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Dorset Local Skills Improvement Plan

August 2023

**Dorset
LSIP** | Delivered by:
 **Dorset
Chamber**

This Local Skills Improvement Plan has been approved by the Secretary of State in line with the approval criteria set out in the [Skills and Post-16 Education Act 2022](#), and in accordance with the [LSIP statutory guidance](#)

Placing employer needs right at the heart of the local skills system - a welcome policy evolution.

Since the launch of the Dorset Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) process in November 2022, Dorset Chamber has worked with a wide range of stakeholders including other ERB partners, employers, education and training providers, and organisations who support learners and people not-in-employment. We have targeted and spoken to small and micro businesses who are typically unheard across the sectors and the county. Our approach has been collaborative and focused on constructive partnership working.

The review has identified a wide range of issues, some of which are challenging and embedded. Through the process we have learnt that assumptions are made by many and that some historical perceptions and attitudes continue to be entrenched.

Conversations have been engaging, honest and, at times, controversial. We have heard how many young people are anxious or unprepared when starting in their first job, how FE funding works, how employers are struggling to recruit and cover rising costs, and how many feel that they have little or no time to consider future skills needs or carbon reduction in their businesses.

Dorset Chamber has added value by using new communication and collaboration processes to develop clearer insights to enhance our employer understanding. We have sought to identify appropriate and viable actions to create change. In doing so, we are highlighting the skills gaps, generational differences, a climate emergency, labour shortages and recruitment challenges, a shrinking workforce, a lack of affordable housing, transport issues and the impact of rising costs for all.

Dorset has clear strengths to build on. This includes new and expanding businesses, skilled apprentices, and an education and training system that is passionate about its learners and supports their transition to and ongoing development in the workplace.

The need for long-term change is clear. The next stage of the Dorset LSIP must result in the development of a coherent strategy, underpinned by a clear action plan involving all parties. We must ensure that we understand the skills that businesses need now and, in the future, and evolve provision to meet these needs.

I am excited about what we can achieve together and am looking forward to the next stage of the LSIP process. I would like to thank all our partners and stakeholders for their support and positive approach to this review and look forward to building a stronger workforce in Dorset together.

Ian Girling

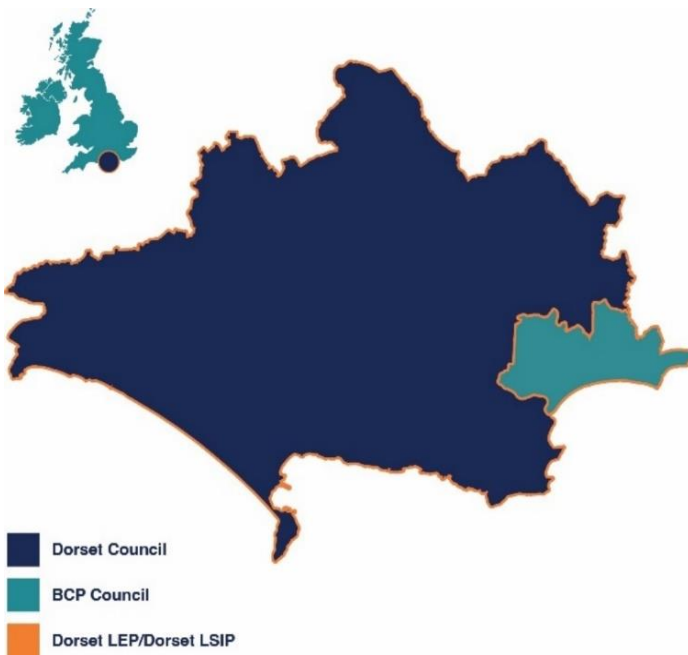
Chief Executive, Dorset Chamber

August 2023

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The LSIP reflects what employers in 5 key sectors (Health and Social Care, Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering including Aerospace, Defence and Marine, Construction; Digital Technology and Creative; Agriculture, Agri-tech and Aquaculture) in Dorset need from Post 16 technical education and training now and in the near future. It sought to understand what Net Zero and digital skills are required in all sectors.

Current national, regional, local and sector data has been analysed to establish what's already known. New primary research was commissioned, targeting small and micro businesses.

The key findings are inextricably linked to the current economic context and the evolution of the workplace which is influenced by the cost of living, pandemic recovery, and Brexit:

- There is a strong demand for labour alongside a declining supply of labour linked to an aging population and workforce
- Dorset's economy is dominated by small and micro businesses
- Dorset is a popular place to live with areas of significant wealth and deprivation. House prices continue to be significantly higher than the national average while average total wages across the Dorset area continue to be lower than the national average
- Health is Dorset's biggest employment sector which is experiencing extensive labour shortages. Employers find it hard to attract applicants and there is low staff retention
- The advanced engineering and manufacturing sector is locally well established. Employers are struggling to recruit skilled staff while needing to reskill its workforce to meet the needs of technological change
- Construction is predicted to grow to become Dorset's second biggest employment sector by 2035, vacancies are at a 20 year high with a current and future need for skilled trades
- Digital tech and creative is a fast-growing sector creating high paid jobs. Qualified software developer/engineer was the fifth most in demand job in Dorset in 2022; and has been for the past few years
- The Dorset agriculture and agri-tech sector is part of the local employment landscape. It has an aging workforce requiring new entrants to have traditional farming skills alongside knowledge of modern farming technology and techniques
- Digital skills are required in all sectors at all levels, from functional IT to AI (Artificial Intelligence)
- Mathematics and data handling skills (Excel) are needed in all sectors at all levels
- Employers often value the right 'work readiness' behaviours over technical skills that can be taught
- Apprenticeship programmes are generally well regarded by employers. 2021/22 starts are below the level seen prior to 2018/19
- Dorset's offer of co-developed technical education programmes is primarily in apprenticeships, while other employer facilitated programmes i.e. Skills Bootcamps, T-levels are in their infancy or about to be launched
- A lack of understanding of the benefits of technical training and emerging career opportunities is negatively impacting on demand
- Learners do not know enough about the skills Dorset employers' value and why, to make informed decisions.

