

Local Skills Report

2022



Swindon & Wiltshire
LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP

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Swindon and Wiltshire Skills Plan
Local Skills Report – Annex A
Local Skills Report – Annex B





Carole Kitching

Chair of the Skills & Talent Subgroup

Despite it being less than a year since Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership (SWLEP) published its last Local Skills Report, we have noted some significant changes.

The impact from COVID-19 and the associated lockdowns has not been as great as initially feared. We have maintained high employment rates and strong Gross Value Added (GVA) per hour worked, keeping both above the national average. Our resilient local economy, founded upon a diverse sectoral mix, played a key role in this.

Although the number of people claiming work-related benefits rose sharply, peaking in May 2020 at nearly 5% of residents aged 16-64 – more than twice the normal rate – since August 2020 the numbers have been reducing consistently.

We have also noted considerable improvements across our twin strategic aims – achieving inclusive growth and maintaining balance between skills supply and demand.

To meet the demand for high-skill jobs, the proportion of residents educated to Level 4 and above increased slightly. We remain below the national average, however, and more work is needed. With the Swindon and Wiltshire Institute of Technology (IoT) opening to students from September 2021, we expect to see further and accelerated improvements in this area.

We wrote about the investment in our Labour Market Intelligence (LMI) capabilities in the last report. In this report we share how this intelligence is being employed to identify opportunities and challenges and to track our progress. The reduced proportion of young people claiming work-related benefits has been one of our chief achievements, enabled through the timely and granular LMI, which first detected the problem and subsequently measured the success of different initiatives.

Apprenticeships have been and will remain a priority for Swindon and Wiltshire. Having learned from our 2018 Apprenticeship Strategy, we intend for our

messages to be much better tailored to reach and influence our target audiences, not just amongst the local businesses, but also future apprentices and education providers.

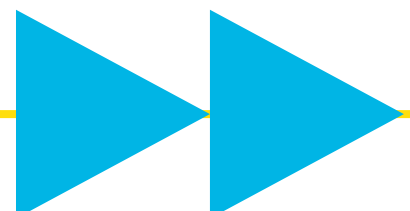
The local intelligence and research strongly indicated that skilled employees were an important lever for businesses to further improve their productivity by reducing sick days and improving workforce health, both physical and mental. With two Skills Advisers in place within our Growth Hub, we will continue to drive this agenda forward, through advice and tailored support for all businesses with which we engage.

Finally, to ensure that everyone not only has access but also aspires to reach high quality education and employment opportunities, our Careers Hub has continued to raise aspirations of our young people, with a special focus on the under-represented groups.

With the role of Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) evolving, and with a considerable amount of uncertainty persisting, we intend to maintain our twin strategic aims, but with more consolidated objectives, primarily built upon SWLEP's resources and capabilities.

As the Skills and Talent Subgroup's new Chair, it is my hope to preserve the fantastic spirit of cooperation I have observed over the years, and to build on the analytical rigour and delivery resolve to bring together employers, providers and other key stakeholders to rapidly identify and help address local demand-driven skills gaps in an inclusive way.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Carole'.





Chapter 2

Skills Advisory Panels – introduction



Skills Advisory Panels: the national context

Since 2018, Skills Advisory Panels (SAPs) have been bringing together employers, skills providers and key local stakeholders to better understand and resolve skills mismatches at a local level. SAPs are part of Mayoral Combined Authorities and Local Enterprise Partnerships and there are 36 in total across England. The Department for Education (DfE) has supported SAPs with grant funding primarily to produce high-quality analysis of local labour markets and publish Local Skills Reports, which set out the local skills strengths and needs and how the SAP proposes its area addresses its key priorities.

This second iteration of SAPs' Local Skills Reports comes at a time when DfE is Trailblazing new Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs), in eight areas of the country. Developed by Employer Representative Bodies, LSIPs are part of a suite of reforms launched in DfE's "Skills for Jobs" White Paper that aim to put employers more firmly at the heart of the skills system. An evaluation of the eight Trailblazers will inform the national roll out of the programme. In the meantime, and before LSIPs are rolled out across the country, it is DfE's intention that Skills Advisory Panels and this Local Skills Report should continue to influence the behaviour of local partners and feed intelligence to central government, including to sectoral focussed skills teams and the national-level Skills and Productivity Board (SPB).

The Swindon and Wiltshire Skills Advisory Panel operates through SWLEP's Skills and Talent Subgroup, which meets six times a year and focuses on:

- ▶ developing and delivering the Swindon and Wiltshire Skills Strategy and Action Plan, alongside the annual Local Skills Report;
- ▶ monitoring trends and shifts in the local labour market;
- ▶ maintaining oversight over locally-funded skills and talent projects and delivering EU-funded skills programmes and other skills projects; and
- ▶ bringing together local employers and skills providers, business representation organisations, such as the Federation of Small Businesses, local and central government and school representatives;

the full list of members can be found in the Local Skills Report – Annex B.

The Chair of the Skills and Talent Subgroup acts as the Champion for Equality on the SWLEP Board and the Subgroup's feedback is a standing item on the SWLEP Board agenda.

In May 2021, Amanda Burnside retired and stepped down as Chair of the Subgroup and the Principal and Chief Executive of New College Swindon, Carole Kitching, was welcomed into the role.

Chapter 3

Skills strengths and needs

Significant work has been undertaken throughout the year to monitor the local labour market, with monthly reports published online. Swindon and Wiltshire continued to perform above the national average in some areas. These are explained further in the Skills Strengths section below. Whilst some year-on-year improvements were noted, several indicators continued to lag behind the national average. These are presented in the Skills Needs section below.

3.1 Skills Strengths



Figure 1: Swindon and Wiltshire Skills Strengths

Swindon and Wiltshire's dynamic economy continued to grow, generating £21.4bn Gross Value Added (GVA) in 2019. GVA per hour worked continued to outperform the UK average, reaching £36.60 in Swindon and Wiltshire in 2019 compared to £35.20 for England. Our employment rate continued to be above the national average. During April 2020 to March 2021, it remained steady at 79%, whilst the national average declined from 77% in 2020 to 75%. The proportion of self-employment increased from 15% in the previous year to 16% during April 2020 to March 2021. Nationally, we saw a decline from 15% to 13% over the same period².

The Claimant Count, which measures the number of people receiving benefits principally for the reason of being unemployed, rose sharply from the beginning of the first lockdown in March 2020 to August 2020. This initial increase was steeper in Swindon and Wiltshire than the country average. Since August 2020, however, claimant count levels have fallen faster than the national average. In September 2021, the Claimant Count in Swindon and Wiltshire was 3.5% of residents aged 16-64 (down from 4.6% in November 2020), compared to 5.1% for England (down from 6.4% in November 2020).

The Swindon and Wiltshire area offers a good environment for business to operate and survive, which is demonstrated through our low business death rates. Over the five years to 2020, business death rates in Swindon and Wiltshire have been on average 1% lower than England's.

There is a mixed picture in terms of the incidence of deprivation, with three measures considered in this report. Comparing the 38 LEP areas in England in 2019:

- ▶ 32 have a higher proportion of Lower-layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs) – small geographical areas, with an average population of 1500 people or 650 households – in 10% most income deprived nationally than Swindon and Wiltshire;
- ▶ 30 have a higher proportion of LSOAs in 10% most employment deprived nationally than Swindon and Wiltshire; and
- ▶ 24 have a higher proportion of LSOAs in 10% most education, skills and training deprived nationally.

