

Kent & Medway

Local Skills Improvement Plan

2026 – 2029

Shaping the future workforce for Kent & Medway



Annex A

Annex A - Further information on Skills Needs

This annex provides further details on the skills needs identified in the LSIP, drawing out relevant evidence not included within the main body of the report.

A1. Major construction and infrastructure projects shaping workforce demand

The construction and built environment sector in Kent and Medway is operating at scale and pace, underpinned by sustained housing delivery, regeneration, commercial/logistics development and nationally significant infrastructure. It accounts for roughly 7–8% of jobs (around 58,000 roles in 2024) and close to one in five businesses, with strong employment growth over the last five years (around +20% since 2019). However, delivery capacity is increasingly constrained by workforce ageing, reduced inflows of experienced labour and persistent shortages across core trades and site leadership/commercial roles. These shortages translate into delayed starts, extended programmes, constrained capacity to take on work and upward pressure on labour costs. The major projects pipeline is therefore both the primary driver of demand and the biggest opportunity: if employment and skills commitments are structured well, these programmes can function as “skills factories” that scale apprenticeships, placements, bootcamps and progression routes, particularly for SMEs, while modernising provision for green and digital construction.

A1.1. Major projects pipeline – where demand concentrates

The construction and built environment sector across Kent and Medway is experiencing sustained and accelerating demand, driven by an extensive pipeline of housing delivery, large-scale regeneration and nationally significant infrastructure. This pipeline is not characterised by isolated developments but by a series of overlapping, labour-intensive programmes that collectively shape both the scale and nature of workforce requirements. As a result, the central challenge facing the sector is not the availability of work, but the growing tension between demand and workforce capacity, particularly in core trades, civil engineering, site leadership and technical roles.

- **Ebbsfleet Garden City:** At the heart of this demand is the continued expansion of Ebbsfleet Garden City, which represents a long-term, multi-phase housing and infrastructure programme extending well into the 2030s. Its scale and duration mean that demand is sustained rather than cyclical, requiring consistent flows of skilled labour across bricklaying, carpentry, plumbing, electrical installation and finishing trades, alongside early-phase civil engineering capability. The longevity of the programme creates a unique opportunity to embed structured training and employment pathways over time, enabling apprenticeships, industry placements and progression routes to be integrated into delivery rather than developed in response to short-term pressures.
- **Lower Thames Crossing:** Alongside this, the Lower Thames Crossing will act as the most significant driver of infrastructure-related skills demand in the medium term. As a major civil engineering scheme spanning tunnelling, highways construction and complex logistics operations, it will require substantial volumes of labour at peak across earthworks, concrete, steel fixing, plant operation and engineering functions. In addition to its scale, the breadth of occupational demand is particularly notable, extending beyond traditional construction roles into logistics, systems installation and project leadership. The project is expected to support large-scale workforce engagement through structured employment and skills programmes, including training hubs and pre-employment pathways, creating a critical opportunity to widen participation while addressing acute shortages in civils-related occupations.

- **Otterpool Park:** Further east, Otterpool Park introduces a step-change in demand within a geography that has historically had a smaller resident construction workforce. The early stages of the development will be heavily weighted towards civils, utilities and site preparation, followed by sustained housebuilding activity requiring a full complement of trades. This shift places greater emphasis on locally anchored training and recruitment strategies, as the ability to retain and grow the local workforce will determine whether the development strengthens local labour capacity or increases reliance on imported labour.
- **Wider housing pipeline and overlap effects:** Additional pressure is expected where large housing schemes are layered across the county. If progressed, developments such as **Highsted Park** would further intensify demand for core trades and enabling infrastructure capability, particularly where timelines align with existing delivery programmes. More broadly, housing growth across areas such as **Ashford, Maidstone and Canterbury** contributes to a dispersed but cumulative demand profile, reinforcing the risk of subcontractor churn and competition between sites for the same limited workforce.
- **Medway regeneration and brownfield complexity:** Regeneration activity in Medway provides a complementary but distinct pattern of demand. Schemes such as **Rochester Riverside** demonstrate how brownfield redevelopment can sustain employment across a wide trade base while incorporating structured employment and skills commitments. As further regeneration progresses across dockside and town centre locations, there is an increasing requirement for skills linked to remediation, constrained urban logistics, sequencing and complex project management. These environments demand not only technical capability but strong coordination and safety leadership, particularly where sites are operationally constrained.
- **Commercial/logistics development and specialist packages:** Elsewhere, commercial and mixed-use developments are contributing to a more technically varied skills profile. Projects involving higher-rise construction, advanced façades and complex mechanical and electrical systems are increasing demand for specialist installation skills and multidisciplinary coordination. Logistics and industrial development, particularly along key transport corridors, is adding further pressure through requirements for steel erection, cladding, utilities installation and associated specialist trades. In many cases, these packages are delivered by mobile teams operating across regions, which can limit opportunities for local workforce integration unless skills and procurement strategies are aligned to support local participation.

A1.2. Infrastructure programmes and specialist civils demand

Beyond these flagship schemes, a broader programme of infrastructure investment continues to shape demand. Highways improvements, rail upgrades, port and border infrastructure, and coastal and flood defence work all contribute to sustained demand for civil engineering capability, specialist plant operation and experienced site supervision. These programmes are particularly sensitive to labour availability, as they rely on skillsets that are already in short supply and are often required simultaneously across multiple sites.

A1.3. Implications: labour market competition and peak pressure

The cumulative effect of this pipeline is the emergence of a highly competitive labour market in which multiple programmes are drawing from the same pool of workers. This dynamic is most pronounced in the late 2020s, where overlapping peaks in housing and infrastructure delivery are expected to intensify pressure on key occupations. While major developments increasingly include employment and skills commitments designed to mitigate these pressures, the effectiveness of these interventions depends on consistent implementation,

alignment with training provision and active engagement with small and medium-sized enterprises, which make up the majority of the sector.

A1.4. Converting demand into workforce development

Taken together, the project pipeline represents both a risk and an opportunity. Without intervention, it is likely to exacerbate existing shortages, constrain delivery and increase dependency on external labour markets. However, with coordinated planning, these projects can act as engines for workforce development, creating structured pathways into employment, strengthening local training systems and supporting progression into higher-level and supervisory roles. The ability to convert project demand into a sustained, locally embedded skills pipeline will be critical in determining whether the sector can meet its delivery ambitions while building long-term workforce resilience.

Development	Commitments	Delivery to Date ¹
Ebbsfleet Garden City	15,000 homes 50 new parks and open space Ambition to create 30,000 jobs Creation of offices, city living, culture cluster.	Over 5,000 homes complete
Lower Thames Crossing	14-mile new route with 2.6mile twin-bore tunnel. Tunnelling to start 2028. 5,240 jobs. 437 apprentices 291 graduates or industry placements 470 work placements 5000 hours of STEM engagement 2000 hours of support to educators 855 people trained/upskilled, of which 45% (387) should be local 2,500 homes (Decision due)	In 2025/26 - 33 apprentices, 7% of target 11 graduate placements, 4% of target 180 work placements, 28% of target 867 hours, 17% of target 172 hours, 8% of target 86 people, 39 being local, 10% of target
Otterpool Park	8,500 homes consented (up to 10,000 possible). 9,000 jobs	
Chilmington Green, Ashford	5,750 homes. 1,000 jobs	
South East Faversham (Swale/Duchy of Cornwall).	2,500 homes. Aiming for 1 job per household built. Connectivity upgrades inc. A2	
Hoo Peninsula	10,600 homes (possibly 12,000)	Planning imminent for 470 homes.
Mountfield Park	4,000 homes	

Note: This table is indicative (non-exhaustive).

¹ As can be derived from publicly available data

Whilst major developments fall into three categories – large housing development, infrastructure projects and strategic sites/economic hubs, albeit these sometimes overlap, the table above is intended to give a sense of scale, not to be an exhaustive account.

Whilst it is challenging to find detailed information on all the commitments made by major developments to employment and skills, the table above provides an illustration of some of these. The illustration overleaf demonstrates the wider South East context for strategic housing and infrastructure project demonstrated the scale of the demand for skills.

