Kent & Medway Local Skills Improvement Plan

Annexes

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Kent & Medway Local Skills

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Annex A

1. Kent & Medway Overview

1.1 The UK has experienced technical and vocational skills gaps for many years. This acts as a drag on productivity. In the **Skills for Jobs White Paper** published in January 2021, the Government presented a series of reforms, designed to increase skills in those areas that are most needed by employers, and to raise the profile, esteem, and employer responsiveness of the further education sector[1].

1.2 **Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs)** are part of this package of reform. They are intended to help further education providers deliver the technical skills that the labour market demands, by articulating employers' skills needs and setting out how changes can be made to provision to enable them to be delivered. They are **employer-led**, coordinated by Employer Representative Bodies (such as Chambers of Commerce), working closely with other employer bodies and the further education sector. Alongside this, the Government also launched a £65 million **Strategic Development Fund (SDF)** to enable further education colleges to invest in new initiatives to support the local economy. The Government is building on the Strategic Development Fund and will be setting out further support as part of the Local Skills Improvement Fund (LSIF) to be launched in early summer 2023.

1.3 Initially, the Government approved eight **trailblazer LSIPs** in summer 2021 to pilot the approach, including Kent & Medway. These trailblazers are all aiming to test "what works", in relation to[2]:

- **Models of employer representation** to best articulate the skills needs of a wide range of employers in a way that elicits an effective response from providers.
- **The process for creating "actionable local plans"** around shared goals that employers, providers, and funders can support.
- **Ways to join up with other parts of the skills system**, both locally and nationally.

1.4 The LSIPs were put on a statutory footing through the Skills and Post-16 Education Act 2022[3] enacted in 2022. The Department for Education subsequently appointed 38 LSIPs that should[4]:

- set out the key priorities and changes needed in a local area to make post-16 technical education or training more responsive and closely aligned to local labour market needs;
- provide a representative and coherent employer view of the skills most needed to support local economic growth and boost productivity, and improve employability and progression for learners;
- set out actionable priorities to better meet these skills needs that employers, providers and stakeholders in a local area can get behind to drive change in ways that add value to relevant local strategies and effectively join-up with other parts of the local skills system;
- not attempt to cover the entirety of provision within an area but focus on the key changes and priorities that can gain traction and maximise impact informed by robust underpinning evidence, meaningful dialogue between employers and providers and constructive engagement with MCAs/GLA, LEPs, LAs and other stakeholders;
- be drawn up for a period of three years and be reviewed and updated as appropriate during this time to ensure it remains relevant and reflects the skills needs of the specified area; and

[1] Department for Education (Jan 2021), *Skills for Jobs: Lifelong Learning for Opportunity and Growth*
[2] Department for Education (Nov 2021), *Local Skills Improvement Plan Trailblazers: Guidance for Employer Representative Bodies*
[3] UK Public General Acts 2022 - Skills and Post-16 Education Act 2022
[4] Department for Education (October 2022), Statutory Guidance for the Development of a Local Skills Improvement Plan

- describe how skills, capabilities and expertise required in relation to jobs that directly contribute to or indirectly support Net Zero targets, adaptation to Climate Change or meet other environmental goals that have been considered.

1.5 The Kent & Medway Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) builds on a large evidence base and information that has been driven by the County and Unitary Authorities, forming a strong base of collaboration to build on and take forward from the employer perspective. This was initially used in the Trailblazer LSIP and further elaborated and added to in this LSIP.

1.6 The Kent & Medway LSIP will provide an agreed set of actionable priorities that employers, providers and stakeholders in Kent and Medway can get behind to drive change. Our approach aims to place employers at the heart of the local skills system and facilitate the conversation between employers and providers. This is a long-term approach and has been underpinned by our focus on working with partners and through existing business and employer networks to ensure it remains part of an ongoing employer led approach.

1.7 The Local Skills Improvement Fund (LSIF), which replaces the Strategic Development Fund provides capital and programme funding to:

- support changes in local teaching and training facilities and provision so as to better meet the needs of employers
- support local innovation and economic growth
- develop a more efficient overall delivery infrastructure

The LSIF is part of a long-term change programme, concerned with investing in the new facilities, provision and teaching expertise needed to deliver the skills priorities set out in the LSIP and Kent & Medway FE colleges have been successful in securing funding from both rounds of this fund so far to support the sectors and areas highlighted in this plan.

Kent & Medway

1.8 Kent and Medway has a large and sectorally diverse economy, dominated by small and medium enterprises. We have benefited from rapid recent employment growth, and our workforce is expanding.

1.9 Our workforce skills profile has also improved over time. However, there is still a significant ‘deficit’ relative to both the South East and national averages. **Raising workforce skill levels, and aligning these with economic need**, is a high strategic priority and has been for a range of plans either in place or coming forward to address this on a local level and which the LSIP complements.

1.10 The further education landscape in Kent and Medway has consolidated in recent years, with three large FE college groups covering the county, and there is strong collaboration between the colleges.

The Employer Representative Body

1.11 In Kent and Medway, the LSIP has been led by **Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce (KICC).** KICC is the county’s single accredited chamber of commerce, with a direct membership of 1,500 businesses (over 90% of which are SMEs) and direct engagement with around 30,000 businesses, including through the Chamber’s role as the delivery body for the Kent and Medway Growth Hub. Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce is part of the British Chambers of Commerce network of 53 Accredited Chambers of Commerce across the UK and a global network of over 75 British Chambers in markets around the world. Accredited Chambers in the UK represent, support and campaign for business in their local communities. As a Chamber, KICC is:

- An independent, impartial, and part of a quality assured, accredited, and not-for-profit national network;
- Is business led, and business focused. We work with micro, small, medium, and large employers from the widest range of industry sectors;
- Provide a business-centred view of in-demand and future skills needs to ensure that the LSIPs focus on skills will lead to good and sustainable employment opportunities;
- Is rooted in our local business community, with strong local infrastructure. Our business advisers on the ground are already supporting employers with a broad range of business issues. Through

these multiple touch points, KICC is well placed to ensure all initiatives include a skills conversation with employers;
- Have well-established relationships with economic partners and broader stakeholders - at a strategic and operational level - locally, regionally and nationally;
- Have the flexibility to operate across varying geographical levels and locations;
- Combine national and local working - affording efficiencies, the sharing of best practice and the identification of national and regional trends alongside local, unique variances in skills demand.

Wider stakeholder engagement

1.12 While KICC has coordinated the development of the LSIP and the trailblazer, as the lead Employer Representative Body, **the involvement of a wide range of other business representative organisations and other stakeholders has been central to the development of the Plan.** Alongside engagement with employers, bilateral and group discussions have taken place with a wide range of stakeholders to explain the LSIP process, obtain partner views and drive collaboration.

1.13 This chapter provides an overview of the economic and strategic context within which the LSIP is developed. It is structured in three sections:

i) The latest data on the Kent and Medway labour market, setting out the county's resident skills and qualifications profile, its sectoral composition, and quantitative evidence of employer skills demand, including analysis of the projections of the types of jobs in the UK labour market, and the skills workers will need, up to 2035.[5]

ii) A summary of the further education landscape in Kent and Medway and its recent consolidation and development.

iii) An outline of how the LSIP complements the range of other workforce skills plans and evidence material and how overall coordination of "skills planning" is managed.

1.14 Finally, based on the above, it **explains the specific focus of the LSIP** and how this strategic context has shaped the approach to further investigation of employer need.

2. The market for jobs and skills in Kent and Medway

2.1 In 2021, Kent and Medway Economic Partnership published the *Workforce Skills Evidence Base* (WSEB). This provides an extensive analysis of the county's labour market, based on 'standard' data, employer consultations and desk research, and informed the preparation of the original bid for the trailblazer LSIP. Building on the WSEB, this section summarises the state of the market for jobs and skills[6].

Workforce supply

2.2 **Kent and Medway's population has grown rapidly in recent years.** In 2020, the county had a population of 1.87 million: between 2000 and 2020, the population grew by around 295,000 (equivalent to a city the size of Medway).

2.3 **Working age (16-64) population growth has been faster than in the rest of the UK**, with 15% growth over the 20 years to 2020, compared with 11% nationally. Looking to the future**, projected population growth over the next decade is significantly higher in Kent and Medway than in the rest of the country.** Although the population is ageing overall (as it is everywhere in the UK), the working age population will increase by around 46,000 between 2020 and 2030 (around 4%). This compares with growth of around 2% in England, and contrasts with many parts of the country which are likely to see a net decrease in the working age population[7].

2.4 Looking more closely at those age groups that will be entering further or higher education or joining the jobs market, the population aged 15-19 is expected to grow by a fifth (c.23,000) over the decade.

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[5] The Skills Imperative 2035, Nuffield foundation, sub-region data funded by Department for Education
[6] For further information, see the *Workforce Skills Evidence Base* at: http://kmep.org.uk/documents/Workforce_Skills_Evidence_Base.pdf
[7] ONS, Population projections. Kent County Council's 'housing-led' forecasts project higher rates of growth (around an additional 97,000 in 2020-30).