Of our two local authorities, Swindon has more areas of deprivation (ranked 157th out of 317 authorities in England, with 9% LSOAs in the 10% most deprived), although in a rural area like Wiltshire (ranked 233rd out of 317 authorities in England, with only 0.4% LSOAs in the 10% most deprived), deprivation can be easily masked.

The area's diverse sectoral mix remains stable. The largest sectors for employment are: public administration education and health; banking finance and insurance; distribution, hotels and restaurants; manufacturing; and construction. Together they account for nearly 80% of employment.

The extensive analysis undertaken to develop our Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) identified a number of sectors which were strong or had the potential to

grow locally. These were: advanced manufacturing, digital technology, electronics and connective systems; sustainability and circular economy; life sciences; and digital, defence and security, including cyber resilience. These are also expected to generate a greater demand for highly skilled people.

Whilst COVID-19 negatively impacted employment levels in some sectors, several of our priority sectors increased. Comparing Apr 2019-Mar 2020 with Apr 2020-

Mar 2021, employment levels increased significantly in the construction and agriculture sectors. Manufacturing also experienced modest improvements during this period. In contrast, employment declined across these three sectors nationally.

³ ONS claimant count & DWP Stat Xplore, Jan 2013 – Nov 2020

⁴ Note the exception of the data anomaly in 2017.

3.2 Skills Needs



Figure 2: Swindon and Wiltshire Skills Needs

Compared to England, the Swindon and Wiltshire area has a lower proportion of people qualified to Level 4 and above. Whilst improvements were recorded over the last year, Swindon and Wiltshire continue to lag behind the national average for highly skilled workers/residents. This is thought to be driven in part by the local labour market, which has a higher demand for people qualified to lower levels. The lack of a local university is considered to be another contributing factor.

The ageing population remains a concern in Swindon and Wiltshire. Compared to the national average, the proportion of younger 16-34 year old working age people is lower in Swindon and Wiltshire. This is primarily an issue in Wiltshire, where there is a considerably higher proportion of the older working age population, namely those aged 50-64 and 65+ groups (27% for both in Wiltshire compared to 24% and 22%, respectively for England). The discrepancies are more noticeable in some sectors, such as engineering and construction. The higher proportion of older working age population, which has fewer formal qualifications nationally, is contributing to the lower proportion of people qualified to Level 4 and above⁵.

Despite the sharp increase in the Claimant Count during the pandemic, the rate remained well below the national average for both Swindon and Wiltshire local authority areas. In the 2020 Skills Report we highlighted several actions planned to help lower the higher proportion of younger claimants, aged 16-24. In this report we are pleased to report our excellent progress. Following the peak in July 2020, there have been strong improvements, especially in Wiltshire, which showed lower levels of claimants overall but composed of a higher proportion of young claimants.

Whilst the incidence of deprivation in Swindon and Wiltshire is less acute than in many other areas, with

lower proportion of neighbourhoods in the 10% most deprived nationally, this is due to strong performance in Income and Employment. The third area monitored – Education, Skills and Training – shows Swindon and Wiltshire lagging behind the national average.

Although the gap was narrowed slightly in 2020, Swindon and Wiltshire's lower business birth rates suggest that there are barriers to starting new businesses. This is partly due to the historically buoyant jobs market, especially in Swindon.

During 2021, the shifts in the labour market due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic stabilised. The analysis of Labour Insights online job postings data shows that the numbers across the UK and Swindon and Wiltshire continued to improve. For the UK, August 2021 was the highest month for job postings since the records began in January 2012. The Swindon and Wiltshire recovery has been slightly less impressive. September 2021 saw a 25% increase compared to September 2020, whilst the UK grew by 66%. Looking back to the pre-pandemic levels in September 2019, for Swindon and Wiltshire this represented a 17% increase in contrast to a nearly 63% rise for the UK.

Comparing the trends locally with the UK over the last two years by sector, the SWLEP area is lagging behind in two sectors: wholesale and retail (-5%) and financial and insurance (-37%). To understand why, we will schedule deep dives as part of our annual LMI plan.

The development of regular, granular intelligence reports to monitor our labour market and employment opportunities will remain an important cross-cutting objective in our 2022/23 Skills Plan.

⁵ Annual Population Survey, Table T19 Qualification by age

Chapter 4

Skills strategy



The Swindon and Wiltshire Skills Strategy was published in July 2020, with an accompanying Skills Plan. In November 2021, the Skills Plan was updated in response to the new local labour market conditions and partnership arrangements (Figure 3). Our two strategic priorities – maintaining the skills supply and demand balance, and inclusive growth – were reaffirmed, but to augment our impact the underlying objectives were further consolidated.



Figure 3: Swindon and Wiltshire 2021/22 Skills Plan Outline

4.1 Addressing the Skills Supply and Demand Imbalance

There are two separate areas for action underpinning the delivery of this priority.

Firstly, labour market intelligence (LMI) and analysis, based on up-to-date data, is used to identify challenges and opportunities. Several data sources are pooled together to build a comprehensive picture, including intelligence from our employers, proprietary information based on job postings data, publicly accessible government data, as well as the HR1 redundancy data, which includes advance notification of potential redundancies from employers dismissing 20 or more staff in a single establishment.

Secondly, we continue to regard apprenticeships as an important route for young people and adults who want a job whilst continuing to learn to acquire new skills. In 2020, although Wiltshire (at nearly 90%) and Swindon (at 71%) achieved more of their five-year targets than England overall (68%), the area remained below the 2017 levels, when the levy was introduced. Through engagement with our businesses, we will also continue

