



Kent & Medway Local Skills Improvement Plan

Progress Report
June 2025



Funded by
UK Government

Table of Contents

Kent & Medway LSIP Progress Report 2025	3	SME Engagement in Skills.....	13
1. Purpose of the Report	3	5. What still needs to be achieved?.....	14
2. Summary of the Local Skills Improvement Plan	3	Construction.....	14
3. Strategic and economic context update.....	4	Manufacturing & Engineering.....	14
Strategic Landscape	4	Health & Social Care.....	15
Business Landscape.....	5	Fresh Food & Food Production	15
Education Landscape	5	Education	15
4. What has been achieved so far?.....	6	Cross Cutting Themes	16
Construction.....	6	Watching Briefs	16
Manufacturing & Engineering.....	8	Creative Industries.....	16
Health & Social Care.....	9	Transport & Logistics.....	16
Fresh Food & Food Production	11	Additional sectors to note.....	16
Education	12	Visitor and experience economy.....	16
Cross Cutting Themes	13	6. Conclusion.....	17
Digitalisation.....	13	Annex A – Priorities and Actions (Roadmap).....	18
Decarbonisation	13	SKILLS 25	21



**Funded by
UK Government**



Kent & Medway LSIP Progress Report 2025

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1** Building on the Local Skills Improvement Plan in August 2023¹ and the 2024 update report², this report aims to provide employers, providers and stakeholders an update as we reach 3 years since the launch of the LSIP initiative.
- 1.2** This report aims to provide a snapshot of the activity achieved in the last year and to outline the next steps for the skills agenda in the region. It is an opportunity to reflect on the progress made to date in Kent & Medway and what comes next to address the employer identified skills needs.
- 1.3** The achievements of the region reflect the collaborative approach within the region, with the LSIP and other skills stakeholders, including existing employer groups and forums wherever possible, working together towards the goal of embedding and advancing the skills conversation. This reinforces the approach taken focused on embedding the skills agenda within the regional structures and enabling a coordinated approach for employers, stakeholders and education providers.

2. Summary of the Local Skills Improvement Plan

- 2.1** The Kent & Medway Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) 2023 provided a roadmap to address the key skills needs and shortages in the region and was developed collaboratively by employers, training providers, and other stakeholders.
- 2.2** The key driver of the LSIP is to ensure that employers are, and remain, at the heart of the skills conversation, and drive and inform the future of skills in Kent & Medway.
- 2.3** Key points of the LSIP 2023:



- **Focus on key sectors:** The plan identifies priority sectors in the region, including **Construction, Manufacturing & Engineering, Fresh Food & Food Production, Health & Social Care** and **Education**. And some sectors with potentially emerging skills needs such as **Transport & Logistics** and **Creative Industries**.
- **Cross-cutting themes:** The LSIP also addresses cross-cutting themes that affect multiple sectors, such as **Decarbonisation, Digitalisation** and **SME engagement in skills**.

¹ [Kent & Medway Local Skills Improvement Plan 2023](#)

² [Kent & Medway Local Skills Improvement Plan - Progress Report 2024](#)

- **Collaboration:** The LSIP encourages greater collaboration between employers, training providers, and other stakeholders to ensure that the workforce has the skills needed to succeed in the 21st-century economy.

2.4 The Kent & Medway LSIP 2023 aims to create a more skilled and adaptable workforce in the region, better equipped to meet the challenges and opportunities of the future.

2.5 The blueprint provided by the Kent & Medway LSIP set out clear actions for each of the sectors and priority themes that has been used by Education providers and stakeholders to articulate the best responses for the region based on their expertise and working collaboratively. It builds on previous work and analysis, providing a clear direction for skills development in Kent and Medway.

2.6 As with our previous reports, it is important to understand the principles upon which the Kent & Medway LSIP set out the agenda for change it sought to address:

- **The agenda has not been to set out an employer ‘demand’ for further education action**, although the Education Providers have a central role in delivering it. It is important to note that employers will themselves be key to the better communication of industry opportunity and demand. Employers also have a role in supporting the Education Providers to ensure that any additional offer meets evolving need.

3. Strategic and economic context update

Strategic Landscape

3.1 As outlined in the 2024 report, the landscape was changing with the Kent and Medway Economic Partnership (KMEP), established under SELEP originally, taking on the new responsibilities within role as the county-wide economic growth board, including the Kent & Medway Employment Task Force (KM ETF) which supports the skills agenda at a regional strategic level.

- **Understanding the barriers to meeting these needs remains important going forward.** These relate to funding and qualification structures, the availability of skilled tutors and the balancing of employer demand with the wider range of objectives that Education Providers must meet.
- Ultimately, and possibly most importantly, when looking at what has been done in the last 2 years, **change can be incremental and ‘marginal’, as well as systemic.** Tackling specific, distinct challenges in the short term where they address the needs of a group of engaged employers can help to make the case and build confidence in the delivery of wider measures in the longer term.



3.2 KMEP:

- continues to work with stakeholders to take forward the Kent & Medway Economic Framework³, which set out the ambitions of the region towards 2030, including the skills challenges of the region in which the Kent & Medway LSIP plays a central role.

³ [Kent & Medway Economic Framework March 2024](#)

- launched the first regional Bootcamp addressing some of the strategic needs outlined in the K&M Economic Framework and the LSIP. Sectors covered include construction, agri-food, creative industries, social care and retail.
 - Has drafted the local 'Get Britain Working' plan with DWP to reduce economic inactivity by integrating employment, health, and skills support, building on the strategic ambitions outlined in the K&M Economic Framework and the opportunities identified in the LSIP.
- 3.3** Following the introduction of the English Devolution White Paper⁴, Kent & Medway put itself forward, but was not selected, for the priority programme giving chosen regions more control over areas including skills. Despite this, the region continues joined up work on skills through different forums including KMEP and the KM ETF to ensure alignment in preparation for a future devolution.
- 3.4** This alignment showed particularly as the region came together at SKILLS 25⁵ focused on employers, facilitating conversations around the skills landscape and the specific needs of the priority and emerging sectors, supported by local authorities and education providers. The event and outputs demonstrated how the conversation around skills has matured in the region.
- 3.5** The UK Industrial Strategy 2025⁶ set out the key growth sectors for the UK which map to the key sectors in the region such as Agri-Tech & Food, Advanced Manufacturing, Health Tech, Creative, Digital and Net Zero. This correlation to national priorities supports the focus on skills within these areas and the need to continue the collaborative work stemming from the LSIP.
- 3.6** As part of the skills component of the Industrial Strategy 2025 and the detail outlined in Skills England's Skills for Growth and Opportunity paper⁷, the sectors and initiatives outlined respond to several issues highlighted by employers in the LSIP, responsive curriculum and training, sector-specific skills pipelines and the Growth and Skills Levy.

