Kent & Medway

Local Skills Improvement Plan

2026 – 2029

Shaping the future workforce for Kent & Medway

Construction & the Built Environment

Kent & Medway Local Skills

KENT INVICTA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Funded by UK Government

This report has been produced by the Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce

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Kent & Medway Local Skills

This Local Skills Improvement Plan has been approved by the Secretary of State in accordance with the requirements of section 1 of the Skills and Post-16 Education Act 2022, and the relevant published statutory guidance.

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Foreword

Skills are fundamental to the future prosperity of Kent and Medway. They shape how our businesses grow, innovate and adapt, and determine whether people can access good jobs and build rewarding careers. They are central to the strength, resilience and competitiveness of our regional economy.

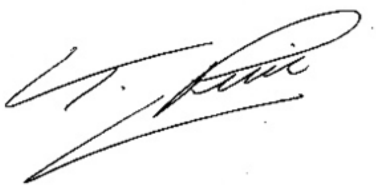
As the designated Employer Representative Body for the Kent and Medway Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP), Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce has been proud to lead this work on behalf of the region. Our role has been to listen to employers, draw together evidence from across the economy, and work with education, training and strategic partners to identify where action is most needed.

This new LSIP, covering 2026–2029, builds directly on that employer voice. It provides a clear and practical framework for aligning skills provision with the needs of the local economy, focusing on the priority sectors and cross-cutting capabilities that matter most to Kent and Medway's future. Across sectors including adult social care, construction, creative industries, fresh food and land-based industries, manufacturing and engineering, and the visitor economy, employers have been clear: skills shortages are affecting capacity now, while digital, green and leadership capabilities will be essential for future growth.

The findings also reinforce the need for a skills system that works for the reality of our business base. Kent and Medway is an economy built largely on small and medium-sized enterprises, so skills solutions must be accessible, flexible and responsive to the pressures employers face day to day. This means strengthening entry routes, improving work readiness, supporting progression, and making it easier for businesses of all sizes to engage with training and talent development.

The LSIP is not a document for one organisation alone. Its value lies in the shared commitment it creates across employers, further and higher education providers, local authorities, careers partners and wider stakeholders. This plan sets the direction; delivery must now follow. Employers, providers and partners across Kent and Medway must continue to work together to turn these priorities into practical solutions that strengthen the workforce, support business growth and widen opportunity for people across our region.

I would like to thank the businesses, providers and partners who have contributed their time, insight and expertise to this process. Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce looks forward to continuing this work with partners across the region. By maintaining a clear focus on employer need, collaboration and delivery, we can build a more agile, inclusive and productive workforce, one that supports business growth, strengthens communities and enables Kent and Medway to realise its full economic potential.



Tudor Price
Chief Executive Officer
Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce

Introduction

The Kent and Medway Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) is the employer-led evidence base and delivery framework that aligns the skills system to labour market demand, strengthening workforce capability, driving productivity, and enabling sustainable economic growth across the region.

The LSIP sets out the priority skills needs that matter most to the Kent and Medway economy over the **2026–2029** period and provides a clear, coordinated mechanism to respond to them. It strengthens alignment between education, training and workforce demand, ensuring that skills investment translates into improved performance, participation and economic resilience.

The LSIP sets a common direction for the local skills system, guiding the decisions of employers, providers and place partners that shape skills outcomes. For **employers**, it identifies the workforce constraints affecting delivery, competitiveness and growth, and establishes where coordinated action will unlock recruitment, progression and productivity. For **further and higher education providers**, it provides an employer-validated framework for curriculum planning, provision review and investment, ensuring that delivery is responsive to labour market demand. For **local authorities, economic partners and system stakeholders**, it creates a shared structure for aligning activity, targeting resources and maintaining clear pathways into employment and progression.

Operating within a context of national reform and increasing expectations for employer-led delivery, the LSIP acts as the bridge between **national skills policy and local economic strategy**, translating strategic ambition into actionable, place-based priorities. It establishes a clear route from evidence to delivery, enabling partners to act collectively and maintain alignment as labour market needs evolve.

The document is structured in three integrated parts. The **Strategic and Economic Context** defines the conditions shaping demand. **Part 1: Local Skills Needs** presents the evidence-led assessment of priority sector requirements and cross-cutting capabilities. **Part 2: Agreed Actions** converts these into a coordinated programme of delivery, with defined outcomes and proportionate approaches to evidencing progress, supported through detailed annexes.

Executive Summary

This LSIP sets out how Kent and Medway will align skills supply with employer demand across **2026–2029**, establishing a clear, evidence-led framework for coordinated, partner-delivered action. It defines the economic context, identifies priority skills needs, and translates these into targeted actions that strengthen workforce capability and support growth. The LSIP convenes and aligns the system, while employers, providers and partners lead delivery.

Kent and Medway faces structural workforce challenges, including reduced labour market participation, geographic variation in access to opportunity, and a highly SME-dominated economy. These factors require a more responsive and accessible skills system, one that strengthens entry into work, supports progression and retention, and reflects the practical realities of employer engagement.

Across the six priority sectors; **Adult Social Care; Construction and the Built Environment; Creative Industries; Fresh Food and Land-based Industries; Manufacturing and Engineering; and Tourism and the Visitor Economy**; a consistent picture emerges. Employers require immediate action to stabilise workforce capacity while strengthening pipelines, progression routes and leadership capability. At the same time, **digital and low-carbon competencies are now standard requirements**, embedded across roles and sectors.

A defined set of **cross-cutting workforce essentials** underpins delivery: English, maths and employability skills; digital and AI capability; net zero and decarbonisation; workforce and educator capacity; and effective SME engagement. Strengthening these foundations ensures that training leads to consistent workplace competence and enables employers, particularly SMEs, to participate fully in the skills system.

The LSIP translates these needs into a focused programme of agreed actions that:

- strengthen entry routes and careers visibility;
- embed work readiness and core behaviours;
- expand flexible, employer-aligned upskilling; and
- reinforce progression into higher technical, supervisory and leadership roles.

Delivery is coordinated across partners, informed by employer insight, and kept under active review to ensure sustained alignment with economic need and changing labour market conditions.

This LSIP provides Kent and Medway with a clear, employer-led framework for transforming how the skills system responds to economic demand. By grounding priorities in robust evidence and translating them into coordinated, deliverable actions, it strengthens the region's ability to address workforce challenges and unlock opportunity. Its effectiveness depends on sustained collaboration between employers, education and training providers, and system partners, with the LSIP maintaining a disciplined focus on alignment, responsiveness and impact. Through this approach, Kent and Medway will develop a more agile, inclusive and productive workforce, ensuring that skills investment delivers tangible outcomes for employers, individuals and the wider economy.

Strategic and Economic Context Kent & Medway

The Kent and Medway Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) is the employer-led mechanism for setting out the priority skills needs that matter most to the local economy over the 2026–2029 period. It is designed to strengthen the alignment between education and training provision, and the skills employers need now and in the medium term, while supporting productivity, participation and inclusive growth across the geography.