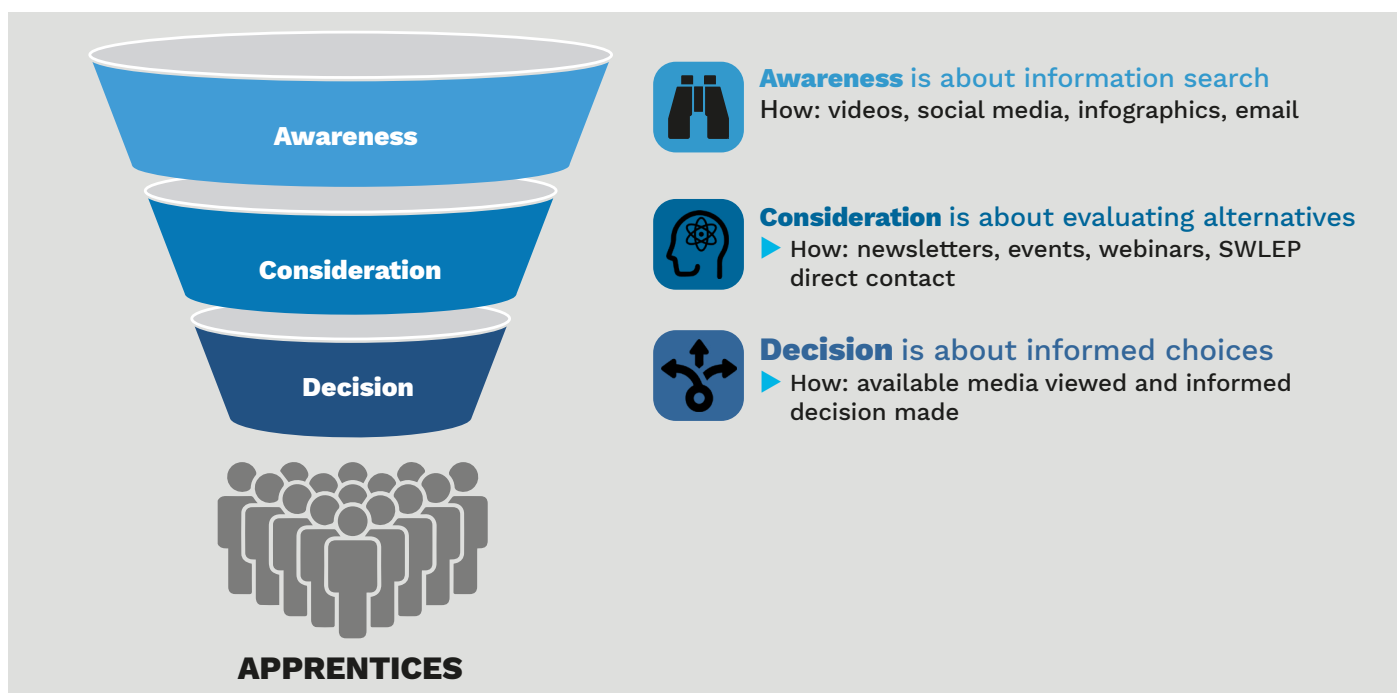
to identify sector-specific issues.

To grow apprenticeship take up for school and college leavers as well as adults, our plans for the 2022 and beyond will focus on promoting apprenticeships to increase awareness and consideration and help influence decision-making. With support from partners, but primarily utilising resources within SWLEP, we will promote benefits of apprenticeships to businesses, future apprentices and education providers.

We will carefully tailor our messages to ensure our promotion is more effective. To achieve this, we will:

- ▶ segment the market based on needs, wants and barriers, and select our target segments to include those most likely to make the transition to employing an apprentice; and
- ▶ use the standard Buyer's Journey framework (see Figure 4), recognising different levels of apprenticeship understanding within each target segment.

Figure 4: Adapted Buyer Journey Funnel used to tailor apprenticeship messages and channels



Previously, we also focussed on bringing local Higher Education (HE) providers closer together to ensure that their offers are driven by the needs of local businesses. This goal will remain very important as a key enabler of increasing the proportion of our residents qualified to Level 4 and above.

With the Swindon and Wiltshire Institute of Technology opening to students from September 2021;

the Innovation Centre for Applied and Sustainable Technologies (iCAST) supporting PhD students from the University of Bath and Oxford University opening in the Carriage Works in November 2021 and the continued work of the Wiltshire College and University Centre, this has now become a business-as-usual activity, ceasing to be a SWLEP strategic priority for improvement.

4.2 Ensuring Inclusive Growth

Our second priority is focused on inclusive growth, ensuring that opportunities not only exist but that people from disadvantaged backgrounds and under-represented groups – such as ethnic minorities, women or people with disabilities – aspire to take up these roles. In some sectors, we also find that younger generations are under-represented, and this imbalance needs to be addressed.

The Swindon and Wiltshire Careers Hub will continue to ensure that careers programmes delivered by secondary schools and colleges are progressive and raise the aspirations of all young people, but particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds. This includes collaborative working with the local Study Higher and the Wessex Inspiration Network Uni Connect programmes, as well as the Apprenticeship Support and Knowledge (ASK) programme to ensure that all institutions can access and make effective use of the offers available.

Additionally, at least one funded virtual encounter with an employer was offered to all institutions during the last academic year. They were also encouraged to choose from a wide range of free local and national virtual work experience activities sourced and developed by the Swindon and Wiltshire Careers Hub.

Two virtual careers events were provided directly by the Swindon and Wiltshire Careers Hub. One of these

focussed on making a positive post-16 and post-18 transition to improve destinations outcomes. The other event was a virtual career fair, which concentrated on raising aspirations of young people from Year 9 and above. Due to the success of these activities, the Careers Hub plans to continue to provide these in the 2021/22 academic year and will support all institutions to be able to access these opportunities on behalf of their students.

Encouraging more young people into the key sectors such as Construction and High-Value Engineering and Advanced Manufacturing has been identified as a challenge by local businesses. In response, the Careers Hub will continue to ensure that schools and colleges are better informed about the exciting possibilities that these careers offer.

Work to support workforce health, by developing a better understanding of the link between employee health, skills and productivity, has been embedded into the Swindon and Wiltshire Growth Hub's core offering since November 2021. As part of their suite of offers, two Skills Advisers will help individual businesses tackle these issues in a way that is tailored to meet their specific needs. As a result, this activity will be monitored and evaluated through the Growth Hub programme and overseen by SWLEP's Business Environment Subgroup.

4.3 Aiding COVID-19 Recovery

The COVID-19 pandemic caused unprecedented shifts in the economy and local labour market. It has been critical to understand if any sectors, occupations or groups of population were disproportionately affected and requiring additional support, to meet our twin strategic aims of maintaining balance between skills supply and demand and ensuring inclusive growth. As the labour market continues to stabilise across most sectors, we will continue to use our Labour Market Intelligence to inform local delivery, but also to measure

the success of our actions.

For the occupations that are declining, we will continue to collate and promote online training materials, combined with insights into local opportunities and occupations for which demand has been increasing, to ease our residents' transition into new employment. In addition, we will continue to support individuals wishing to start their own business through SWLEP's Growth Hub ERDF SME Competitiveness programme.

4.3 Skills Priorities Overview by Category

The table below provides an overview of our skills priorities, based on the Skills Plan 2021 and the regular Labour Market Intelligence reports we have produced

and have been monitored throughout the year. The priorities have remained consistent with the Skills Report 2020.

Category	Priorities and supporting rationale
Cross-cutting skills priorities (far-reaching, cross-sector)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Recognising the improvements made over the last several years, we still have a considerable demand for digital skills that affects all sectors ▶ Core STEM subjects, such as Engineering and Technology and Computer Sciences, are still identified as the most popular subjects that local employers across sectors would like to see delivered ▶ Overall, continuing to balance skills supply and demand, through regular intelligence reports, increase in apprenticeship uptake and better matching demand for high-skill jobs ▶ Ensuring inclusive growth, through actions aimed at raising aspirations to improve education and employability of under represented groups and better workforce health, allowing more people to work longer
COVID-19 recovery and renewal skills priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Providing up-to-date intelligence showing the impact of COVID-19 on local business and providers; working with both sides to ensure that skills supply is responding to skills demand ▶ Collating and promoting online training materials for newly unemployed, to ensure low claimant count and unemployment ▶ Accessing funding made available for recovery ▶ Develop targeted action plan with partners to support recovery of most adversely affected by COVID-19 (for example, NEETs and Over 50s)
Sector priorities (or occupational priorities)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Help attract more young people into Engineering / High-Value Manufacturing and Construction, working through the Careers Hub and with local providers and employers ▶ Understand specifically which "green" jobs will be needed and in which quantities, and therefore which skills need to be developed locally ▶ Ensure that the momentum recently gained continues, with more people interested in Health and Social Care careers ▶ Help farmers utilise technology to increase productivity, protect the environment and make farming safer through Agritech focus and leveraging Wiltshire College & University Centre Lackham campus investments ▶ Leveraging Business Cyber Centre (£3.7m Getting Building Fund) to help close the Cyber Security skills gap through an academy, employment hub and a cyber response team

As outlined in the Chapter 6 below, our actions have positively impacted several of these priorities, but more work is needed and planned through our Growth Hub and Careers Hub. To aid our internal efforts, we will also

continue to influence work of our two local authorities, relevant government departments, local colleges, universities and businesses through the Skills and Talent Subgroup.