A1.5. Snapshot of major developments

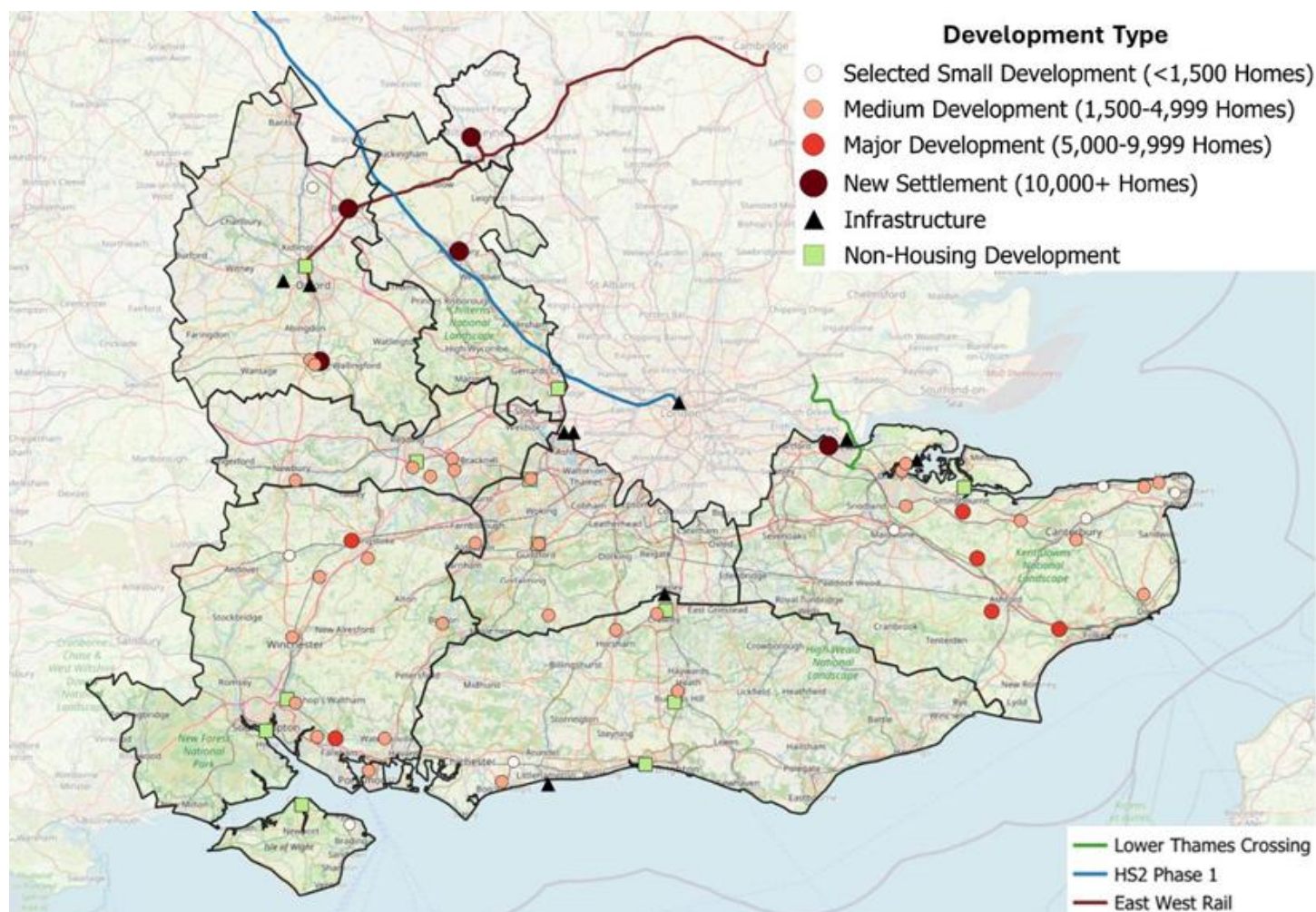


Figure A1.5: Strategic housing and infrastructure projects – South East context. Source: SQW (March 2026), *Regional market and skills analysis for the construction sector in the South East of England: Main report*, prepared for the South East Construction Technical Excellence College (SECTEC).

A1.6. Conclusion

This pipeline evidence reinforces that the construction workforce challenge in Kent and Medway is not episodic but structurally embedded within long-term, overlapping programmes. The scale, duration and concurrency of major developments intensify demand across core trades, civil engineering, site leadership and technical roles, creating sustained pressure on recruitment, progression and workforce capacity. These dynamics mean that skills development cannot be treated as a standalone intervention; it must be integrated

directly into project delivery through coordinated employment and skills commitments that operate at scale and over time.

The concentration of demand across major schemes also highlights the importance of converting project pipelines into consistent entry and progression pathways. This includes embedding apprenticeships, placements and pre-employment routes within delivery models, strengthening progression into supervisory and management roles, and ensuring that small and medium-sized enterprises are able to participate fully in training and workforce development activity. Without this alignment, labour market competition risks undermining delivery and limiting the ability to build a resilient, locally rooted workforce.

In parallel, the technical complexity of the pipeline, particularly in civil engineering, urban regeneration and commercial development, reinforces the need for strengthened capability in coordination, sequencing, and multidisciplinary project delivery. This is increasingly combined with requirements for low-carbon construction, retrofit and modern methods, positioning green and digital capability as core components of workforce readiness rather than specialist add-ons.

Taken together, this evidence provides a strong underpinning for the LSIP's cross-sector focus on expanding workforce supply, strengthening progression pathways, increasing employer engagement, and building delivery capacity within the further education system. It demonstrates that the effective translation of project demand into workforce development will be critical to sustaining delivery, improving productivity and ensuring that the benefits of major investment are captured locally over the long term.

A2. Ports, Transport and Logistics – Sector Skills Analysis

Ports, transport and logistics underpins Kent and Medway's role as a national trade and border-resilience system. It links internationally significant gateway assets with inland distribution, warehousing and fulfilment, passenger connectivity and enabling services that keep high-volume flows safe, compliant and reliable.² The sector's footprint is large and spatially concentrated. Kent alone records 39,000 jobs in transportation and storage (6.0% of all jobs) and 2,895 enterprises (4.4% of all enterprises), with 47.4% of jobs in warehousing and support activities; GVA is estimated at £2,582m (5.5% of total Kent GVA) and Dover's dependence is acute with 26.1% of district GVA generated by transport and storage.

Kent and Medway's ports, transport and logistics economy combines globally significant gateway infrastructure with an inland logistics and distribution system that must perform at high throughput, with tight tolerances for safety, security and regulatory compliance. The sector spans land transport, warehousing and support activities, postal and courier operations, and port and maritime activity; its geography creates pronounced concentrations along the Thames corridor and in coastal gateway locations, reinforcing a distinctive skills profile that is simultaneously high-volume and compliance critical.

The Port of Dover illustrates the operating reality: it reports handling £144bn of trade in goods and 33% of UK trade in goods with the EU. In practice, that translates into relentless demand for role-ready competence in process discipline, accurate documentation, safe working, and rapid issue resolution, because small errors amplify quickly into delay, cost and reputational risk within time-critical supply chains.

The sector's economic structure shapes how skills solutions must be designed. Kent Analytics shows a substantial enterprise base and a strong micro and SME presence, meaning training must be flexible, shift-compatible and low-friction to secure participation. This is not a secondary consideration: it determines

whether employer-led provision can reach scale and whether productivity improvements can be embedded in day-to-day operations across fragmented supply chains.

Ports, transport and logistics functions as a horizontal enabler, it does not sit neatly in one occupational silo, and its performance condition directly affects delivery capacity across multiple LSIP priority sectors. The Kent & Medway Local Growth Plan evidence base is explicit that the greatest opportunity lies in recognising and strengthening interdependencies, treating ports as anchors for cross-sector growth, with logistics demand driving technology adoption, energy investment and supply-chain development across the wider economy.

Agri-food is a clear example of mutual dependence. The evidence base identifies Kent and Medway's significant agri-food and supply chain presence and highlights proximity to Dover as a strength for access to EU markets and import-export flows. This raises the premium on time-critical, high-quality logistics and cold-chain competence, including accurate documentation and standards compliance, because the sector's value and reputation depend on predictable throughput and condition control from border to final distribution.

Digital and technologies is the acceleration layer. The Local Growth Plan frames digital solutions as a shared enabler of efficiency, innovation and productivity growth across ports, energy and agri-food, with modernising operations shifting toward real-time logistics management, tracking technologies and integrated digital systems. For the logistics workforce, this creates a baseline digital expectation across operational roles and a growing requirement for higher-value skills in data-enabled supervision, systems optimisation and technology deployment in live environments.

Energy and the net zero transition is the second enabling backbone. The evidence base positions energy capacity and affordability as a cross-sector constraint and explicitly links logistics transformation to electrified freight and energy resilience. Logistics UK's national evidence reinforces that decarbonisation is a defining operational challenge for road logistics, which in turn drives demand for new infrastructure, new operating practices and a workforce confident with low-carbon technologies and compliance expectations as requirements evolve.

Construction and infrastructure is tightly coupled to the sector through major project delivery and network reliability. The evidence base describes capacity and reliability constraints on strategic corridors and highlights underutilised rail and port assets as potential levers for more efficient, sustainable movement of goods. This reinforces shared occupational demand (drivers, plant and logistics operatives, engineering technicians, supervisors and project roles) and the need for coherent progression pathways that serve both construction delivery and logistics operations rather than duplicating provision.

A2.1. Current skills needs

Current skills pressure is concentrated in **high-volume operational roles** and the immediate competence that protects throughput, safety and compliance. Kent Analytics shows that warehousing and support activities account for 47.4% of transportation and storage jobs in Kent, indicating that the sector's employment base is anchored in distribution-centre operations, stock handling, scheduling and support functions as much as it is in front-line driving activity. This creates sustained demand for **warehouse operatives, forklift and materials handling competence, and reliable shift-based performance** in environments where errors generate rapid operational and financial consequences.

However, the critical requirement is not simply recruitment volume; it is **job-ready capability in compliance-dependent workflows**. The Local Growth Plan evidence base frames the sector as a critical interface for national and international trade and explicitly highlights the premium placed on safe, accurate and time-critical performance in high-volume gateway environments. This places **foundational skills, functional**

English and maths applied to documentation, sequencing, weights and measures, incident reporting and regulatory processes, alongside work-readiness behaviours (reliability, communication, teamwork) at the centre of operational resilience.