The population aged between 20 and 24 is likely to fall slightly for the next couple of years, but with a stronger increase towards the end of the decade. **Overall, there is an expanding labour supply in Kent and Medway, including in those groups about to enter the labour market for the first time.**

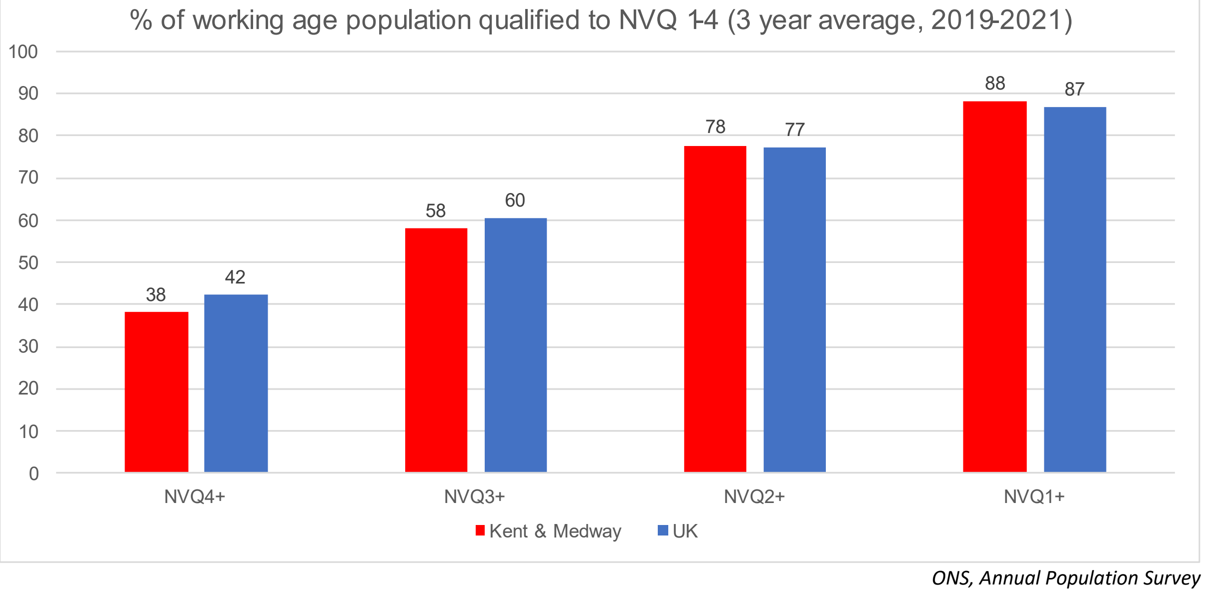
2.5 Within the working age population, **economic activity rates are relatively high.** In 2021, around 81% of people were 'economically active' (i.e., they were either in employment or actively seeking work), compared with 78% across the UK (although there is some variance across local authority areas). Economic activity rates have also increased steadily over time, reflecting the national picture. **Unemployment** rates track the national average (generally slightly below), and the claimant count has fallen steadily as the economy has recovered from the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. **This points to a labour market that is relatively 'tight,'** which is reinforced by the employer demand signals discussed later.

Workforce skills

2.6 Formal certification does not capture all the knowledge and skills that people possess. As Chapter 3 sets out, many of the skills gaps that employers are looking to fill will need to be met through non-accredited training, and many highly skilled people may have few formal qualifications. However, workforce qualifications provide a useful measure of local labour supply and help us to compare Kent and Medway with the national picture.

2.7 **Workforce qualifications in Kent and Medway lag behind the rest of the UK at intermediate and higher qualification levels.** At Level 2, attainment levels are comparable, but at Level 3, there is a two-percentage point gap, widening to four percentage points at Level 4. These county averages obscure local differences, but the percentage of the workforce qualified to both Levels 3 and 4 is lower than the UK rate in nine of Kent and Medway's 13 local authority areas (with especially low rates in Swale and Thanet)[8].

% of working age population qualified to NVQ 1-4 (3-year average, 2019-21)



ONS, Annual Population Survey

2.8 Nevertheless, **there has been steady improvement over time**. In 2004, around 13% of the working age population had no formal qualifications, a figure which had fallen to around 6% by 2020. The share of the working age population qualified to Level 4+ almost doubled over the same period. This partly reflects the gradual transition of the workforce, as less-qualified older workers retire, and better-qualified younger people enter the market.

2.9 Looking at the highest level of qualifications obtained by Kent and Medway residents, in 2020, around 69,000 people of working age had no formal qualifications, and a further 121,000 were only qualified to Level 1. Relative to the rest of the UK, progression from Level 3 to Level 4+ is weak: although more

[8] Three-year averages have been used to smooth volatility in local data.

of the working age population than the national average has Level 3 as their highest qualification, the percentage achieving beyond this is lower:

Highest qualifications obtained, % of working age pop (3-year average, 2019-21)

	Kent & Medway	UK
NVQ4+	38.1	41.3
NVQ3	20.0	19.1
NVQ2	19.5	16.9
NVQ1	10.4	9.6
Other Qualifications	5.0	6.1
No Qualifications	6.9	7.1

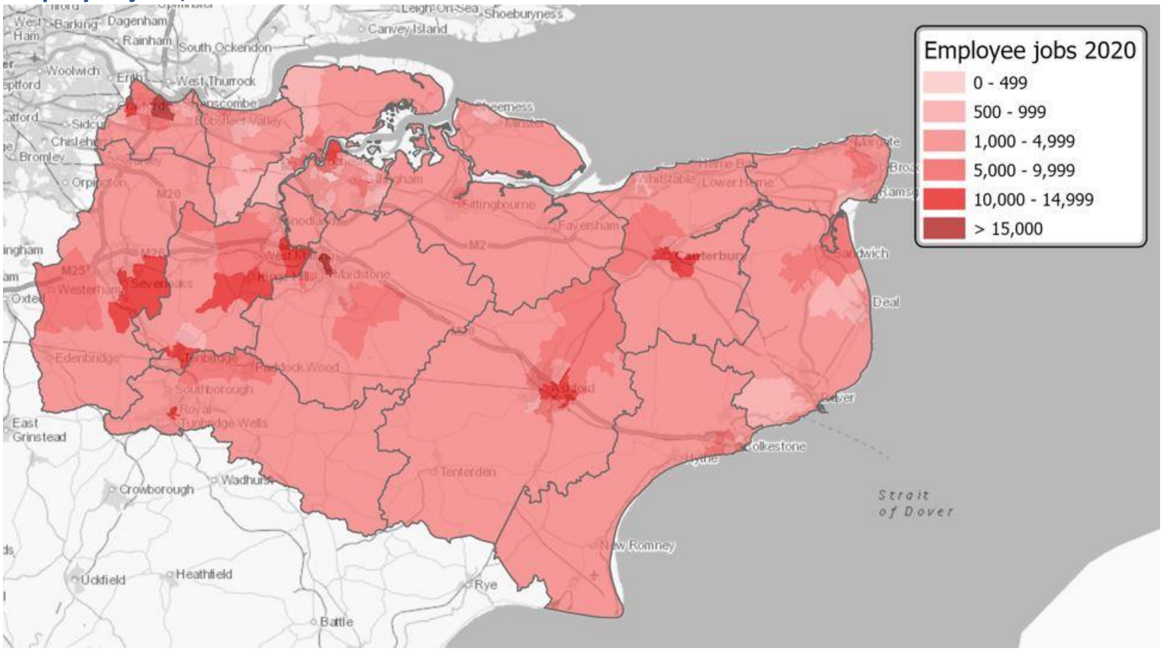
Source: ONS, Annual Population Survey

Employment demand: Jobs

2.10 **In 2019, there were around 880,000 jobs in Kent and Medway.** The rate of job creation has been positive over the past two decades: between 2000 and 2019, the county's stock of jobs increased by 28% (compared with 11% growth in the working age population). This reflects the UK's general success in job creation over time, and partly correlates with the low unemployment and rising economic activity rates referred to earlier. This growth has meant that the **'jobs density'** (the number of jobs for every working age resident) has increased steadily over time, to 0.78 in 2019. This is however lower than the UK average (0.87), partly reflecting out-commuting to London.

2.11 **Concentrations of employment are widely dispersed across Kent and Medway.** This reflects the county's 'polycentric' nature (which includes some important concentrations of activity in industrial and business park locations, especially in West Kent (e.g., Kings Hill and Aylesford/ Medway Gap):

Employee jobs, 2020



Source: ONS, Business Register and Employment Survey

Sectoral profile

2.12 **Sectorally, Kent and Medway's employment base is diverse**:

- In terms of **absolute employment numbers**, the largest sectors are health and social care; education; retail; and business administration and support services. Combined, these four sectors account for over 40% of all employee jobs. Accommodation and food service; manufacturing; construction; and professional, scientific, and technical services are also large employers, and combined account for a further 28% of jobs.

- Of the larger sectors, **Kent and Medway is relatively 'over-represented' in construction, motor trades and retail** (and to a slightly lesser extent in transport, distribution, and logistics). Despite being a small employer in absolute terms, agriculture and horticulture is, for Kent & Medway, a larger than average sector in comparison to the rest of the country. However, this hides some significant local concentrations (such as manufacturing in Swale; construction in Dartford, Gravesham, Maidstone, Sevenoaks and Tonbridge and Malling; and transport and logistics in Dover, Dartford, Gravesham, Swale and Tonbridge and Malling).

- **Employment growth** in 2015-21 was strongest in water supply, construction, transportation & storage and accommodation and food service. A few sectors also saw a contraction, principally in agriculture and information and communications.

2.13 A summary of the county's sectoral profile is set out in the table below:

Kent and Medway sectoral employment profile.