Business Landscape

- 3.7** The general business landscape in the region has not evolved much in the last year, however it is worth noting that current indicators show that the number of businesses is static or reducing slightly. The business makeup of the region remains the same with 90% of businesses with fewer than 10 employees.
- 3.8** There have been no major business closures, however there are some smaller established businesses in key sectors that have closed and overall, the business environment has been challenging. Initial data from Companies House shows that the growth in businesses in the region has slowed with fewer businesses created and increased business deaths.
- 3.9** The Lower Thames Crossing project has received initial approval, which will have a great impact on the construction sector. Highways England and the delivery partner have been engaging in the region including on skills.

Education Landscape

- 3.10** The overall education landscape has remained stable since the publication of the LSIP and the 2024 report, with good engagement with all providers, ITP, Further Education (FE) colleges and Higher Education (HE) institutions engaging and being solutions focused on addressing the issues raised by the employers within the key sectors and themes identified in the LSIP.
- 3.11** All facilities created through LSIP related and other funds have come on stream and providers have been engaging with employers in the relevant sectors and to create awareness and engagement with these facilities.
- 3.12** In addition to the projects outlined in the 2024 report, the investment included the Assistive Technology suites⁸, Decarbonisation Hub⁹, the Hadlow Centre of Excellence¹⁰, and the Innovation Kitchen¹¹. In addition, several training academies and skills hubs linked to construction projects have been launched. More details of these are set out in the sections below.

⁴ [English Devolution White Paper, 16 December 2025](#)

⁵ [SKILLS 25 event, 18 March 2025](#)

⁶ [Industrial Strategy, HM government, 6 June 2025](#)

⁷ [Skills for growth and opportunity, Skills England, June 2025](#)

⁸ [EKC AT Suite Launch, EKC Canterbury College, 18 November 2025](#)

⁹ The Decarbonisation Hub, funded by LSIF 23-25

¹⁰ [Thanet Earth Centre of Excellence, Hadlow College June 2024](#)

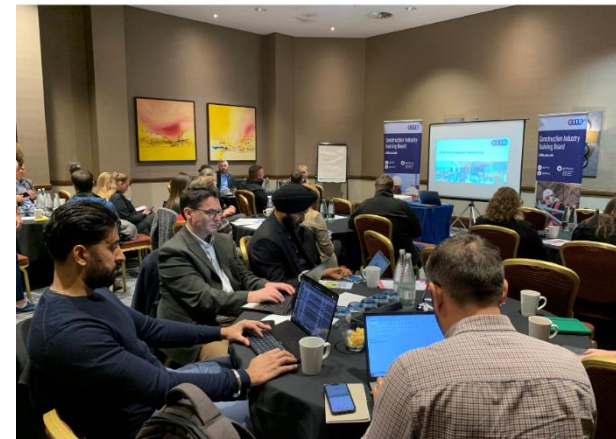
¹¹ [EKC Innovation Kitchen Launch](#)

4. What has been achieved so far?

- 4.1** The Kent & Medway LSIP has unified stakeholders with a shared strategic vision, influencing regional funding and policy decisions. It has fostered collaboration across education providers, local authorities, and employers, ensuring investment aligns with workforce needs. Through sustained engagement and related targeted capital investments, the LSIP has strengthened the skills conversation, helping employers recognise their role in addressing workforce challenges.

Construction

- 4.2** The LSIP remains actively engaged with the sector through key industry forums such as the Kent Construction Focus Group (KCFG), participation in the Kent Construction Expo, and representation on the skills boards of major regional projects, including the Lower Thames Crossing.
- 4.3** The effectiveness of this engagement has been further strengthened through LSIP-led sector skills roundtables, which facilitated employer-driven discussions on engagement experiences with education providers. These roundtables also provided a platform for the sector to explore additional opportunities to shape the regional skills agenda.
- 4.4** Sector skills surveys continue to provide an up-to-date understanding of the regional skills landscape which allow for engagement activities to focus on immediate needs as well as future skills. This is further enhanced by LSIP representation on the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) Kent Employer Network Steering Group to continue to understand the changing skills needs of the sector.
- 4.5** SKILLS 25 served as a strategic forum for industry and education to collaborate on workforce development and skills policy. A dedicated seminar space facilitated discussions on skills advancement and social value modelling for the supply chain, while panel sessions brought together representatives from major regional projects and SMEs to examine the role of business in shaping the skills system. The industry training body, CITB, played a pivotal role in curating sector-specific content as a member of the SKILLS 25 steering group. The event attracted significant engagement, with



over 300 attendees spanning industry, education, and national and local government.¹²