Digital competence is already a baseline expectation for operational staff, not a specialist add-on. The evidence base describes a shift toward integrated digital systems, real-time logistics management and tracking technologies, with strengths in supply chain service providers and tracking technologies and a growing requirement for digital skills even in roles traditionally viewed as “hands-on”. As a result, the workforce must be confident using **warehouse management systems, handheld scanning and e-documentation, and following standard digital workflows** with high accuracy to maintain throughput and auditability.

A decisive skills pinch point sits in **first-line supervision and operational leadership**. The evidence base notes that jobs are mainly in lower-skilled occupations but that needs are changing with growing digital demands; it also recognises the importance of customs expertise and specialist technical and engineering capability supporting gateway and transport infrastructure. In practice, this creates immediate demand for **supervisors and team leads** who can coach **safe behaviours, enforce standards, manage compliance-critical processes, and translate digital operating models** into day-to-day practice, an essential lever for productivity and retention in high-pressure environments.

Specialist maritime capability remains material within the gateway system. Kent and Medway has strengths in ports along the coast, and the evidence base identifies a strong base of marine and maritime activity. The local pipeline is strengthened by specialist provision such as the National Maritime Training Centre at North Kent College, which supports safety-critical maritime training and accredited routes aligned to sector need.

A2.2. Medium skills needs

The medium-term shift is from “more volume” to “more value”: **higher productivity, technology-enabled logistics and greener operating models**. The Local Growth Plan evidence base is explicit that ports and logistics have seen growth in employment and businesses but a weakening productivity signal, particularly in maritime activity. This makes the workforce transition a strategic imperative: without progression into higher-value roles (digital operations, optimisation, engineering maintenance, compliance and technical leadership), growth risks remaining concentrated in lower productivity activities.

Technology-enabled logistics will reshape occupational profiles. The evidence base describes a shift toward integrated digital systems, smart and green logistics and supply-chain optimisation, and highlights strengths in tracking technologies. This will increase demand for roles that can operate, maintain and improve digitised systems, supervisors who manage performance using data, technicians who support automation and equipment uptime, and operational managers who can implement standardised processes across multi-site, multi-employer supply chains. The human capital implication is clear: the sector needs more people who can translate technology into measurable operational performance, not only install it.

Decarbonisation will also become “business as usual” rather than a parallel agenda. Logistics UK’s national evidence positions decarbonising road logistics as a profound challenge, reinforcing the need for coordinated infrastructure and practical workforce readiness. For Kent and Medway, the evidence base directly links sector transformation to electrification and energy capacity constraints, which implies rising demand for low-carbon operational competence (energy-efficient driving and handling practices, carbon literacy, safe working with emerging technologies) and for technical roles that support fleet transition, charging infrastructure operations and equipment retrofit.

The ability to work effectively across different parts of the transport system, alongside better use of underutilised infrastructure, will be a key factor in future resilience. The evidence base highlights unused capacity within transport and port assets (including international rail stations and ports) and identifies opportunities to increase the use of rail freight, subject to targeted improvements. This strengthens the case for skills that **support shifting activity between transport modes**, coordinating systems that need to work together, strong planning and scheduling capability, safety and compliance across different environments, and operational leadership able to manage the complex interfaces between road, rail and port operations.

The evidence shows growth in employment and businesses but warning signs on productivity, particularly linked to maritime activity. Therefore, LSIP impact is maximised by **embedding sector needs through shared occupations** and cross-cutting capability within priority sector routes (construction, engineering/manufacturing, digital, agri-food and energy), while maintaining structured monitoring and clear escalation triggers.

Immediate pressure sits in **high-volume operational and compliance-critical roles**, but the strategic risk is the missing middle in supervision and the rapid shift to digitised, greener operating models (smart logistics, transparency and electrification). The local skills system must deliver job-ready competence now and build progression into higher-value technical, digital and supervisory roles to lift performance and productivity.

The evidence points to three practical LSIP levers:

1. **Strengthen work-readiness:** contextualised English and maths, and baseline digital capability within priority sector routes that already reach scale, ensuring competence translates into documentation accuracy, safe behaviours and process reliability in real operational settings.
2. **Build the “missing middle”:** creating clear progression routes into supervision and operational leadership, including digitally enabled supervision aligns with the evidence that sector needs are changing toward digital operating models, and that higher-value growth depends on improving performance and productivity, not simply expanding employment volumes.
3. **Align net zero capability with operational reality:** integrate low-carbon competence and electrification awareness into mainstream logistics, engineering and construction provision so that decarbonisation is embedded in day-to-day practice, consistent with both the evidence base (electrification as a key future need) and Logistics UK’s national decarbonisation challenge framing.
4. **Delivery models must reflect SME capacity constraints:** Intelligence demonstrates the scale and geography of the enterprise base and shows how micro and small firms dominate across many localities. This requires modular training design, strong brokerage and signposting, and employer-facing coordination that reduces friction and makes participation feasible for shift-based operations.

A2.3. Conclusion

In summary, the LSIP treats Ports, Transport & Logistics as a critical sector to watch, one that can shape demand in multiple areas, and address its workforce needs through the prism of existing priorities and cross-cutting themes. This ensures that Kent and Medway’s skills system remains responsive to the gateway economy’s evolving needs (e.g. post-Brexit customs expertise, sustainable logistics practices, advanced supply chain management) while leveraging synergies: investments in digital, technical, green, and management skills will simultaneously bolster the logistics workforce and benefit the priority sectors that rely on it. The LSIP will continue to monitor Ports, Transport & Logistics closely, ready to adapt or elevate its status if critical skills gaps emerge beyond what cross-sector measures can address. For now, the sector’s requirements are

being actively managed within the LSIP's broader programme, reflecting its importance as a regional strength and a linchpin connecting multiple priority skill agendas.

A3. Health, Life Sciences and Med-Tech

Health, life sciences and medical technology form an increasingly interdependent ecosystem in Kent and Medway, bringing together discovery and applied R&D, regulated manufacture and supply, diagnostics and laboratory services, and adoption through the health system. The dataset defines life sciences in a way that captures this full "bench-to-bedside" pipeline by including pharmaceuticals, medical technology (devices and diagnostics) and medical biotechnology, while also extending the scope to research and experimental development, medical and pharmaceutical production, wholesale and retail, and human health activity. This framing is particularly useful for the LSIP because the strongest local growth potential sits at the intersection of life sciences and med-tech innovation, diagnostics modernisation, and the skills and adoption capacity within the health system that enables new technologies to scale.

The sector's enterprise base is sizeable and continues to expand, providing a platform for growth in med-tech, diagnostics, life science services and specialist supply chains. The data evidence reports 1,975 life science enterprises in Kent in 2025 (3.0% of all enterprises) and 310 in Medway (3.4%), totalling 2,285 across Kent and Medway (3.1%), with five-year growth in Kent's enterprise count of 18.3%. Although the largest share of enterprises sit within human health, the same bulletin shows persistent activity across research and experimental development, production and distribution, which together represent the industry segment most closely associated with innovation, commercial scale-up and higher-value jobs.

Geographically, Kent and Medway's life science and med-tech capability is strengthened by innovation campuses that attract and host R&D, specialist facilities and scaling activity. Discovery Park at Sandwich is a key anchor, with UKSPA describing it as an international centre for science and innovation with world-class laboratory space and a long R&D heritage, supporting a large community of tenant organisations and specialist accommodation including laboratories and manufacturing facilities. Discovery Park has also been recognised nationally through Life Sciences Opportunity Zone status, signalling its relevance to national ambitions around growth, advanced manufacturing and digital innovation in healthcare. This local cluster effect is visible in the intelligence firmography: Dover has a markedly higher share of life science enterprises in research and experimental development (20.8%), which the data explicitly links largely to Discovery Park's presence.

Kent Science Park provides a second, complementary node, positioned as a campus supporting biotech, biopharma and related ventures through lab infrastructure and a wider innovation community. Its role matters for med-tech and life sciences because scaling early-stage science firms requires more than laboratory space; it requires access to commercial science expertise (including regulatory, safety and finance), investor readiness and structured venture support to translate scientific assets into investable, adoptable products and services.

Employment data reinforces the need to treat this as a connected ecosystem rather than a purely "health" narrative, while still acknowledging that the health economy is the largest employer and demand driver. In 2024, Kent is estimated to have around 61,000 life science employee jobs (9.4% of all employee jobs) and Medway 12,000 (12.2%), totalling 73,000 across Kent and Medway (9.8%). Human health activity accounts for the majority of these jobs, but the data also shows distinct local concentrations aligned to the med-tech and life sciences industry base, including higher shares of research and experimental development employment in Dover and higher shares of medical and pharmaceutical production employment in Swale. These variations are significant because they point to localised demand for industrial and innovation skillsets, laboratory

practice, instrumentation, regulated documentation, quality systems and validation, alongside the workforce needed to deliver and adopt technology through diagnostics and clinical pathways.

Employer and provider intelligence reinforces this wider view of the sector and highlights the importance of improving visibility of technical and non-clinical roles. Participants described a workforce spanning healthcare science and laboratory roles, med-tech, quality and regulatory functions, and enabling roles such as digital and data, and emphasised that careers awareness needs to demystify these pathways for learners, parents and educators through clearer, jargon-free labour market information. This is particularly material for life sciences and med-tech firms because growth depends on widening the talent pool into less visible technical roles, where job titles and acronyms can deter otherwise suitable candidates and where practical exposure often changes career intentions.