Chapter 5

Skills action plan

We have a focussed Skills Action Plan setting out what SWLEP resources can directly influence and deliver. To address the skills supply and demand imbalance we will concentrate on:

- ▶ continuing to monitor and report on trends in our Labour Market Intelligence reports, published on our website and discussed in all relevant forums. By March 2022, nine new reports will have been produced; and
- ▶ delivering a step change in the take-up and achievement of apprenticeships by promoting this up-skilling or re-skilling route in a more targeted way. The new Swindon and Wiltshire 2025 Apprenticeship Strategy will be published as an Open Access Government e-book later this year. It will set out our short to medium term approach, including:
 - business engagement to create demand for apprenticeships by developing a clear overview of options – apprenticeships, T-levels, traineeships, and Kickstart jobs. This will help inform local businesses how best to engage with the re/up-skilling for their employees. Our lead resources for this will be the Growth Hub Skills and Enterprise Advisors, with support from the SWLEP Marketing team
 - future apprentices by explaining the pathways available to them in an engaging and exciting way, demonstrating the range of apprenticeship options, disciplines and levels. Our lead resources to deliver this will be the Careers Hub.
 - education providers to ensure that processes are in place to update course portfolios in line with business / apprentice demand. The lead resources employed to achieve this will be the regular LMI reports.

To ensure inclusive growth we will focus on raising aspirations and improving employability, especially for young people, through effective support for independent careers education, information, advice and guidance via

the SWLEP Careers Hub, including:

- ▶ delivering support for a high quality careers programme across all our schools and colleges to achieve the programme targets set by The Careers & Enterprise Company (CEC); and
- ▶ coordinating ambassadors, role models and skills champions to inspire young people from vulnerable groups to achieve Uni Connect targets.

Although the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has not been as great as initially feared in terms of Claimant Count or unemployment rate, we will continue our activities aimed at achieving swift recovery, including:

- ▶ developing and sharing the intelligence reports in the relevant forums and with all our partners, detailing the impact of COVID-19 on local businesses and providers, continuing to collaborate to ensure that the skills supply is responding to skills demand. To achieve this, we will publish monthly reports on the SWLEP website;
- ▶ collating and promoting training materials online for the unemployed; and
- ▶ continuing the webinar series to help businesses to respond to change in innovative and effective ways.

To ensure that the intended outcomes are reached, Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership Board will continue to oversee the implementation of the Skills Plan through its existing governance arrangements (Figure 5). The Board's Skills and Talent Subgroup, which operates as the Swindon and Wiltshire Skills Advisory Panel, will retain responsibility for the monitoring of progress and reporting back to the SWLEP Board on a regular basis, including in-depth, end-of-year reports. In addition, as and when required, we will produce progress reports for the Department for Education.

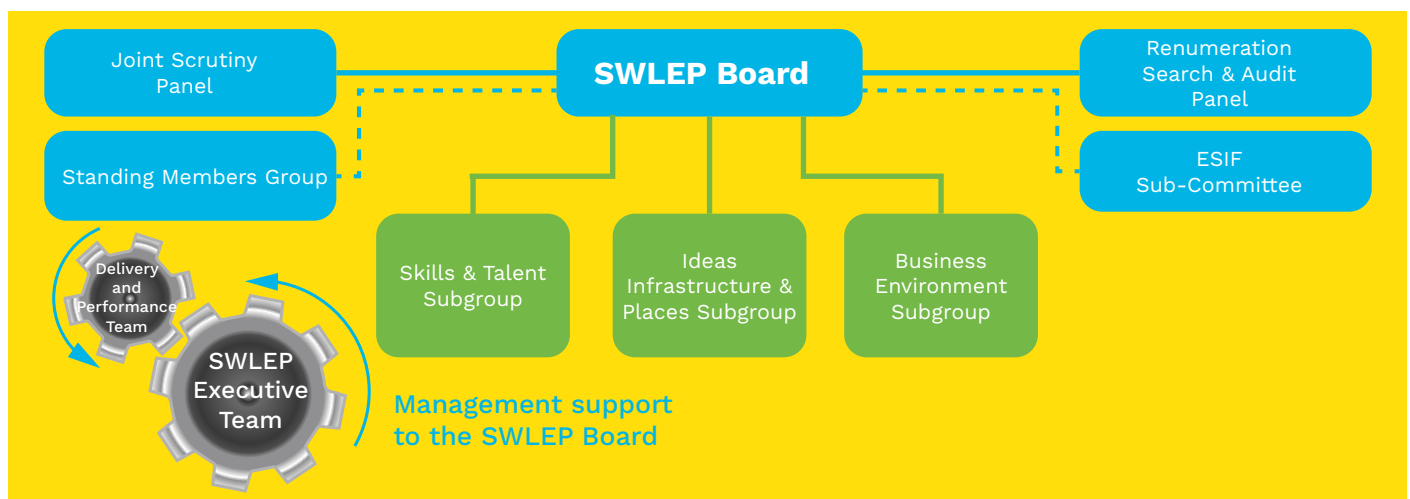


Figure 5: Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership Governance Structure, July 2021

Chapter 6

Assessment of progress



By the end of November 2021, all the actions set out in the Swindon and Wiltshire Skills Action Plan for 2020/21 had been mobilised. In addition, a number of new actions had commenced. These are explained further below.

6.1 Progress to date for Priority 1 - skills supply and demand balance




Intelligence	Apprenticeships	Higher Education
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ 11LMI reports since the beginning of 2021 (minimum of 1 per month)▶ Continuing to maintain automated dashboard developed for the SWLEP website▶ Continuing to access to “real-time” intelligence gained through EMSI and Labour insights 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ finalising 2025 strategy and 2021/22 apprenticeship marketing plan to grow apprenticeship take up, especially for business currently not employing an apprentice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Leadership handed over to IoT from September 2021▶ Continue to engage with neighbouring universities on individual projects 

Figure 6 An overview of the outputs delivered since our last report. Each of the three strategic objectives, namely LMI, apprenticeships and Higher Education, are further explored in the sections below alongside our progress on sector-specific priorities.

6.1.1 Intelligence

To improve the use of skills and labour market intelligence and create a more nuanced and up-to-date picture, we have continued to supplement the publicly available government data with online job postings, accessed through the EMSI Analyst and Burning Glass Labour Insight systems. As well as publishing these insights on the SWLEP website, the findings have been presented to a wide range of groups. These include the Skills and Talent Subgroup, SWLEP Board, Business Intelligence and Networking Group (BING), skills and economic recovery working groups within our two local authorities, skills and training providers and businesses, highlighting the important local issues and driving remedial action where needed.