There are steps Dorset employers, providers and learners can take to improve the status quo. We can enhance the way the existing countywide offer is communicated, articulate better the skills demands of employers and

highlight new career opportunities for learners. In parallel we can encourage bolder recruitment, a more inclusive and global workforce, and support all learners to be better prepared for their entry or re-entry into the world of work.

Introduction

It is an exciting time to be living and working in Dorset.

Dorset offers an exceptional rural, urban, and coastal environment. Half the region is a designated area of outstanding natural beauty, home to the Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site, whilst BCP Council is the tenth-largest urban local authority in England.

Dorset's £18+ billion GVA economy is strong and resilient. Approximately 52,000 businesses are based here, with low churn and high survival rates. Dorset is the UK's top area for high growth digital businesses, second fastest-growing area for start-ups and third fastest growing financial sector with a strong entrepreneurial culture.

The LSIP builds on well-established county-wide strategic relationships and a solid understanding of skills data, led by the Dorset Local Economic Partnership (LEP). The skills system is largely deemed to be good with relevant public sector organisations confident they are doing the best they can with the resources available.

In the six months since the LSIP process was launched Dorset Chamber has focused on increasing the visibility of a wide range of employers' skills and workforce needs. The report outlines what we know and can project followed by a collation of what is happening now, planned to happen and could happen to affect change.

This LSIP is an on-going process, the product of feedback from employers, and a high level of engagement by stakeholders and partners. Success will be a collective challenge to the status quo, more piloting of new ways of working, more outward-facing behaviours and active partnerships, and more shared goals and measures.

1.0 The Dorset Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP)

1.1 Objectives

The Skills for Jobs white paper set out the Government's blueprint for reshaping the technical skills system in England to better meet the needs of employers and the wider economy. As part of this new approach, the Department for Education (DfE) has introduced LSIPs. Dorset Chamber bid for and was selected as the Employer Representative Body (ERB) in Dorset to develop and monitor this local change process with partners including the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) and Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP).

The LSIP is a new approach, putting employers at the heart of technical skills education. It provides a credible and coherent employer view of the unmet and future skills needs of local employers that are needed to: enable local economic growth, boost productivity, and improve employability and progression for learners.

The agreed focus was five sectors deemed by the Dorset Skills Advisory Panel & Board (SAPB) to be growing and innovating in Dorset: health and social care, advanced manufacturing and engineering including aerospace, defence and marine, construction, digital technology and creative, and agriculture, agri-tech and aquaculture as well as two key cross cutting themes Net Zero, and digitalisation.

The Dorset LSIP captures employers' view of skills, capabilities, or expertise they require and identifies viable actions for change through research and meaningful dialogue between employers, skills providers, and other stakeholders. The voice of employers not always heard was deliberately sought, including those in micro and small businesses.

The LSIP considers the drivers, context and the specific curriculum changes needed to meet employers' skills demands. This is not a straightforward task. The language of education and business is different. Interpretations of what a skill is vary. Employers are often not able to respond to questions in specific ways. Through our research we have identified that when asked about skills, employers often focus not on 'knowledge' or 'skills' but more on behaviours and attitudes.

The LSIP sets out actionable priorities and recommendations for employers, providers and other partners to meet technical skills needs and become more responsive to the changing needs of employers. The priorities and recommendations add value to relevant local strategies and join-up with other parts of the local skills system, for example those working with learners from disadvantaged backgrounds or with special educational needs and disabilities.

The LSIP also describes the skills, capabilities and expertise required in relation to digitalisation and jobs that directly contribute to or indirectly support Net Zero targets and adaptation to Climate Change.

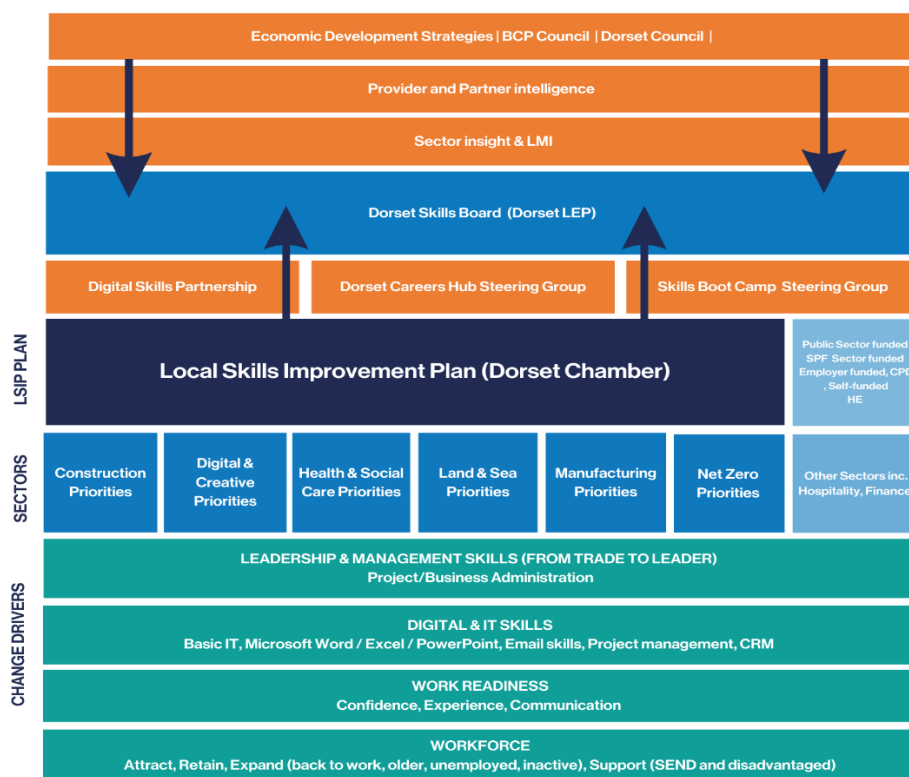
The Dorset LSIP will be an approximately 3-year process; this report and plan is the culmination of the first stage. The plan will be refined, regularly reviewed and updated as required by [DfE statutory guidance](#) to June 2025.