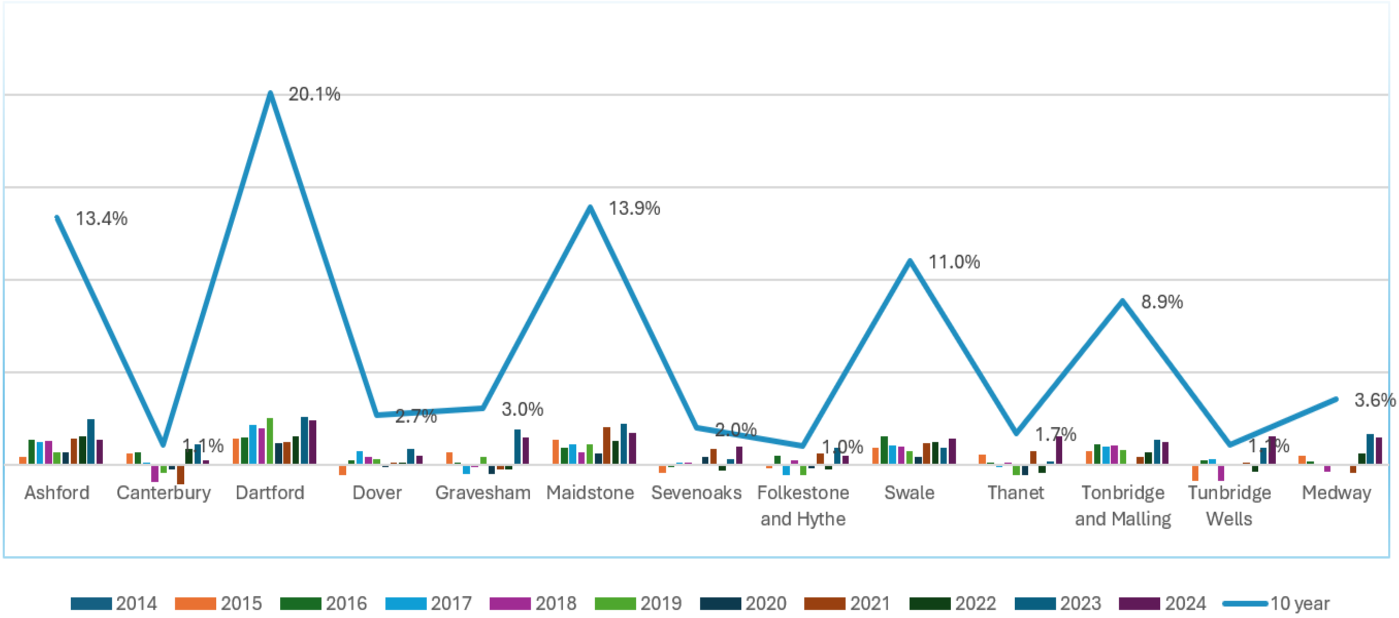
The national direction of travel reinforces the need for this employer-led focus. The Get Britain Working White Paper sets out a programme of reform intended to reduce economic inactivity and raise employment rates through more joined-up support across work, health and skills, with an explicit expectation that local areas convene partners and develop local plans to deliver impact. In parallel, the UK's Modern Industrial Strategy establishes a ten-year framework for investment and growth in eight priority sectors; Advanced Manufacturing, Clean Energy Industries, Creative Industries, Defence, Digital and Technologies, Financial Services, Life Sciences, and Professional and Business Services; supported by targeted interventions including skills packages and sector plans. Together, these national reforms underline the requirement for LSIPs to provide a credible local articulation of demand, to support provider planning and system-wide collaboration, and to ensure local workforce development is aligned to the national growth mission.

Locally, the LSIP sits within an established strategic framework for growth, inclusion and resilience. The Kent & Medway Economic Framework sets out a shared ambition to build an economy that is more productive, sustainable and inclusive by 2030, supported by a focus on business growth and innovation, unlocking talent, resilient infrastructure and place-based renewal. Alongside this, the Local Growth Plan evidence base provides a sectoral lens on Kent and Medway's distinctive growth opportunities and identifies four focus sectors, Agri-Food and Agri-Tech, Ports/Transport/Logistics, Digital and Technologies, and Energy, selected where the area demonstrates clear, buildable strengths. The LSIP therefore provides a practical bridge between national policy direction and local economic strategy, translating the region's growth and inclusion ambitions into employer-validated skills priorities that can be acted upon by providers, partners and stakeholders.

Kent & Medway's economic baseline: scale, growth and spatial variation

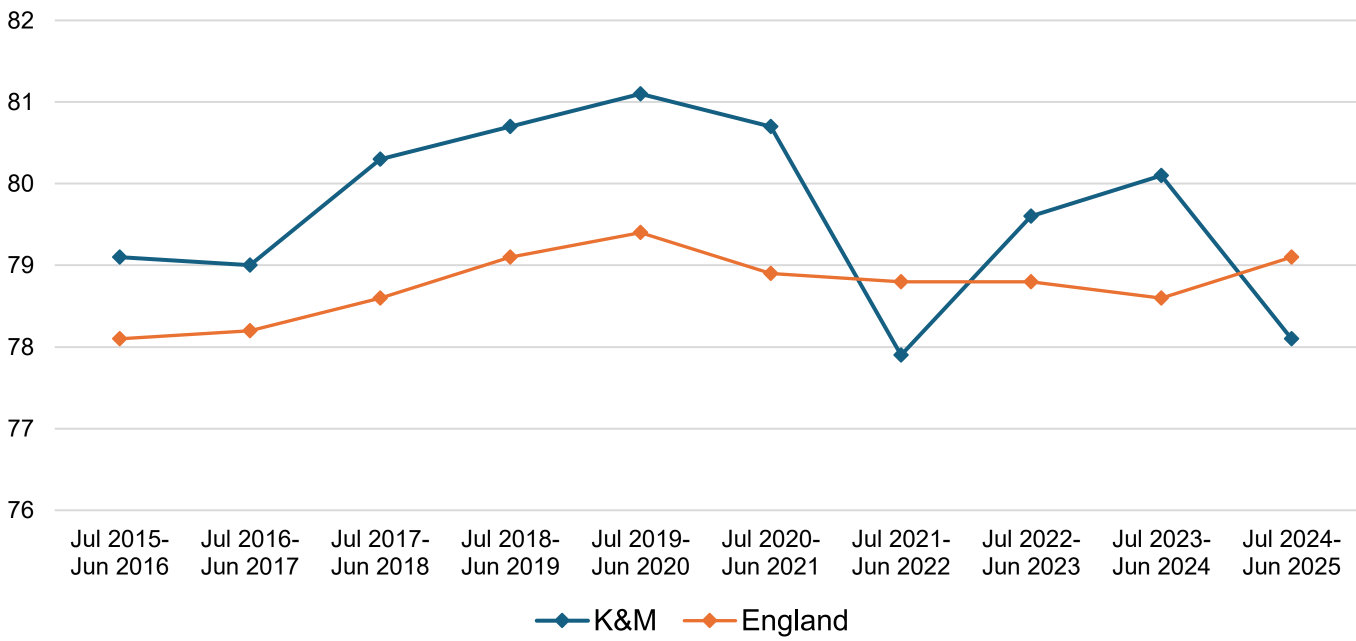
Kent and Medway is a large and growing region, accounting for 3.3% of England's population and reaching an estimated 1.93 million residents by June 2024. Growth has been faster than the national average in recent years and has not been evenly distributed across the area, with particularly strong increases in Dartford, Maidstone and Ashford compared with slower growth in some coastal and eastern districts. This uneven geography is a material factor for skills planning: the pattern of population change, housing development and labour market opportunity differs across the county, so training access and pathway design must be responsive to local context rather than relying on a single "whole-area average".

The working-age population (16–64) is estimated at 1.17 million (61% of total population), with growth slower than total population due to faster increases in older age groups. This creates a medium-term workforce challenge, reinforcing the importance of improving participation and progression among residents already in the labour market, strengthening entry routes for young people, and supporting those currently outside the workforce to move into sustainable employment.



Kent & Medway Working Age Population Source: NOMIS, 25/11/25

Labour market participation in Kent and Medway broadly tracks national patterns. The working-age economic activity rate is reported at 79.1% for the year to June 2025, with evidence that post-COVID changes have been associated with higher inactivity linked to sickness or disability. Kent and Medway also has a slightly higher unemployment rate (4.4%) than England (4.2%) over the same period. Local employment rates differ by geography and cohort, with stronger outcomes in areas with better access to the London labour market and weaker outcomes in parts of the east, coastal areas and some urban locations. These differences reinforce the need for the LSIP to support both (i) skills supply aligned to local jobs and growth sectors and (ii) clearer and more navigable pathways into work and progression, particularly where barriers to participation are highest.



Economic Activity Rates Source: Annual Population Survey

The trend in economic activity rates illustrates the importance of workforce participation as a strategic constraint, with Kent & Medway moving broadly in line with England but showing a more pronounced dip in the most recent year.

Enterprise structure: an SME-dominated economy with implications for skills delivery

Kent and Medway's economy is characterised by a very large number of small firms. As at March 2025, there were 74,430 active enterprises, with 90.1% classified as microbusinesses (fewer than 10 employees) and only 240 large enterprises (250+ employees). This matters for skills strategy: employer demand is widely distributed across many smaller businesses, many of which face capacity constraints that limit time and resource for training. As a result, skills solutions that rely on large-employer infrastructure or high administrative burden risk excluding a substantial proportion of the local economy.