The SWLEP data dashboard has been fully operational since March 2021. It provides a one-stop shop for easily accessing a range of socio-economic data. Because it is almost entirely produced through Application Programming Interfaces (APIs), the underlying data is

continuously and automatically updated, with minimal manual intervention.

The dashboard also provides definitions for the datasets to help people who are less experienced with handling this type of information. Initial feedback from the local businesses has been positive, with the dashboard regarded as a useful and progressive development.

In addition to the analysis of hard data, we have maintained our efforts to collate intelligence from our local businesses and providers.

Finally, we continue to influence provision. For example, acting on our intelligence about increased demand for five specific digital skills, the Institute of Technology successfully applied for funding to deliver free courses in these areas. We have also worked with Wiltshire College and University Centre to highlight subjects where demand may be exceeding supply to inform their course portfolio development.



6.1.2 Apprenticeships

To realise a step change in take-up and achievement of apprenticeships we have decided to move to a more intensive approach, focussed on promoting apprenticeships in a more tailored way and over a longer period of time, using SWLEP's expertise and resources.

The development of the Swindon and Wiltshire 2025 Apprenticeship Strategy was overseen by the Skills and Talent Subgroup, which will continue to monitor and evaluate our progress.

In June 2021, we convened a Working Group consisting of local businesses, education providers and local authority representatives to:

- ▶ review Swindon and Wiltshire 2020 Apprenticeship Strategy, what we did to reach our targets and how well it worked;
- ▶ agree what our strategic objectives are and what role apprenticeships can play going forward; and
- ▶ decide what action is needed to achieve these strategic goals.

One of the Working Group outputs was the long-term objective to grow apprenticeship take up for school and college leavers as well as adults. This is to be achieved through promotion of apprenticeships to increase awareness and consideration and to help in decision-making. The primary target audience will be the businesses that currently do not have apprentices but face re-skilling and up-skilling challenges and are likely to take on an apprentice. We will need to work hard to identify these businesses and to tailor our messages and communications channels to reach them effectively.

By focussing the scope of the Apprenticeship Strategy primarily on communications, the new plan shows how SWLEP's resources can be best leveraged to achieve apprenticeship growth. Support from partners and resource sharing will be welcomed and encouraged.

6.1.3 Higher Education

To increase the proportion of highly skilled workforce, our Skills Action Plan 2021/21 focused on developing a business-led federation of Higher Education providers.

Swindon and Wiltshire Institute of Technology (IoT) in Swindon, led by New College Swindon, working in partnership with the University of Gloucestershire, Oxford Brooks University and 11 local anchor businesses, opened to students in September 2021. To ensure success of the venture, the Skills and Talent Subgroup has worked closely with the IoT, helping it achieve success through promotion across our collective communication channels.

The Innovation Centre for Applied and Sustainable Technologies (iCAST), which will support PhD students from the University of Bath and Oxford University, opened in the Carriage Works in November 2021.

With these two developments and the continued work of the Wiltshire College and University Centre, this has now become a business-as-usual activity, ceasing to be a SWLEP strategic priority for improvement.



6.1.4 Sector-specific needs

We have been working with our local authorities to identify and quantify the “green” skills needs, highlighting existing regional specialisms and high growth areas, shortfalls and factors that may restrict job creation and failure to deliver the Government’s Net Zero targets. As well as understanding the current trends, we plan to start to examine future needs, including barriers, risks and opportunities perceived by businesses operating in these markets. All of this will enable us to develop the workforce necessary to achieve local commitments of becoming carbon neutral by 2030.

Swindon Borough Council (SBC) commissioned iCare Careers to offer recruitment support, including free advertising, to over 100 Care providers in Swindon. Local intelligence suggests that care providers are generally reluctant to recruit apprentices as there is the perception they would not have time to train or mentor them. iCare has engaged with 13 local schools to encourage more young people into the sector. Through South West Apprenticeships Ambassador Network (SWAAN), we have engaged with Somerset Care to share some insights on what worked for them. In addition, we have assisted SBC’s Adult Social Care Service by promoting apprenticeships.

Swindon and Wiltshire Clinical Commissioning Group Partnership Board has been working to address the issue in terms of social care staffing in the NHS locally.



Of particular concern is the fact that about one fifth of the workforce is over the age of 55. To address this, we are looking at improving student supply. Historically, we have struggled to attract Health students into the area for placements and work subsequently. We are therefore developing measures to bring students into the area with a view to retaining them long term as part of the workforce. It is believed locally that the offer of T-Levels will help achieve this for Health students.

Wiltshire College and University Centre has been driving Agri-tech improvements following a £9.2m investment by SWLEP at its Lackham Campus. This has resulted in the construction of a new Agricultural Technology Centre, infrastructure and upgrade works, including a Higher Education Centre which houses incubation space for land-based businesses in order to boost the rural economy.

By September 2021 Wiltshire College and University Centre was:

- ▶ recruiting students for a new Land Based Skills Bootcamp;
- ▶ delivering the new Agriculture in Dairy Engineering HND (part-time) for the first time;
- ▶ offering Level 3 Farm Mechanisation (six learners enrolled) in addition to the full-time course in Agriculture at Level 1 and Level 2 (55 enrolled learners);
- ▶ offering Land-Based Engineering Level 2 / 3 Study Programme (27 learners enrolled); and
- ▶ delivering the Level 2 / Level 3 Land-based Engineering Apprenticeship Standards (52 learners enrolled).

Online job postings data suggests that cyber jobs continue to grow across the country. With skills an important part of the proposition and to further encourage growth in both demand and supply, SWLEP secured funding for a Business Cyber Centre in Chippenham. We are working with three strategic partners – Ministry of Defence (MOD); Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS) and the University of Bath – to deliver services. The Centre’s priorities are outlined in Figure 7 (see page 14).



Figure 7: SWLEP's Business Cyber Centre

The Swindon and Wiltshire Careers Hub has been supporting the engineering, manufacturing and construction sectors in a number of ways:

- ▶ a group of construction employers have been working collectively with a school as a pilot project to develop a virtual work experience activity;
- ▶ our virtual learn live World of Work Fest (WoW Fest) event in the summer featured seven construction, manufacturing and engineering employers and attracted almost 4,000 attendees; and
- ▶ SWLEP funded Wiltshire College and University Centre and Your Placement to develop a website, with Phase 1 focussed on videos and information on a range of local businesses, including a feature on three manufacturing and engineering companies.

⁸ANNEX B

Our actions to help attract more young people are starting to yield results in the construction sector . Although there is more work to do, the proportion of people aged 16-24 in employment in construction in the Swindon and Wiltshire area has been gradually increasing from 7% in 2014 to 8% in 2017 and 9% in 2020.