A3.1. Current skills needs

The current skills picture for Kent and Medway is shaped by the fact that the largest share of “life sciences” employment is still concentrated in human health activity, with hospitals and wider human health services accounting for the majority of employee jobs captured in the intelligence definition. This creates immediate demand pressures for roles that **sustain day-to-day service delivery**, but the employer evidence is clear that the system’s skills constraints are **not confined to frontline clinical pathways**. Employers repeatedly highlighted the need to **broaden and clarify routes into healthcare science, laboratories, diagnostics and med-tech support functions, including quality and regulatory roles and enabling capability in digital and data**. In practical terms, the most acute “now” needs include reliable pipelines into laboratory and diagnostic roles alongside clearer progression into specialist practice, particularly where employers reported difficulty moving staff from Band 5 into Band 6 specialist roles in **pathology and related services**.

Across the life sciences and med-tech segment specifically, employers’ immediate expectations centre on **workplace-ready technical competence in regulated environments**. Skills England identifies priority needs in **specialist science and research, regulatory and quality assurance**, and **innovation and emerging technologies**, with a rising premium on interdisciplinary capability that **combines scientific skills with advanced digital skills**. Local employer evidence mirrors this, emphasising that **digital confidence** is now a baseline requirement, including **effective use of productivity tools and AI assistants**, and that many applicants under-utilise tools they already have. Employers also described **work-readiness gaps** that directly affect performance in both **clinical-adjacent and industrial settings**, particularly **face-to-face communication, telephone confidence, teamwork behaviours, punctuality and reliability, resilience and interview readiness**, which they view as essential alongside **technical knowledge for safe, effective team-based working**. These needs intersect with **placement capacity and structured exposure**, where employers reported that short, well-scoped **work experience can convert interest into sustained progression and employment**, but that capacity and administration remain constraints, especially for smaller organisations, without practical support such as templates, safeguarding checklists and placement packs.

A3.2. Medium skills needs

In the medium term, the skills requirement intensifies around the **convergence of med-tech, diagnostics and digital**. Skills England highlights growing demand for **innovation and emerging technology skills**, including advanced digital and AI, and notes the increasing need for interdisciplinary roles that blend **scientific knowledge with digital capability**, which is central to automated manufacturing, bioprocessing, personalised medicine and digital health. In parallel, national NHS workforce reform anticipates widespread adoption of **digital and technological innovation to improve efficiency and release clinical time**, while shifting more care and capability into community settings and strengthening multidisciplinary working. For

Kent and Medway, where the labour market footprint is large and the innovation estate is strengthening, this implies **sustained demand for a blended skill mix**: laboratory and diagnostic practitioners confident with data and digital systems; med-tech and life science technicians with strong quality systems and documentation discipline; and “translator” roles that can operate across academic research, product development, clinical validation and adoption pathways.

Education and training routes will need to respond to this shift by strengthening both volume and “fit”. Employers described strong practice in **structured placements** and employer-aligned selection and induction models, but highlighted supervision capacity as the limiting factor, particularly if placement models are not standardised and easy to run at scale. **Bootcamps** were viewed as useful where they are tightly aligned to employer demand and lead to guaranteed interviews, though employers emphasised the importance of better screening and clearer articulation of the offer. **English and maths** remains a progression constraint if delivery is not contextualised; employers highlighted that contextualised approaches linked to workplace tasks improve engagement and functional competence, which supports widening entry into lab, diagnostics and med-tech pathways while maintaining safety and quality. Taken together, these signals suggest that the medium-term **priority is not simply “more people”, but more people with the right hybrid capability** for a regulated, technology-enabled sector, combining scientific method, quality practice, digital confidence and the professional behaviours required to work safely in multidisciplinary environments.

Diagnostics and laboratory services sit at the interface of health and industry and therefore represent a particularly important watching brief for the LSIP. Employer evidence highlights persistent shortages in **healthcare science and technical roles** and described challenges progressing staff into specialist positions in pathology, including movement from Band 5 into Band 6 specialist roles. These pinch points are closely tied to the wider **diagnostics modernisation agenda** and to the expanding role of technologies and data in diagnostics pathways, which increases the premium on specialist technical competence, quality standards and workforce development pathways that can keep pace with change.

A3.3 Education and Innovation

Education and innovation capacity is central to how Kent and Medway can support life sciences and med-tech growth, and it provides one of the clearest locally deliverable levers even while the wider health workforce system remains nationally governed. Alongside the wider university infrastructure that supports STEM and applied research, Discovery Park demonstrates how education provision is being designed directly into the innovation estate. Discovery Park has an established education dimension, including school engagement activity and an Industry Liaison Life Sciences Laboratory managed by Canterbury Christ Church University on site, supporting practical links between education and the science park environment. This on-site education and engagement function is now being strengthened further through the development of Carbon 6 Academy of Science, a specialist STEM sixth form due to open at Discovery Park in September 2026. Carbon 6 Academy of Science is presented as a science and maths sixth form embedded within an active science and innovation campus, giving learners access to professional laboratories and real-world scientific environments, with mentoring, guest lectures and input from on-site companies operating across biotechnology, pharmaceuticals and advanced manufacturing. Its planned A-level offer in Biology, Chemistry, Physics and Maths, with additional options such as Further Maths and the Extended Project Qualification, is explicitly oriented toward progression into university study and degree apprenticeships, with applications signposted through local pathways.

Alongside this A-level route, the local technical education offer provides work-integrated progression into life sciences and med-tech through T Levels in Health and Science (including Science), and wider T Level

routes delivered across Kent providers, combining two-year technical study with a substantial industry placement and clear progression into skilled employment, higher/degree apprenticeships or higher study.

For the LSIP, this is strategically significant because it strengthens the front end of the regional talent pipeline into med-tech and life sciences by normalising technical careers early, embedding learners in a live innovation setting, and supporting progression into higher-level routes that align with the sector's regulated and laboratory-based realities. This matters because apprenticeships remain central to the pipeline, but evidence indicates current volumes are not yet sufficient relative to replacement and growth needs; strengthening "pre-apprenticeship" technical routes and employer-connected placements helps convert interest into sustained progression.

Kent Science Park contributes to education and talent development through a different but equally relevant mechanism: venture building and innovation support that develops the commercial and translational capability of science entrepreneurs and early-stage firms. Its positioning emphasises accelerator support and access to expert networks spanning regulatory, safety, finance and related disciplines, which are central to building med-tech and life science ventures that can secure investment, meet regulatory expectations and scale. In local skills terms, this reinforces that "education" for the life sciences and med-tech segment is not solely about qualification volumes; it also includes innovation capability-building, commercial science skills and effective employer-education interfaces that turn scientific learning into viable, regulated products and services.

A3.4. Conclusion

Despite strong local need and visible innovation assets, the LSIP should treat this as a sector to watch because the sector's workforce and operating model is being shaped by national policy and is in transition. The NHS Long Term Workforce Plan sets out a nationally led reform agenda focused on expanding supply, improving retention and working differently through multidisciplinary models and digital and technological innovation, meaning the major levers governing workforce structure, funding flows and pipeline volumes sit largely outside local control. In that context, the most credible regional contribution is to strengthen the local conditions that enable life sciences and med-tech growth and adoption, improving visibility of technical and non-clinical careers, expanding high-quality work experience and placement capacity through consistent brokerage and low-friction support for SMEs, and embedding work-readiness and digital confidence as consistent outcomes across relevant routes, while maintaining structured engagement with employers to monitor emerging needs in diagnostics, laboratories and med-tech.

A4. Clean Energy and Net Zero: a strategic skills priority for Kent and Medway

Kent and Medway are entering a decisive decade in which national clean energy ambition and local net zero commitments converge, creating a sustained requirement to expand and modernise the local workforce. National policy direction, set out in the Clean Energy Jobs Plan (2025), signals rapid growth in demand across renewable power, building retrofit, clean heat, electricity networks, hydrogen, CCUS and smart systems, and frames the scale of workforce expansion required to deliver this transition.

At the same time, the Kent & Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy commits the area to net zero by 2050, with significant reductions required before 2030. That pathway depends on scaling capability in retrofit, local energy generation, low-carbon transport, smart and resilient local energy systems, digital connectivity and environmental resilience, all of which translate directly into workforce and training requirements.

Evidence gathered through LSIP development shows that net zero capability is no longer a specialist add-on. It is becoming standard workplace practice, with low-carbon awareness and sustainable operating behaviours increasingly required within mainstream occupational routes, particularly where delivery models, compliance expectations and technology adoption are changing at pace. The LSIP will therefore treat clean energy and net zero workforce development as a core strategic priority: supporting employers to access the skilled labour they need to deliver investment and infrastructure, while ensuring local people, especially young people and those facing labour market barriers, can access secure, future-proof opportunities.

A4.1. National direction and what it means locally

The Clean Energy Jobs Plan identifies urgent workforce requirements in priority occupations including electricians, heating installers, welders, engineering technicians, project managers and construction trades, and signals major investment streams to drive this growth. It also sets out enabling measures that shape local delivery opportunities, including investment in clean power infrastructure aligned to Clean Power 2030, the establishment of Clean Energy Technical Excellence Colleges (TECs) and engineering skills investment, and targeted programmes such as the Heat Training Grant and Warm Homes Skills Programme to accelerate clean heat and retrofit capacity.