The enterprise profile also highlights distinctive sector concentrations. Construction accounts for 19.1% of enterprises, substantially above the national average cited for England, indicating the scale of the sector within the local business base and helping explain why self-employment is also higher locally (15.5% of those in employment compared with 12.9% for England). Professional, scientific and technical services (15.3%) and administrative and support services (8.8%) also represent significant components of the enterprise base, while retail, hospitality and information and communication remain substantial.

The enterprise base by sector is shown below, illustrating the prominence of construction and the breadth of SME-heavy activity across the economy.

Sector	Enterprises	Share
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	2,130	2.9%
Mining, quarrying & utilities	415	0.6%
Manufacturing	3,465	4.7%
Construction	14,240	19.1%
Motor Trade	2,260	3.0%
Wholesale	2,365	3.2%
Retail	5,070	6.8%
Transportation and storage	3,445	4.6%
Accommodation and food	4,565	6.1%
Information and communication	4,660	6.3%
Financial and insurance	1,480	2.0%
Real estate activities	2,795	3.8%
Professional, scientific and technical	11,355	15.3%
Administrative and support services	6,560	8.8%
Public administration and defence	285	0.4%
Education	1,380	1.9%
Health and social care	3,220	4.3%
Arts, entertainment and recreation	1,775	2.4%
Other services	2,965	4.0%
Total	**74,430**	

Source: NOMIS, 25/11/25

Employment, productivity and sector composition: strengths, constraints and opportunities

Kent and Medway's employment structure reflects both high-volume foundational sectors and a set of tradable and enabling activities linked to the region's geographic and economic role. Employee jobs are concentrated in Health and Social Care (14.3%), Retail (9.6%), Education (9.5%), Administrative and Support

Services (9.0%), Construction (7.8%), and Accommodation and Food Services (7.6%), with additional substantial employment in Professional, scientific and technical services (6.2%), Transport and Storage (6.0%) and Manufacturing (5.8%). This profile highlights why workforce capacity and skills supply in health/care, construction, hospitality and logistics have system-wide importance: these sectors not only employ at scale but also shape local labour market participation, entry routes, and progression opportunities.

The employee jobs profile by broad sector is shown below.

Sector	Employees	Share
Health and social care	107,000	14.3%
Retail	72,000	9.6%
Education	71,000	9.5%
Administrative and support services	67,000	9.0%
Construction	58,000	7.8%
Accommodation and food services	57,000	7.6%
Professional, scientific and technical	46,000	6.2%
Transportation and storage	45,000	6.0%
Manufacturing	43,000	5.8%
Public administration and defence	33,000	4.4%
Wholesale	30,000	4.0%
Information and communication	19,000	2.5%
Arts, entertainment and recreation	17,000	2.3%
Motor Trade	16,000	2.1%
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	14,000	1.9%
Financial and insurance	14,000	1.9%
Other services	14,000	1.9%
Real estate	13,000	1.7%
Mining, quarrying & utilities	11,000	1.5%
Total	**747,000**	

Source: BRES

Productivity and value-added patterns further illustrate Kent and Medway's distinctive economic shape. Total Gross Value Added (GVA) is reported at £55 billion in 2023 (2.6% of England's total), with a sector mix that differs from England in ways that are strategically relevant for the LSIP. Kent and Medway has notably higher GVA shares in Construction (12.0% vs 7.0% England), Transport and Storage (5.9% vs 3.8%), Utilities (4.4% vs 2.7%), and Health and Social Work (10.2% vs 8.8%). Conversely, it has materially lower shares in Information and Communication (3.5% vs 7.1%), Financial and Insurance (5.4% vs 10.1%), and Professional, scientific and technical activities (6.8% vs 9.8%). These differences signal both strengths and constraints: the region generates high value in construction-linked activity, logistics and utilities, but is structurally under-represented in some knowledge-intensive sectors that tend to support higher productivity and higher-level skills demand.

A comparison of GVA shares (Kent & Medway vs England) for sectors with the largest differences is shown below.

Sector	GVA (bn)	Shares	England Shares
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	401	0.8%	0.6%
Mining and quarrying	37	0.1%	0.1%
Manufacturing	4,069	8.6%	9.8%
Utilities	2,095	4.4%	2.7%

Construction	5,655	12.0%	7.0%
Motor trades	908	1.9%	1.7%
Wholesale trade	1,905	4.0%	4.4%
Retail	2,794	5.9%	5.1%
Transportation and storage	2,794	5.9%	3.8%
Accommodation and food	1,613	3.4%	3.1%
Information and communication	1,667	3.5%	7.1%
Financial and insurance	2,553	5.4%	10.1%
Real estate activities, excluding imputed rental	1,966	4.2%	4.1%
Professional, scientific and technical	3,192	6.8%	9.8%
Administrative and support services	2,692	5.7%	6.2%
Public administration and defence	2,402	5.1%	5.2%
Education	3,733	7.9%	6.9%
Human health and social work activities	4,837	10.2%	8.8%
Arts, entertainment and recreation	636	1.3%	1.6%
Other service activities	1,292	2.7%	1.8%
Activities of households	19	0.0%	0.1%
All industries	**47,260**		
Owner-occupiers' imputed rental	7,703		
Total GVA	**54,963**		

Two further indicators reinforce the strategic importance of skills for productivity and inclusion. First, the region’s employee job density is reported at 0.64 (compared with 0.75 for England), indicating that the local economy does not provide one job for every working-age resident and that commuting out of area is an important feature of labour market behaviour. Second, workforce skills levels are below England and regional averages: 32.7% of working-age residents have a Level 4+ qualification compared with 37.1% for England. This strengthens the case for LSIP priorities that support progression, higher-level technical routes and improved local retention of skilled residents, while also responding to immediate recruitment pressures in foundational sectors.

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

Alignment to the Industrial Strategy (IS-8): relevance and local priorities

The UK’s Modern Industrial Strategy provides a national framework for investment and growth across eight priority sectors, supported by published sector plans and skills interventions. For Kent and Medway, the local growth narrative is shaped by both the current economic structure and the region’s distinctive assets. The Local Growth Plan evidence base explicitly notes that Kent and Medway has a below national share of employment in the IS-8 sectors (18.3%), creating a strategic requirement to focus on the sectors where the area can credibly demonstrate strength, while strengthening capability where there are clear productivity and skills gaps.

Four sectors are particularly prominent as locally defined growth priorities, closely aligned to Industrial Strategy missions and supply chains:

1. **Energy (aligned to Clean Energy Industries).** The Local Growth Plan evidence base identifies Energy as a focus sector, with high GVA per job reported for the sector and a clear strategic narrative linked to energy security. Nationally, the Clean energy jobs plan sets out workforce requirements and actions to scale skills pathways to support clean energy delivery. For the LSIP, this reinforces the need to embed low-carbon competence and energy-related occupational demand across construction, engineering, maintenance and digital/controls pathways, ensuring workforce readiness supports both infrastructure delivery and wider net-zero transition.
2. **Digital and Technologies.** The Local Growth Plan evidence base identifies Digital and Technologies as a priority sector for growth. At the same time, the local economic profile indicates lower representation in Information and Communication than England in both employment share and GVA share, suggesting that strengthening digital capability is both a growth opportunity and a structural gap to address. The LSIP therefore needs to support both foundational digital competence across all sectors and stronger advanced pathways in areas aligned to employer demand, technology adoption and productivity improvement.
3. **Ports, Transport and Logistics (linked to tradable activity and supply-chain resilience).** The Local Growth Plan evidence base identifies Ports, Transport and Logistics as a focus sector, reflecting Kent and Medway's gateway role and distinctive assets that underpin trade and the movement of goods; the local GVA profile also shows a higher share in Transport and Storage than England, reinforcing the scale and economic value of this activity locally. Given its strategic gateway function and its role as a system-critical enabler for multiple industries, the LSIP will recognise the sector's workforce requirements by embedding key entry and progression needs, particularly supervisory, technical and compliance-critical capability, within cross-cutting actions and relevant priority-sector delivery where occupations and skills needs overlap, while keeping the sector under active review as the evidence base continues to develop
4. **Agri-Food and Agri-Tech (linked to national food security and innovation).** The Local Growth Plan evidence base identifies Agri-Food and Agri-Tech as a focus sector, explicitly framing the sector's growth opportunity and the rationale for deeper analysis. This intersects with broader Industrial Strategy priorities through advanced manufacturing, digital technologies and life sciences-adjacent innovation, and supports the case for skills pathways that combine technical competence, digital adoption and sustainable practice in land-based and food supply chains.