	Employee Jobs 2021	Share of total employment	Location Quotient	Employment Growth (CAGR 2015-21)
Agriculture, forestry, and fishing	10,350	1.4	2.4	-2.38%
Mining and quarrying	400	0.1	0.8	3.01%
Manufacturing	42,000	5.8	0.8	-1.29%
Electricity, gas, steam, and air conditioning supply	3,000	0.4	1.0	2.94%
Water supply; sewerage, waste management and remediation activities	9,000	1.2	1.8	8.15%
Construction	56,000	7.7	1.6	5.30%
Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles	120,000	16.4	1.1	-0.47%
Transportation and storage	48,000	6.6	1.3	3.99%
Accommodation and food service activities	53,000	7.3	1.0	0.84%
Information and communication	18,000	2.5	0.5	-1.67%
Financial and insurance activities	20,500	2.8	0.8	1.09%
Real estate activities	10,500	1.4	0.8	-1.29%
Professional, scientific, and technical activities	46,000	6.3	0.7	-0.75%
Administrative and support service activities	68,000	9.3	1.0	1.33%
Public administration and defence; compulsory social security	28,000	3.8	0.9	0.00%
Education	69,000	9.5	1.1	-0.61%
Human health and social work activities	99,000	13.6	1.0	0.44%
Arts, entertainment, and recreation	15,000	2.1	0.9	-0.47%
Other service activities	13,750	1.9	1.0	-1.00%
Total	**729,500**	**100.0**	**1.0**	0.53%

Source: ONS, Business Register and Employment Survey

2.14 The sectoral composition of the economy is helpful in indicating where market demand for employment might be generated. However, four broader considerations should be borne in mind:

- Even where sectors appear to be 'declining' in net employment terms, there will still be demand for new workers as older workers retire. This 'replacement demand' is an important part of the annual labour requirement – so we will still need to ensure a (potentially large) skills supply for sectors that are not growing overall.

- The range of occupations is broad and include support activities that are transferrable across sectors (all sectors will employ people in finance and IT, for example).

- Technology convergence is blurring some sectoral boundaries and changing the nature of activities within sectors. For example, the increasing importance of service activities to some manufacturing firms, or the transformational impact of digital technology on the nature of retailing. These changes are not necessarily visible in overall sectoral balance but are important in determining the type of jobs and skills that might be required in the future.
- Current labour supply issues may have an impact on demand for automation and different working practices. For example, the impact of the UK's exit from the European Union has been widely cited as driving significant labour supply constraints, especially in lower-skilled and semi-skilled jobs (about 21% of low-skilled factory and machine operator jobs were held by EU nationals in 2018[9]).

Occupational profile

2.15 Kent and Medway's occupational profile is broadly similar to that of the UK as a whole. Over time, the occupational balance has been more or less stable, there has been continued growth in professional and managerial occupations and a contraction in process and plant and sales roles. This reflects the impact of automation highlighted earlier. However, the type of work *within* occupational definitions may change faster than the data suggests with implications for employer skill needs. It is worth noting that the post Covid19 data (Change CAGR 2020, 2022) shows a contraction of caring occupations which could be an impact of the pandemic but will be an element to track considering the Working Higher predictions for need over the coming years.

2.16 Occupational profile, 2020

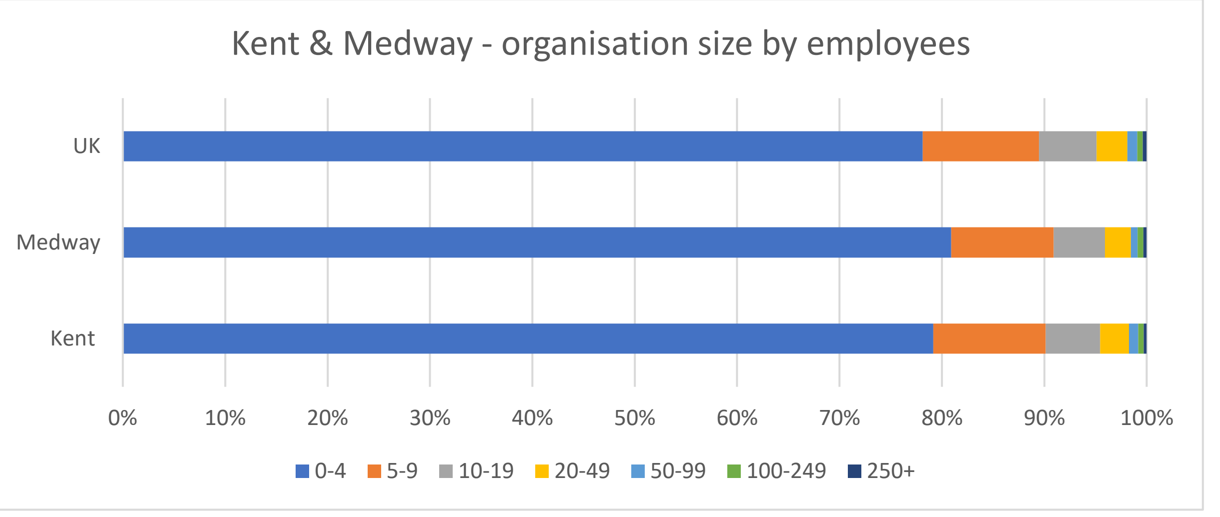
	Count	Percent	Change (CAGR, 2004,2022)
Managers, directors, and senior officials	118,800	13.1	2.17%
Professional occupation	209,300	23.1	2.88%
Associate professional occupations	139,800	15.4	1.88%
Administrative and secretarial occupations	97,400	10.8	-0.30%
Skilled trades occupations	79,400	8.8	-0.94%
Caring, leisure and other service occupations	79,700	8.8	0.97%
Sales and customer service occupations	57,300	6.3	-0.56%
Process, plant, and machine operatives	43,800	4.8	-1.10%
Elementary occupations	79,700	8.8	-0.51%

Source: ONS, Annual Population Survey

Business stock

2.17 In 2021, there were around **75,000 businesses** in Kent and Medway. As elsewhere in the UK, the business stock is overwhelmingly composed of small businesses[10]. Some 90% of all businesses employ nine people or fewer, a slightly higher percentage than the UK average. However, large organisations account for a high share of employment: about half of all employee jobs are in businesses that employ more than 50 people. There is considerable variance by sector, with employment in construction strongly dominated by small and micro businesses and others (such as financial services) mainly based on large employers[11].

[9] Kings College London, UK in a Changing Europe/ Migration Observatory, 2020
[10] ONS UK business; activity, size, and location, 2022
[11] BEIS, Business Population Estimates for the South East region.



ONS, UK business, activity, size, and location; 2022

Productivity and pay

2.18 The *Skills for Jobs* White Paper places improved productivity at the heart of the case for the Government's technical education reforms: a better-skilled workforce ought to create more value from every job, translating into higher pay and greater business competitiveness.

2.19 Kent and Medway's gross value added (GVA) per filled job (a conventional measure of productivity) was around £53,600 in 2019. This equated to around 95% of the UK average, with a somewhat wider gap with the rest of the South East. Reflecting this, workplace earnings (i.e., the wages commanded by people *working* in Kent) were 94% of the national average in 2021, at £575 per week for full-time workers[12].

Forecasts for skills and the labour market

2.20 Looking to the future, the Department for Education has recently published a set of employment forecasts via its **Working Futures** forecasting model. This forecasts employment by sector, occupation, and qualification level for all Local Enterprise Partnership areas in England[13].

2.21 Projections from Working Futures anticipate an **additional 56,000 jobs** in Kent and Medway between 2020 and 2035. In terms of **sectors**, the forecasts suggest **significant growth in science, research, engineering & technology, business, media and public service, health and social care and elementary trades**.

2.22 However, most employment demand relates to the replacement of people who retire or otherwise leave the labour market currently anticipated at 423,000 for Kent & Medway by 2035 – so annual demand for new job openings is much greater than the net increase in total jobs. **Overall, the annual demand for new entrants, including both 'replacement' and 'expansion' demand is around 28,000**.

2.23 As the table below shows, there will be demand for new entrants across all occupations (other than secretarial and community & civil enforcement roles, which are diminishing rapidly). These will require skills at a range of levels, with high demand for caring and personal service roles as well as in professional and managerial jobs that are likely to require 'higher-level' qualifications:

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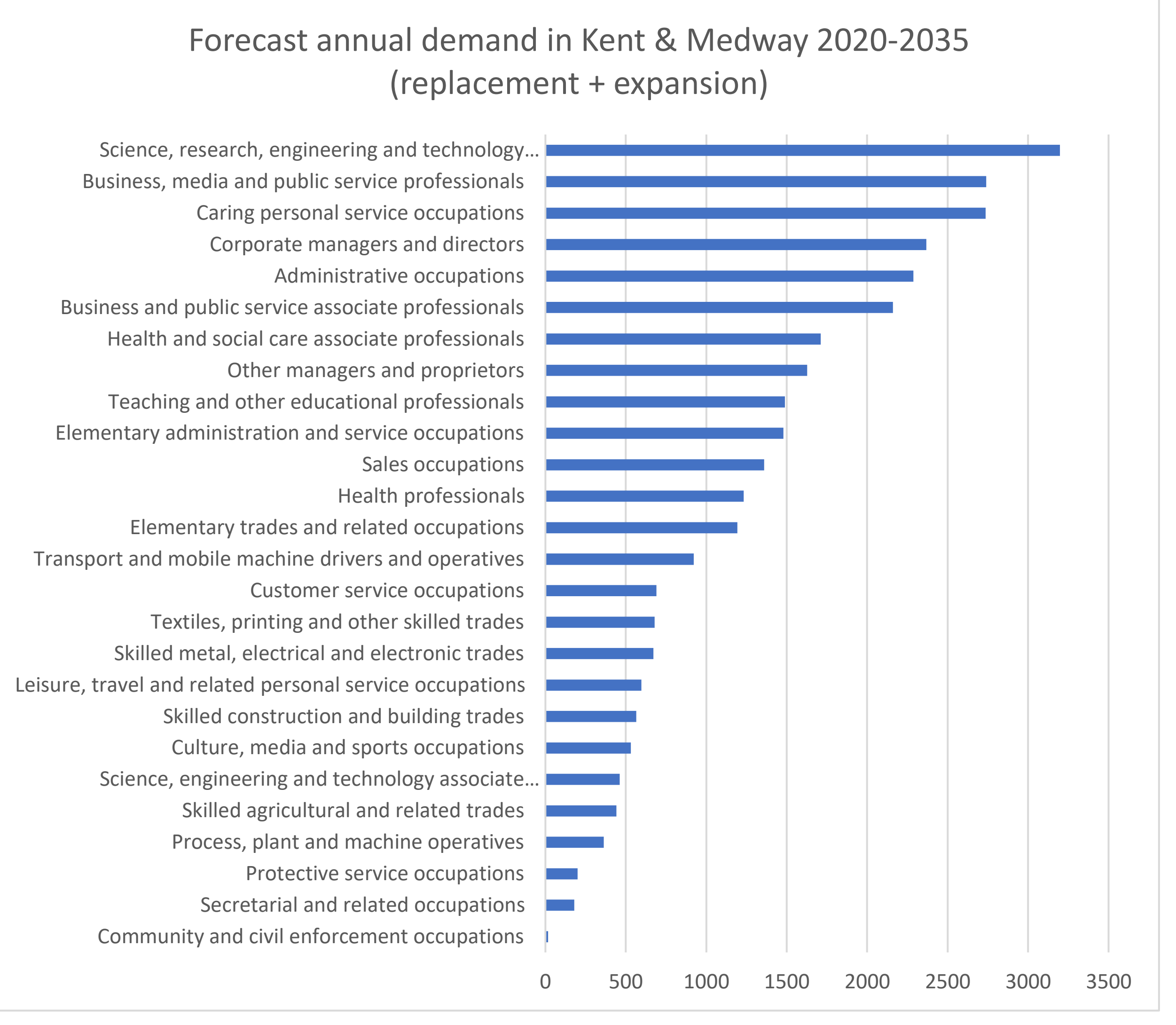
[12] Resident earnings are higher (£631 per week), reflecting the higher wages commanded by out-commuters (mainly to London). Data relates to the Kent County Council area, rather than Kent and Medway.

[13] Warwick University Institute for Employment Research/ Cambridge Econometrics for DfE, *Working Futures 2035*

Forecast annual demand in Kent & Medway to 2035 (replacement + expansion)



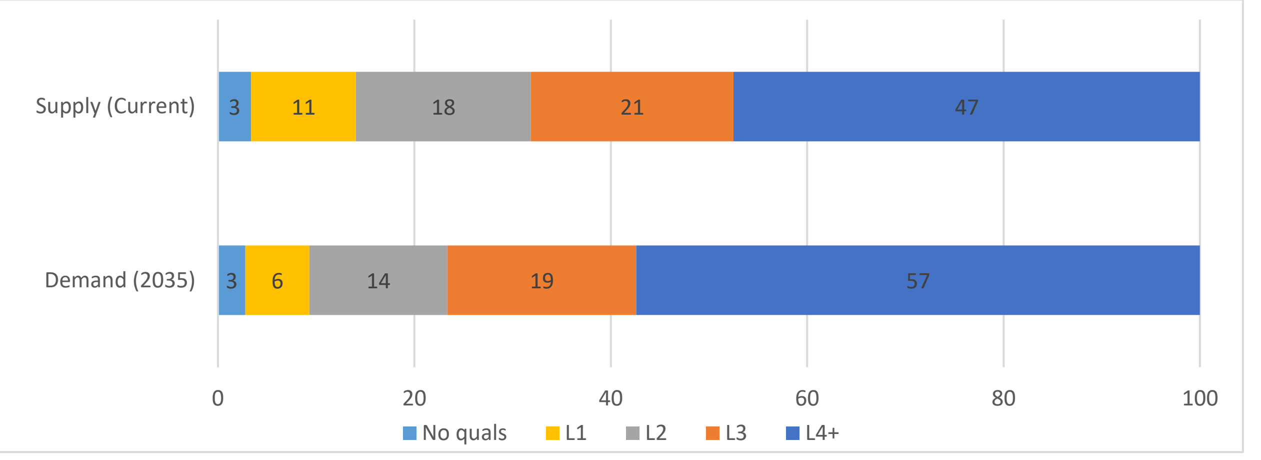
Source: Labour market and skills projections: 2020 to 2035

2.24 One of the elements to highlight is that if we aggregate the demand for health and social care related professions, the total employment requirement (replacement + expansion) is 76% of the 2020 employment in these areas, compared to 56% on average. This highlights a particular sectoral issue that will impact Kent & Medway as this is a large sector within the region, as set out above.

2.25 Working Futures anticipates that **demand for higher qualifications will continue**, with the proportion of total jobs requiring qualifications at foundation degree level or equivalent reaching around 50% by 2035 (from around 30% in 2007 and 35% in 2015). Demand and supply are not entirely independent of each other: a more highly qualified workforce will help to drive higher qualification requirements as some employers use qualifications as a 'sorting' mechanism.

2.26 However, there is an imbalance between the qualifications profile of today's workforce and projected demand, as the table below illustrates. Projecting the trajectory of recent improvements in Kent and Medway's qualifications supply forward, this gap is likely to narrow over time. But maintaining the trend will require a consistent focus, especially given the existing and historic 'deficit' in the county at higher workforce skill levels.

Current supply vs. anticipated employer demand in 2035



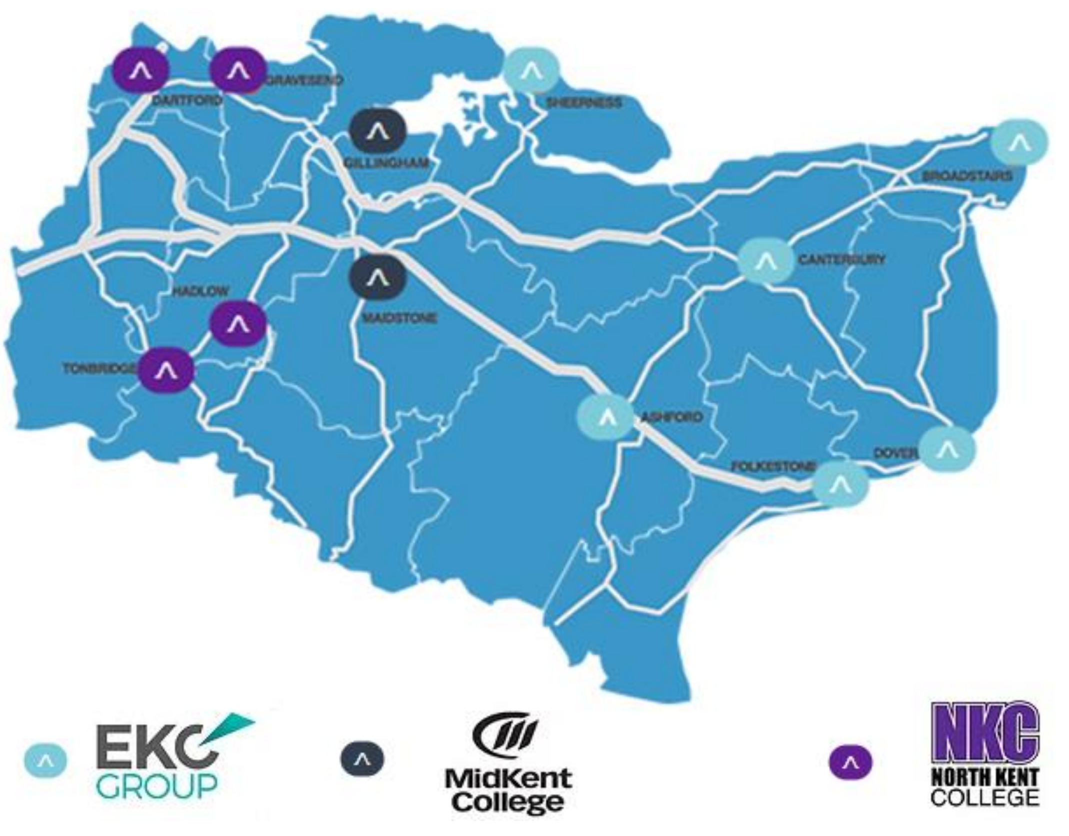
Source: Labour market and skills projections: 2020 to 2035

3. The education landscape in Kent Medway

The Further Education landscape.

3.1 Kent and Medway's further education provision is delivered through three further education college groups (North Kent College, MidKent College and EKC Group). These operate across 12 main college sites, supported by over 20 other training locations, illustrated below:

Further education in Kent and Medway: Main college sites



Source: Kent Further Education;

3.2 The three colleges support around 25,000 students, of which some 10,000 are 16-18, over 12,000 adult learners and around 2,500 apprentices. In recent years, the further education landscape has undergone substantial consolidation, as smaller colleges have merged. This has led to an improvement in quality and institutional resilience, with MidKent and North Kent Colleges currently assessed as Good by Ofsted and EKC Group having received an Outstanding rating in 2023. In addition, EKC Group, as the first in the region to have the enhanced inspection, received the highest level achievable on this with a "strong contribution to meeting skills needs."