1.2 Strategic context and skills landscape

There has been no lack of commitment to strategic planning and ambition in Dorset, which continues. The [Dorset Skills Advisory Panel and Board \(SAP&B\)](#) supports the growth of an inclusive economy with a highly skilled workforce. The Board provides the collective strategic leadership for skills and employment activity across Dorset and in this role has provided a pan Dorset steer for the LSIP process. It consists of 20 members including representatives of key business sectors, economic development expertise from the local Councils as well as Higher and Further Education sectors and Independent Training Providers. Currently not all provider types of technical education are represented on the Board, for example school sixth forms and specialist colleges, and this is being addressed as the group becomes the LEP enabled and funded Dorset Skills Board. As the well-established strategic leadership body for skills, it will also continue to provide the steering group for the LSIP to June 2025.

In 2022, the SAP&B published a [local skills report 2022](#), [annex of core indicators](#) and [action plan 2020-2022](#). The LSIP seeks to build on this knowledge base and ambitions, talking directly to employers about their skills and training needs experiences.

Figure 1: Dorset Skills Board



There is strong political support for the local skills agenda. The two local authorities in the Dorset LSIP area, [BCP Council](#) and [Dorset Council](#), both name skills as a priority in their respective economic development policies. BCP Council recently published their [Skills Plan 2022-2026](#) which notes that a *'focus on strong collaborations between employers and educational providers ... is now essential'*. BCP Council has identified four priorities their skills plan will address: Sustainable Productivity, Work and Place Centric Delivery, Smart Collaboration and Learning for Life.

Dorset Council appointed in April 2023 a new Portfolio Holder for People – Children, Education, Skills & Early Help which has brought Skills to higher-level visibility in this area. [Dorset's Economic Growth Strategy](#) states that: *'investment in people and skills is crucial to delivering clean and inclusive economic growth and increasing resilience against future economic shocks such as COVID-19. Raising aspirations and developing skills sets are crucial to improving social mobility and overcoming deprivation. There are issues of concern across Dorset, and very evident in the more populated areas of Weymouth and Portland.'*

Both Councils declared a climate emergency in 2020, shortly after the new councils were formed following local government reorganisation and are committed both to their organisations' and to their communities' transition to Net Zero.

Mature education system

Dorset is home to three universities, three further education colleges, independent training providers, a specialist college, school sixth forms which offer technical qualifications and businesses training in-house.

Declining working age population

Dorset is an increasingly popular place to live,¹ but with a declining working age population, particularly in Dorset Council area. In 2021, the population was estimated at nearly 782,000 residents of which 58.7% were of working age, significantly lower than the national average, 62.9%.² Projections suggest Dorset's population will continue

¹ ONS population estimates (2021), Annex B, Graph 1

² ONS – Annual Population Survey, 2021, Annex B, Graph 1.1

to grow and at a faster rate than nationally, particularly over 65's, while the working age population will continue to fall further to approximately 55% by 2033 then to circa 52% by 2043. The Dorset 2019 Employer Skills Survey found that 17% of all respondents cited an aging workforce as a recruitment concern, but that few were looking at creative ways to mitigate this challenge.³

Productivity gap

Dorset's LSIP area GVA was £18.2bn in 2020.⁴ Dorset, as with many other rural areas, continues to experience a significant productivity gap against the national average. When measured by the 'GVA per hour' basis labour productivity is only c88% of UK average, on a 'per job' basis it is lower, 84%.⁵ Despite local interventions there has been no marked improvement in relative terms on either measure over the past 10-20 years. Across the UK, productivity growth has been muted for many years and this has been accentuated by the impact of Covid.

As with most areas, the Dorset economy is dominated by small and micro businesses (85% have less than 10 employees, 97% 1-49 employees).⁶ Small and micro businesses continue to grow in number, while the number of medium and large are falling. Many of these small businesses are time and cash poor – meaning that training and upskilling can often come under pressure. They are less likely to have formal training plans in place when compared to larger businesses.

High employment

In quarter 1 2023, [The Bank of England](#) reported employment intentions remained stable nationally. UK firms are expected to maintain headcount over the coming year. After a strong local history of having higher employment rates compared to the UK average, it fell from March 2020 until it reached national level in June 2020. December 2022 data shows employment rates rising above average with Dorset's rates near a historical high across the area.⁷ 79.7% of the Dorset working age population are economically active (UK 78.5%). Approximately 20% of the Dorset working age population are now classified as economically inactive, most of whom are either 16-24 or 50-64 and only 1-in-6 want a job. IPPR research suggests economic inactivity patterns mask rises in those out of work due to long-term ill health, which costs the UK economy £43bn a year. Self-employment is prevalent in Dorset, 12% (9.5% England).⁸

Strong demand for labour

Jobs growth has been strong locally and regionally over the past twenty years, although it has slowed in more recent years. Over the past decade, jobs growth in Dorset has broadly mirrored the national profile.⁹

Counter to the national picture of softening demand, 2023 started strongly in terms of the scale of vacancies advertised in Dorset. In 2022 Dorset experienced continued strong demand for labour, which was reflected in record high numbers of job postings, c84,500 vacancies.¹⁰ Overall recruitment in Dorset continued to be high in 2022, exceeding the previous two years, particularly during the summer months. Dorset saw a higher growth in vacancies which were up 31% on previous year, than nationally, which was up 25%.¹¹

The largest volume of jobs advertised in 2022 were in higher-level skill occupations (Professional and Associate Professional roles); however, the highest growth was seen in lower and mid-skilled roles, i.e. Elementary (+61%), Process and Plant (+47%), Administrative (+38%), Caring (+37%) and Skilled Trades (+35%).¹² Reasons for this increase will relate to growth in these sectors and a continued lack of available staff. Anecdotally, Brexit is still having a significant impact, due to workers returning home or not able to relocate to the UK.