Alongside these four locally prioritised growth sectors, the Industrial Strategy's other priority sectors remain relevant through local assets and supply-chain linkages. The Kent & Medway Economic Framework identifies innovation strengths that include life sciences, and national policy includes sector plans across Advanced Manufacturing, Creative Industries, Defence, Professional and Business Services and Financial Services. Evidence of higher-skill recruitment by major employers, including defence-linked demand signals, further reinforces the importance of maintaining strong technical and professional pipelines.

How the LSIP supports and connects to the Get Kent & Medway Working Plan

The Get Kent and Medway Working Plan provides a jointly agreed framework (Kent County Council, Medway Council, DWP/Jobcentre Plus and the NHS Integrated Care Board) for reducing economic inactivity and improving employment outcomes through a more integrated approach across health, work and skills. It identifies five themes of change, including a specific focus on employers, training and work supply, and operating as a system, and explicitly recognises the relationship to the LSIP and the region's wider economic framework.

Within this framework, the LSIP adds value in three principal ways:

1. **Clarifies employer demand and priority skills constraints.** The LSIP provides the employer-validated articulation of where workforce shortages and capability gaps constrain delivery, particularly in high-employment and high-value sectors such as health and care, construction, logistics and the wider visitor economy. This strengthens the ability of partners to target interventions that support both job entry and sustainable progression.
2. **Supports pathway coherence and navigability.** The Working Plan highlights fragmentation in the local system and the need for better coordination, including improved employer engagement mechanisms and stronger pathways for young people. LSIP priorities that simplify training navigation, strengthen careers information, expand meaningful work experience and improve transitions into work directly reinforce this system ambition.
3. **Complements the Working Plan's focus on participation barriers.** The Working Plan identifies significant numbers of residents outside the active economy and highlights priority cohorts including young people, carers and those with long-term health conditions. The LSIP complements this by ensuring that skills provision and delivery models are designed in ways that are accessible and realistic for both learners and employers, particularly in SME-dominated sectors where flexibility and reduced administrative burden are essential.

The combined effect is a coherent local approach: the Working Plan strengthens the conditions for residents to enter and sustain work, while the LSIP strengthens the alignment of skills pathways and provision to the jobs and progression routes the local economy requires.

Strategic implications for LSIP priorities and delivery (2026–2029)

The evidence and strategy context above point to a set of implications that shape how LSIP priorities should be framed and implemented across the 2026–2029 period.

1. **Skills solutions must work for an SME-heavy economy.** With over 90% of enterprises classified as microbusinesses, training models must minimise friction for employers and enable viable cohort formation, including through brokerage, shared provision and more modular offers.
2. **The LSIP must address both immediate capacity constraints and longer-term productivity improvement.** High-volume foundational sectors (health/care, education, retail, hospitality and construction) drive local employment and service resilience, while structural under-representation in some knowledge-intensive sectors reinforces the need for progression pathways and higher-level technical routes to support productivity and inclusive growth.
3. **Local growth priorities should be reflected in skills planning.** The Local Growth Plan evidence base identifies Agri-Food/Agri-Tech, Ports/Transport/Logistics, Digital and Technologies and Energy as priority sectors for growth. LSIP priorities should therefore support both specialist pathways in these areas and the cross-cutting skills (digital, technical, regulatory, supervisory) that enable growth and diffusion across supply chains.
4. **Net zero and digital adoption should be embedded as "business as usual".** National clean energy workforce planning and the broader Industrial Strategy direction emphasise workforce readiness for transition and technology adoption. For Kent and Medway, this reinforces the importance of integrating

low-carbon competence, automation, controls and data literacy into mainstream pathways, particularly in construction, engineering, logistics and operational roles.

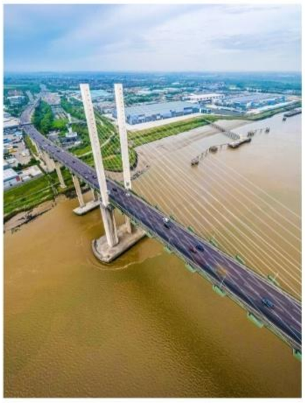
5. **Place-sensitive pathways are essential.** Population growth and labour market outcomes vary across Kent and Medway, and job density indicates commuting patterns that shape opportunity. LSIP implementation must therefore support consistent access and navigability across the geography, ensuring that pathways are not only available in principle but practical in terms of travel, employer participation and learner support.

In summary, the LSIP is the principal mechanism for turning national direction and local economic priorities into a deliverable, employer-led skills agenda for Kent and Medway. It anchors skills planning in the area's established strategic framework, reflects the locally evidenced sector priorities and Industrial Strategy-aligned opportunities that matter most to the region, and provides the clear basis on which providers and partners can plan and align investment over 2026–2029. Crucially, it is designed to operate as part of the wider system, not alongside it, building on the work and momentum already underway across Kent and Medway to strengthen partnership working, improve pathway navigability and accelerate delivery against shared economic and inclusion goals. In doing so, the LSIP actively supports and feeds into other local plans and strategies, including the Get Kent and Medway Working Plan, by providing the employer-validated skills intelligence and practical delivery focus required to reduce economic inactivity, improve progression and ensure the local workforce is equipped to meet current demand and sustain future growth.









Part 1: Local Skills Needs

This document sets out an evidence-led assessment of the key current and medium-term skills needs across Kent and Medway's priority sectors, in order to inform the priorities and actions of the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) for 2026–2029. Drawing on employer intelligence, labour market analysis and sector-specific evidence, it identifies where workforce shortages and skills gaps are constraining delivery, productivity and resilience, and where targeted intervention will be required to support future growth and transition. The assessment focuses on the construction and the built environment sector.

1.1 Construction & Built Environment

Kent and Medway's construction and built environment sector remains a major driver of local growth and employment, supporting roughly 7–8% of jobs (around 58,000 roles in 2024) and close to one in five businesses. Over the last five years, local construction employment has expanded sharply (around +20% since 2019), outpacing regional and national trends and reflecting a strong development and infrastructure pipeline, including Ebbsfleet Garden City and the Lower Thames Crossing.

Labour market intelligence reinforces both the scale of the sector and its medium-term trajectory. The data estimates 55,331 construction jobs across Kent and Medway districts in 2024, rising to 57,094 by 2030 (+3.2%), with average pay estimated at £45,672 per job in 2024 and construction GVA at £5.1bn in 2022. It further highlights the sector's exceptionally large business base and its concentration in parts of the Thames Gateway: construction enterprises accounted for 18.3% of all Kent enterprises in 2024 (excluding Medway), while Medway's share is higher still at 24.1%, with Gravesham and Dartford among the highest concentrations in Kent.

However, the sector's ability to deliver is increasingly constrained by workforce pressures that are now binding on capacity. Employers continue to report persistent shortages across core trades; bricklaying, carpentry and joinery, plumbing and heating, electrical installation, plastering and drylining, scaffolding, groundworks and plant operation, alongside rising pressure on supervision, commercial functions and planning-related capacity. These constraints are compounded by workforce ageing, reduced inflows of experienced labour and the structural realities of an SME-dominated industry, where micro and small firms often face practical barriers to training uptake, placement continuity and apprenticeship administration.

The regional context intensifies these challenges. Kent and Medway sit within an integrated South East and London labour market, with high workforce mobility and competition for scarce skillsets. CITB evidence points to sustained recruitment requirements across the South East through the remainder of the decade, driven by both growth and replacement demand, underlining that reliance on short-term labour inflows will not provide a durable solution where neighbouring areas face similar constraints.