- 4.6** The LSIP continues to work closely with the Kent and Medway Careers Hub on the promotion of career's engagement across schools and colleges. Teachers Encounters provide an opportunity for educators to engage directly with employers. 35 teachers are planned to spend a day in industry to support skills, knowledge and understanding of the Construction sector across 4 large employers in the region. This activity is scheduled for May 25 and feedback due shortly after publication.
- 4.7** The LSIP continues to support and monitor the progress of LSIF related activity. The Decarbonisation Hub at MidKent College is a state-of-the-art facility delivering training in retrofitting, renewable energy systems, and sustainable construction. It serves as a vital resource for upskilling and reskilling the workforce to meet the growing demand for green jobs and support the UK's decarbonisation efforts. The facility was recognised at the LCL 2024 Awards as the "Green Centre of the Year."¹³
- 4.8** Training programmes delivered in this facility range from foundational awareness courses to practical competence development, targeting the skills gap in sustainability and construction sectors. These courses prepare the workforce for emerging green jobs. MidKent College has achieved centre approval, awarded from NOCN, LCL, AIM, and ABBE, enabling the college to develop and offer several accredited courses.
- 4.9** Employer-led training centres are an expanding form of independent training provision across the region, reinforcing the LSIP messaging of the sector's role in shaping the skills agenda. O'Halloran & O'Brien (OHOB) Group's accredited Training Academy in Gravesend tackles industry shortages by offering structured training and employment pathways for underrepresented groups. In partnership with key stakeholders, its Change Your Script Pre-Employment Programmes blend classroom, practical, and online learning to equip participants with essential construction skills. Collaborating with industry leaders, OHOB provides hands-on experience, boosting employment prospects and workforce readiness.¹⁴

4.10 East Kent Colleges Group (EKC), in collaboration with Morgan Sindall Construction, has established a Construction Academy at EKC Canterbury College to address industry skills gaps as identified in the LSIP. The academy offers practical training, work placements, and direct industry engagement, leveraging the organisation's supply chain to enhance employment prospects.

4.11 The LSIP remains instrumental in advancing the skills strategy for The Lower Thames Crossing project, serving as a key member of the Employment and Skills Working Group (South). Central to its efforts is the establishment of regional skills hubs, with facilities in Gravesham and Maidstone (launched October 2024). These hubs will provide accredited training for school and college leavers, individuals transitioning from other sectors, returning construction workers following periods of unemployment, and priority demographic groups, ensuring a skilled workforce for local employment opportunities.¹⁵

4.12 The hubs will also deliver accredited upskilling training to the existing workforce to enable progression into higher skilled roles. In addition, the hubs will provide wider community support through pre-employment training programmes, pastoral provision and planned co-location of organisations such as DWP, NHS and the Lighthouse Charity.



¹² [SKILLS 25](#)

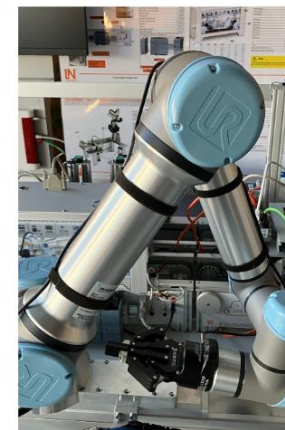
¹³ [LCL 2024 Awards-Green Centre of the Year](#)

¹⁴ [Case Study O'Halloran & O'Brien](#)

¹⁵ [LTC Skills Hubs](#)

Manufacturing & Engineering

- 4.13** The Kent & Medway Manufacturing Focus Group (KMFG) serves as the primary engagement platform for the LSIP, facilitating collaboration between industry and education. It convenes monthly through face-to-face networking events and site visits, enabling the exchange of best practice. Sector experts provide insights on innovation, skills development, workforce planning, and industry growth. These meetings allow providers and stakeholders to share updates on key skills initiatives, including T Levels, Apprenticeships, Supported Employment, Teacher Encounters/CPD activities, and other FE/industry collaboration opportunities such as career activities and work experiences/placements.
- 4.14** KMFG has also provided the LSIP team the opportunity to share with the sector a variety of non LSIP related initiatives around growth, impact and accelerator programmes, and funding offered through our HE partners and Government initiatives such as innovation funding to support digital transformation and skills development in manufacturing.
- 4.15** KMFG activities have been further enhanced by SKILLS 25 and MAKE UK's contribution to sector seminars focussing on Industrial Strategy, innovation, and advanced manufacturing together with skills.¹⁶
- 4.16** The LSIP supports and monitors LSIF projects in this sector led by North Kent College (NKC). The LSIP has been instrumental in enabling new curriculum offerings and expanding skills development in Kent and Medway. Through LSIF investment, colleges across the region have enhanced apprenticeship programmes, introduced innovative training, and strengthened employer engagement to address sector-specific skill gaps. Engineering students have acquired advanced skills beyond their curriculum and qualifications, particularly in Factory Automation, Mechatronics, Robotic Systems, and Industrial Controls. Their hands-on experience with complex applications has significantly refined their technical proficiency.
- 4.17** Several manufacturing employers have collaborated with NKC on innovation initiatives, enhancing their understanding of Programmable Logic Controllers (PLCs)—devices that govern automated factory systems. Hosted in the college's mechatronics lab, these sessions provided a structured approach to learning about system architectures, device functionality, and



hands-on programming, supporting the advancement of automation within their operations.

- 4.18** EKC Dover College partnered with a Sandwich-based manufacturer to tackle inefficiencies in their blend back process, aimed at reducing waste through product reintegration. A recurring machine failure delayed implementation, leading students and staff to design bespoke adaptation parts using CAD software and CNC machining. The resulting quick-release component resolved the issue, enabling integration at the company's Kent site—demonstrating industry-education collaboration in innovative engineering solutions and workforce readiness.
- 4.19** Employer feedback indicates that this engagement has been instrumental in progressing their automation strategies. Additionally, employers have furthered collaborated with college learners on project work and problem-solving, fostering knowledge exchange and skills development. They gained valuable insight into how the technology supports the delivery of apprenticeships and other training provisions.
- 4.20** This collaboration is shaping future educational programmes in manufacturing by reinforcing the integration of industry-led innovation into curriculum design. This engagement with automation technologies demonstrates a model where employers actively contribute to skills development, ensuring that learners acquire competencies aligned with real-world technological advancements and develop industry ready skills for the sector.
- 4.21** KMFG leads the employer engagement piece for the Industry 4 Council. Regular meetings with industry and education providers (FE, HE and ITP's) collaborating on sector specific activities targeting 3 main areas as identified in the LSIP. As the Industry Council becomes more established, the LSIP has been instrumental in supporting the vision of the Council, as a founding member, working more closely with industry to move the sector forward, in particular around apprenticeship provision, careers and STEM activities and supporting tutor CPD and tutor shortages within education
- 4.22** Train the Trainer activities to support staff CPD have begun to address the upskilling of current curriculum staff through college wide collaboration by equipping educators with advanced teaching methodologies, subject expertise, and practical skills in advanced manufacturing methods.