Projections for the Dorset LSIP area workforce show an increase from c400,000 in 2020 to 439,000 in 2035. This will be challenging for labour supply as there is projected increased labour demand and a projected declining

³ Dorset LEP 2020 Employment Skills Survey

⁴ ONS 2022, Annex B, Graphic 2

⁵ ONS subregional productivity, Annex B, Graph 3

⁶ Inter Departmental Business Review, 2021, Annex B, Table 12

⁷ ONS – Annual Population Survey, Annex B, Graph 14

⁸ ONS – Annual Population Survey, 2022

⁹ Lightcast, 2022, Annex B, Graph 4

¹⁰ Lightcast 2022 via Dorset LEP

¹¹ Job posting data has been used for the analysis of labour demand, however, not all jobs are advertised online and therefore this is not the total picture. There are some employment sectors, for example construction, where word of mouth is a normal recruitment method.

¹² Lightcast, 2022 via Dorset LEP, Annex B, Graph 6

supply of labour linked to aging population and workforce. The largest industries in terms of employment are predicted to remain health & social care, wholesale and retail, accommodation and food, and construction.¹³

The majority (84%) of projected employment change across the Dorset area will be driven by replacement demand, that is replacing workers already in the workforce who are projected to leave i.e. through retirement or leaving jobs. This is projected to be 204,000 jobs between 2020 and 2035. The net change, associated with growth in the economy, is projected to be 39,000 new jobs.

A more qualified workforce

Dorset has increased the proportion of workers with higher level qualifications (NVQL4+) from 30% in 2010 to 40% in 2021 with fewer holding no formal qualifications.¹⁴ However, since 2014 Dorset has slower growth than nationally, in 2021 Dorset was below national by 3.5 percentage points (ppt). In broad terms employment projections continue to show higher demand for roles/occupations with higher levels of qualifications, i.e. Level 4, degree level and above, across the LSIP area and a decline in projected demand for roles requiring lower-level qualifications. Projections suggest half of roles in Dorset area will require higher level qualifications.¹⁵ This reflects wider UK trends and is not unique to Dorset. 82% of Dorset school leavers achieve a Level 2 qualification (regarded by employers as the benchmark for employability) by the age of 19 (81.3% nationally).

The [Institute for Employment Studies](#) reports that nationally long term sick, NEET (Not In Employment or Education) young people and women are struggling to enter the workforce even as the economy continues to create jobs, which in turn is holding back growth.¹⁶

Low levels of non-working adults

Many of the working age population, considered to be fit and able to work, are employed. So, the challenge is whether the workforce can be expanded enough to meet unmet labour demand. The unemployment rate has been dropping and remains low in Dorset (3.1%) compared to UK (3.6%). In quarter 1 2023 unemployment hit a historic low in the Dorset Council area dropping to an estimated 1.7%. Locally the number of people claiming out of work benefits has plateaued at one percentage point higher than prior to the pandemic (2.9%). The proportion of young people (18-24yrs) claiming out of work benefits in Dorset is just above the whole workforce unemployment rate (3.5%) and is also nearly one percentage point higher than pre-pandemic levels, following national trends.¹⁷

Local authorities track and support the re-engagement of 16- and 17-year-olds participating in education, employment and training. Over the past 3 ½ years both local councils have maintained NEET (not in education, employment or training) and not known destinations below national (3.0%) average, although suitable provision for NEETs to reengage is an ongoing issue for both BCP and Dorset Councils.¹⁸

Between July and September 2021, 53.5% of disabled people aged 16 to 64 years in the UK were employed compared with 81.6% of non-disabled people.¹⁹ 5.1% of adults (18+) with a learning disability known to their local authority in England are in paid work.²⁰

Challenging labour market

The low unemployment rate, particularly in the Dorset Council area, taken with the increase in vacancies and national employment rates rises indicate near full employment, this is a challenging recruitment market for employers. Unmet demand for labour has been impacting productivity, in 2020 the majority of Dorset employers noted that skills gaps impacted their productivity, and half felt it was negatively impacting their profitability and growth:

- 61% of Dorset employers had at least one vacancy that was hard to fill (national average 44%)
- Half of vacancies (49%) in Dorset were hard to fill, compared to 37% nationally

¹³ [Working Futures \(2020 to 2035\)](#). Annex B, Graph 7

¹⁴ ONS Annual Population Survey, 2021. Annex B, Graph 8

¹⁵ [Working Futures \(2020 to 2035\)](#). Annex B, Graph 10

¹⁶ ONS Labour Market Statistics, Institute for Employment Studies April 2023

¹⁷ ONS Claimant Counts. Annex B, Graph 13

¹⁸ NCCIS via BCP Council and Dorset Council. Annex B, Graph 15

¹⁹ [ONS – Labour Force Survey 2021](#)

²⁰ NHS Digital, 2021

- One third of vacancies were specifically caused by skill shortages (one quarter nationally).²¹

It is challenging to attract workers to the area as the average house price is significantly above the UK average²² and Dorset's average total wage (£26,600) continues to be lower than the national average (£28,000). There is a wide distribution of earnings across the workforce – with estimates that 23% of workers across Dorset earn less than the national living wage compared to 17% nationally.²³ Some progress has been made in closing the gender pay gap in Dorset, but locally females in full-time roles typically earn c80% of male full-time earnings.

1.3 Sectors

Whilst all post-16 technical education or training is in scope, a LSIP focusses on the most pressing skills issues in an area, informed by local economic strategies and employment and skills plans. In defining the scope of the Dorset LSIP, Dorset Chamber sought to add most value by drawing on existing data and analysis, facilitating meaningful dialogue between employers and partners, building on, and joining up specific sectoral skills initiatives and championing the voice of employers.