For Kent and Medway, the implication is direct: the local skills system must be able to grow output in delivery-critical trades and technical roles while embedding low-carbon competence as a baseline expectation, so that workforce availability does not constrain delivery timelines, quality, safety or compliance. LSIP evidence also reinforces that a small number of enabling capabilities, including work readiness, digital confidence and net zero competence, shape whether investment in training converts into consistent workplace performance at scale.

A4.2. Local strategy and the workforce requirements it creates

Kent and Medway's Energy and Low Emissions Strategy sets out delivery priorities that are inherently workforce-dependent. Large-scale building retrofit across public sector, housing and commercial estates requires expanded capacity in building fabric competence and installation skills. Renewable energy generation, particularly rooftop solar and emerging technologies, increases demand for electrical installation and systems competence. Transport decarbonisation drives additional requirements for EV infrastructure and associated installation and maintenance capability. Smart and resilient local energy systems, including responses to grid constraints and digital connectivity needs, require a workforce with both technical competence and increasing digital systems understanding.

These priorities demand a skilled, flexible and locally available workforce spanning technical trades, engineering and technician roles, and leadership and project delivery capability that can mobilise programmes, assure standards and manage complex delivery pipelines at pace.

A4.3. Priority occupations for clean growth in Kent and Medway

To support delivery of both national and local ambitions, the LSIP identifies a set of clean energy priority roles for Kent and Medway mapped to local decarbonisation needs:

- **Technical and installation trades** include plumbers and heat pump installers, electricians and electrical fitters, and core construction trades such as bricklayers, roofers, plasterers, carpenters and joiners. They also include glaziers, window fabricators and insulation installers, along with delivery-support roles such as scaffolders, riggers and construction operatives.

- **Engineering and technical professions** include mechanical, electrical, civil and production engineers; engineering technicians; CAD/drawing/architectural technicians; routine inspectors and testers; and welding and metalworking specialists.
- **Project and leadership roles** include construction project managers, production managers, quantity surveyors and energy and sustainability project leads, reflecting the need for programme management, commercial control and quality assurance as delivery scales.

These roles are required across heat pump installation, whole-home retrofit, solar deployment, local energy systems, district heating, transport infrastructure and manufacturing supply chains.

A4.4. Local demand drivers: why workforce pressure will be sustained

Kent and Medway's pipeline of decarbonisation activity indicates sustained, multi-year workforce demand rather than short-lived peaks. This includes retrofit and energy efficiency programmes across public sector estates, increasing housing delivery requiring low-carbon construction and smart-ready infrastructure, expansion of EV charging networks and wider transport decarbonisation programmes, continued growth in rooftop solar adoption, and local energy system innovation in response to grid constraints.

The LSIP evidence base also indicates that delivery depends not only on occupational volumes, but on whether low-carbon competence is embedded into mainstream routes and maintained as technologies and standards evolve, so that capability keeps pace with changing methods, compliance expectations and operating models.

A4.5. LSIP ambitions: a coordinated, employer-driven skills response

The LSIP will deliver a coordinated, employer-driven, place-based response that builds a strong clean energy pipeline, aligns skills delivery to real occupational demand, strengthens progression into higher-value roles, and embeds net zero competence as a standard feature of training routes rather than a parallel offer.

This approach will be implemented in a way that reinforces job quality and progression and widens access to opportunity, recognising the importance of inclusive participation in sectors that have historically under-represented groups within technical roles. It also reflects the wider evidence-led requirement that skills delivery must remain grounded in the realities of the workplace: employers need job-ready entrants with strong behaviours and applied competence, and the skills system needs the capacity and industry currency to scale delivery in technical areas.

A4.6. Delivering clean energy and net zero through the LSIP.

Evidence collected through LSIP development shows that net zero capability is increasingly a baseline requirement across the workforce, shaping compliance expectations, operating models and customer standards. For that reason, the LSIP does not treat clean energy and net zero as a separate strand requiring additional actions. Instead, this agenda is delivered by weaving low-carbon competence and sustainable operating behaviours into the existing priority-sector actions and through the LSIP's cross-cutting Net Zero / Decarbonisation theme, ensuring it is embedded into mainstream occupational routes and applied in real job roles.

In practical terms, programmes and investment opportunities associated with retrofit, clean heat, local generation and wider decarbonisation are treated as implementation levers that help partners deliver what is already agreed, strengthening entry pipelines, work readiness, technical competence, progression and system responsiveness, while ensuring net zero competence becomes routine workplace practice.

A4.5. How this will be implemented

- **Mainstream net zero competence through existing sector actions:** Across the priority sectors, the agreed actions already incorporate net zero expectations where they are most material, embedding green fundamentals, low-carbon mainstreaming and retrofit capability within sector delivery priorities, alongside digital competence and work readiness. This is most explicit in Construction and the Built Environment, where agreed actions reference early green fundamentals in entry routes, low-carbon mainstreaming in trade and building services routes, and strengthened capability for low-carbon and retrofit delivery with digital integration treated as core.
- **Use the cross-cutting Net Zero theme as the system-wide lock:** The LSIP's Net Zero / Decarbonisation cross-cutting theme provides the formal system mechanism that ensures consistency: it requires education and training provision to embed existing green fundamentals and low-carbon operating behaviours into mainstream curriculum, assessment and work-based learning across priority occupational routes, so competence is applied in real job roles as standard day-to-day practice rather than relying on separate specialist training. Progress is evidenced through provider confirmation of where content is embedded, employer feedback on workforce readiness and compliance expectations, and brief applied examples captured through established employer forums and provider networks.
- **Align national and local programmes to the agreed actions.** Where national initiatives and funding streams support delivery, such as support linked to clean heat and retrofit, these are used to accelerate the existing action programme rather than create new priorities. For example, activity linked to retrofit/building fabric capability and clean heat installation routes strengthens what is already agreed within Construction's delivery priorities and reinforces the cross-cutting expectation that net zero competence is embedded into mainstream occupational routes.

To make this integration explicit within the Clean Energy narrative, the LSIP will emphasise the following implementation priorities, each of which sits within the agreed action programme and cross-cutting delivery framework:

- **Retrofit and low-carbon building services as part of Construction delivery priorities.** Agreed actions already position low-carbon competence and retrofit delivery as integral to construction capacity, including entry routes that embed early green fundamentals, mainstream low-carbon competence across trade and building services routes, and strengthened capability for low-carbon/retrofit delivery with digital integration treated as core.
- **Low-carbon competence embedded into engineering pathways as standard practice.** Within Manufacturing and Engineering, agreed actions embed green competence alongside Industry 4.0 capability, reinforced through measures that sustain educator capacity and curriculum currency aligned to modern production, automation and low-carbon practice. Implementation of the clean energy agenda therefore reinforces these agreed priorities, rather than introducing additional requirements.
- **Sustainability and resource efficiency embedded into leadership and operating practice.** Agreed actions embed sustainability and resource efficiency within progression into higher-level specialist and leadership routes in Fresh Food and embed green operating behaviours as business-as-usual within Tourism and the Visitor Economy. Implementation activity therefore focuses on practical, role-based application through the existing delivery framework, rather than creating new action lines.

- **Consistent monitoring through existing LSIP arrangements.** The agreed action programme already sets out that progress will be kept under review through established employer forums, channels and provider networks, supported by proportionate evidence and qualitative examples. The clean energy and net zero agenda will be monitored in the same way, through confirmation that low-carbon content is embedded in priority routes, employer feedback on readiness and compliance expectations, and brief applied examples showing what is changing in day-to-day practice, ensuring net zero delivery is visible without creating parallel governance or additional reporting burdens.

In summary, the LSIP does not introduce additional, stand-alone actions for clean energy and net zero. This agenda is delivered through the existing priority-sector actions and the existing Net Zero / Decarbonisation cross-cutting theme, with national and local programmes used as implementation levers to accelerate delivery and strengthen workforce readiness for low-carbon practice as standard.

A4.6. Expected outcomes by 2029

By 2029, the LSIP will have strengthened Kent and Medway's capacity to deliver net zero priorities through a larger and more capable workforce across clean energy priority occupations. It will improve alignment between employer needs and skills delivery, strengthen participation in routes relevant to retrofit, clean heat, solar and engineering, support progression into supervisory and technical leadership roles, and reinforce job quality expectations as the low-carbon transition scales. Overall, this will enhance the region's ability to deliver its net zero pathway while supporting productivity, resilience and inclusive access to future-proof employment.

A4.7. Conclusion

Ultimately, the LSIP's success in this space will be determined by whether low-carbon competence becomes routine across the roles and pathways employers already rely on, strengthening workforce readiness, accelerating adoption of higher-performance practice, and reducing delivery risk as standards and expectations evolve. By treating clean energy and net zero as a practical, embedded requirement within the existing priority sector actions, rather than a parallel programme, the LSIP maintains clear line-of-sight from evidence to implementation, supports partner-led delivery through established networks, and creates a durable platform for inclusive growth and long-term economic resilience across Kent and Medway.