Health & Social Care

- 4.23** The Health and Social Care sector across the region benefits from the support of multiple organisations, with the LSIP maintaining ongoing skills engagement. Skills for Care serves as a key stakeholder in LSIP's success, strengthened by strategic collaboration with Kent County Council's Innovation & Partnerships Team for Adult Social Care & Health. The LSIP-led sector skills roundtable facilitated further engagement to ensure evolving workforce needs are effectively addressed.
- 4.24** These strategic partnerships have been instrumental in supporting the LSIF project, led by East Kent Colleges Group (EKCG), to enhance digital skills in social care. This collaboration has also facilitated the launch of assistive technology (AT) facilities across six college campuses, providing cutting-edge tools to support workforce development across diverse settings within the Care sector.¹⁷
- 4.25** The project has established new provision to support both full-time students and the existing workforce in digital upskilling. EKC has successfully delivered a Level 2 Assistive Technology course to twelve learners employed in the social care sector, all of whom have completed the programme. A Level 3 course is scheduled to launch in Summer 2025. The Assistive Technology pathway in Health & Care environments equips professionals with the specialised expertise required to implement assistive technology ethically and effectively.
- 4.26** Across Kent Further Education (KFE) Colleges, 349 full-time students have accessed the newly installed facilities and equipment, primarily from Health and Social Care Programmes, with additional engagement from Built Environment (Electrical) learners. This initiative promotes cross-sector understanding of assistive technology and its broader applications. Recently, the facilities have been adapted for Early Years classes at EKC, incorporating PARO seal and eye gaze technology to enhance learning outcomes.
- 4.27** The project's success is largely attributable to the active participation of key sector stakeholders in its development. Kent NHS Hospitals Trust has played a particularly prominent role, notably through its engagement with North Kent College. Furthermore, Skills for Care and several care providers across the region have made significant contributions to the initiative.

¹⁷ [EKC AT Suite Launch](#)

4.28 The Kent and Medway Commission for Assistive Technology Skills in Social Care¹⁸, established in collaboration with Policy Connect, builds on KFE's efforts to integrate assistive technology across college campuses, aligning with sector priorities outlined in the LSIP. Bringing together specialists from industry, higher and further education, technology, and local government, the commission will evaluate regional project findings to develop recommendations that strengthen the technological competencies of social care professionals beyond the local area.

4.29 To address recruitment and retention challenges and promote careers in social care, the LSIP convened sector-wide partners for the Careers in Social Care event at EKC Canterbury College. Designed to highlight the breadth of career opportunities, the event engaged over 50 Health & Social Care students and young Care Leavers, offering insights into the diverse and rewarding roles. Curriculum and Careers staff participated for CPD and industry collaboration. Professionals from Residential Care Homes, Supported Living, and Home Care contributed alongside pathways into Occupational Therapy, Social Work, and Nursing Associate roles. The event also explored emerging technological advancements within the sector.¹⁹

4.30 SKILLS 25 provided a vital platform for collaboration between industry leaders and education and training providers, fostering dialogue on key sector-wide skills challenges. Seminar discussions explored the transferable skills of care leavers, the benefits of employment opportunities for care-experienced individuals, and innovative workforce models such as flexible working patterns and shorter weeks to enhance work-life balance, recruitment, retention, and business success. LSIP engaged closely with key stakeholders to ensure seminar content was relevant and aligned with sector needs, driving progress in skills development, training, and workforce strategy.

4.31 A key element identified in the 2024 Progress Report was the requirement to monitor the implementation of the Care Workforce Pathway and the delivery of resources showcasing the diverse roles within the sector (LSIP Progress Report 2024 6.11). The LSIP have been working closely with Skills for Care to fully understand the sector requirements with a focus on key developments to strengthen the adult social care sector across the region, including enhancements to the Care Workforce Pathway, funding updates, a new quality assurance initiative, and revised Care Certificate standards.

These initiatives collectively aim to enhance workforce training, career progression, and care quality within the adult social care sector.



¹⁸ [Kent & Medway ATech Skills for Social Care Commission, Policy Connect, 2025](#)

¹⁹ [Careers in Social Care Event](#)

Fresh Food & Food Production

- 4.32** The Fresh Food and Food Production sector in Kent & Medway benefits from the Growing Kent & Medway (GKM) initiative, which fosters innovation and supports regional businesses. A central component of this sector is the Growers & Food Production Group, coordinated by the LSIP sector lead, which convenes fortnightly to tackle industry challenges with a strong emphasis on skills enhancement. Strategic efforts have bolstered collaboration among growers, food producers, and education providers, strengthening industry engagement and workforce development. Clearer communication of sector-specific skills needs to colleges and training institutions has resulted in more tailored courses and development programmes.
- 4.33** Driven by positive industry testimonials, an increasing number of fresh produce organisations are integrating apprentices into their workforce to support sector-wide skills development. This shift aligns with Hadlow College's strategic efforts to facilitate the transfer of expertise into the industry. Apprentices play a critical role in advancing innovation, applying specialised knowledge in emerging technologies such as drone operations, data capture, and analytical interpretation. Apprenticeships are now recognised as an essential mechanism for upskilling, knowledge transfer, and the reinforcement of technical capabilities across the sector.
- 4.34** The launch of the Thanet Earth Centre of Excellence at Hadlow College²⁰ underscores the critical need for skilled professionals in horticulture and related industries. As the UK's first Centre of Excellence in glasshouse growing, it provides students with a hands-on experience in advanced food production techniques and technologies. The initiative fosters collaboration across the fresh produce supply chain, encompassing sectors such as glasshouse construction, electrical engineering, and climate control.
- 4.35** Beyond cultivation, students develop essential skills in sales, marketing, communication, and community engagement, including contributions to food banks. A significant portion of the produce is donated to FareShare, reinforcing the Centre's commitment to social responsibility. Additionally, the Green Horticulture Centre at Hadlow College partners with industry specialists in machinery and design, ensuring that the curriculum remains responsive to evolving workforce demands. These collaborations create

mutually beneficial opportunities for students and employers, strengthening the pipeline of skilled talent in the sector.

