned with National Apprenticeship Week (Feb / Mar)	SWLEP Digital Marketing Apprentice	SWLEP Marketing Exec, LA Skills Teams, GWP Providers		Sep-20	Mar-21	£5000 10 days	Marketing campaign implemented	More apprenticeship starts
	1.3	Build on the success of the employer input to the IOT and develop a business-led multi-campus federation of higher education providers to meet the demand for local jobs, especially those requiring STEM skills	1.3.1	Support FE colleges to achieve successful implementation of T-levels through high quality business engagement	SWLEP Growth Hub Manager	FE Colleges, SWLEP Growth Hub Business Navigators		Sep-21	Aug-22	10 days	More work placements	More people completing T-levels
			1.3.2	Establish a strategic partnership with a group of committed employers and education providers to develop a framework for a successful business-led, multi-campus federation	SWLEP Head of PII Implementation	LIS Manger, SWLEP		Oct-20	Oct-21	30 days + 3rd party costs (e.g. legal)	At least 6 employers and 6 providers + independent business chair signed up to participate in HE Federation and a high-level framework developed	Business-led multi campus framework developed (strategy, heads of terms, governance)
			1.3.3	Promote the Institute of Technology in Swindon to achieve success in its first five year charter	SWLEP Marketing Exec	GWP Providers, Schools, Careers Hub, Adviza, DWP		Sep-21	Sep-26	ASK, Uni Connect, Careers Hub, Adviza, Higher Futures Learning Hub	Year on year increase in learners as projected in the bid	IOT achieves targets set by DFE
			1.3.4	Develop a targeted marketing campaign to increase uptake of higher and degree apprenticeships in STEM subjects, in particular females	SWLEP Marketing Exec	GWP Providers, LA Skills Teams, Business Reps on Skills and Talent		Jan-21	Jul-21	£5000 10 days	Marketing campaign delivered - ROI realised	ROI realised with an increase in female STEM learners identified
			1.3.5	Develop high quality marketing materials about the supply of skills provision to support Inward Investment programmes	SWLEP Skills Lead	SWLEP Marketing Exec, SWLEP & LA Inward Investment Leads		Apr-20	Apr-21	10 days	More initiatives on SWLEP website and social media attracting talent to Swindon and Wiltshire	More people coming to Swindon and Wiltshire to study and stay for work
	1.4	Develop digital skills	1.4.1	Develop agile digital skills training programmes, responsive to business need	SWLEP Digital Specialist	GWP Providers, Business Reps, ESIF programmes, Growth Hub		Jul-20	Jul-22	10 days	A local digital skills offer is developed and promoted	Resilient businesses with strong digital platforms and high digital skills levels

Priority	Objectives	Actions	Lead Person	Partners	Start	Finish	Cost and Resources	Success Measures	Impact		
2	2.1	Raise aspirations and improve employability of young people through effective support for independent careers education, information, advice and guidance via SWLEP Careers Hub	2.1.1	Deliver support for a high quality careers programme in schools and colleges	Careers Hub Manager	Careers Hub Steering Group members	Aug-20	Jul-21	£276,442	All CEC targets achieved	Reduction in NEET figures, improved HE destination figures and increase in employers engaged and working with schools
			2.1.3	Coordinate ambassadors, role models and skills champions to inspire young people from vulnerable groups	Careers Hub Manager	Careers Hub Steering Group, GWP Providers, LA Skills Teams, schools, DWP	Aug-20	Jul-21	Uni Connect, DWP grandmentoring scheme	Uni Connect targets achieved,	Increased rate of employment of YP from vulnerable groups / reduction in vulnerable NEETs
			2.2	Promote programmes to improve physical and mental health of employees	2.2.1	Develop understanding of the impact of physical and mental health on employability and productivity and produce a report on findings; explore options for a student project	SWLEP Head of PII Implementation	Universities, West of England and Wessex Academic Health Science Networks, NHS Federation	Aug-20	Mar-21	15 days
			2.2.2	Promote the report findings with businesses to implement examples of good practice	SWLEP Growth Hub Manager	Skills and Talent subgroup, SWLEP bid manager	Mar-21	Mar-22	15 days	No. of businesses that take up the promoted ideas via survey	Business efficiency due to reduction in absenteeism
3	3.1	Recover skill supply and demand balance	3.1.1	Develop intelligence reports detailing the impact of Covid-19 on local business and providers; work with both side to ensure that skills supply is responding to skill demand	SWLEP Head of PII Implementation	Data discovery group (SWLEP and LAs), Skills and Talent subgroup	May-20	Aug-21	Leveraging resources from action 1.1 12 days	Articles published monthly on SWLEP website	Balance between supply and demand is carefully managed
			3.1.2	Collate and promote online training materials for newly unemployed	SWLEP Digital Marketing Apprentice	SWLEP Skills Lead, LA Skills Teams, ESIF Programmes, DWP, Adviza	Jul-20	Jul-22	15 days	Webpage analytics showing a good levels of traffic; survey of businesses advertising for vacancies to see if employee upskilling is needed	Drop in unemployment rates
			3.1.3	Identify and apply for funding made available for recovery	SWLEP Skills Lead	SWLEP Head of PII Implementation	Jul-20	Jul-22	15 days	Amount of funding received and success rate	Higher rate of recruitment for those that access funded programmes
	3.2	Recover inclusive growth	3.2.2	Understand which groups are most adversely affected by Covid-19 (e.g. NEETs), and develop an action plan with partners to support recovery	SWLEP Skills Lead	Data discovery group (SWLEP and LAs), Skills and Talent subgroup, DWP	Jul-20	Jul-21	15 days	Action plan delivered	NEET proportion reduced to pre-Covid 19 levels