Training pipelines are expanding, but not yet at the scale or speed required to match recruitment and replacement needs. Apprenticeship starts have improved and FE learner volumes indicate a sizeable entry-level pipeline, yet achievement outcomes remain a concern and qualified outputs remain below the level implied by projected demand and replacement pressures. Provider capacity constraints, especially shortages of experienced tutors in key trades, can also limit growth in provision even where learner demand is strong, strengthening the case for collaboration and shared capacity across the local and regional system.

Major programmes will shape demand most sharply in the late 2020s as housing delivery overlaps with large-scale infrastructure delivery. The Lower Thames Crossing, in particular, represents a significant medium-term driver of civil engineering demand across earthworks, concrete, steel fixing, plant operation, logistics, surveying, building services and project leadership, and it is positioned as an employment and skills opportunity through a dedicated jobs, skills and education approach. At the same time, the region's sustained programme of housing growth across major strategic sites in Kent and Medway provides a long-term opportunity to embed apprenticeships, placements and local recruitment at scale, provided partner commitments are coordinated and applied consistently.

The direction of travel locally is increasingly coordinated and employer led. Partners are mobilising a response focused on scaling apprenticeships, strengthening SME support (including practical help with funding and levy transfer), improving work-readiness through site exposure and placements, and expanding provision aligned to both immediate shortages and future demand. Priorities include building retrofit and green construction capability, embedding digital and modern methods competence into mainstream pathways, and strengthening progression into supervision, site management and commercial roles to address leadership bottlenecks. The strategic intent is to turn major projects into 'skills factories' while modernising the wider training offer and building a resilient, locally rooted workforce able to sustain the region's ambitions.

1.2 Key skills needs

Skills needs are shaped by a high-demand, SME-dominated construction and built environment sector where persistent shortages in delivery-critical trades and civils capability are already constraining programme pace, with growing pressure in supervision, commercial functions and adjacent planning and design capacity. The priority is to stabilise workforce supply now while embedding green and digital competence across progression routes, so delivery keeps pace with changing methods, technologies and standards.

1.2.1 Current skills needs

- ***Immediate workforce pressure in core trades and site delivery.*** Across the region, employer evidence and labour market intelligence point to a consistent set of roles where shortages are already constraining delivery. In housing, the most acute scarcity continues to be reported in bricklaying and carpentry, roles that directly determine programme pace and are difficult to substitute when labour is tight.
- **Plumbing and electrical installation** remain persistent shortage areas, with demand intensified by both ongoing newbuild activity and the electrification and decarbonisation agenda, which is increasing the complexity and volume of building services work. Plastering and drylining shortages are particularly

disruptive at finishing stages, while roofing and scaffolding constraints can create delays where access and limited weather windows are critical.

- ***Infrastructure and civils capacity, including plant, groundworks and specialist operations.*** For infrastructure and civils programmes, skills pressure is commonly felt in plant operation and logistics, alongside groundworks capability and specialist civils roles such as formwork, steel fixing and concrete operations. These occupations are highly sensitive to project scheduling peaks and can become binding constraints when multiple programmes overlap across the region.
- As demand rises for these operational roles, the requirement for ***competent surveyors, site engineers and civils supervisors*** also increases, reflecting the safety-critical and coordination-heavy nature of major delivery and the need to manage quality, sequencing and risk effectively.
- ***Site leadership and commercial capability as a strategic bottleneck.*** Alongside trade shortages, employers describe a structural constraint in site leadership and commercial functions. Site managers and supervisors require both technical competence and leadership capability, and retirements alongside competition from major projects can leave local firms exposed.
- ***Quantity surveying, estimating and procurement*** remain difficult to recruit, yet these functions are central to cost control, bidding and delivery. Where capacity is constrained, firms can struggle to bid competitively, manage risk and maintain margins, which can limit growth even where regional demand is strong.
- ***"Adjacent" capacity that can still limit delivery: planning, design and plant maintenance.*** Skills needs are not confined to onsite roles. Planning capacity sits adjacent to the sector but can be equally limiting; insufficient planning officer and technical capability can slow approvals and extend uncertainty, which then cascades into delivery challenges and undermines workforce planning for contractors and developers.
- Similarly, shortages in ***building services design capability*** can sit behind delivery issues, particularly as systems become more complex and the industry transitions towards low-carbon solutions. For major programmes, plant maintenance and mechanic capability can also become a hidden constraint; where plant availability is critical, the ability to maintain and repair equipment rapidly underpins productivity and safety.
- ***Cross-cutting competencies employers increasingly require (now and over the medium term).*** Across these high-demand roles, employers consistently emphasise the growing importance of transferable and enabling competencies. Leadership is required not only at senior level but within site supervision and foreperson roles, particularly as compliance, documentation and client assurance requirements increase.
- ***Digital competence*** is becoming a baseline expectation as sites adopt digital reporting, electronic permits, BIM-enabled coordination and data-driven progress tracking. As a result, employers highlight the need to strengthen communication, numeracy, problem-solving and digital literacy alongside technical competence, so the workforce can adapt as methods, technologies and regulatory expectations evolve.

1.2.2 Medium skills needs

- ***Green construction, retrofit and digital delivery***. Looking ahead across the region, demand is expected to grow for green and specialist roles. Skills needs are rising quickly in retrofit coordination, low-carbon heating design and installation, energy efficiency assessment and renewables integration, with demand often exceeding the current local supply of formally qualified individuals.
- ***Digital capability*** is becoming more significant across roles as information management, BIM, digital surveying and data-enabled site management become more embedded in routine practice. In this context, shortages are increasingly about evolving competence, digital literacy, regulatory awareness and leadership capability, as well as workforce numbers.

Overall, the evidence points to a combined challenge of immediate scarcity and medium-term transition. Meeting current demand requires expanding entry and progression routes into the most pressured trades and operational roles, improving completion and retention and enabling SMEs to participate in training. At the same time, the region needs stronger progression pathways into leadership and professional roles, with green and digital competencies embedded across the workforce so that skill supply keeps pace with changing methods, technologies and standards.

1.3 Cross cutting themes

The LSIP evidence base is clear: a small number of cross-cutting capabilities determine whether sector actions can be delivered at pace and whether investment in training converts into consistent workplace competence. These themes matter because they are **workforce essentials**, the baseline conditions that shape productivity, progression, compliance and service quality across the economy. While the intensity of demand varies by sector, these are not sector-specific issues: they are the shared foundations that employers expect the skills system to strengthen at scale.

1.3.1 English, maths and employability skills

Employers consistently point to work readiness as a decisive factor in recruitment and early performance. Professional behaviours, clear communication, reliability, and the confident application of English and maths underpin effective working across all roles, from day-to-day problem solving to customer interaction and team communication. This requirement is most visible where the consequences of error are highest or where interaction is constant: in Adult Social Care, communication and accurate record-keeping are integral to safe practice, and in the Tourism & Visitor Economy and Creative Industries, employers repeatedly stress readiness for workplace expectations and dependable professional standards.

1.3.2 Digital (including AI)

Digital capability is now a core employability requirement, not a specialist add-on. As organisations embed digital reporting, automation and data-driven processes, the ability to work confidently with digital tools, and increasingly with AI-enabled workflows, has become central to safe practice, compliance and productivity across the workforce. Demand is most pronounced in Manufacturing & Engineering, where automation, controls and data literacy are directly linked to performance, and in Creative Industries, where digital "fusion" skills explicitly extend to AI- and data-enabled workflows alongside production-ready toolchains.

1.3.3 Net Zero / Decarbonisation

Net Zero competence is rapidly becoming standard workplace practice. Low-carbon awareness, sustainable operating behaviours and compliance requirements increasingly need to be embedded within mainstream occupational routes, so that the workforce can deliver decarbonisation as part of normal practice rather than treating it as a separate specialism. This is most evident in Construction, where green fundamentals must be integrated across trades and technical pathways, and it is strongly relevant to Manufacturing & Engineering and the Visitor Economy, where sustainability expectations are reshaping operating models alongside continued adoption of digital processes.