- 4.36** The cross-sector nature of SKILLS 25 fostered valuable discussions and collaborations, leading to ongoing focus group work. Sector Skills Academies—proven successful in other industries—were highlighted as a potential model to enhance learning and collaboration. The sector recognises that greater support in developing a robust talent pipeline is required, particularly through enhancing links between secondary education and emerging career opportunities in technology-driven fields. LSIP led discussions have emphasised the need for bespoke sector courses, alongside Bootcamps for upskilling employees and initiatives to strengthen the Local Worker approach.
- 4.37** The Fresh Food & Horticulture group recognised the benefits of Bootcamps for the sector. Now a sector trailblazer, efforts are underway to secure training providers through a tendering process with Kent County Council. The sector has identified extensive training needs to enhance workforce skills across growers, grower-packers, and food manufacturers. With notable overlaps in training requirements, there is strong momentum to launch provision, and the LSIP sector lead is actively supporting Kent County Council in this effort.
- 4.38** A local workforce solutions approach has been adopted by soft fruit producer Hugh Lowe Farms supported by the LSIP sector lead. In response to post-Covid and Brexit challenges, the farm successfully recruited seasonal local labour, engaging university and college students during summer breaks and gap years. Their Generic Farm Worker role provides husbandry experience and facilitates easier transport access for students from the local area. This initiative not only supports short-term staffing needs but also introduces students to careers in food production, with some transitioning into full-time roles. The sector is exploring how similar models could be adopted across other businesses, ensuring solutions align with sector-specific requirements.
- 4.39** The Innovation Kitchen launched at The Yarrow (EKC Broadstairs College)²¹ is a dedicated hub for developing entrepreneurial talent in food innovation.

²⁰ [Thanet Earth Centre of Excellence, Hadlow College June 2024](#)

²¹ [Innovation Kitchen, EKC, May 2025](#)

Designed to support students in creating, refining, and scaling food products, the facility ensures hands-on experience in product development within an industry-aligned environment. The Innovation Kitchen provides comprehensive training in key food production areas developing capabilities that are essential not only for business start-ups and local small enterprises but also for established food production and manufacturing businesses. Established in collaboration with Produced in Kent, the kitchen is strategically positioned to meet the needs of local food producers, fostering industry engagement and workforce readiness.



Education

- 4.40** Tutor shortages in Construction and Manufacturing & Engineering remain a critical challenge. This priority is now being advanced through the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) in collaboration with key partners such as the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB), Industry 4 Council, and KFE. Engagement has also extended to trades outside CITB's scope, including the Electrical Contractors Association (ECA) and the Building Engineering Services Association (BESA), both of which have identified significant shortages in tutors and assessors for Apprenticeship Programmes, leading to a lack of suitable provision.
- 4.41** To address this issue, new initiatives have been introduced. East Kent College (EKC) has launched a Graduate Scheme designed to develop Graduate Lecturer and Graduate Apprenticeship Trainer roles providing recent graduates with teaching and assessing qualifications while facilitating industry experience through partnerships with sector organisations. Participants benefit from full-time employment, integrating industry placements to enhance professional development and ensure strong sector engagement in curriculum delivery.
- 4.42** Since its launch, the scheme has generated strong interest, with over 240 expressions of interest across five graduate pathways and more than 60 individuals having attended information events. To date, one successful appointment has been made for an Engineering Lecturer in Dover with a planned industry placement at the Port of Dover. The scheme is not only addressing immediate shortages but also establishing a sustainable pipeline of qualified technical educators with direct industry experience. By embedding structured career pathways for graduates within technical education, the initiative strengthens workforce readiness and enhances curriculum relevance.
- 4.43** Moreover, employer partnerships established through the scheme have fostered deeper sector engagement, ensuring that graduates receive mentorship, hands-on industry exposure, and access to cutting-edge technological advancements. The model also supports retention by offering clear progression routes, reinforcing the value of dual-professional roles within the education sector. The sustained interest in the scheme indicates a growing recognition of its importance in tackling tutor shortages and improving the quality of technical training provision.

- 4.44** The Industry 4 Council focuses on strengthening employer partnerships to boost the availability of expert tutors and trainers in engineering and manufacturing. Initiatives include expanding Train the Trainer programmes and promoting employer-led student projects aligned with industry standards.
- 4.45** Sector skills roundtables²², facilitated by LSIP, addressed tutor shortages and the need for employer-led masterclasses to bridge gaps in provision. While employers demonstrate strong willingness to engage, concerns persist regarding the cost of staff time commitment. Recent national initiatives, including announcements on industrial strategy and sector-specific funding — particularly in Construction — emphasise the importance of supporting employers in implementing dual-professional models and strengthening the role of education providers in workforce development.

Cross Cutting Themes

- 4.46** The cross-cutting themes underpin the priority activities outlined in this report, demonstrating their integration across multiple sectors through LSIP initiatives.

Digitalisation

- 4.47** Digital skills are fundamental to meeting employer demands across Construction, Manufacturing & Engineering, Health & Social Care, and other sectors. The establishment of immersive classrooms has strengthened digital learning, driven curriculum-wide integration and new pedagogical frameworks.
- 4.48** Strategic investments have reinforced the digitalisation agenda, fostering employer collaboration to ensure curriculum alignment with evolving workforce needs.
- 4.49** These facilities, integrating Augmented and Virtual Reality, equip students with hands-on experience in advanced digital technologies across multiple industries. Additionally, continuous professional development opportunities enable staff to upskill in emerging educational technologies, enhancing instructional practices. It has also permitted the cross-college delivery of content to support the growing need for tutors across Construction and Engineering. The Decarbonisation Hub is benefitting from the creation of

virtual, augmented, and mixed reality technologies, including the development of a VR retrofit house environment endorsed by the sector.