National Skills Priorities have been agreed across Government in areas with high volumes of vacancies which are expected to increase; long-term structural barriers to recruitment, retention, and progression issues; and in key growth areas such green jobs,²⁴ the creative industries and science and technology (including AI and quantum computing). These sectors are: construction; manufacturing; digital and technology; health and social care; haulage and logistics; engineering; science and mathematics.

Five sectors were identified for LSIP Stage 1 in Dorset and agreed by the SAPB: health & social care; advanced manufacturing & engineering; construction; digital technology & creative; agriculture, agri-tech and aquaculture. (Listed in £ value size). The sectors were pinpointed by reviewing the Dorset Local Skills Report 2022, the BCP Council Economic Development Strategy 2021-2026, and the Dorset Council Economic Growth Strategy. Subsequently, BCP Council published the BCP Skills Plan 2022-2026 which confirmed these are important growth or innovation sectors in Dorset. Priority sectors will be revisited when planning for Stage 2.

Health & Social Care

Health is Dorset's biggest employment sector (55,000 staff) being the largest part of the labour market (16.3%) versus in England (13.3%).²⁵ The National Health Service is by far the largest employer in Dorset, also accounting for approximately 9% of all vacancies in 2022, over 5 times as many as the second largest employer, J.P.Morgan. This sector is one of the biggest contributors to the local economy contributing £1.9bn, 10.6% GVA. It has experienced one of the biggest increases since 2010.²⁶ It is also forecast to be Dorset's biggest employment growth sector.²⁷

Caregiver / personal care aid / care assistant (LEP 2022 round up for the SAPB) was the 2022 job in greatest demand by a significant margin (4,938) in Dorset. Nurses (2,456) were the fourth most in demand.²⁸ Typically these roles were posted 5 times before being filled. This is not a new challenge, these are roles that were identified as hard to fill in 2019's Employer Skills Survey: nurses, carers, physiotherapists.²⁹

Skills for Health, who represent the healthcare workforce, estimate that staff turnover in Dorset is 46% compared to the England average, 30%. They go on to say that not all turnover results in workers leaving the sector, around half (49%) of starters remain within the adult social care sector but employers still need to backfill these posts. "Only 44% of direct care workers hold a qualification of Level 2 and above. There is no regulatory requirement for care workers to hold a qualification in England."³⁰

²¹ Employer Skills Survey, 2020. Published in Dorset LEP Local Skills Report

²² UK House Price Index, March 2023

²³ ONS – Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings, 2021

²⁴ The Office for National Statistics defines a green job as "Employment in an activity that contributes to protecting or restoring the environment, including those that mitigate or adapt to climate change."

²⁵ ONS – Business and Employment Register. Annex B, Graph 16 & 17

²⁶ ONS – Regional gross value added 2020. Annex B, Graph 18

²⁷ [Working Futures \(2020 to 2035\)](#). Annex B, Graph 7.

²⁸ Lightcast 2022

²⁹ Employer Skills Survey, via Dorset LEP Local Skills Report 2020

³⁰ Skills for Care, who represent adult social care.

Advanced manufacturing & engineering including Aerospace, Defence and Marine

The sector is well established in Dorset, a significant hub for advanced engineering with companies such as BAE Systems, Draken (previously Cobham), Honeywell, Holt Engineering, Curtis-Wright, Magellan Aerospace and many more. It is one of the largest sectors, employing 31,000 employees and 9.2% of the workforce (England 7.5%).³¹ It contributes £1.7bn to the local economy (9.4% GVA).³² The current workforce is aging,³³ new recruits with the right skills are in short supply and overseas workers are now not able to fill gaps. It is male-dominated, with 1-in-5 of the workforce female.

The sector has been growing and now has 1,000 businesses.³⁴ The majority are micros (89%) or small businesses (7%). Most notably, the early months of 2023 have seen vacancies increasing, more than tripling in manufacturing from 2019.³⁵ Skills gaps and shortages are cited by manufacturers as one of the main barriers to their business growth. The 2019 Employer Skills Survey noted that engineering (systems & technical) jobs were hard to fill. Recent feedback by regional manufacturers via the SWMAS Barometer highlighted that consistently for around three-quarters of manufacturers, the availability of suitably skilled staff is having a negative impact on their business.

Engineering and manufacturing are predicted to be the biggest areas of employment decline in Dorset over the next twenty years, mainly driven by adaption to automation.³⁶ The rapid pace of technological change demands a workforce with the ability to adapt rapidly and take on new tasks and responsibilities that require different and often higher skillsets.

Construction

The construction sector is projected to become Dorset's second biggest employment growth sector by 2035,³⁷ currently the eighth. Recruiting enough employees to fulfil need will be arguably its greatest challenge. Currently there are approximately 5,500 businesses in Dorset and 17,000 staff.³⁸ The construction industry contributes £1.2bn (6.6%) to the local economy.³⁹ It is dominated by micro businesses and many of these businesses will have an informal approach to training.

Construction vacancies recently hit a 20 year high. In 2021 over a third (34%) of employers suggested that they have skills gaps, compared in 14% in 2018 and 20% in 2016. The strong demand for construction work from 2020 combined with the end of free movement and lower numbers of self-employed workers, are factors that have contributed to faster wage increases and skilled worker shortages. The major sectors for demand are expected to relate to private housing, infrastructure and repair and maintenance. Among the construction jobs that were hard to fill in 2020 were plumbing, electrical, and carpentry.⁴⁰

Use of Modern Methods of Construction (MMC), using premanufactured value to improve productivity is seen as part of the solution.⁴¹ Dorset is home to the largest manufacturer on the South Coast servicing, housing, education, health and the MOD. There is a need to build capabilities in the client, consultant, and wider supply-chains to specify, design, project manage and evaluate MMC delivery against more traditional approaches. Dorset is well placed to support this agenda.

Digital Tech & Creative

In 2021, there were approximately 3,000 businesses⁴² employing 9,000 employees⁴³ with 20,000 people in Dorset in roles associated with the sector.⁴⁴ This is a fast-growing sector that contributes £632m (3.5%) to the local economy.