1.3.4 FE Workforce

Delivery capacity in the skills system is a critical enabler in its own right. Tutor supply, industry currency and the ability to keep curriculum aligned to modern workplaces directly determine whether priority provision can expand, adapt and remain credible to employers. This is particularly acute in Manufacturing &

Engineering, where technical delivery depends on scarce expertise and requires structured approaches such as Industry Associate models, Teacher Encounters and targeted CPD. It is also significant in Construction, where educator capacity is closely tied to sustaining trade and technical provision that reflects current site practice and standards.

1.3.5 SME Engagement

In an SME-heavy economy, the LSIP must work for the majority of employers, not only those with dedicated HR and training capacity. Smaller firms often face practical barriers: limited time, constrained capacity to host placements, and difficulty navigating provision alongside day-to-day operations. The challenge is therefore to make engagement simple, accessible and low-burden so that SMEs can participate consistently. This theme is strongest in Construction, the Visitor Economy, Creative Industries, and Manufacturing & Engineering, where micro and small firms are central to the labour market and where the feasibility of engagement is as important as the underlying demand for skills.

Taken together, these themes form the LSIP's delivery logic**.** They are the shared workforce conditions that sit beneath sector priorities and determine whether actions translate into real improvements for employers and residents. Addressing them strengthens the whole system: it makes sector delivery more implementable, supports employer participation, especially among SMEs, and keeps provision focused on the workplace outcomes employers consistently value. Detailed delivery activity to implement these changes will be set out in Annex B.

1.4 Conclusion

Part 1 sets out the **current** and **three-year** skills needs across Kent and Medway, providing a clear, evidence-led foundation for the actions and activities that follow. It brings together employer insight, labour market data and sector intelligence to show where shortages and capability gaps are already constraining delivery and where the system must build stronger pipelines, progression and workforce resilience. It also highlights the cross-cutting essentials, work readiness, digital (including AI), net zero capability, provider delivery capacity and SME engagement, that will determine whether training investment translates into consistent workplace competence at scale.

Part 2: Agreed Actions

This section sets out the agreed actions that respond directly to the skills needs identified in Part 1, translating the evidence into a clear programme across priority sectors. The priorities below have been agreed with strategic partners and will be delivered through employers, education and training providers, and wider system partners, with the LSIP convening and brokering collaboration and keeping progress under review. For each sector, the actions specify the intended outcomes and impacts and set out proportionate measures to evidence progress, grounded in employer and provider insight, established forums and networks, and qualitative examples, supported by contextual indicators where these are available. Detailed delivery activity to implement these changes is set out in Annex B, presented as a table of specific activities (including leads, supporting partners, timescales, expected outcomes and monitoring/measurement) to provide system partners with clear line-of-sight from action to implementation.

2.1 Construction and Built Environment

1. **Entry pipeline, careers, sector perception and work readiness (digital + green fundamentals):** Maintain a coherent, area-wide construction careers and pre-employment offer embedding safe working practice, professional behaviours, baseline digital competence and early green fundamentals, and broker SME access to placements and entry-to-site activity through simplified, shared approaches to improve readiness, progression and early retention. Evidence progress through employer forum feedback on readiness and safe behaviours, provider starts/participation for entry routes and placement/brokerage activity (including SME engagement).
2. **Delivery-critical core trades and building services (digital baseline + low-carbon mainstreaming + educator capacity):** Scale capacity in priority trade and building services routes by aligning employers and providers around provision that reflects current site requirements, with digital competence treated as baseline for reporting, QA and compliance and low-carbon awareness integrated into mainstream delivery. Strengthen educator capability through employer-led CPD and Industry Associate-type models and enable SME participation through brokerage that reduces administrative burden. Evidence progress through provider starts (and participation where available), employer forum insight on recruitment difficulty, work readiness and compliance capability, and educator-capacity signals showing whether constraints are easing.
3. **Infrastructure enabling capacity: groundworks, plant operations and plant maintenance (ticketing barriers + digital readiness + SME access):** Expand routes into enabling roles underpinning infrastructure mobilisation, including progression into civils, groundworks, plant operations and plant maintenance, reducing barriers linked to ticketing costs, entry requirements and insurance constraints through coordinated, shared delivery that improves SME access. Embed digital readiness and green

awareness as standard to support compliance. Evidence progress through starts/participation where providers can report, supply-chain and employer forum feedback on constraints, downtime and unfilled roles, and qualitative evidence that compliance behaviours and basic digital reporting practices are improving.

4. **Progression into site leadership and commercial capability (supervision, management, QS/commercial; digital leadership + green compliance):** Strengthen progression from experienced trades into supervisory, managerial and commercial roles through structured development in planning, QA, health and safety management, contract administration and people leadership, alongside routes into quantity surveying, estimating and procurement, with digital leadership and green compliance explicit throughout. Support SME participation through flexible delivery and brokerage to strengthen programme certainty, quality and commercial resilience. Evidence progress through participation starts where providers can share them, employer forum feedback on changed practice and easing delivery constraints, and qualitative examples captured through employer/provider networks.
5. **Specialist technical capability, planning capacity and low-carbon/retrofit delivery (digital integration + educator upskilling + SME market access):** Strengthen pipelines into professional and technical roles (including civil/structural and building services engineering/design) and sustainable routes into planning and development management, while building low-carbon and retrofit capability through specialist pathways and embedded sustainability content, with digital integration treated as core. Strengthen educator capability through employer-led CPD and Industry Associate-type models and support SMEs into emerging markets through simplified routes and shared cohorts. Evidence progress through starts/participation where shareable, employer forum feedback on digital competence and compliance capability, and qualitative evidence that firms are staffing and delivering higher-performance and retrofit work.

2.2 Cross cutting themes

1. **English, maths and employability skills:** Strengthen work readiness across priority sector routes by embedding contextualised English, maths, communication and professional behaviours into pre-employment, apprenticeships and adult upskilling so learning translates into consistent workplace competence. Delivery will align employer expectations with provider practice through established forums and networks, supporting safer practice, improved early performance and smoother progression. Evidence progress through employer feedback on job readiness and applied core skills, provider confirmation that core skills are embedded within priority pathways, and short qualitative examples showing improved communication, reliability and applied English/maths in workplace contexts, supported by participation/completion signals where partners can share them.

2. **Digital (including AI):** Make baseline digital confidence, including appropriate awareness of AI-enabled workflows, a standard employability expectation across priority sectors so staff and entrants can work safely and productively as workplaces adopt digital reporting, automation and data-enabled processes. Delivery will focus on simple, bolt-on modules and clear signposting that employers (including SMEs) can use without heavy burden, reinforcing compliance, productivity and service quality. Evidence progress through employer and provider insight on improved digital confidence and safe practice, confirmation that digital/AI content is routinely included in priority pathways, and short case examples showing how baseline digital capability is improving day-to-day performance, with contextual indicators used where available.

3. **Net Zero / Decarbonisation:** Embed low-carbon awareness and sustainable operating behaviours within mainstream occupational routes so Net Zero competence becomes standard workplace practice rather than a separate specialism, with relevance across sectors where compliance, customer expectations and operating models are changing. Delivery will focus on "green fundamentals" integrated into existing provision and applied to real job roles, reinforcing consistent behaviours in day-to-day practice. Evidence progress through provider confirmation that sustainability content is embedded across priority pathways, employer feedback on workforce readiness for low-carbon practice, and qualitative examples showing applied change in workplace behaviours, supported by relevant system signals where these are available.

4. **FE workforce:** Strengthen delivery capacity and curriculum currency by scaling practical educator upskilling through targeted CPD, teacher encounters and Industry-Associate-type approaches, ensuring priority provision can expand, adapt and remain credible to employers. Delivery will prioritise low-burden employer participation and regular exposure to modern workplace practice so technical routes remain current and scalable. Evidence progress through participation in CPD/industry-engagement activity, qualitative feedback from employers and providers on improved currency and confidence, and provider signals that delivery constraints are easing (for example refreshed content, improved credibility and the ability to sustain cohorts), triangulated through existing networks.