3.3 Collaboration between institutions has also increased, with the three colleges co-operating through Kent Further Education and sharing expertise. As highlighted in Chapter 1, the colleges are actively supporting the development of the LSIP process, with the secondment of skills advisors to Kent Invicta Chamber to support employer liaison.

3.4 EKC Group, MidKent College and North Kent College successfully applied to the SDF for £5.6 million and delivered a series of projects to address skills needs in three sectors:

- **Manufacturing and engineering**, led by EKC Group. This includes the development of a Green Engineering and Design Centre at Ashford and a green engineering and mechanics lab at Canterbury, focused on electric and assisted vehicles.
- **Construction,** led by MidKent College. This includes a zero-carbon construction 'skills factory' on MidKent's Maidstone campus, with a home heating centre and a 'train to teach' programme designed to bring industry expertise into the teaching process to address the acute shortage of trained teaching staff.
- **Agriculture and horticulture**, led by North Kent College, through a focus on decarbonisation in agri-tech delivered via NKC's specialist agriculture and horticulture campus at Hadlow College.

3.5 EKC Group, MidKent College and North Kent College successfully applied to the SDF2 for £2.5 million to deliver a series of 13 connected immersive classrooms across all campuses of the three college groups. Immersive classrooms provide artificial, digitally created content and environments that accurately replicate real life situations. They are also a way for learners to connect to other colleges, so that new skills and techniques can be learned and perfected. Having an immersive classroom means that students can learn at the same time as other classes, with a tutor being in another room or one of the environments on the screens. Tools include Virtual Reality, Artificial Reality, 360 Viewpoints or other technology.

3.6 MidKent College is one of the partner colleges in the newly formed South East Institute of Technology (SEIoT). The SEIoT is a close partnership between seven further education colleges, three universities and employers across the SELEP region. The SEIoT project was awarded £13.1million from the Department for Education to support the development of new facilities. MidKent College was awarded £2.8million to invest in creating a centre of excellence at its Maidstone campus. The centre, to open in autumn 2023, is specifically focused on the construction and engineering sectors, and has invested in refurbishment, state-of-the-art equipment, and technology to offer high quality T-levels, HNC, HNDs, Degrees and Higher & Degree Apprenticeships.

The Independent training provider landscape

3.7 Independent training providers are represented by Kent Association of Training Organisations (KATO) which brings together ITPs and local colleges.

3.8 The independent training providers (ITPs) landscape in Kent & Medway has changed in the last few years with a reduction in numbers of providers within the region.

3.9 In addition, there are several national providers operating within the region, including those operating the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) schemes.

The Higher Education landscape

3.10 Kent & Medway has 4 Universities within the geography,

- Canterbury Christ Church University - campuses in Canterbury and Medway
- University of Kent - campuses in Canterbury and Medway
- University of Greenwich – campus in Medway.
- University for the Creative Arts – campus in Canterbury

4. LSIP Focus

Bringing it together: The focus of the LSIP

4.1 The overview of Kent and Medway's economic profile and strategic context indicates that the county has a workforce skills deficit, in the context of generally high employer demand; that there is a strong consensus on the need to address this; and that progress has been made in recent years, for example through further education college consolidation, SDF projects, Institutes of Technologies and other initiatives to support the sector led by DWP and delivered through the Independent Training Providers as well as FE colleges.

4.2 In that context, the **added value and focus** of the LSIP, building on the trailblazer LSIP, is on articulating the employer voice, with the aim of identifying potential solutions to meet need in the short term and establishing a framework for systematically reflecting employer perspectives in the longer term.

4.3 We have considered a number of sectors and focused on 5 principal areas and earmarked 2 areas that present up and coming developments which will impact on skills in the future.

4.4 These sectors include the three that were outlined in the Trailblazer LSIP and are:

- **Construction:** a sector in which Kent and Medway has a relatively high concentration of employment, large numbers of SME employers and a high degree of employer and representative body willingness to engage.
- **Manufacturing and engineering:** relatively high productivity, with some important local concentrations of employment, and with resilient employment levels and demand for new technology.
- **Fresh food and food production:** a small sector in absolute employment terms, but one in which Kent and Medway has some distinct strengths (horticulture and fresh food and important research and development facilities) and high levels of industry engagement.

4.5 Taking into account the data set out above as well as the information we have gathered talking to employers and stakeholders in these sectors, we have added:

- **Health and social care:** a large sector in the region and one that faces specific challenges with a high level of replacement demand over the coming years.
- **Education:** A key sector to ensure that the skills needs outlined can be addressed and where there is a shortage of tutors, especially in construction and manufacturing and engineering, both key sectors for Kent & Medway,

4.6 In addition, we would like to highlight the following sectors which have upcoming developments that will require skills considerations in the future:

- **Transport & Logistics:** a large sector in the region and one that will face challenges relating to the net-zero and decarbonisation agenda.
- **Creative Industries:** An important sector within the region with good support structures through the Creative Estuary and the Thames Estuary Production Corridor.

4.7 Finally, we would like to reiterate that this plan is not attempting to cover the entirety of the skills needs within Kent & Medway but focus on the key changes and priorities, throughout this process, we will continue to ensure that we raise the skills agenda widely within the region and capitalise on the LSIP focus to benefit the wider economy.

Annex B – Developing the LSIP Kent & Medway

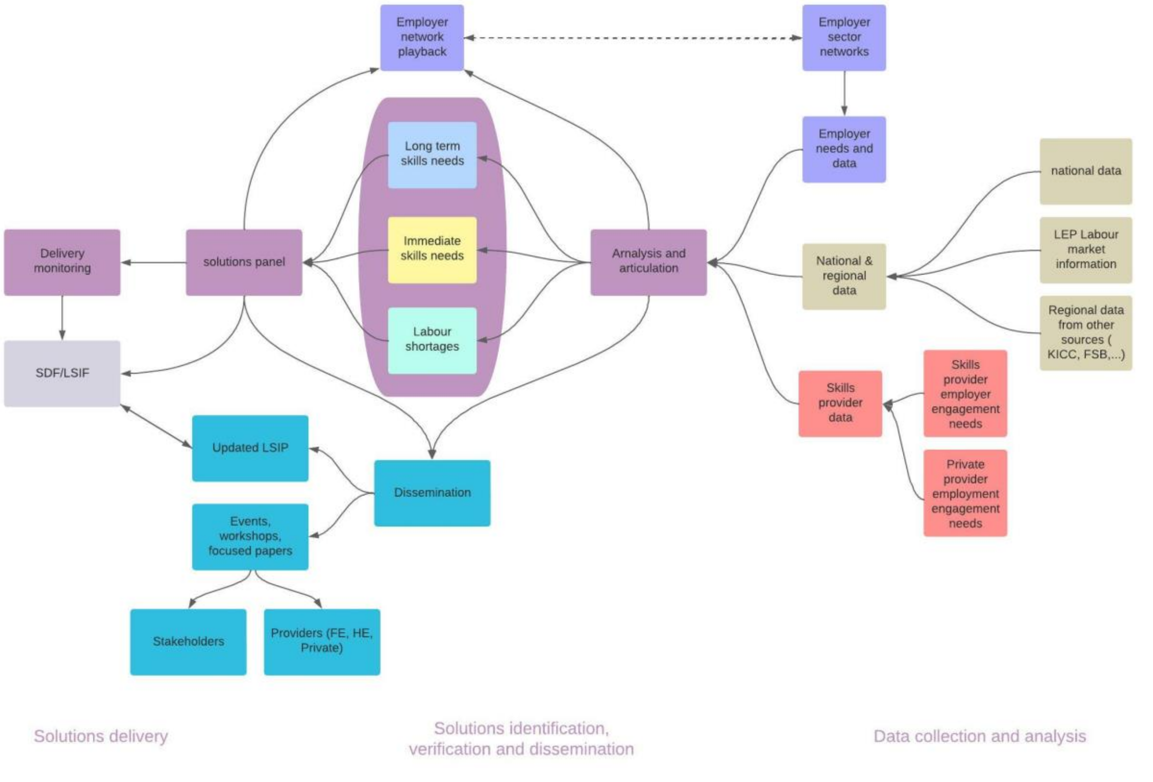
The trailblazer LSIP 2022 set out a starting point for the ongoing development and evolution of an LSIP 2023. Through its earlier development, we built substantial enthusiasm among employers in Kent and Medway and there was goodwill on which to build for this LSIP. With this comes the desire to build on the information and data gathered for the trailblazer 2022 and add to it to get a more complete LSIP.

1. Approach

1.1 We worked with stakeholders and partners to build on the findings of the initial LSIP report and the current and ongoing action plans highlighted within the Workforce Skills Evidence Base Action Plan and other Stakeholder initiatives. These include the projects that were being taken forward within the SDF stream of activity alongside those projects already identified within the Skills Accelerator programme.

1.2 In developing the LSIP, we have focused on a data and sector approach to enable us to provide further robust data to inform this updated LSIP and support the articulation of needs and the design of focused and fit for purpose solutions to underpin future plans.

1.3 Our methodology, outlined below, demonstrates the process taken:



1.4 The process of the LSIP is, in our view a really valuable part of the LSIP, the conversations and connections made have already shown impact and in general the raising of the skills agenda even further up the agenda with the region's businesses is proving beneficial in many, sometimes unquantifiable, ways.