A5. Workforce Skill Levels

Workforce skills levels in Kent and Medway are below the England and regional averages, with 32.7% of working age people in Kent and Medway with a level 4 or above qualification, compared to 37.1% for England, and 38.8% for the south east region. More women have a level 4 qualification at 35.2% (England 39.4%) compared to males at 30.1% (England 34.7%).

Highest qualification – working age people

Highest Qualification	Kent and Medway	England
None	11.8%	12.4%
Level 1	11.4%	9.9%
Level 2	17.1%	14.8%
Level 3	20.5%	19.5%

Level 4	32.7%	37.1%
Other not classified	6.5%	6.3%

Source: Census 2021

The overall rate for the working age population is slightly distorted by inclusion of the age range 16 to 24, with many in this age range still studying for qualifications. For the age range 25 to 49 around 40% of people have a level 4 qualification in Kent and Medway, and for the age range 25 to 34 this is significantly below the national average of 47.7%. Part of this shortfall will no doubt be due to higher proportions of younger graduates tending to live and work in larger cities (e.g. London).

Highest qualification by age

Age Range	Kent and Medway	England
25 - 34	39.3%	47.7%
35 - 49	40.9%	44.5%
50 - 64	29.3%	31.9%

Source: Census 2021

Skill levels² vary greatly across the county with less than 30% of working age people having a level 4 qualification in Dover, Gravesham, Medway, Swale and Thanet. In Swale 15.1% have no qualification and in Thanet 14.3%. Skill levels reach their highest in Tunbridge Wells, with an above national average rate of 44.6% working age people having a level 4 qualification and are similarly high in Sevenoaks at 41.2%. Higher skills levels are also found in the three local authorities of Canterbury, Dartford and Tonbridge and Malling where around 36% of working age people have a level 4 qualification.

When we look at qualification levels by sector of employment, there are two things key findings. Firstly, the percentage of people with level 4 qualifications is much higher – this is due to economically inactive people being more likely to have a low qualification level and much more likely to have no qualifications at all. Secondly, **qualification levels for Kent residents are behind the national average** in all sectors except for Agriculture. The gap to national average is most striking in the Information and Communication sector and also very high across Finance and Insurance, Professional services and Public Administration.

Percentage of residents in Kent and Medway in employment with a level 4 qualification

Sector	Residents in work	% with level 4	England
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	6,200	27.0%	25.5%
Mining, quarrying & utilities	12,700	28.9%	37.9%
Manufacturing	44,900	30.2%	33.0%
Construction	92,200	21.9%	24.8%
Retail, Wholesale and Motor Trade	121,400	22.3%	27.3%

² Note that the Census reports sector based on self-declared descriptions of type of business worked for, while previous data presented on sector is based on surveys of businesses based on how they classify themselves. This results in some difference in counts of employee by sector.

Transportation and storage	44,100	21.1%	24.0%
Accommodation and food services	36,900	21.5%	25.3%
Information and communication	31,100	55.1%	65.3%
Financial and insurance	38,300	48.9%	57.6%
Real estate	12,800	38.4%	45.4%
Professional, scientific and technical	48,900	62.4%	70.9%
Administrative and support services	45,800	24.1%	28.2%
Public administration and defence	51,100	42.1%	50.2%
Education	82,200	61.5%	65.0%
Human health and social work	117,800	49.9%	53.7%
Arts, entertainment and other services	35,700	38.6%	43.8%
Total	822,100	37.8%	43.3%

Source: Census 2021

A5.1. Occupations

The occupational breakdown for those in work in Kent and Medway is very similar to the national average with Managerial, Professional and Technical roles and Skilled Trades making up nearly 57% of employment. The south east region overall however has just over 60% of employment in such roles.

Compared to ten years earlier Managerial, Professional and Technical roles account for over 5% more of jobs with all other roles having reduced as a proportion. Administrative and Secretarial roles having reduced the most from 11.5% to 9.2%. This trend was seen at both a national and local level.

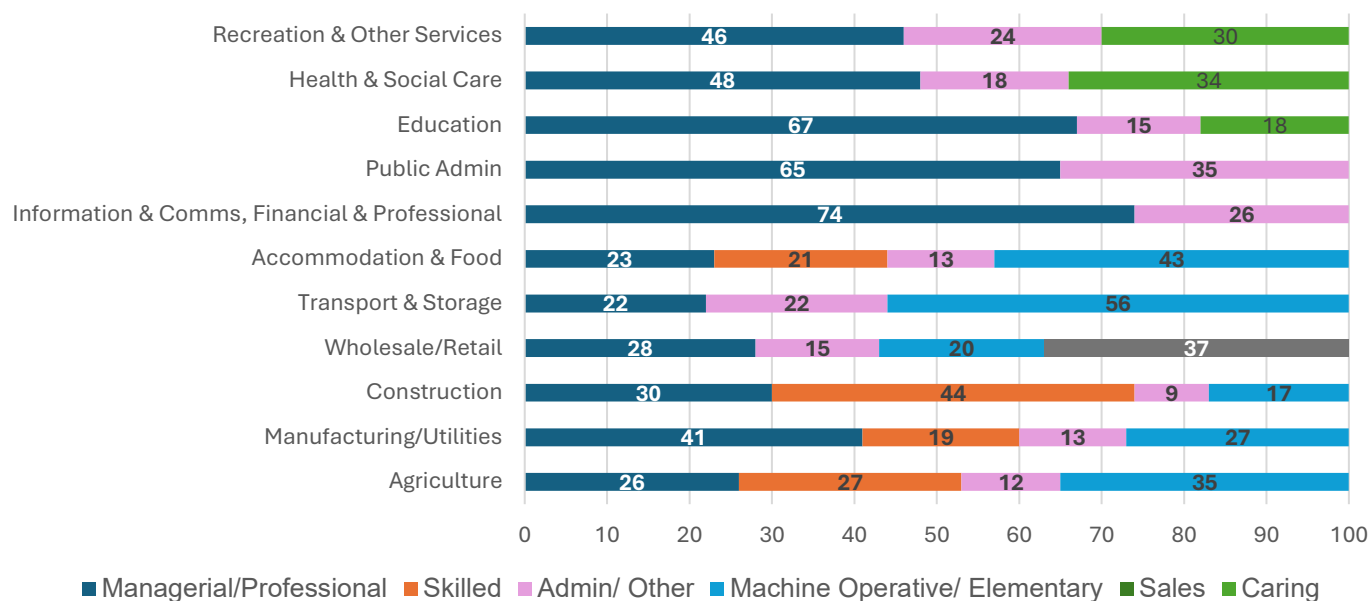
Occupation for working age people in employment

Occupation	Kent and Medway number	Kent and Medway - %	England %
Professional Occupations	152,100	18.5%	20.5%
Associate professional and technical	113,400	13.8%	13.4%
Managers and senior officials	111,300	13.5%	12.7%
Skilled trades	91,000	11.1%	10.1%
Elementary occupations	81,200	9.9%	10.5%
Administrative and secretarial	79,900	9.7%	9.2%
Caring, leisure and other services	78,300	9.5%	9.3%
Sales and customer services	59,800	7.3%	7.5%
Process, plant and machine operatives	55,000	6.7%	6.9%

Source: Census 2021

Residents in Sevenoaks, Tunbridge Wells and Tonbridge and Malling are much more likely to be employed in Managerial, Professional and Technical roles at over 50% of occupations. The reverse is true in Thanet, Swale, Dover, Gravesham and Medway where only 40% of residents are employed in these occupations, with a much higher proportion of people in these local authorities employed as Process/Plant operators and in Elementary roles.

Percentages of occupational groupings by sector

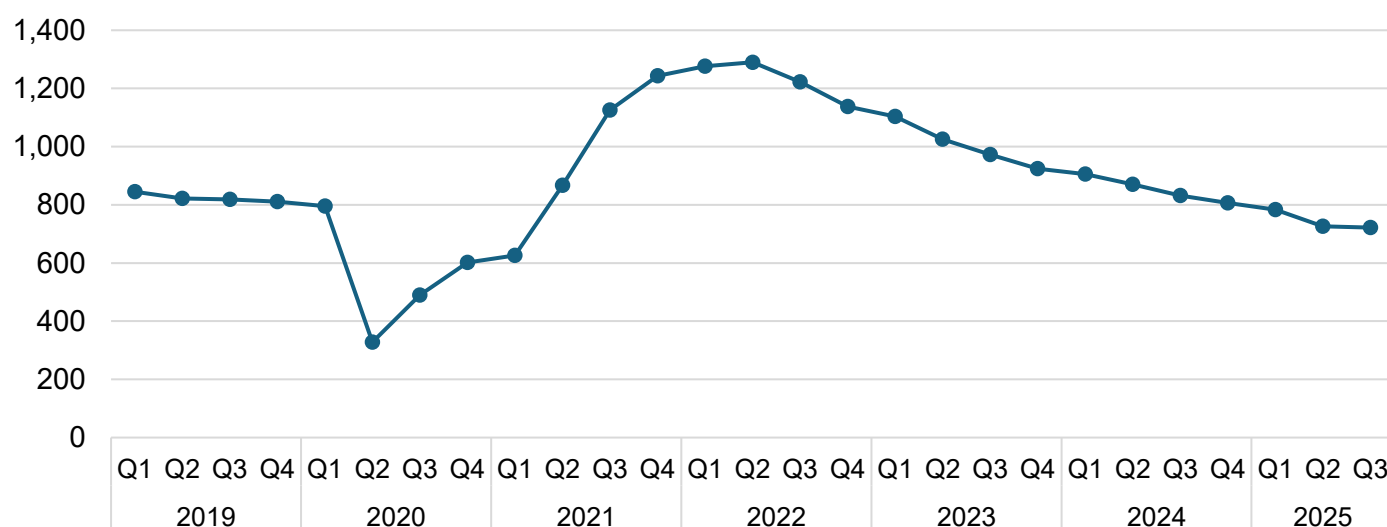


Source: Census 2021

A5.2. Vacancy Rates

At a national level employee vacancy rates initially dipped with the onset of COVID but then rapidly moved to record highs as employers struggled to fill job roles following COVID disruptions. Only within the last year have vacancy rates returned to more normal pre-COVID levels.