5. **SME engagement:** Make the skills system simpler and more accessible for SMEs by strengthening navigation, signposting and brokerage into training and placements, using shared approaches that reduce time and administrative friction for micro and small firms across priority sectors. Delivery will focus on practical, repeatable mechanisms that enable SMEs to participate consistently despite limited capacity, improving take-up and sustaining engagement over time. Evidence progress through SME participation and repeat engagement, partner feedback on ease of access and reduced burden, and qualitative examples showing SMEs successfully using training or placements that were previously hard to access, with contextual indicators used where partners can share them

2.3 Conclusion

Collectively, these agreed actions provide a clear line of sight from the evidence in Part 1 to delivery across the system: strengthening entry and careers visibility, embedding work readiness and core behaviours, expanding flexible upskilling aligned to employer operating models, and reinforcing progression into supervision, leadership and higher technical capability, with digital and sustainability embedded as standard practice. Delivery will be led by employers, education and training providers and wider system partners, with the LSIP convening, brokering alignment and keeping progress under review through established employer forums, channels and provider networks. Progress will be evidenced through a proportionate, evidence-led approach that prioritises partner feedback and qualitative insight on what is changing in practice, supported by documented case examples and relevant system signals where these are available. Detailed delivery activity to implement these changes is set out in Annex B.

Annex B – This Annex outlines the specific activities required to implement each of the recommended actions as identified in Part 2. Agreed Actions

Where specific lead organisations are not yet confirmed, activities are assigned to broad delivery partners. Specific lead organisation(s) will be agreed for each activity as the LSIP moves into delivery, and engagement with relevant providers has already commenced.

Construction and Built Environment						
Action	**Activity**	**Lead Organisation(s)**	**Supporting Partners**	**Timescales**	**Expected outcomes**	**Monitoring & Measurement**
1. Entry pipeline, careers, sector perception and work readiness (digital + green fundamentals)	Convene employers, providers and careers partners to align one area-wide construction careers/pre-employment pathway that standardises safe practice, professional behaviours, baseline digital and early green fundamentals, and operate a low-burden SME brokerage with simplified shared processes to unlock placements and entry-to-site activity.	SECTEC LSIP Careers Hub	FE HE ITP KATO Employers LA's Industry Bodies (CITB) FMB SEC ECA National Careers Service (CXK) DWP	Y1 – align partners and pilot shared entry routes Y2 – expand delivery and increase SME participation. Y3 – review progression and sustain coordinated delivery.	A more coherent construction entry route is in place across Kent and Medway, bringing together careers activity, pre-employment support and a shared expectation around safe practice, professional behaviours, baseline digital capability and early green fundamentals. This should improve sector understanding, strengthen job-readiness and increase progression into placements, entry-to-site activity and priority training routes.	Progress will be measured through: • the number of employers, providers and careers partners participating • use of the shared pathway and brokerage model • learner participation in careers and pre-employment activity • number of placements, tasters or entry-to-site opportunities brokered, including with SMEs • starts or progression into construction pathways where available • employer feedback on work-readiness and sector awareness.
2. Delivery-critical core trades and building services (digital baseline + low-carbon	Align employers and providers on a live "site-requirements" specification for priority trade/building-services provision, embed	SECTEC LSIP	FE HE ITP KATO Employers LA's	Y1 – agree priority changes and pilot CPD and employer input.	Priority trade and building services provision is better aligned to live site requirements, with digital reporting, quality assurance, compliance	Progress will be measured through: • the number of employers and providers adopting the live site-requirements specification

mainstreaming + educator capacity)	baseline digital reporting/QA/compliance plus mainstream low-carbon competence in delivery, expand tutor capacity through employer-led CPD and Industry Associate-type models, and broker SME involvement through a single simplified route that strips out admin burden		Industry Bodies (CITB) DWP	Y2 – embed revised delivery across providers. Y3 – review readiness and sustain the model.	and low-carbon competence embedded more consistently and educator capacity strengthened through employer-led CPD and Industry Associate-style support. This should improve the supply and readiness of operatives in delivery-critical roles and make provision more responsive to current site practice.	• programmes updated to reflect digital, compliance and low-carbon requirements • tutor and assessor participation in employer-led CPD or Industry Associate activity • learner starts and completions in priority trade routes • SME engagement in delivery • employer feedback on site-readiness, technical competence and curriculum relevance. •
3. Infrastructure enabling capacity: groundworks, plant operations & plant maintenance (ticketing barriers + digital readiness + SME access)	Broker a coordinated, shared delivery model across employers, providers and the supply chain to create low-barrier enabling-role pathways into civils/groundworks/plant (pooling or subsidising tickets, streamlining entry requirements and agreeing workable insurance approaches for SMEs), with baseline digital reporting and green awareness embedded as standard	SECTEC LSIP	FE HE ITP KATO Employers KCFG LA's DWP Industry Bodies (CITB)	Y1 – agree the shared model and pilot enabling routes Y2 – scale delivery and widen participation Y3 – review pipeline impact and sustain access routes.	A more coordinated route into civils, groundworks, plant operations and plant maintenance is established, reducing ticketing and entry barriers, improving access for SMEs and embedding baseline digital reporting and green awareness as standard. This should increase participation in enabling-role pathways and help relieve constraints in roles that underpin wider construction delivery.	Progress will be measured through: • the number of employers, providers and supply-chain partners participating • ticketing, insurance or entry solutions agreed • starts and participation in enabling-role pathways • licences, tickets or short-course completions where relevant • SME engagement in placements or recruitment • employer feedback on improved access to entry-ready candidates in civils and plant-related roles.

4. Progression into site leadership and commercial capability (supervision, management, QS/commercial; digital leadership + green compliance)	Convene employers and providers to co-design and deliver a flexible (SME-friendly) leadership/commercial upskilling pathway for experienced trades covering planning, QA, H&S management, contract administration, people leadership plus QS/estimating/procurement, embedding digital leadership and green compliance throughout and using brokerage to sustain engagement and programme certainty	SECTEC LSIP	FE HE ITP KATO Employers LA's Industry Bodies (CITB)	Y1 – map gaps and pilot leadership and commercial development. Y2 – expand participation and embed progression routes. Y3 – review progression and sustain delivery.	A clearer progression route is available from skilled trades into supervision, site leadership and commercial roles, with flexible upskilling in planning, quality assurance, health and safety, contract administration, people leadership, estimating, procurement and green compliance supported by digital leadership capability. This should strengthen progression, improve on-site management capacity and help employers grow commercial and supervisory talent from within.	Progress will be measured through: • the number of employers and providers participating • uptake of leadership and commercial upskilling • starts, completions and progression into supervisory, management or commercial roles where data is available • employer feedback on confidence in planning, compliance, commercial and people-management capability • evidence of sustained SME engagement through flexible delivery and brokerage.
5. Specialist technical capability, planning capacity and low-carbon/retrofit delivery (digital integration + educator upskilling + SME market access)	Co-design with employers and providers a joined-up suite of technical/planning/retrofit pathways that embeds sustainability and digital as core, delivers employer-led CPD via Industry Associate-style models to build educator capacity, and offers	SECTEC LSIP	FE HE ITP KATO Employers LA's Industry Bodies (CITB)	Y1 – identify priority specialisms and pilot targeted delivery. Y2 – expand provider capacity and employer uptake.	A more joined-up specialist offer is in place across technical, planning, retrofit and low-carbon activity, with digital integration and sustainability treated as core requirements, educator capability strengthened through employer-led CPD and Industry Associate-style	Progress will be measured through: • the number of specialist pathways, modules or cohorts introduced or revised • employer and provider participation in design and delivery • educator engagement in CPD and Industry Associate activity

	SMEs simplified access through shared cohorts into emerging low-carbon and retrofit markets.			Y3 – review alignment to demand and sustain specialist provision.	input, and simplified access for SMEs through shared cohorts. This should improve delivery capacity in emerging markets and support firms to compete for and deliver higher-value low-carbon work.	• learner starts and completions in specialist or retrofit-related provision • SME participation in shared cohorts • employer feedback on technical, planning and retrofit capability and market readiness.