1.5 We have worked with our LSIP Solutions Panel, which brings together the key stakeholders to support us in analysing the information, building on the teams' analysis and identify opportunities. The organisations involved are:

- Further Education – EKC Group, MidKent College, and North Kent College

- Independent Training Providers - represented by KATO
- National Career Service – CXK
- Career Enterprise Company – The Education People
- Higher Education – represented by Canterbury Christ Church University
- Department for Work & Pensions
- County and Unitary Authority Education teams – Kent County Council and Medway Council

2. Stakeholder Engagement

2.1 Both the trailblazer and the current LSIP have involved **a wide range of stakeholder organisations and this engagement has been central to the development of the Plan.** Alongside engagement with employers, bilateral and group discussions have taken place with a wide range of stakeholders to explain the LSIP process, obtain partner views and drive participation from other organisations' members and customers. These have included:

- **Other general employer representative bodies**, including the local branches of the Federation of Small Businesses, the Institute of Directors and the CBI, as well as the county's local (unaccredited) Chambers of Commerce (Sevenoaks Chamber and East Kent Chamber).
- **Sector-based employer organisations**, including training-focused bodies (such as the Construction Industry Training Board and Skills for Care) and others with a wider business support and representation remit. These included some national organisations which have engaged in skills dialogue at national level but have not previously been engaged locally.
- **Provider organisations**, including Kent and Medway's three further education colleges (EKC Group, MidKent college and North Kent College), the Kent Association of Training Organisations and some individual private providers.
- **Career and employment support organisations**, including The Education People who run the 16-19 Careers Hub, CXK who operate the National Careers Service in the region and the local representatives of the department for Work and Pensions (DWP).
- **Other strategic organisations**.

2.2 A full list of stakeholders engaged can be found below:

Organisation type	
General Employer Representative Bodies	Confederation of British Industry East Kent Chamber of Commerce Federation of Small Businesses Institute of Directors Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce Sevenoaks Chamber of Commerce
Sector-based Employer Representative Bodies	Construction Industry Training Board Chartered Institute of Building Electrical Contractors Association Institute of Civil Engineers Institute of Engineering and Technology Kent Developers Group Kent Integrated Care Alliance Make UK National House Builders Federation National Farmers Union Road Haulage Association

Organisation type	
	Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors Skills for Care
Skills and training providers	Association of Head Teachers Canterbury Christ Church University Careers and Enterprise Company – The Education People EKC Group Education Skills Partnership Hickory Learning UK IPS International JTL Kent Association of Training Organisations Kent Trainers Ltd MidKent College MKC Training National Careers Service - CXK NCFE North Kent College NUYU Academy People Plus STEM Learning University of Greenwich University of Kent
Strategic partners	Department of Work and Pensions Greater North Kent Kent and Medway Economic Partnership Kent and Medway Employment Task Force Kent and Medway MPs Kent County Council Kent District Councils Locate in Kent Medway Council South East LEP West Kent Partnership
Other Stakeholders	Ascentis Careers Hub Cornerstone Employers Group Education Landscape Essex LSIP Gatsby Charitable Foundation Institute of Physics Sussex LSIP

2.3 These stakeholders have supported this process, and although they may not have submitted formal evidence as part of the process, they have supported its development and in some cases as wider strategic bodies that recognise the importance of the workforce skills agenda, they will look to the LSIP to inform this.

2.4 Stakeholder engagement has been important to ensure that there is widespread understanding of the role (and potential role) of the LSIP, and a coordinated approach.

3. Provider Engagement

3.1 As outlined in our approach above, we engaged with education providers as part of the trailblazer and this LSIP. This engagement enabled us to gain provider data and insights as well as ensure they were kept informed of emerging employer findings and supported the development of solutions.

3.2 Within the initial Trailblazer, staff from the local colleges were seconded to support the initial work carried out and help the ERB better understand the education landscape.

3.3 During this LSIP, we have sought to further embed provider engagement in our way of working and ensure that providers, Further Education colleges, Independent Training Providers (ITP), and Higher Education Institutions were included in the LSIP process and more broadly in the employer led skills conversation within Kent & Medway.

Further Education providers

3.4 Strategic level engagement with the three FE colleges, EKC Group, MidKent College, and North Kent College, was carried out with Kent Further Education (KFE) which brings together the 3 local colleges and supports strategic initiatives14, in line with our desire to embed engagement in our way of working, we met representatives from the 3 colleges and KFE have met quarterly to discuss:

- Emerging LSIP priorities and correlating skills provision.
- SDF1 and SDF2 developments.
- Skills needs of the FE sector.

3.5 Added to that, the FE colleges identified colleagues within each institution that would support queries on emerging priority sectors and were involved, where relevant, with LSIP employer engagement in these sectors. This engagement will continue as we take forward the priorities outlined in the LSIP.

3.6 Representatives from the 3 FE colleges have been, and remain, involved in the Solutions Panel and supported the analysis of information, identification of opportunities, and the articulation of solutions with other stakeholders.

Independent Training providers

3.7 Engagement with the Independent training providers was done through the Kent Association of Training Organisations (KATO), the network manager received regular updates and quarterly presentations and discussions with the members at their meetings on:

- Emerging LSIP priorities and correlating skills provision.
- Skills needs of the ITP sector.

3.8 A representative from KATO has been, and remains, involved in the Solutions Panel. They supported the analysis of information, identification of opportunities, and the articulation of solutions with other stakeholders.

3.9 Meetings with ITP's outside of KATO to understand their views, provision, and needs were also undertaken, both during employer engagement and directly. Direct interaction included organisations such as IPS International, the Education and Skills Partnership, People Plus, and JTL.

Higher Education Institutions

3.10 Engagement with the 3 main Higher Education Institutions (HEI), Canterbury Christ Church University (CCCU), University of Greenwich (UoG) and University of Kent (UoK), was done individually initially, with CCCU taking the lead on representing HEIs for the LSIP process.

3.11 For emerging priority sectors, HEI's were able to take part relevant employer engagement.

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[14] Kent Further Education

3.12 An HEI representative has been, and remains, involved in the Solutions Panel. They supported the analysis of information, identification of opportunities, and the articulation of solutions with other stakeholders.

Other provider engagement

3.13 We engaged with the Association of Head Teachers, directly and through their representation in other forums which contributed to this LSIP.

3.14 We engaged with Kent County Council and Medway Council education teams, both 16-19 and adult education, who contributed to the LSIP and had representatives at the Solutions panel.

3.15 We engaged with a qualification agency to ensure that as an ERB we were able to better understand some of the requirements faced by providers.

4. Employer Engagement

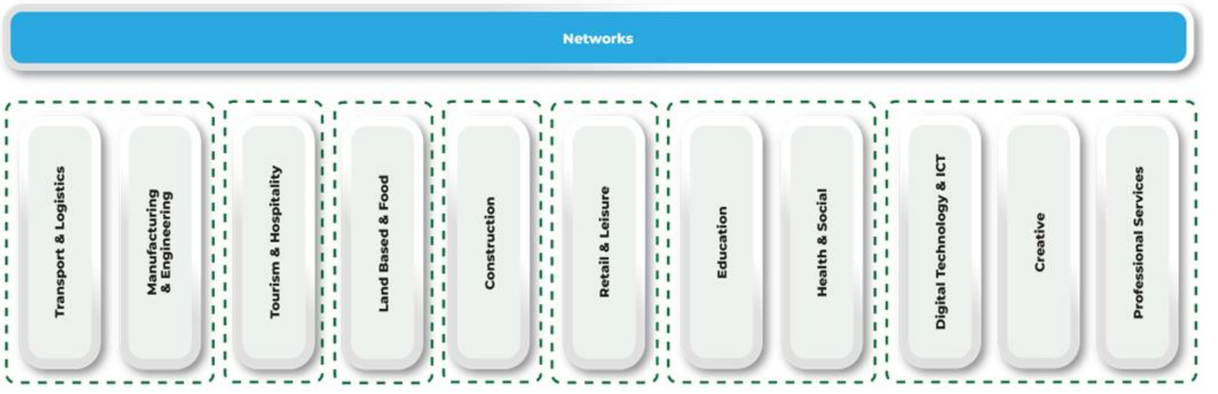
4.1 Our approach built on the trailblazer employer engagement which included:

- A **survey of employers**. This involved a telephone survey carried out by an independent market research company, supplemented by an online survey. This sought to reach a wide range of mainly private sector employers, with coverage across all the Standard Industrial Classification main sections and across all parts of Kent and Medway. There were over 900 complete responses to the survey, which sought to explore employers' skills 'needs', their perceptions of the skills landscape overall, and their propensity to invest in training and to develop solutions.
- Six **employer focus groups.** These were sectorally oriented (three focused on construction; with one each focused on land-based industry (principally the fresh food sub-sector), professional services, and the visitor economy) and were independently facilitated. Given the relatively short period of time in which the trailblazer LSIP had to be produced, these were organised as 'one-off' events, although could provide a basis for more ongoing engagement in the future.
- A series of **direct discussions with businesses.** These focused on employer skill needs, opportunities to address these (either within existing arrangements or through the development of new ideas) and willingness to engage in future dialogue. This process was facilitated by three **skills advisors**, partially seconded to Kent Invicta Chamber by the county's three further education colleges.
- A synthesis of this primary and secondary evidence was brought together and discussed at an **Employer Panel**, convened by the Chamber.