Decarbonisation

- 4.50** The decarbonisation and net zero agendas are predominantly reflected in construction sector investments and project activities. However, increasing recognition of sustainability practices in other priority sectors, particularly health and social care, prompted broader discussions at SKILLS 25.
- 4.51** Shifts in the political landscape surrounding net zero targets have contributed to uncertainty among some employers regarding their roles and responsibilities within the wider agenda. This uncertainty has affected the success of new provision and related initiatives, including those supported by the Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF).
- 4.52** To address the need for greater industry awareness of decarbonisation, LSIP employer forums have facilitated discussions and insights on the UK Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM). This policy underpins domestic decarbonisation efforts, reinforcing competitiveness while advancing the UK's net-zero strategy.²³

SME Engagement in Skills

- 4.53** Enhancing SME engagement in the skills agenda is critical to ensuring a robust and adaptable workforce in Kent & Medway. Previous LSIP reports highlighted the unique challenge SMEs face in driving skills development, given their limited capacity and confidence in navigating the system.
- 4.54** By fostering collaboration through LSIP employer forums, strategic partnerships, and the dissemination of best practice, stakeholders are successfully elevating SME participation. The success of SKILLS 25, LSIP-led sector skills roundtables, and increased employer involvement highlight a shift in engagement with the skills system. Even amidst economic instability and policy shifts, a coordinated regional strategy is making an impact.
- 4.55** With growing momentum, SMEs are gaining greater clarity on workforce training opportunities and the structural frameworks that shape provision. Now, more than ever, sustained commitment and targeted initiatives are needed to maximise this progress and ensure long-term skills investment from the SME sector.

²² [LSIP Sector Skills Roundtables 2025](#)

²³ [KMFG November 24 - CBAM](#)

5. What still needs to be achieved?

- 5.1** Sustaining LSIP engagement and ensuring the continued integration of the skills agenda within employer forums is imperative to securing a lasting impact on Kent & Medway's skills landscape. Maintaining structured and collaborative dialogue between education and training providers, and industry stakeholders will be essential in driving progress and establishing a meaningful and enduring legacy for the region.

Construction

- 5.2** The LSIP will maintain its collaborative approach with partners to maximise the impact of FE projects, working closely with industry to fully harness the benefits of new provisions and facilities. This will include ongoing curriculum monitoring to ensure alignment with LSIP priorities, fostering sustained employer engagement, sector-wide collaboration, and enhancing staff recruitment and retention within the construction industry.
- 5.3** The LSIP will continue to work in close partnership with education providers and industry leaders to embed new construction skills policy effectively within the region. This coordinated approach will deliver tangible benefits for businesses, training providers, and the local workforce, fostering a skilled talent pipeline aligned with industry needs.
- 5.4** As Bootcamps roll out across the region, the LSIP maintains its dedication to supporting employers in maximising workforce development opportunities. At the same time, it continues strengthening collaboration with education and training providers, ensuring they are fully prepared to address the shifting demands of local businesses.
- 5.5** The LSIP has identified a significant demand from construction sector employers for shorter, modular training programmes aimed at expediting workforce upskilling, with a particular emphasis on leadership and management. Through strategic engagement with employer networks, training providers, and training boards, we will ensure these programmes maintain close alignment with industry priorities, delivering measurable benefits for businesses and the sector as a whole.
- 5.6** The LSIP will continue to collaborate closely with industry partners and career-focused stakeholders to ensure the effective implementation of careers initiatives and the development of new materials, providing strong

support for new entrants into the sector. Moreover, there is clear industry demand for a sector-led skills alliance to coordinate careers education and align skills development with sector priorities.

- 5.7** The Lower Thames Crossing and other major regional infrastructure projects are essential to the region's economic development. These initiatives significantly influence workforce dynamics and future skills needs. As such, ongoing engagement in the project's skills and employment strategy, alongside the development of regional Skills Hubs, remains a key priority for the LSIP.
- 5.8** The LSIP will continue its engagement with key trade associations, including the Electrical Contractors Association (ECA), Building Engineering Services Association (BESA), and Federation of Master Builders (FMB), to gain a deeper understanding of the specific skills needs within the wider construction sector. This targeted collaboration ensures comprehensive sector representation and strengthens workforce development efforts within the skills agenda.

Manufacturing & Engineering

- 5.9** KMFG will continue to serve as the primary engagement vehicle for the LSIP, facilitating collaboration between industry and education providers to advance sector-specific skills development. It will maintain its role as a key platform for ongoing skills discussions. Additionally, KMFG site visits will remain instrumental in strengthening sector performance by showcasing best practices and fostering broader stakeholder collaboration.
- 5.10** As a founding member of the Industry 4 Council, the LSIP remains committed to advancing sector-wide skills development by facilitating strategic discussions and initiatives through platforms such as KMFG and other employer forums. Furthermore, the LSIP will continue to actively monitor the council's activities to ensure alignment with evolving sector priorities and identified workforce demands.
- 5.11** The LSIP will collaborate with the Industry 4 Council to advance dual professional and industry associate models, strengthening the attraction, recruitment, and retention of teaching staff in engineering programmes and apprenticeships. This initiative underscores the critical importance of

knowledge and skills transfer within the sector, leveraging expertise from the existing workforce to enhance educational delivery and industry alignment.

- 5.12** LSIP remains committed to supporting the sector by promoting awareness of the opportunities it provides, and the essential skills required for success. Through strategic collaboration with career-focused stakeholders and continued sector engagement, we will ensure that these opportunities are effectively communicated and leveraged to strengthen workforce development.
- 5.13** LSIP will maintain its strategic engagement with Higher Education institutions to highlight the extensive opportunities available for collaboration in manufacturing and engineering education. This ongoing partnership will play a crucial role in fostering sector-wide innovation and supporting future growth initiatives that enhance industry capabilities and long-term sustainability.