Number of job vacancies on a quarterly basis (in 000's) – UK



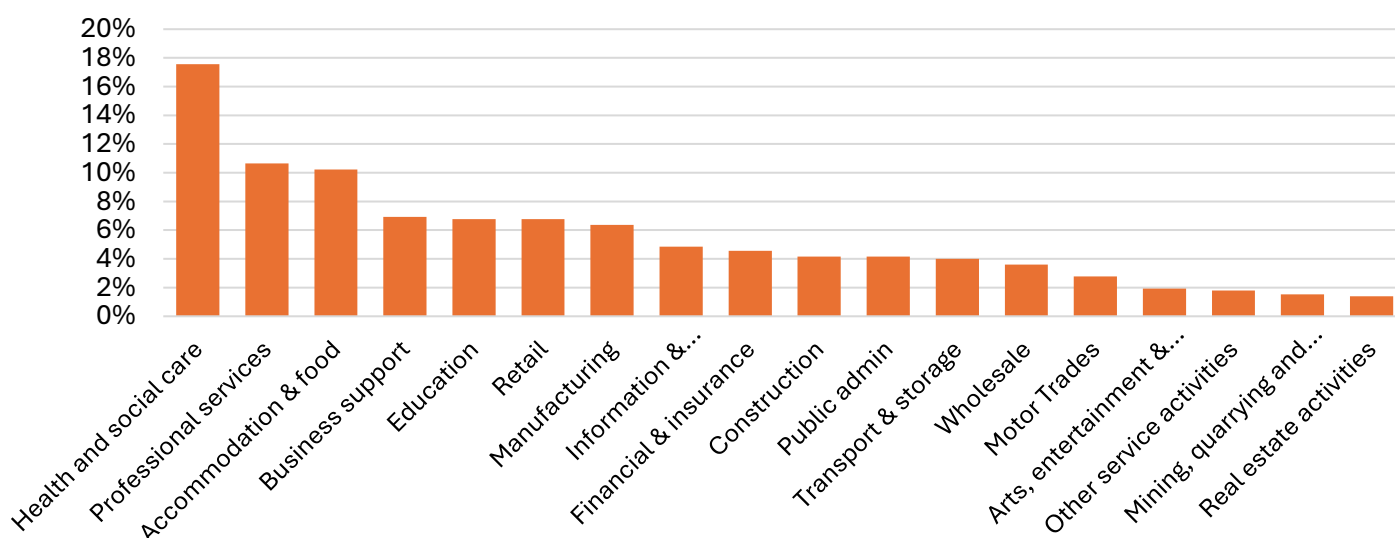
Source: ONS Vacancy Survey. September 2025

Measured as a percentage of employee jobs, the overall UK vacancy rate at the start of 2019 was 2.8%. This reached 4.1% by mid-2022 and now stands for the most recent quarter at just 2.2%, the lowest rate in nearly a decade (excluding the exceptional period of 2020).

Rates can change by industry within the course of a year, but in the latest quarter at a sector level, the motor trade industry had the highest vacancy rate of 3.3% with Food and Accommodation and Financial Services both at 2.9%. Sectors which in the past have seen higher vacancy rates, but which now appear to be among the lowest at below 2% include Transport and Storage, Retail and Arts and Entertainment.

However, it should be borne in mind that some sectors are much larger than others, and the highest number of vacancies (17.6% of the total) are actually in Health and Social Care, with Professional Services and Accommodation and Food each accounting for over 10% of vacancies.

Vacancies by sector/ share of total vacancies – England, July to September 2025



The latest national Employer Skills Survey commissioned by the Department for Education provides useful information by sector on a number of skills related issues. The table below shows Skills Shortage Vacancies by broad sector. A skill shortage vacancy is one that is hard to fill due to applicants not having the right skills. Clearly there is great variation across sectors, with construction companies seeing the largest problem with skill shortage vacancies.

The percentage of vacancies which are skill shortage vacancies

Sector	Skill shortage vacancies
Construction	45.1%
Education	36.2%
Agriculture, Mining & Utilities	34.4%
Manufacturing	33.7%
Arts & Other Services	32.9%
Business Services	30.8%
Wholesale & Retail	25.3%
Accommodation and Food	21.9%
Transport & Storage	21.5%
Health & Social Work	21.4%
Financial Services	17.4%
Information & Communications	17.1%
Public admin.	6.6%
All Sectors	27.0%

Source: Employer Skills Survey, 2024

The table below shows a more detailed sector analysis of skill shortage vacancies. Engineering is at the top of the list with some areas of manufacturing and the motor trade also high.

The percentage of vacancies which are skill shortage vacancies

Detailed Sector	Skill shortage vacancies
Civil engineering	55.6%
Architectural and engineering activities	52.3%
Manufacture of fabricated metal products	46.8%
Specialised construction activities	45.2%
Employment activities	43.8%
Motor vehicle trade	43.4%
Crop and animal production	41.0%
Manufacture of other machinery and equipment	40.5%
Other manufacturing	37.4%
Rental and leasing activities	37.3%
Other personal service activities	36.9%
Education	36.2%
Legal and accounting activities	35.2%
Sports activities and amusement and recreation activities	32.9%
Residential care activities	32.0%
Construction of buildings	31.5%
Other professional, scientific and technical activities	27.0%
Real estate activities	25.6%
Land transport and transport via pipelines	24.4%
Accommodation	22.5%
Food and beverage service activities	21.7%
Retail trade, except of motor vehicles and motorcycles	20.8%

Source: Employer Skills Survey, 2024

Regionally is the lowest level this survey reports at. The Survey shows that there were 119,800 vacancies listed in the South East region, with a density of 2.9%. This is down from 211,700 vacancies and a 5.3% density in 2022.

In 2024, 47,700 (40%) of these were reported as hard to fill and 34,800 (29%) were reported as skill shortage vacancies. These have both seen significant falls from 131,200 hard to fill vacancies (62%) and 77,500 (37%) in 2022. The table below looks at this by employer sites.

Sites with at least one:	Number	%
Vacancy	50,689	18
Hard to fill vacancy	27,741	10
Skill shortage vacancy	21,814	8
Skill gap ³	29,741	11

³ 1+ employee not fully proficient

Results showed that the number of employees being trained in the previous 12 months was up by 11% from 2022, to over 2.7m employees. The table below shows what type of training being undertaken.

Training that sites are providing:	Number	%
Basic induction	104,887	61
Extensive induction	62,306	36
Job specific	141,652	82
Management	60,915	35
New technology	87,696	51
Supervisory	57,071	33
Health and safety & first aid	125,163	73

Source: *Employer Skills Survey, 2024*

This shows that job specific and regulatory training remain the training priorities for companies. Results also showed that over 120,000 sites used eLearning methods for training, 116,410 (42%) undertook off the job training and over 138,000 (50%) undertook on the job training. With 72% of sites using eLearning, representing a 4% increase since 2022, compared to 1-2% for on and off the job training, it indicates that eLearning is now a key route for employee training.

The 2023 the Wider Economic Impact of Emerging Technologies study looked at the main barriers restricting the greater uptake of technology. Whilst overall the financial cost was cited as the biggest barrier, workforce skills gap was second. The table below shows the 5 emerging technologies where the highest percentage of companies cited workforce skills gap as a key barrier:

Emerging Technology	Proportion stating skills gap as a barrier to uptake
Quantum technology	88%
Robotics & autonomous systems	82%
Advanced sensing	81%
Photonics	79%
Synthetic/Engineering biology	78%
Autonomous vehicles	77%
Future telecoms	77%
AR/VR/ER	77%

Source: *Wider economic impacts of emerging technologies, 2023*

A5.3. Job Postings

In the year up to November 2025, there were 11,063 employers competing for talent in Kent and Medway, between them advertising for 121,406 unique job postings⁴. This was from a total job posting count of 257,375, creating a 2:1 ratio, so for every job it is posted twice. The average length of time the jobs are open for is 23 days. 92,218 (76%) of these job postings were full time, 21,462 (18%) part time and 7,726 (0.6%) flexible hours.

The map below shows that Medway and Maidstone had the highest number of postings and Thanet, Gravesham and Folkestone had the lowest.



Source: Lightcast

When looking at all unique job postings, the public sector are the top employers advertising with the NHS and Kent County Council (KCC) being the top, having 10,772 and 1,104 unique job postings in that year, respectively. Other employers with over 500 unique postings included Maid2Clean, Tesco, Barchester, Compass Group, Medway Council, BAE Systems, Leigh Academies Trust and Shepherd Neame Ltd.