6.2 Progress to date for Priority 2 - ensuring inclusive growth



 Raising aspirations	 Workforce health
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Delivered 3 virtual conference for employers careers Leaders and for those working with SEND Institutions ▶ Gatsby Benchmarks above national average in 7 of the 8 ▶ careers Leader SharePoint made more user-friendly - network meetings, CPD sessions or Master-classes recorded and stored on the site ▶ Created local SEND Community of Practice ▶ Career Leader training for Careers Explorer to SWLEP website completed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ 3 webinars delivered in 2021 on improving health ▶ Workforce Health project plan developed ▶ Hand over to Growth Hub Skills Advisors to implement completed ▶ Project closed in the SWLEP Skills Action Plan

Figure 8: SWLEP Skills Plan Priority 2 Progress Update (Q4 2021) - providing a summary of the key activities completed to date. The progress against the two strategic objectives underpinning this priority, namely raising aspirations and workforce health, are further explained above.

6.2.1 Raising aspirations and improve employability of young people

Through the Swindon and Wiltshire Careers Hub, we continue to deliver a robust careers programme across a network of 63 secondary schools and colleges. The network has achieved an average of 4.78 Gatsby Benchmarks, above the national average of 4.05 and well above our 2.2 average benchmark score in September 2018. Of the eight Gatsby Benchmarks, six are currently performing above national average.

The Careers Hub continues to work directly with both local authorities on activities to prevent young people from becoming NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) and to support disadvantaged groups of students. Examples include providing two Live Learn virtual employer careers fairs, specifically focussed on supporting looked-after children and groups of vulnerable young people.

The Careers Hub employs a Senior Enterprise Coordinator that works directly with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) providers, ensuring there is a joined-up approach with local authority SEND teams. The heads of both local authority Virtual Schools have delivered a master-class session to the Careers Leader Network focussing on how care experience or looked-after children should be supported during their career journeys.

Through additional funding from The Careers and Enterprise Company, up to 250 young people in the Swindon and Wiltshire area who are either NEET, or are at risk of becoming NEET, will receive up to four personal guidance interviews through an independent provider.

Other important achievements of the Swindon and Wiltshire Careers Hub include:

- ▶ the recruitment and retention of over sixty Enterprise Adviser (EA) volunteers, covering 98% of mainstream schools/colleges locally, compared to a national average of 86%;
- ▶ providing a programme of virtual events including:
 - an Employer Conference, attended by over 70 employers and employees;
 - two Learn Live careers events for looked after and vulnerable children groups, which were attended by over 1,000 young people;
 - a Careers Leader conference for over 80 delegates that included a keynote address from Ofsted;
 - a SEND Careers Conference, delivered in partnership with three other LEP areas;
 - a range of Enterprise Adviser volunteer events such as Business Breakfasts and CPD training sessions delivered by stakeholders; and
 - a range of Careers Leaders network Master-class and networking events.
- ▶ expanding the local SEND Community of Practice Network to encourage Career Leaders to share good practice and support each other to strengthen the stability of careers programmes;
- ▶ coordinating ambassadors, role models and skills champions to inspire young people from vulnerable groups, utilising a wide stakeholder network, including ASK, DWP Schools Advisor, HEI Outreach teams, Education Business Partnerships, Adviza, Virtual Schools teams and SEND teams;
- ▶ further developing the Careers Leader SharePoint site to facilitate and ensure ongoing exchange of good practice;
- ▶ working with a range of stakeholders to address a gap of over 14,000 work experience placements needed each academic year by:
 - forming partnerships with Speakers for Schools, Great Western Hospital NHS Trust, Class of your Own and Education Business Partnership (EBPWB) to develop virtual work experience placements and to work with local partners on the development of a local virtual work experience platform; and
 - developing a menu of options for schools/colleges to access virtual work experience; and
- ▶ promoting the use of the Careers Explorer LMI module to Careers Leaders and young people, parents/carers through collaborative webinars with SWLEP.

Whilst it is recognised that good progress has been made over the first three years of the Careers Hub programme, there is still more work to be done. One area of concern is the ongoing churn of experienced Careers Leaders in schools and colleges and a lack of qualified Careers Guidance Advisors available in the local area to provide one-to-one personal guidance interviews. Through the WIN Uni Connect programme additional guidance interviews have been made available to schools/colleges, through the qualification to Level 6 Careers Guidance of the WIN operation team.

Training providers who offer the CEC's Level 6 Careers Leader training options have also developed a top-up programme to allow Careers Leaders to become qualified in careers guidance at Level 6 and be able to provide these interviews. The Careers Hub team has been supporting Careers Leaders to develop business cases for their Senior Leadership Teams to request the resourcing of further personal guidance interview provision.

Through a successful funding bid to The Careers and Enterprise Company, the Careers Hub will be undertaking a research project with eight to ten secondary schools during the 2021/22 academic year. The aim of the project is to examine whether embedding employer-enriched careers activities into the Year 7 maths curriculum will encourage girls to have a more positive attitude towards maths. It will also showcase the range of careers which utilise maths. Findings will be published in the autumn of 2022.



6.2.2 Improving workforce health

In the 2020/21 report we also talked about promoting programmes to improve the physical and mental health of employees. Since April 2021, we have been working with partners to develop a plan to better understand the specific health issues that our local employers experience and help them understand best practice to overcome the identified challenges. (See Figure 9.)

With a focus on individual and managerial skills, as well as the overall organisational culture, the Growth Hub Skills Advisors have been asked to integrate the plan as part of its day-to-day business information, advice and guidance services. As a result, this project has been mobilised and taken out of the 2021/22 Skills Plan as an action.