Health & Social Care

- 5.14** The LSIP remains steadfast in its commitment to fostering collaborative partnerships with industry stakeholders to optimise the impact of the Assistive Technology (AT) suites across the FE colleges. This approach ensures that industry-led provision and facilities deliver measurable benefits to the sector. Furthermore, the LSIP continues to monitor the recommendations outlined by the Kent and Medway Commission for Assistive Technology Skills in Social Care, facilitating the advancement of digital skills within the workforce and supporting sector-wide progress.
- 5.15** Careers education remains a central priority for the LSIP, with a strong emphasis on collaboration with industry partners and key careers stakeholders to facilitate the delivery of targeted initiatives. These efforts are designed to support a diverse range of groups, including care-experienced individuals and care leavers, ensuring equitable access to career development opportunities. Furthermore, LSIP is actively engaging with the sector to develop additional careers resources that are inclusive and accessible to a wide audience, with a particular focus on enhancing digital engagement.
- 5.16** The LSIP will engage with key stakeholders and employers to assess and optimise the potential of Apprenticeship provision in addressing sector-wide workforce development needs. This collaborative effort will be driven by

employer demand, ensuring tailored training opportunities that support both new entrants and the upskilling of existing employees.

- 5.17** The LSIP will monitor the uptake of new Bootcamp programmes within this sector to ensure their measurable impact on workforce development. By fostering close collaboration with industry stakeholders, the LSIP will facilitate engagement with training providers, ensuring that provision is tailored to employer needs, remains fit for purpose, and effectively supports sector-wide skills development.

Fresh Food & Food Production

- 5.18** The LSIP will work in collaboration with the sector lead to ensure that potential bootcamps are strategically designed to meet the specific needs identified within the sector. Additionally, the LSIP will engage training providers to establish strong partnerships with the sector, ensuring alignment with industry requirements and fostering a responsive, high-impact skills development framework.
- 5.19** The LSIP will monitor the effective implementation of new facilities at EKC, fostering engagement with industry stakeholders to underscore the extensive opportunities these developments present. This initiative will act as a strategic driver for small businesses, enabling them to maximise the available support and resources to accelerate growth and innovation.
- 5.20** The LSIP will support the sector lead in nurturing substantive cross-sector collaboration, facilitating stakeholder engagement, and promoting the dissemination of best practice. Through this approach, the sector will contribute to the development of sector-led skills academies, aimed at advancing workforce training initiatives and driving industry-led skills innovation.
- 5.21** The LSIP will facilitate sector engagement with the Industry 4 Council to uphold the strategic priority of engineering skills. Through this collaboration, we will ensure that industry-led innovation and workforce development remain central to advancing the sector's technical capabilities.

Education

- 5.22** The LSIP will continue to collaborate with industry, education providers, and professional training bodies across the region to mitigate tutor shortages. This will be achieved through the strategic promotion of the graduate scheme, the implementation of dual professional and industry associate

models, and the delivery of industry-led masterclasses. Additionally, the LSIP will disseminate emerging skills policies—particularly within the construction sector—at appropriate opportunities to facilitate the development of targeted initiatives that align with this priority.

Cross Cutting Themes

- 5.23** The LSIP team will maintain ongoing oversight of cross-cutting themes across priority sectors, with a particular focus on the integration of green and digital skills within existing provision. This monitoring will ensure that workforce development aligns with evolving industry demands and sustainability requirements.
- 5.24** To support this, the LSIP team will actively facilitate the implementation of these themes within priority actions, fostering collaboration between employers and education providers. By strengthening partnerships, the initiative will ensure that skills development remains responsive to sectoral needs and future workforce requirements.
- 5.25** Additionally, targeted support will be provided to employers in relation to work readiness and the development of soft skills among new entrants, equipping them to succeed within priority sectors. This will be achieved through strategic partnerships with careers organisations, ensuring a coordinated approach to workforce preparedness.
- 5.26** Recognising the complexities SMEs encounter when engaging with the education and skills landscape, the LSIP team remains committed to providing clear, accessible, and actionable guidance. This support will be delivered through SKILLS 26, as well as key forums such as KCFG, KMFG, sector skills round tables, and other employer networking platforms.
- 5.27** By streamlining information and clarifying processes, SMEs will be better equipped to understand the implications for workforce planning and skills development, while also identifying opportunities for strategic collaboration and meaningful engagement.

Watching Briefs

Creative Industries

- 5.28** The LSIP has successfully convened key stakeholders and industry leaders to advance a sector-driven approach to strategic workforce development. A pivotal milestone in this effort was SKILLS 25, which facilitated collective dialogue on the sector's evolving skills challenges and workforce requirements. In collaboration with industry bodies, the LSIP has co-developed a targeted skills survey to support regional workforce planning and enhance sector-wide alignment. Moving forward, the LSIP will maintain active engagement with industry partners to define next steps, address emerging skills gaps, and ensure sustained support for workforce development.

Transport & Logistics

- 5.29** Sectoral needs continue to evolve, influenced by significant infrastructure developments. The approval of the Lower Thames Crossing project will have far-reaching implications for this sector, while ongoing challenges in the development of a freight-focused airport at Manston introduce further complexities. These developments are expected to substantially reshape the region's skills demands. We remain committed to continuously monitoring these shifts, ensuring responsive and informed sectoral development strategies.