4.2 Through the trailblazer process, we generated significant engagement and "goodwill" from Employers, and it was vital that we built on that base and did not duplicate as well as maintaining the momentum of the relationships and skills conversations already developed. Therefore, we have sought to amplify the issues raised and continue to articulate the employer voice.

4.3 To amplify the skills conversation within the region, we have sought to embed it in employer led networks as employer platform and channels of engagement to help articulate the specific needs of the employers and build a meaningful, long-term approach, to embedding the skills and workforce conversations within employers in the region.

4.4 Our approach was broad to ensure that we considered all the main sectors in our analysis and focused on addressing the key needs within the LSIP. The sectors considered are set out below.



4.5 We purposefully chose not to repeat the discussions that had taken place within the trailblazer but sought to strengthen the conversation through network involvement to ensure that once the actions start, we have as broad an engagement in the key sectors and the geography as we can.

4.6 We have worked with partners in existing regional networks, to avoid duplication and build on the work they are doing in these sectors. These were:

- **Kent Construction Focus Group** (KCFG) for Construction.
- **Kent Integrated Care Alliance** (KiCA) and **Skills for Care** for Social Care.
- **Kent Further Education** (KFE), **Kent Association of Training Organisations** (KATO), the **Association of Head Teachers** (AHT) for Education.
- **Creative Estuary** for the Creative Industries.
- **Visit Kent** for Tourism and Hospitality.
- **Growing Kent & Medway** (GKM) and the **Fresh Food group** for Land Based and Food.

4.7 With each of these sector groups, we tailored our approach to the sector, led by the network organisations that understand them best and by the underpinning data we were collating in parallel. Engagement took many forms, such as discussions with representatives, presentations with Q&A, attendance at conferences and skills focused meetings.

4.8 With each of these sector groups, we tailored our approach to the sector, led by the network organisations that understand them best and by the underpinning data we were collating in parallel. Engagement took many forms, such as discussions with representatives, presentations with Q&A, attendance at conferences and skills focused meetings.

4.9 Where networks did not exist and the need for skills was evidenced by data we have sought to establish a more formalised regional sector focused network, such as the **Kent & Medway Manufacturing Focus Group** (KMFG), which we launched in May 2023 as a forum for sector discussion and the skills conversation.

4.10 We carried out two snapshot surveys, one for all sectors and one focused on construction. These were online surveys that allowed us to confirm certain elements from the trailblazer and emerging discussions. There were over 100 complete responses to the general snapshot survey and over 50 for the construction focused one carried out with KCFG.

4.11 Through the sector conversations and building on the Trailblazer LSIP we were able to identify Cross **cutting themes** for the region, confirming the need for digitalisation and digital skills across the board, **decarbonisation and green skills**, and identifying further the element that was emerging from the trailblazer approach that **SME engagement in skills** is low and needs to be addressed across sectors in Kent & Medway.

4.12 Although not all of these engagements have notes attached, the aim was to confirm that the elements that were outlined by employers in the trailblazer and the additional elements that were emerging from the data were correct.

4.13 We have sought to engage widely through a few direct events (345 attendees), social media (over 12,500 impressions) and through our network engagement we have sought to validate the trailblazer findings and the additional elements raised by the data and outlined in the Kent and Medway LSIP.

5. Data and sources

Construction

- KMEP, May 2021, Kent and Medway Workforce Evidence Base
- GNK, December 2021, Greater North Kent Workforce Skills Evidence Base
- Skills for Care ICS data for Kent & Medway, demographics age table
- Turner and Townsend (2019), UK Market Intelligence
- SQW (2022), Kent and Medway Economic Review
- CITB (2021), Construction Skills Network: Industry Outlook 2021-25
- CITB (2021), Migration and UK Construction 2021
- CITB (2023) Construction Skills Network Outlook 2023-2027
- CITB (March 2023) Future Priority Needs
- CBRE, January 2023, Future Homes Standard 2025
- CITB (March 2023) Marcus Bennett, Future Priority Needs (slides)
- Energy Saving Trust, Retrofitting the UK's housing stock to reach net zero
- Grovesnor, Heritage & Carbon, Addressing the Skills Gap
- Submission by the ECA (March 2023)
- Trailblazer survey 2021/22
- Construction snapshot survey 2023 – KCFG
- LSIP Trailblazer focus group and submissions
- Kent Construction Focus Group, 7th February 2023 and 7th March 2023

Manufacturing & Engineering:

- KMEP, May 2021, Kent and Medway Workforce Evidence Base
- GNK, December 2021, Greater North Kent Workforce Skills Evidence Base
- EKC Group, March 2021, Curriculum 2030 Research
- Kent Analytics, 2022, Manufacturing in Kent Report
- Gov.uk, March 2023, Labour market and skills projections: 2020 to 2035
- ONS, 2021, UK business Count
- Make UK, 2022, Blackberry Cyber Security report
- Make UK, 2022, Manufacturing Monitor
- Make UK, March 2023, The Labour shortage challenge for UK Manufacturers
- The Manufacturer/PwC, 2020, Annual Manufacturing Report
- Make UK/PwC, 2023, Executive Survey
- LSIP Trailblazer focus group and submissions
- Kent Manufacturing Focus Group, 26th April 2023
- Snapshot survey 2023
- Trailblazer survey 2021/22

Fresh Food and Food Production:

- KMEP, May 2021, Kent and Medway Workforce Evidence Base
- GNK, January 2022, Greater North Kent Workforce Skills Evidence Base
- EKC Group, March 2021, Curriculum 2030 Research
- Food and Drink Sector Council

- Kent Analytics, 2022, Food & Drink Production Industries in Kent
- Produced in Kent
- Growing Kent & Medway
- Kent Downs AONB, 2021, Viticulture report
- Growing Kent & Medway, 2022, Workforce 2030 full report
- Growing Kent & Medway, 2022, Workforce 2030 research report
- LSIP Trailblazer focus group and submissions

Health & Social Care:

- Kent and Medway ICS, 2022, Kent & Medway Integrated Care Strategy
- Health and Care Act 2022
- Skills for Care, 2021 - 2022, Adult Social Care Workforce Data Visualisation
- Care Quality Commission, October 2022, Access to Care
- NHS Providers, 2022, NHS Providers, State of the Provider Sector 2022 Key Findings
- Skills for Care, 2021 – 2022, Demographic and recruitment sections
- Department of Health and Social Care, 2021, People at the Heart of Care white paper
- NHS England Transformation Directorate, 2021, Using technology to put people at the heart of care
- Skills for Care, March 2023, Adult Social Care Apprenticeships 20/21 Key Findings
- KiCA, Hundreds of Healthcare Providers join to launch Recruitment Service
- Kent Care Professionals, Becoming a professional carer
- Skills for Care Kent & Medway Learning & Development Network, May 2023
- NHS England, December 2021, Adult Social Care Technology, Innovation and Digital Skills Reviews
- Snapshot survey 2023
- Kent Integrated Care Alliance conference, 18th May 2023
- Skills for Care, Kent & Medway Learning & Development Network, 23rd May 2023
- IPS International, ASC apprenticeship discussion, 26th May 2023

Education:

- FE News - job search
- Lifelong Education Commission/Chartered Institution for Further Education, 2023, Developing Industry-Expert Teaching for Higher Skills report

Other sectors:

- River Oak, Reopening Manston Airport

Cross Cutting themes:

- Digital Kent

All sector sources:

- Department for Education, Unit for Future Skills Local Skills Dashboard
- Skills, what Is happening in Kent & Medway and why should businesses get involved? 9th February 2023
- Business Bites – Sector Specific networks, why get involved? 18th April 2023
- Business Vision Live roundtable – 10th May 2023

Annex C

1. Snapshot Survey – All sectors

To further inform the LSIP, a snapshot survey of employers was carried out in winter 2023. This was conducted as an online survey by Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce.

Survey participants

There were 103 responses in total. Respondents were from a wide range of sectors, although not fully representative and from across Kent and Medway and were mainly SMEs.

Survey analysis

The survey showed that a majority of participants were recruiting and planning to recruit in the coming years. 60% found some roles and professions difficult to recruit and the key reasons given besides number of applicants (58), were technical skills (45) and qualifications (42). Soft skills were also highlighted by nearly a third of respondents and further confirmed by the qualitative data on skills than new entrants to the industry lack, along with digital skills.

The qualitative data reflects in a small snapshot the findings of the trailblazer LSIP for construction, manufacturing, and engineering with the addition of care professionals, education, and management level staff.

A large majority of respondents had carried out training, mainly in house or through private providers. More than half have used short courses, followed by apprenticeships and level 2/3 qualifications. All respondents bar one plan on doing training in the future. The main issues cited when seeking training are cost, availability, and location.

And finally, we asked organisations how confident they were that they had the right skills to address the net zero agenda, 52% were very or reasonably confident and the increase in digital technologies, 86% were very or reasonably confident.

View the full survey report here

2. Snapshot Survey – Construction

A snapshot survey of employers in the construction industry was also carried out in winter 2023. This was conducted as an online survey by Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce, mainly aimed at the KCFG.

Survey participants

There were 55 responses in total. Respondents were from a wide range of construction organisations, although not fully representative and from across Kent and Medway and were mainly SMEs.

Survey analysis

A majority of organisations encountered recruitment issues in the last 12 months, with project managers and electrical trades, architects, and surveyors being the main skills that are difficult to recruit to.