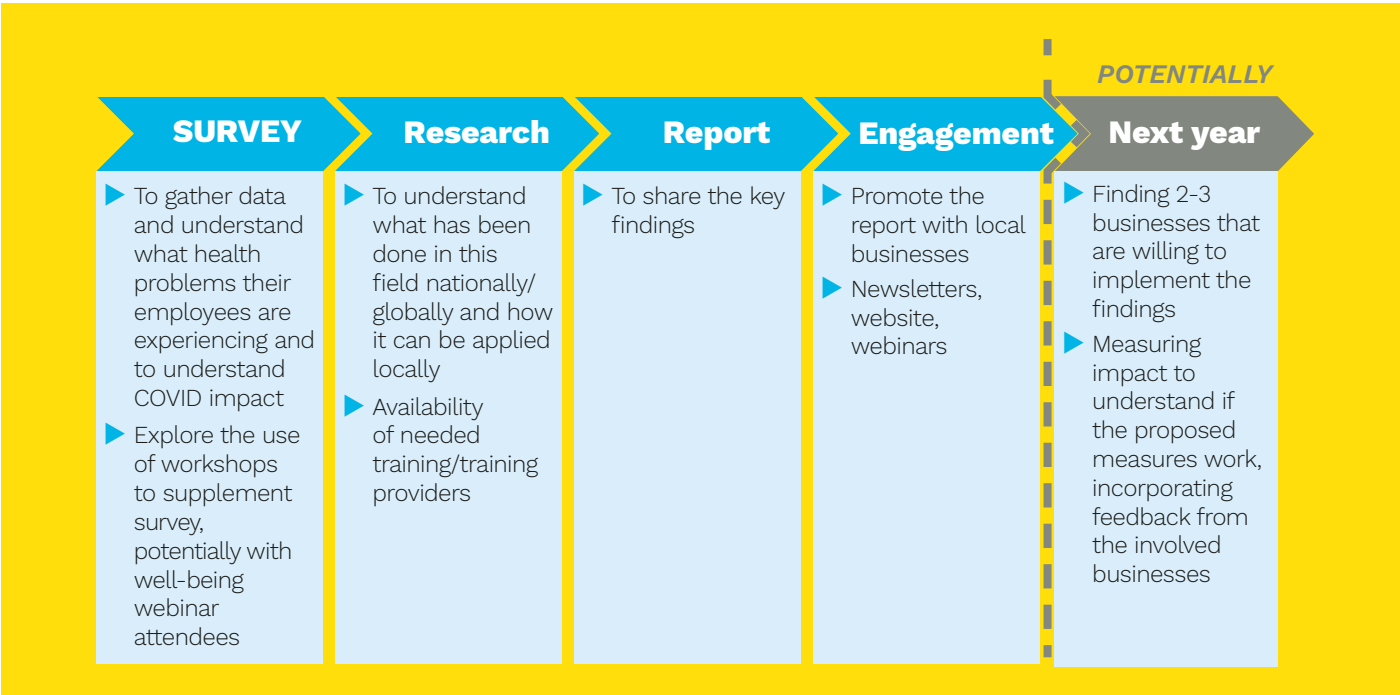
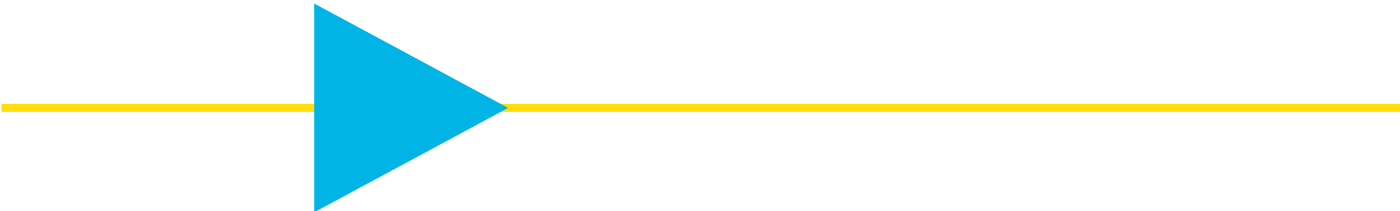


Figure 9: Proposed approach to helping local businesses improve their productivity through better workforce health



6.3 Skills and Talent Subgroup's Role

The role of Swindon and Wiltshire's Skills and Talent Subgroup has not changed since the previous Local Skill Report. It remains multi-faceted:



Leadership role

unifying force and a forum bringing together local employers and skills providers to pool knowledge and resources to resolve local issues

Since its creation, the Subgroup has been pivotal in taking a leadership role through the development and delivery of the Swindon and Wiltshire Skills Plan and the Annual Skills Report. It acts as a unifying force, bringing together local employers and skills providers to pool knowledge on skills and labour market needs, and to work together to understand and address key local challenges.

The Subgroup maintains oversight over SWLEP-funded skills and talent projects as well as the delivery of European and skills projects funded through other sources, to inform the SWLEP Board of emerging strengths and weaknesses. It also leads on equality-related issues, with the Chair of the Skills and Talent Subgroup acting as the Champion for Equality on the SWLEP Board.



Enhancing local knowledge

Providing access to up-to-date insights, including those derived from online job postings data, to create clear understanding of current and future skills needs

Its focus on enhancing local knowledge is a core part of the Subgroup's ethos. Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, a clear understanding of the current skills supply and demand needs has been developed. Work continues to understand future needs in the short term, such as green jobs, and the medium term, such as the permanent changes in skills demand resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

We have been producing monthly labour market intelligence reporting drawing on national data sources as well as licensed EMSI and Labour Insights data. These continue to be published on the SWLEP website and discussed in all the relevant forums,

including the Skills and Talent Subgroup, SWLEP Board and our Business Intelligence and Network Group. Periodically, SWLEP also publishes articles highlighting important changes in the local labour market and support available to manage these changes. As well as distributing information, we continue to receive requests from businesses for intelligence support, such as the bespoke Honda labour market report.

Although only operational for six months, the SWLEP data dashboard is regarded as a source of robust information by the local businesses, helping them make informed decisions.



Impacting local skills provision

working with colleges and independent providers to shape course portfolios

Through our collective efforts, we have seen considerable impact on local skills provision. Recent examples of close collaboration including agreeing a new joined up and more targeted approach to promoting apprenticeships. To achieve this, we have been working with Wiltshire College and University Centre, New College Swindon and Gloucestershire and Wiltshire Partnership (GWP), alongside several employers.

We have worked with IoT on its bid to the Department for Education to develop an evidence base to identify local digital skills gaps. The application was successful and led to the creation of five free courses: Cyber Security, Cloud Management, Agile Methodology, DevOps, and Data Analysis, which were made available to working adults aged 19 and over, with priority given to those employed locally in related industries.

We have collaborated with Wiltshire College and University Centre, leveraging its internal and external data as well as the SWLEP's Labour Market Intelligence (LMI) to provide insights into those campuses, subject and courses with growing demand. This work fed into both the College's strategy development and course portfolio review.

We have continued to provide updates on the sectors which are growing and where there are skills shortages for a network of training providers which have contracts with the Education and Skills Funding Agency, DWP or Local Authority to deliver age 16-19 and adult learning programmes. The information we have provided has been used as part of the delivery of ASK Apprenticeship Awareness campaign in Wiltshire schools for students in Years 10 to 13.



Supporting COVID-19 recovery and renewal plans

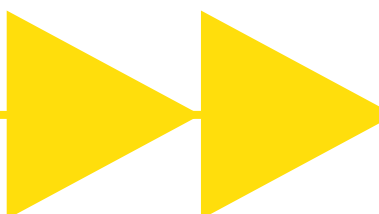
Through intelligence reports, acceleration of development plans and membership of COVID-19 partnership board for the recovery plan for both LA's

We continue to support COVID-19 recovery through better intelligence and by bringing partners together to make the recovery smoother and swifter. Our progress to date on this objective includes:

- ▶ continuing to monitor the higher than average proportion of young claimants, aged 16-24, in particular in Wiltshire, to gauge effectiveness of different actions. So far the combination of our initiatives, including the SWLEP acting as a Kickstart Gateway Organisation, appears to be effective. Through the year we have seen strong and continuous improvements, exceeding the national average.
- ▶ working with colleges and independent providers, as well as schools and students through Careers

Hub, to ensure they have up-to-date local information, including the impact of COVID-19, and the likely longer-term skills demand shortages and surpluses, to inform supply-led provision.

Working collaboratively, we have adopted agile working practices including a shift to more virtual delivery. For example, our four Careers Hub events and our highly popular series of Growth Hub webinars, currently averaging at ten webinars per month. These sessions have attracted hundreds of people and have proved to be an excellent way to provide information, advice and guidance to business leaders, to boost business survival, help employee well-being and offer redundancy support.



Chapter 7

Case studies and positive impact stories



7.1 Honda

This case study demonstrates how the Skills and Talent Subgroup:

- ▶ enhance local knowledge, allowing Honda to focus on developing re-skilling / up-skilling programmes for their redundant staff, aligned to skills with high local demand
- ▶ brought partners and funding together to provide tailored support for Honda staff wishing to start businesses
- ▶ leveraged learning from Honda's large-scale redundancy programme to aid led COVID-19 recovery

7.1.1 Background

Honda UK closed its Swindon manufacturing plant in July 2021, releasing approximately 3,500 members of staff. The closure affected several thousands of other people in Honda's supply chain locally and nationally.