However, if we look at those employers seeking higher level skills⁵, the top recruiters are the NHS and BAE Systems, with 379 and 343 unique postings respectively. KCC, Stantec and the University of Kent make up the remaining top five.

In terms of education and skill levels sought, most job adverts do not list any education requirements, these make up 82% of all unique postings. Eight percent require GCSE level, 5% A-levels and 6% degree level.

The chart below shows the top occupations for all postings and those seeking higher level skills. As we can see, the largest volume of jobs is for lower skilled occupations, however these jobs are generally only posted twice and have an average duration of 23 days. Whereas the higher skilled roles have an average intensity of 3 postings and a duration of 26 days, indicating that these roles are harder to fill.

⁴ Please note this excludes non-staffing companies to try and capture a clearer picture of demand.

⁵ Qualifications at level 4 or above

Occupation (SOC)		Total/ Unique Jobs	Posting Intensity	Posting Duration
All Postings	Care workers & home carers	6708	3	27
All Postings	Cleaners & domestics	5505	2	21
All Postings	Sales	4261	2	22
All Postings	Kitchen & catering assistants	3757	2	24
All Postings	Sales & retail assistants	2297	2	21
All Postings	Large goods drivers	2062	2	21
All Postings	Customer service	1962	2	23
All Postings	Nursing professionals (other registered)	1904	3	29
All Postings	Chefs	1853	3	25
Higher Skills Postings	Teaching professionals	379	2	31
Higher Skills Postings	Specialist medical practitioners	343	3	31
Higher Skills Postings	Nursing professionals (other registered)	279	4	21
Higher Skills Postings	Social workers	249	2	26
Higher Skills Postings	Care workers & home carers	230	5	29
Higher Skills Postings	HE teaching professionals	198	3	18
Higher Skills Postings	Chartered accountants	184	2	24
Higher Skills Postings	Project support officers	170	2	23
Higher Skills Postings	Quantity surveyors	163	2	30
Higher Skills Postings	Health care practice managers	154	3	22

Source: Lightcast

Maidstone, Dartford, Canterbury and Ashford have the highest volumes of jobs for all and higher-level skilled jobs.

If we look at the top three industries in Kent and Medway in terms of the number of enterprises – construction, professional, scientific and technical and administrative and support services the ratio of jobs postings to companies can be seen in the table below.

Sector	Total Enterprise s	Total/ Unique Jobs	Employer competin g	Ratio of jobs to all employers	Ratio of jobs to competing employers	Top Hirers
Construction	14240	3765	665	4	6	Laing O'Rourke, Balfour Beatty
Professional, Scientific & Technical	11355	6664	793	2	8	Boots, Stantec, FM Conway
Administrative and Support Services	6560	7686	910	1	8	Maid2Clean, Arun Estate Agent

This shows that in construction, given the size of the sector in Kent and Medway that there are four enterprises to every job recruited and 6 jobs for every competing employer. Please note this is an average and is likely to be a small number of larger companies with multiple adverts alongside smaller companies with one. As we can see in admin and support, there are more jobs being advertised than there are enterprises, indicating high demand in these industries.

A6. SOC and SIC coding table

This table presents a sector-level consolidation of the occupations referenced in Part 1 (Local Skills Needs) mapped to SOC 2020 and UK SIC 2007.

LSIP Occupational name	Definition within the LSIP Report	Relevant SOC Code(s)	LSIP Sector name	Relevant SIC Code(s)	Mapping Limitations/Further Information
Care workers / domiciliary carers / front-line care roles Senior care workers / shift leads Registered Managers (care) Deputy managers / aspiring care leaders (progression routes) Social care nurses / nursing capacity in care settings Induction/mentoring/reflective practice support roles (care workforce support) Delegated healthcare tasks (care staff delivering delegated clinical tasks)	Referenced as part of the adult social care workforce requiring stabilised recruitment/retention, safe practice (communication, records, professional behaviours) and stronger progression/leadership (including the Registered Manager pipeline).	1242, 2231, 6145, 6146	Adult Social Care	86.10 87.10 87.20 87.30 87.90 88.10	This row provides a sector-level consolidation of the occupations referenced in the LSIP and the corresponding SOC/SIC codes. Where multiple SIC codes are listed, the appropriate code should be selected based on the employer's primary activity. SOC coding should be validated against the ONS SOC index where a precise job-title match is required.
Bricklaying Carpentry and joinery Plumbing and heating / building services installation Electrical installation Plastering Drylining / finishing-stage interior trades Roofing Scaffolding Groundworks Plant operations (construction plant) Civils: formwork / steel fixing / concrete operations	Referenced as delivery-critical to housing and infrastructure programmes, where shortages and capability gaps constrain pace and capacity	2121, 2124, 2432, 2433, 3121, 3534, 3541, 5231, 5241, 5312, 5313, 5314, 5315, 5319, 5321, 5330, 8141, 8229, 9120	Construction & Built Environment	33.17 41.10 41.20 42.11 42.99 43.12 43.21 43.22 43.31 43.32 43.39 43.91 43.99	This row provides a sector-level consolidation of the occupations referenced in the LSIP and the corresponding SOC/SIC codes. Where multiple SIC codes are listed, the appropriate code should be selected based on the employer's primary activity. SOC coding should be validated against the ONS SOC index where a precise job-title match is required.

Site engineers Civils supervisors / forepersons Site managers / site leadership Quantity surveyors (QS) Estimating Procurement / buyers (construction supply chain) Planning officers / planning capacity Building services design / engineering design capability Civil/structural engineering/design Plant maintenance / mechanics (construction plant) Retrofit coordination / low-carbon delivery roles Energy efficiency assessment Low-carbon heating installation Renewables integration / building energy systems installation				71.11 71.12 74.90 84.13	
Programmers / software developers IT managers Technical production: lighting technicians Technical production: sound technicians Stage management / production operations Screen industries (film/TV/video production roles) Animation / VFX Immersive/XR production roles Commercial skills: pricing/negotiation/client development (creative SMEs/freelancers) Marketing (creative sector) Project delivery / project management (creative SMEs)	Referenced within a fragmented, freelance- and micro-business dominated sector	2133, 2136, 2424, 3416, 3417, 3421, 3543, 3545	Creative Industries	59.11 59.12 62.01 62.02 73.11 74.90 82.99 90.01 90.02	This row provides a sector-level consolidation of the occupations referenced in the LSIP and the corresponding SOC/SIC codes. Where multiple SIC codes are listed, the appropriate code should be selected based on the employer's primary activity. SOC coding should be validated against the ONS SOC index where a precise job-title match is required.

Seasonal harvest workers / field labour Grading / packing / packhouse operations Team leaders / first-line supervision (operations) Maintenance engineering (automation/controlled environments) Technically confident operators (automation-enabled sites) Food safety / QA technicians Compliance leads / traceability roles Logistics roles (fresh food supply chain) Agronomy / crop science Plant science / applied bioscience roles Viticulture specialist roles Technical management (packhouse/production technical leads)	Referenced across land-based industries with operational capacity pressures (including seasonal labour) and rising demand for technical operations, maintenance, quality/compliance and progression into higher-level specialist skills (including viticulture).	2112, 2113, 3115, 5112, 5223, 8111, 8112, 8211, 9111	Fresh Food, Horticulture, Agriculture, Viticulture	01.13 01.21 01.25 10.39 33.20 49.41 72.11	This row provides a sector-level consolidation of the occupations referenced in the LSIP and the corresponding SOC/SIC codes. Where multiple SIC codes are listed, the appropriate code should be selected based on the employer's primary activity. SOC coding should be validated against the ONS SOC index where a precise job-title match is required.
Welders CNC machinists Maintenance engineers Design technicians / draughting Automation / control engineering Engineering technicians (Level 4–5 "missing middle") Mechatronics / robotics technicians Data literacy / data-enabled production roles (applied) Industry 4.0 roles (digital manufacturing/automation adoption) Engineering tutors / FE delivery workforce (educator capacity)	Referenced as persistent technical recruitment difficulty.	2122, 2123, 2312, 2425, 3113, 3122, 5215, 5221, 5223	Manufacturing & Engineering	25.11 25.62 28.99 33.12 62.01 71.12 72.19 85.59	This row provides a sector-level consolidation of the occupations referenced in the LSIP and the corresponding SOC/SIC codes. Where multiple SIC codes are listed, the appropriate code should be selected based on the employer's primary activity. SOC coding should be validated against the ONS SOC index where a precise job-title match is required.

Chefs (all levels) Kitchen staff / kitchen and catering assistants Housekeepers / accommodation cleaning Front-of-house: waiting staff Front-of-house: bar staff / baristas Hotel operations: front desk management Supervisors / team leaders (hospitality) Events coordination Visitor experience roles / guest services Digital marketing (visitor economy)	Referenced as part of ongoing recruitment and work-readiness pressures affecting service quality and capacity.	1251, 3543, 3546, 5434, 7211, 9233, 9272, 9273, 9274	Tourism & Visitor Economy	55.10 56.10 56.29 56.30 73.11 79.90 82.30	This row provides a sector-level consolidation of the occupations referenced in the LSIP and the corresponding SOC/SIC codes. Where multiple SIC codes are listed, the appropriate code should be selected based on the employer's primary activity. SOC coding should be validated against the ONS SOC index where a precise job-title match is required.
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