³¹ ONS – Business and Employment Register Annex B, Graph 16 &17

³² ONS – Regional gross value added 2020. Annex B, Graph 18

³³ Dorset Employer Skills Survey via Dorset LEP Local Skills Report 2020

³⁴ Nomis UK Business Counts, 2022

³⁵ Lightcast, 2023

³⁶ [Working Futures \(2020 to 2035\)](#), Annex B, Graph 7.

³⁷ [Working Futures \(2020 to 2035\)](#), Annex B, Graph 7

³⁸ ONS – Business and Employment Register, Annex B, Graph 17

³⁹ ONS – Regional gross value added 2020. Annex B, Graph 18

⁴⁰ Employer Skills Survey via Dorset LEP Local Skills Report 2020

⁴¹ Modernise or die: The Farmer Review of the UK construction labour model

⁴² Nomis UK Business Counts, 2022

⁴³ ONS – Business and Employment Register

⁴⁴ Lightcast, 2021

The digital tech and creative sectors have seen some of the largest increases in labour demand across the UK. This sector has significant vacancies, the early months of 2023 have seen vacancies more than tripling in IT from 2019. Roles such as software developers are consistently among the most sought-after roles across the UK and the fifth most in demand job in Dorset in 2022. They have been consistently in demand in Dorset and nationally for the past few years as noted in Dorset LEP and BCP Skills Plans.⁴⁵ This sector also creates high skilled high paid jobs. Bournemouth and areas of rural Dorset are part of the 5G pilot, a roll-out of high-speed internet.

Agriculture, Agri-tech & Aquaculture

Dorset is part of the South West region which has nearly a quarter of the UK's agricultural holdings with more cattle, calves, sheep and lambs than any other region and nearly 350,000 hectares of arable land.⁴⁶

In the agriculture sector there are approximately 2,250 businesses in Dorset, the vast majority of whom have less than five employees (96%).⁴⁷ The number of employees has grown significantly in the past 8 years; 3,000 employees directly employed⁴⁸ and 8,000 jobs in associated occupations.⁴⁹ Predictions of Dorset's employment for this sector for 2035 show small growth compared to the overall Dorset picture, but significant growth for the sector.⁵⁰

The sector has particular concerns about how to support an aging workforce to gain skills required for the fast-changing technological landscape.⁵¹ A national survey of the sector found that both the availability of labour and access to staff with the requisite skills continue to be an issue. Many parts of the agrifood sector are affected by significant staff shortages, particularly at peak times such as harvesting. These recruitment difficulties have been accentuated by the pandemic and Brexit. It is also now being affected by competition for staff, which is increasing the cost of labour through higher wages being demanded by employees.⁵²

The Dorset agriculture and manufacture of food and beverages sectors contributed 2.8% to the local economy in 2020.⁵³ Dorset's sustainable aquaculture has been identified by Dorset LEP as a high potential opportunity likely to create apprenticeships, jobs and growth.⁵⁴

1.4 Project approach

The Dorset LSIP project was designed by Dorset Chamber; the SAPB was consulted on the approach and agreed the key sectors. Primary quantitative and qualitative research was commissioned to capture employers' current and future skill needs and a satisfaction baseline. Particular focus was put on seeking the views of small and micro businesses. Further detail about the methodology of commissioned research can be found in Annex B. Analysis of the labour market and skills locally, regionally, and nationally was conducted by Dorset LEP.

Dorset Chamber, as the Employer Representative Body (ERB), has worked iteratively with stakeholders including the [Federation of Small Businesses](#) (FSB) employers, providers, local stakeholders such as [BCP Council](#), [Dorset Council](#) and [Dorset LEP](#), [Dorset Careers Hub](#), [DWP](#) and many others (full list in Annex B) to build up a credible, evidence based and actionable LSIP. Regularly sharing insights and data to gather feedback and maintain participation. The intention of the project team is to make the Dorset LSIP as collaborative as possible, building opportunities at each stage for stakeholders to shape the plan.

The LSIP team held two consultation events for all Dorset stakeholders: a launch event on 4 November 2022 and a draft findings workshop 24 February 2023. Throughout the process the LSIP team has attended stakeholder meetings and networking events including Dorset and Somerset Training Provider (DSTPN) network meetings, Dorset Careers Hub events, and the Digital Skills Partnership Board (a full list in Annex B). Employer and sector events were attended throughout the process to encourage employer engagement and feedback i.e. Maritime UK Southwest, Gillingham Show.

⁴⁵ Lightcast, 2022

⁴⁶ NFU

⁴⁷ Nomis UK Business Counts, 2022

⁴⁸ ONS – Business & Employment Register, Annex B, Graph 17

⁴⁹ Lightcast, 2022

⁵⁰ [Working Futures \(2020 to 2035\)](#) Annex B, Graph 7

⁵¹ Employer Skills Survey via Dorset LEP Local Skills Report 2020

⁵² [Labour and skills in the horticulture and agriculture sectors in England, 2023: Summary report](#)

⁵³ ONS – Regional gross value added 2020. Annex B, Graph 18

⁵⁴ Dorset LEP Local Skills Report 2020

Three stakeholder groups (learner demand group, provider group, employer engagement group) were convened to engage partners, share findings, provide insight for the process and support for the actionable priorities. (Annex B)

The external research team and the LSIP project team have shared updates and findings with neighbouring LSIP areas: Somerset and Devon, Hampshire, Business West (Swindon & Wiltshire; Gloucestershire; and West of England LSIPs) along with areas that have similar key sectors e.g. Sussex.

2.0 Employer Needs – Taking forward the LSIP priorities

2.1 New research

New research was commissioned to capture local business owners' satisfaction with current and future skill levels. 267 eligible employers responded to our online survey between December 2022 and March 2023: agriculture (38); advanced manufacturing & engineering (45); construction (52); digital tech & creative (83); health care (49).