To aid the transition and help de-risk the sale of the site, in October 2020, SWLEP made £200,000 available for a study into the transport network, reflecting the

potential increase in the number of businesses and employees on the site causing increased transport complexity.

It is hoped that with intensified development the site could support up to 8,000 jobs, which is twice as many jobs as employed by Honda at its peak, causing profound shifts in the local skills demand.

7.1.2 Impact

Through the Honda Task Force, established in the wake of the closure announcement and chaired by the Secretary of State, with the leader of Swindon Borough Council and the Chair of the SWLEP acting as co-chairs, the Skills and Talent Subgroup has been supplying analysis and insight into the current and future skills needs to help Honda understand which sectors, occupations and jobs its employees are best qualified to move into, where the key skills gaps might be and which training might be required.

It was anticipated that around a quarter of the released staff would consider starting up companies. As part of the three-year, ERDF-funded SME Competitiveness programme, the SWLEP Growth Hub is offering support for individuals being made redundant from Honda that wish to start a business. This will build on the half-day enterprise workshops commissioned by Honda for all its employees, to outline the key skills, knowledge and understanding, including cultural shifts, required for business success.

Whilst offering support to Honda's employees, we

have enhanced our experience of using large-scale redundancies to deliver positive change. This capability enabled us to mobilise quickly and effectively to support businesses and individuals being made redundant due to COVID-19. We have done this directly through themed redundancy events, which included sharing insights into compatible occupations in demand and the skills required for them, as well as indirectly, such as helping identify sector-based work academy programmes.

Since Honda's closure this summer, we have noticed an increase in Manufacturing redundancies through the HR1 data. However, this has not flowed into Claimant Count increase and the employment rates continue to hold. We believe that this is because the closure of Honda provided the needed influx of skills to grow the existing high value manufacturing businesses, attract new investment into the area and encourage Honda's supply chain to diversify to support the emerging engineering sectors.

7.2 Swindon and Wiltshire Institute of Technology

This case study examines Skills and Talent Subgroup's:

- ▶ Impact on local skills provision, ensuring that it is demand-led
- ▶ ability to enhance skills and labour market intelligence, with methodical analysis of the wants and needs of local businesses
- ▶ leadership role in tackling several skills needs, including lower L4+ qualifications and aging population

7.2.1 Background

The Government-backed Institute of Technology (IoT) was approved in 2018 and opened to students in September 2021. It is operated by the merged Swindon College / New College, alongside the University of Gloucester and Oxford Brookes University. Several business anchor-partners have been supporting the project since the

beginning and the IoT will remain business-led to ensure alignment between the courses on offer and the local skills needed. As such, the Institute will concentrate on developing high-level technical training and progression opportunities, offering a focussed approach to providing a skilled workforce for employers in the area.

7.2.2 Impact

Through the Principal of the New College Swindon, who is responsible for the IoT, but also chairs SWLEP's Skills and Talent Subgroup and is a SWLEP Board Director, we have been helping shape the future of the IoT, from the idea stage and bidding, through to the inception and selection of the initial course offering.

Supplementing and building on the input from local business, we have been helping the IoT Steering Group understand the local skills supply and demand, how they have changed over time and the likely future shifts. These insights have been used to develop the course offering to bridge the gaps in supply and ensure that the local skills demands are met, with the initial portfolio including:

- ▶ Engineering, Manufacturing and Associated Professions, supporting the growth of the Swindon and Wiltshire Advanced Manufacturing priority sector;
- ▶ Science and Health Related Professions, helping meet the increasing demand for Health and Care sector, as well as the Swindon and Wiltshire Life Sciences priority sector;
- ▶ Creative and Media Professions, building on the rise in regional demand;
- ▶ Digital and Computer Science Professions, assisting the expansion of the Swindon and Wiltshire Cyber Security priority sector and the wider Cyber Valley, covering GFirst, Swindon and Wiltshire, Worcestershire, and The Marches LEP areas; and
- ▶ Business and Management Courses, supporting the regional needs.

Over the last six months, we have continued to work with the Institute, most notably in May 2021, when the Department for Education (DfE) released an exclusive IoT Invitation to Tender (ITT). Successful applicants were to deliver short, modular courses at levels 4 and 5, free of charge, for employers and their employees. The courses, which must be within the Science, Technology Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) subject areas, can be accredited or non-accredited, and as short as 50 hours in total.

With SWLEP's Labour Market Intelligence (LMI) showing significant increases in demand for five digital skill sets, the Swindon and Wiltshire IoT was able to develop a proposal for a range of courses to address this demand. LMI significantly shortened the development window. The IoT was able to approach employers with a draft proposal, which received strong support because it was based on solid evidence that matched what employers were experiencing on the ground.

Across the country, IoTs have received £6.4m to fund sixty-five free courses, available from October 2021 across ten Institutes of Technology. Up to 4,000 adults are expected to benefit from this rapid up-skilling or retraining, allowing them to secure well-paid jobs whilst plugging local skills shortages.

After the successful application, the Swindon and Wiltshire IoT has been enabled to offer free courses in: Cyber Security, Cloud Management, Agile Methodology, DevOps, and Data Analysis.





7.3 SWLEP as Kickstart Gateway Organisation

This case study shows Skills and Talent Subgroup's ability to:

- ▶ Engage with diverse smaller local businesses through innovative services
- ▶ address challenges identified through Labour Market Intelligence (LMI) reports

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Chapter 8

Looking forward



The unprecedented pandemic-driven changes have brought exceptional challenges nationally and locally. Our responses to these have demonstrated the dedication of the Skills and Talent Subgroup and our partners and stakeholders. We have worked collaboratively and innovatively, but we have also been realistic.

We know that without resources it is hard to achieve

ambitious goals. Therefore, our forward plan leverages the resources, skills and expertise that are available to us. Our two strategic priorities and the underpinning objectives for 2021 will continue to guide our actions alongside a strong focus on COVID-19 recovery, as outlined in Figure 10.



Figure 10: Swindon and Wiltshire Skills Plan Next Steps

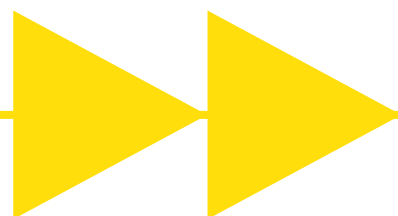
We will maintain our close working relationships with our two local authorities and government departments to coordinate efforts and ensure positive outcomes.

We will also continue to work with our local colleges, independent providers and universities to ensure that they are aware of the current and likely future changes in the local skills and labour markets so that they can be agile in their responses.

Our engagement with businesses through the Skills and Talent Subgroup and the Business Intelligence and

Network Group (BING) will continue. We will also use these groups to supplement our intelligence and ensure that our actions are having the intended impact.

We will continue to work closely with a wide range of employer and business representative organisations operating in Swindon and Wiltshire. As the role of LEPs evolves, we will make sure that these collaborations continue. We will share our knowledge and expertise and provide a seamless transition support, if and when necessary.







Join us in growing our local economy

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