Additional sectors to note

Visitor and experience economy

- 5.30** The LSIP, published in 2023, highlighted the region's dynamic visitor and experience economy, with Tourism and Hospitality comprising a significant component. The sector is exhibiting early indicators of growth, prompting the LSIP team to proactively strengthen strategic relationships with key stakeholders in the newly formed Kent Hospitality Focus Group (KHFG). Efforts are underway to enhance engagement, fostering a more comprehensive assessment of evolving skills requirements and existing provision gaps. Where appropriate, targeted interventions will be considered to advance employer-led skills solutions, ensuring alignment with workforce development priorities and sector-specific demands.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1** The progress achieved through the Kent & Medway Local Skills Improvement Plan demonstrates the region's commitment to embedding a robust and responsive skills system aligned with employer needs and strategic economic priorities. Over the past 3 years, stakeholders across industry, education, and local government have worked collaboratively to drive sector-specific improvements, strengthen workforce development initiatives, and foster greater employer engagement.
- 6.2** While significant strides have been made—particularly in the priority sectors—there remain critical challenges that require continued focus. Addressing tutor shortages, expanding modular training provision, refining employer-led skills strategies, and enhancing SME participation will be

essential in maintaining momentum. Furthermore, the integration of digitalisation and decarbonisation within skills development must remain a priority to ensure long-term sustainability and innovation across all sectors.

- 6.3** As Kent & Medway advances its skills agenda, maintaining the structured and collaborative approach that has underpinned LSIP's success will be vital. The region must continue fostering engagement between industry and education providers, ensuring alignment with evolving workforce demands. Through sustained investment, employer-led training solutions, and strategic coordination, Kent & Medway will build on its achievements to create a resilient, future-ready skills system that supports long-term economic growth and workforce sustainability.



Annex A – Priorities and Actions (Roadmap)

Priority	Action	Partners involved	Timescales	Method of implementation and outcomes expected	Monitoring arrangements	Progress Status
Construction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perception of the industry and engagement Modernising the training offer Upskilling & reskilling 	KFE – MKC lead Employers KCFG Major Projects Group K&M Careers Hub National Career Service Prison Service * LSIP team	Throughout the LSIP 2023/25	To improve collaboration between the construction sector and careers, with a focus on attracting a more diverse and skilled workforce. This includes providing better information to career advisors and educators, making construction careers more appealing to underrepresented groups, and developing new courses that align with industry needs.	Monitoring of materials progress to production and increase in offer related to employer demand.	In progress and on track
Manufacturing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Image and perceptions Modernising the training offer Understanding the skills landscape 	LSIP LSIF KFE – NKC lead KMFG Careers Hub Employers ITP	Throughout the LSIP 2023/25	To improve collaboration between the manufacturing & engineering sector and careers, with a focus on promoting automation and digital skills. This includes providing better information to career advisors and educators, making manufacturing & engineering careers more appealing to underrepresented groups, and developing new courses that align with industry needs, including up-skilling the existing workforce.	Monitoring of materials progress to production and increase in offer related to employer demand. Sector surveys on skills offer.	In progress and on track
Food & Food Production	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recruitment and retention challenge Regional sector-specific offer (Level 2 & 3) Increased engineering skills and provision 	KFE – NKC lead DWP LSIP Sector lead Growers & Food Producer Group KCC (for Bootcamps) Industry 4 Council LSIP team	1. 2024/25 2. & 3. Throughout the LSIP 2023/25	To support the: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> co-development & Delivery of sector-focused pre-employment programmes. curriculum improvement & co-development at levels 2 & 3. development of Engineering curriculum for Food Production. development of leadership and management curriculum for the sector. 	Monitoring of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> pre-employment pilots & rollouts. increase in offer at levels 2 & 3. 	In progress and on track

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sector-specific leadership and management skills 				Employer survey in 2025	
Health & Social Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recruitment and retention in social care Digital skills in social care 	<p>Skills for Care Careers Hub Medway Health and Social Care Skills Board KFE – EKC lead Employers KCC Medway Council LSIP</p>	Throughout the LSIP 2023/25	<p>Support with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increasing visibility of existing tools to promote careers. Providing enhanced career resources for educators and careers advisors. Expanding social care offerings and uptake. Integrating digital skills into existing courses. Offering new programmes for existing staff to support digitalisation. 	<p>Monitoring of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Materials progress to production Social care offer and take-up Social care workforce trends and positive changes Change in offer related to digital skills. 	In progress and on track
Education	Tutor Shortages in construction and manufacturing & engineering	<p>Originally through the SELEP - Going forward: Construction led by CITB – Major projects group. Manufacturing led by Manufacturing Industry 4 Council</p>	Throughout the LSIP 2023/25	<p>Support with ways to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> alleviate skill shortage areas through increased use of technology, division of roles and staff deployment. improve recruitment and retention by looking at the role of employers/employees and graduates, local collaborative recruitment models and mechanisms to aid retention (such as ITT, and technical CPD) <p>Pilots to take forward the options identified in the workshops and increase in tutor retention and recruitment.</p>	<p>Monitoring impact of pilots.</p> <p>Progression of some pilots to rollouts.</p>	In progress and on track

Cross Cutting Themes

Priority	Action	Partners involved	Timescales	Method of implementation and outcomes expected	Monitoring arrangements	Progress Status
Decarbonisation	To ensure this is addressed in all relevant areas, as outlined in the key sectors.	LSIF KFE	Throughout the LSIP 2023/25	Expand net-zero skills training by leveraging the successful programs developed in SDF1 and integrate the best practices from those programmes into relevant courses across all sectors to maximize the impact of green skills initiatives.	Monitoring of provision related to green skills	In progress and on track
Digitalisation	To ensure this is addressed in all relevant areas, as outlined in the key sectors.	SDF2 LSIF KFE ITP	Throughout the LSIP 2023/25	Support with implementing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Digital skills training on existing courses, with extra focus on specialised skills across the sectors. New courses to address basic digital skills needs for the existing workforce. 	Monitoring of provision related to digital skills within existing courses. Employer survey on digital skills progress	In progress and on track
Skills Engagement with SME's	To work towards facilitating SME understanding and engagement with the education landscape and associated opportunities.	KFE LSIP KICC Careers Hub	Throughout the LSIP 2023/25	Create an SME-focused guide(s) outlining regional skills provision, leveraging existing resources to highlight: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opportunities for engagement: Career development pathways The regional skills offer. 	Employer surveys on education landscape understanding to monitor progress	In progress and on track





SKILLS 25

COLLABORATE, INNOVATE, SUCCEED



BUILDING CAREERS AND FORGING FUTURES



MANUFACTURING & ENGINEERING