Just over half had sought training, principally for project managers and electrical trade. As with the more general survey, the training carried out was mainly in house or through private providers, although it is worth noting that for construction, the providers chosen tend to be from within Kent & Medway.

A third of organisations had issues finding training for certain trades/roles, mainly project managers and architects.

Recruiting to certain trades/roles was an issue for just under half of respondents, with the main issues being for project managers, architects, and senior management. However, when considering the activity breadth and size of the organisation that have responded, that with nearly half having issues recruiting certain skills or trades, this is an issue that is not limited to a specific trade.

And finally, we asked organisations how confident they were that they had the right skills to address the net zero agenda, 63% were very or reasonably confident and the increase in digital technologies, 84% were very or reasonably confident.

View the full survey report here

3. Trailblazer Employer survey analysis

To inform the LSIP, a survey of employers was carried out in December 2021. This was conducted as a telephone survey by TTMC, a survey company and a member of the Market Research Society. An online survey was also carried out by Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce using the same survey questionnaire.

Survey data were cleaned to remove any duplicate or substantially incomplete responses. The full survey results are presented below.

Survey participants

There were 909 responses in total. Respondents were from a wide range of sectors, although there were somewhat more from the construction and ‘other service’ sectors than would be expected if the survey respondents were fully representative.

Respondents came from all parts of Kent and Medway and were mainly SMEs:

Total respondents		
	Number	%
Esurvey	91	10.0
Telephone	818	90.0
Total	**909**	

Sectoral composition		
Base	909	
	Number	%
Accommodation and food service	46	5.1
Administrative and support service activities	39	4.3
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	25	2.8
Arts, entertaiment and recreation	75	8.3
Construction	117	12.9
Electricity, gas steam and air conditioning	12	1.3
Financial and insurance activities	41	4.5
Human health and social work activities	58	6.4
Information and communications	51	5.6
Manufacturing	81	8.9
Mining and quarrying	1	0.1
Other service activities	144	15.8
Professional, scientific and technical activities	51	5.6
Real estate activities	21	2.3
Transportation and storage	39	4.3
Water supply, sewerage, waste management and remediation	9	1.0
Wholesale and retail; repair of cars and motorcycles	99	10.9

Size band composition (by number of employees)		
Base	909	
	Number	%
0-9	577	63.5
10-49	264	29.0
50-249	51	5.6
250+	17	1.9

Geographical composition		
Base	909	
	Number	%
East Kent (Ashford, Canterbury, Dover, Folkestone & Hythe, Thanet)	367	40.4
Greater North Kent (Dartford, Gravesham, Maidstone, Medway, Swale)	370	40.7
West Kent (Sevenoaks, Tonbridge & Malling, Tunbridge Wells)	168	18.5
Not stated	4	0.4

Experiences of recruitment

48% of respondents said that they did experience problems in recruiting the staff they need. Professional, technical, and skilled trades roles were reported to be the hardest to recruit for, with specialist skills the main reported gap.

Q4. Thinking about your most recent experiences, which of the following best describes your experience?		
Base	909	
	Number	%
We have no problems recruiting the staff we need	178	19.6
Recruiting staff in certain roles is sometimes a problem for us	253	27.8
Staff recruitment is a major problem for us	179	19.7
We have not tried to recruit anyone recently	299	32.9
Total	**909**	**100.0**

Of those respondents who said that they have problems in recruiting the staff they need, the survey explored the roles that were hard to fill and the skills that were lacking:[15]

[15] The survey also contained a question on personal attributes (e.g., team working, customer service). However, this was incorrectly asked in the telephone survey, so the results are excluded here.

Q5. Which types of roles do you find it hard to recruit at the moment?		
Base	432	
	Number	%
Managers	110	25.5
Professionals/ highly skilled specialists	273	63.2
Technical and skilled support roles	243	56.3
Skilled trades	216	50.0
Sales and customer service roles	112	25.9
Care, leisure and other service staff	70	16.2
Machine operatives	60	13.9
Jobs that don't require any specialist skills	132	30.6

Q6. Which of the following technical and practical skills tend to be lacking among applicants?		
Base	432	
	Number	%
Basic IT skills	89	20.6
Knowledge of using specialist software packages	122	28.2
Advanced/ specialist IT skills	67	15.5
Basic numeracy skills	97	22.5
More complex numeracy and statistical skills and understanding	107	24.8
Writing instructions, manuals and reports	103	23.8
Manual dexterity	50	11.6
Adapting to new equipment or materials	85	19.7
Specialist skills, knowledge and understanding	253	58.6

Experiences of recruiting young people

54% of respondents had not had recent experience of employing staff direct from full-time education. Respondents with direct experience of employing young people from education were more positive about their work readiness than those giving a general view: 31% of those that had recently recruited a young person from education said that they were well prepared or very well prepared. But only 19% of all respondents had the same view.

Q8. Over the past 2-3 years, have you recruited anyone directly from full-time education		
Base	604	
	Number	%
Yes	277	45.9
No - but we have had applicants directly from f/t education	73	12.1
No - and we haven't had any applicants	243	40.2
Don't know	11	1.8
Total	**604**	**100.0**

Q9. Thinking about the people you have recruited directly from f/t education, how well prepared were they to work in a business like		
Base *(responding yes to Q8)*	277	
	Number	%
Very well prepared	21	7.6
Well prepared	66	23.8
Neither well prepared nor poorly prepared	89	32.1
Poorly prepared	65	23.5
Very poorly prepared	25	9.0
Don't know/ blank	10	3.6
Total	**276**	**99.6**

Q10. Thinking about young people leaving education in general, how well prepared are they to work in a business like yours?		
Base *(all respondents, excl.blank entries)*	322	
	Number	%
Very well prepared	9	2.8
Well prepared	55	17.1
Neither well prepared nor poorly prepared	98	30.4
Poorly prepared	111	34.5
Very poorly prepared	31	9.6
Don't know	18	5.6
Total	**322**	**100.0**

The existing workforce

35% of businesses considered that they had some skills gaps within their existing workforce. These were most commonly cited as specialist skills, knowledge and understanding.

Q12. Thinking about your existing workforce, which of the following best applies to you?		
Base	880	
	Number	%
Our existing workforce has the skills and capabilities to fully meet the needs of our business	572	65.0
We have some gaps in capabilities	271	30.8
We have significant gaps in capabilities	37	4.2
Total	**880**	**100.0**

Q13. What skills do you consider your business is currently lacking?		
Base *(all those saying that they have some gaps)*	308	
	Number	%
Basic IT skills	57	18.5
Knowledge of using specialist software packages	99	32.1
Advanced/ specialist IT skills	76	24.7
Basic numeracy skills	44	14.3
More complex numeracy and statistical skills and understanding	68	22.1
Writing instructions, manuals and reports	75	24.4
Manual dexterity	31	10.1
Adapting to new equipment or materials	51	16.6
Specialist skills, knowledge and understanding	153	49.7

Q14. Which of the following personal and people skills and attributes tend to be lacking?		
Base *(all those saying they have some gaps)*	308	
	Number	%
Ability to manage own time and prioritise tasks	134	43.5
Team working	55	17.9
Customer handling skills	77	25.0
Managing, motivating and setting objectives for staff	114	37.0
Sales skills	93	30.2
Managing own feelings or handling the feelings of others	95	30.8

90% of businesses surveyed said they offer some form of training and development for their existing staff, with three-quarters offering in-house training, with most also paying for training through private providers and through trade bodies and industry associations. Fewer accessed workforce training direct from further or higher education:

Q15. There are several ways in which a business might develop the skills of its own workforce. Which of these applies to you?		
Base	909	
	Number	%
We offer our own in-house training and development	694	76.3
We pay for staff to attend training provided by private sector providers	518	57.0
We pay for staff to attend training provided by local colleges	254	27.9
We pay for staff to attend training provided by universities	126	13.9
We pay for staff to access training/ development from industry bodies and associations	542	59.6
We don't currently offer or pay for staff training and development	91	10.0

Nearly two-thirds of employers experienced some form of barrier to delivering training for their workforce. This was most commonly cost (both direct financial cost and the cost of releasing staff, and uncertainty about the quality of the provision that might be available:

Q16. Do you think any of the following present a barrier to your business in terms of accessing training and development for your wor		
Base	909	
	Number	%
We can't afford the financial cost	284	31.2
We can't afford to release staff	297	32.7
Lack of interest from staff	154	16.9
We are unsure about the quality and suitability of what is available	273	30.0
We don't have sufficient management capacity to plan for training and development	210	23.1
Other	63	6.9
We don't experience any barriers in enabling our workforce to access training	323	35.5

Willingness to engage with training and skills

Most respondents were willing to take action to support better training and skills development. Offering work experience was the most commonly cited action, but substantial numbers of employers also expressed willingness (in principle) to advise on the curriculum, help with teaching, and so on:

Q17. KICC and partners are working to make local education and training more relevant. Which of the following applies to you?		
Base	909	
	Number	%
We would like to be able to access more short courses	507	55.8
We would consider offering short work experience	464	51.0
We would consider offering longer work experience placements	442	48.6
We would consider offering students industry projects to work on	359	39.5
We would consider hosting student visits at our company	351	38.6
We would consider helping with teaching	355	39.1
We would consider mentoring young people	531	58.4
We would consider advising on the curriculum	379	41.7
Other	19	2.1

4. LSIP Trailblazer Focus Groups

The LSIP 2023 builds on the focus group work done in the trailblazer, the trailblazer focus group information can be found **here**

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