Cross Cutting Themes						
Action	**Activity**	**Lead Organisation(s)**	**Supporting Partners**	**Timescales**	**Expected outcomes**	**Monitoring & Measurement**
1. English, maths and employability skills	Co-design with employers and providers through established forums to embed sector contextualised English, maths, communication and professional behaviours into each priority pathway (taught/assessed through real job tasks in workplace or simulated settings)	FE/ITP Careers Hub LSIP	HE Employers LA's	Y1 – agree the framework and pilot contextualised delivery. Y2 – extend embedding across priority pathways. Y3 – review impact and mainstream the model.	English, maths, communication and professional behaviours are embedded more consistently across priority pathways, taught and assessed through real job tasks in workplace or simulated settings rather than as separate standalone inputs. This should improve learner confidence, work-readiness and progression while addressing core employability gaps raised by employers across sectors.	Progress will be measured through: • the number of pathways embedding contextualised English, maths and employability content • provider adoption of the agreed approach • learner participation, completion and assessment evidence where available • employer involvement in contextual design • employer/provider feedback on communication, professional behaviours and readiness for work.

2. Digital (Including AI)	Bring employers, providers and digital initiatives together to define a workforce-wide baseline for digital (including AI) capability, then embed it consistently across FE and apprenticeship pathways and accessible upskilling/CPD for existing staff as a standard employability expectation	LSIP FE/HE	Employers LA's KCFG KMFG KHFG DWP	Y1 – define core digital and AI priorities and pilot delivery Y2 – embed them across sectors and provision types Y3 – review uptake and refresh the approach.	A clearer baseline for digital capability, including AI awareness and responsible use, is defined and embedded across FE, apprenticeships and accessible upskilling for the existing workforce. This should make digital and AI capability a more consistent employability expectation across LSIP sectors and support employers and learners to adopt relevant tools safely and effectively in day-to-day practice.	Progress will be measured through: • the number of programmes, pathways or CPD offers updated to reflect the agreed baseline • employer and provider participation in defining and embedding the standard • learner and staff participation in digital or AI-related learning • examples of digital or AI tools being used in teaching, learning or workplace practice • employer feedback on practical relevance and workforce readiness.
3. Net Zero/ Decarbonisation	Education and training providers embed existing "green fundamentals" and low-carbon operating behaviours into mainstream curriculum, assessment and work-based learning across priority occupational routes so Net Zero competence is consistently applied in real job roles as standard day-to-day practice, not a separate specialism.	FE/HE LSIP	Employers KCFG KMFG KHFG DWP	Y1 – agree priority net zero content and pilot integration. Y2 – extend embedding across sectors and programmes. Y3 – review relevance and sustain delivery.	Green fundamentals and low-carbon operating behaviours are embedded more consistently across mainstream curriculum, assessment and work-based learning so that net zero capability is developed as part of everyday practice across priority occupational routes. This should improve workforce readiness for changing technologies, standards and employer	Progress will be measured through: • the number of programmes and occupational routes embedding green fundamentals • provider adoption across curriculum, assessment and work-based learning; learner and staff participation in low-carbon learning or CPD • employer involvement in defining priority low-carbon behaviours • employer/provider feedback on how consistently net zero

					expectations rather than treating decarbonisation as a separate specialist topic.	capability is being applied in real job roles.
4. FE Workforce	Convene education providers and employers (through existing networks) to co-design and scale targeted CPD and regular Teacher Encounters, and to grow Industry Associate/dual-professional models that depend on sustained employer input to tackle technical tutor shortages (especially Construction and Engineering) while keeping priority provision current, credible and scalable	FE Gatsby LSIP	Employers HE ITP's	Y1 – pilot CPD, exchanges and industry engagement models. Y2 – expand participation and embed workforce approaches. Y3 – review impact and sustain capacity.	Targeted CPD, regular Teacher Encounters and stronger Industry Associate and dual-professional models are scaled to help address technical tutor shortages and keep priority provision current, credible and scalable, particularly in construction and engineering. This should strengthen FE workforce capability, increase employer input into delivery and improve the currency of teaching and assessment in LSIP priority areas.	Progress will be measured through: • the number of staff participating in CPD and Teacher Encounters • Industry Associates or dual professionals engaged • priority programmes refreshed through employer input • provider feedback on staff capacity and confidence, particularly in technical shortage areas • employer feedback on curriculum currency and credibility.
5. SME Engagement	Build a coordinated SME support and brokerage offer that helps small firms navigate the skills and education landscape, then matches and supports them to engage with the right education partners for training and placements through	LSIP KICC/ERB SECTEC	FE/HE/ITP Employers KCFG KMFG KHFG I4C	Y1 – establish shared engagement routes and pilot support. Y2 – widen SME participation in design and delivery.	A more coordinated SME support and brokerage offer is in place, helping small firms navigate the skills system and engage with the right education partners for training and placements through simpler shared processes. This should reduce administrative burden,	Progress will be measured through: • the number of SMEs supported through the brokerage offer • the number engaging in training, placements or co-design activity • repeat participation by SMEs • use of shared processes or support tools

	simple, shared processes that minimise admin and make repeat participation realistic.			Y3 – review effectiveness and sustain the approach.	widen SME participation and make repeat engagement in the local skills system more realistic across LSIP sectors.	• employer/provider feedback on ease of navigation, reduced burden and the value of coordinated support.

This table will be treated as a* ***live document* *and updated as needed throughout the three-year LSIP cycle.*
***Where baselines are not already available, they will be established in Year 1. Monitoring will include counts of employers meaningfully engaged through co-design, placements, mentoring, curriculum input or take-up of provision; changes to curriculum or delivery models; learner starts, participation and completion where available; and progression into priority provision, work experience, apprenticeships or employment. Timescales are intentionally concise and show the main delivery focus in Year 1, Year 2 and Year 3, with Year 1 centred on design and piloting, Year 2 on embedding and scaling, and Year 3 on review, refresh and sustained implementation.*

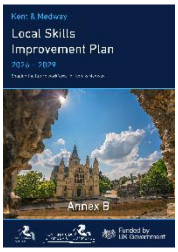
Existing and emerging national and local initiatives will support delivery of the actions identified within the LSIP, providing additional routes into work, progression and upskilling aligned to employer demand. These include Connect to Work, Skills Bootcamps, Sector-based Work Academy Programmes (SWAPs), pre-employment and supported employment programmes, apprenticeships (including Foundation Apprenticeships), T Levels and Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQs), delivered through local partners including DWP, Local Authorities, Further and Higher Education providers, Independent Training Providers and employer-led networks across Kent and Medway. Collectively, these initiatives will strengthen access to opportunities for a diverse range of learners and jobseekers, including those who are economically inactive or unemployed, young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET), individuals with experience of the criminal justice system, and Armed Forces service leavers, ensuring the local skills system supports inclusive progression across all priority sectors.

Guide to Abbreviations

LSIP	Local Skills Improvement Plan	**DWP**	Department for Work and Pensions
KICC	Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce	**LA's**	Local Authorities (Kent County Council and Medway Council)
ERB	Employer Representative Body	**KCFG**	Kent Construction Focus Group (Employer Forum)
FE	Further Education	**KMFG**	Kent Manufacturing Focus Group (Employer Forum)
SECTEC	South East Construction Technical Excellence College	**KHFG**	Kent Hospitality Focus Group (Employer Forum)
HE	Higher Education	**I4C**	Industry 4 Council
ITP's	Independent Training Providers	**GTA**	Group Training Association
KATO	Kent Association of Training Providers	**iCCi**	Institute of Cultural and Creative Industries

The Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce, as the designated Employer Representative Body for the Kent & Medway Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP), leads coordinated engagement across employers, education and training providers, and local stakeholders. This role includes supporting implementation of the LSIP's priorities, reviewing the plan in response to emerging evidence and employer intelligence, and reporting annually on progress and outcomes. Further evidence, insight and the agreed actions that support delivery of the LSIP are provided in the Annexes, available at kentemployerskillsplan.org or via the QR code.

Annex A – Further Information on Skills Needs



Annex B – Detailed Delivery Activity

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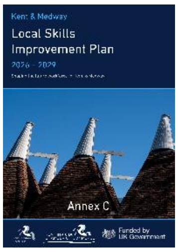

Annex C – Background & Methodology

Annex D – Kent & Medway Education Landscape

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