In follow up to the survey, eighty semi-structured interviews were conducted in the key sectors: advanced engineering & manufacturing (17), agriculture and agri-tech (13), construction (17), digital tech (15), health & social care sector (18) Recruitment continued until the interviews provided no further insights.

[Six reports](#) have been published which describe the final themes in detail and provide a clear representation of the views of employers interviewed regarding skills deficits, the causes of these deficits, potential solutions and progress to net-zero.

Achieving the response rate to the survey and interview recruitment was challenging, timelines were extended and significant effort was made by the LSIP team, research team and partners to encourage participation including direct recruitment approaches. Lack of time, lack of trust in any impact and other priorities were all given as reasons to not take part. Further details on methodology in Annex B.

The baseline survey of 267 employers 'somewhat agreed' that their employees have the required skill levels to perform specific job-related tasks. When comparing sector responses, healthcare and digital tech businesses were most satisfied with employee technical skills, averaging 5.5 on a 7-point scale. Advanced manufacturing and engineering businesses and agriculture businesses outlined significantly lower satisfaction when compared with digital tech & creative sector scores for employability skills, however, overall agriculture businesses 'somewhat agreed' their employees had the right skills. Overall, no statistically significant differences were found between different sector responses to technical skill satisfaction. (Annex B, Table 21).

Survey respondents had varying experiences of training delivery; most use in-house training (62%), online learning and CPD (45%), 25% mentioned apprenticeships, 25% independent training providers, 18% colleges. 11 mentioned Skills Bootcamps. (Annex B, Graph 20).

Net Zero findings

The first questionnaire and qualitative interviews explored Net Zero preparedness. Following these initial findings, it was felt that greater insight was required. An additional survey was conducted with 202 businesses (116 micro businesses and 86 larger businesses) and 9 further qualitative interviews.

Sector focus groups with employers are planned throughout Stage 2 to continue to refine the findings and work through solutions.

2.2 Sector findings

Based on the survey data, interviews, vacancy analysis and sector engagement the key themes and findings were:

- Labour shortages. A lack of any labour, skilled or unskilled, was the most common first response from employers interviewed. Many struggled to separate skills needed from the lack of labour, with several saying that the right attitude would be enough, and the employer would provide technical training
- The importance of work readiness skills. Communication skills, motivation and experience are all important
- Leadership & Management required in all key sectors
- Coding and programming needed in all sectors

- New entrants don't always have the right basic digital/IT skills e.g., Excel, Word and PowerPoint, email. Older workers need to upskill, particularly those in smaller companies
- A perception that relevant apprenticeship and courses are hard to find or have been cut. On the job training/apprenticeships are highly valued by employers when they work well. Some employers lack understanding of all training routes available and how to find the right course to meet their needs. Some showed little resilience to finding different courses or providers if they had learnt a specific course was not available
- Lack of understanding of Net Zero. Most employers know it's important but seem to not know what to do or what they need skills in. Many are keen to utilise low carbon processes and materials if cost effective
- There was no specific preference for a training format and length. All options were mentioned: bite-size, one day per week, 12 months, 2 years, online, face to face, apprenticeship.

Health and Social Care | [Sector Report](#) | [Dorset LEP Overview](#)

This is a huge and diverse sector. The priority for this sector was an extensive labour shortage, employers find it hard to find applicants and there is low retention. The perception of low-status and challenging work is a key issue for the sector.

Roles in particular demand are healthcare support workers and care assistants. Analysis of job vacancies reveals the most common job postings are support workers, care assistants, health care assistants and staff and registered nurses (over 1000 listings each).

The importance of work readiness skills was stressed, interpersonal skills such as communication skills, holding difficult conversations, and empathy are required in this sector to support patient focussed care. Employees with the right attitude for the care sector are very important, employers believe they can teach technical skills but not attitude. They felt more emphasis should be placed on developing these skills in current courses.

There is a need to upskill current and future staff with basic digital skills (word, Excel, email) to support record management and use of medical technology such as assisted living technology. This will become more commonplace, and it will be important for carers to understand how to best use it. English skills are required for report writing.

Employers wanted more dementia care to be included in training for everyone in the care sector.

Employers stressed the importance of work experience opportunities for developing key skills and an understanding of the workplace and its requirements.

Employers stated how much they value staff with experience and training. There was some challenge around the affordability of courses. There was a desire for accessible training: more online learning alongside in-house training.

Medical employers talked about leadership and management training that is tailored to medical or healthcare settings, upskilling pharmacy staff: management skills for managers, and for dispensary staff; clinical skills and higher-level skills to undertake more responsibilities. Specific occupations in demand are nurses and pharmacists.

Given the size and significance of the sector more work is required to understand its complex priorities, and this will be scoped in Stage 2.

Advanced engineering and manufacturing | [Sector Report](#) | [Dorset LEP Overview](#)

Employers described keen competition for skilled staff with other sectors or areas. Employers are struggling to recruit for skilled engineers, technicians and trade skills across Dorset. Employer survey's priority skills needs include:

- Engineering skills (mechanical, electrical, and electronic engineers) who have good foundational & practical knowledge of materials, hands-on practical skills, taking records, repairing skills, product knowledge, tools and general engineering knowledge
- Communication skills and problem solving
- Leadership and management skills
- Machinery use and maintenance. Production operatives are in current demand and so will need to adapt their skills to automated machines.

There is a current unmet, associated demand for skilled trades e.g., electricians, carpenters, and bricklayers. Upskilling current staff to use Excel, word and email continues to be important. The role of automation and increased use of electronics was expressed unanimously.

As machinery becomes more automated there will be a strong importance on having staff with programming and software skills. They will need to modify equipment and use software to organise and monitor automation and an associated need for more electronics engineers to support the automated machinery. 3D printing, AI, AR, machine-learning.

There is often highly specialist equipment, which is company specific, therefore fundamental skills to build this specialist knowledge on is important as are transferable skills. The future of the industry relies on automation and electronics and employers unanimously agreed therefore that an increased understanding of both will be essential.

Businesses place high value on candidates with formal qualifications. In-house training and apprenticeships are highly valued by employers and some surveyed wanted increased availability in Dorset and courses with more specific focus. Smaller businesses surveyed stated lack of resources to offer apprenticeships, one mentioned an untimely completion. Some stated they would benefit from more flexible timings of upskilling courses such as evening classes.

Employers surveyed were keen to have greater engagement with education (schools and colleges), some think this is lacking. Employers believe greater engagement would support curriculum design and attract more people into the sector, although some acknowledged that if short-staffed it's hard to support work experience. Some employers described a desire for people who want to work hard and who are interested in the sector. Young people were not always thought to be work ready.

[Construction](#) | [Sector Report](#) | [Dorset LEP Overview](#)

Survey responses and interviews were clear that the current skills priority is skilled trades staff due to a general labour shortage; this was also described in interviews with advanced engineering and manufacturing employers. Key trades were highlighted including carpentry, joinery, bricklaying, roofing, electrical and floorers, which is supported by job posting data.

There is an ageing workforce, so employers are aware that they need to increase new entrants and attract those who left the sector to return by making the industry more appealing and demonstrating its innovation.

Employers value a positive attitude, reliability, and work ethic (work readiness), with concerns that younger entrants lack these skills. Interviews with employers also highlighted fundamental skills, skills in accuracy and measurements, working to plans and drawings, and design skills including digital design skills. Hands-on skills are highly valued by employers, particularly as they support understanding of different techniques and products.

To support the transition to Net Zero in the sector there is a need to adapt to future materials, techniques, and modern methods of construction (MMC) such as use of prefabricated structures, and methods such as AR and AI, offsite construction, digitalisation. energy assessors, retrofit project managers, insulation installers, and heat pump installers. However, the sector representative CITB, state Net Zero, digitalisation and modern methods of construction are often seen by the industry as medium-to-long term challenges and tend to be low on the list of training needs for employers.

Employers value apprenticeships highly, although wages are low which could be a barrier to people choosing this career path. Employers would like more availability of apprenticeships as well as college courses. There was a feeling that these courses are outdated and don't include all of the latest trends. Some of the employers interviewed felt financially pressured, they described a lack of budget for upskilling, and wanted shorter courses. Achievement levels are lower than pre-pandemic levels.

Research from the CITB demonstrates similar themes with the largest increases in demand expected in occupations such as carpenters and joiners and construction managers, along with a range of technical roles. These include electronics technicians, civil engineering technicians, estimators, and valuers, as well as office-based support staff. These technical roles will become increasingly important with the need for the industry to move towards its own Net Zero ambitions through activities such as large-scale retrofitting, and increasing building carbon standards for new-builds.

Digital Tech & Creative | [Sector Report | Dorset LEP Overview](#)

This is a fast-moving sector. Job vacancy data and interviews support the view that software development and coding are the biggest skills priorities.

Software development and programming skills are in high demand in Dorset at all experience levels. Employers need multiple languages: JavaScript, Git, C#, Java, SQL, React.js adobe, python, HTML. Employers seek developers with formal qualifications who can read, write, and understand code and work as part of a team. Many self-taught developers are skilled but need the fundamentals to progress further. Other priorities include:

- Data analysis. Abilities in statistical analysis, data management and data visualisation
- Design skills. Web design, graphic design, video/photo editing and digital creativity using up to date & latest software proficiency is lacking
- Communication, collaboration, problem-solving and time management skills are as important as technical specialist skills. Client management skills were also highlighted as important, being able to juggle multiple clients and deadlines
- Small companies require a broader skill set including CRM, blogging, marketing, business skills, project management and customer support.

Employers during the interviews indicated that they would value building stronger engagement links between themselves and education providers to help build more specific education courses and post-education routes to support work readiness and skill diversity and develop work experience opportunities. Employers interviewed reported a lack of work readiness for employees coming from education. Lacking in the non-technical aspects of roles, and educational courses have not developed these sufficiently.

Agriculture | [Sector Report | Dorset LEP Overview](#)

The skills gaps present in the agriculture sector are wide ranging. Fundamental farming skills, the basic knowledge of farming principles, computer skills, maths and English literacy, animal husbandry, arable management and the operation of machinery are all said to be lacking.

In terms of future skills employers talked about effective use of modern farming technology and methods to increase efficiency on farms and move towards Net Zero targets. These will require more computer skills and higher-level maths skills to use these new technologies. A perception from employers interviewed that new entrants don't have the required level of English literacy to complete some tasks.

Employers report a lack of availability of apprenticeships which were highly valued, while smaller businesses feel a lack of funding and regulations make it hard to offer apprenticeships. On-farm work experience is seen as a crucial element. Some employers interviewed felt course content could be modernised.

Employers interviewed expressed a labour shortage and believe that there is a lack of young people coming into the industry. There were concerns about the work readiness and work ethic of new entrants, particularly young people, partly due to a lack of experience.

Employers feel further business planning skills to allow businesses to adapt and succeed in difficult circumstances are important going forward. Management skills are important for both people management and animal management.

Chainsaw handling, tractor / telehandler drivers are required. Drivers can be costly and it's challenging competing with other industries for these skills.

2.3 Cross-cutting themes

Through the research process, a number of cross cutting themes are being articulated across all sectors, work readiness, digital skills and labour demand. Net Zero, specifically skills and preparedness to meet Net Zero is a significant issue but businesses have yet to put in place plans or resources to meet this need.

Work readiness skills

Employers request work readiness as a priority within their workforce. The definition of this may vary across sectors, but at its heart lies a set of skills, attitudes and behaviours which include communication, positive attitude, customer service, problem solving, good work ethic, reliability, basic digital skills (Excel, office, emails), maths and English.

Table 1: Top skills requested by employers, 2022



Source: Lightcast, 2022

Job vacancy analysis and interviews conducted with employers supports the concerns around work readiness.

Interviews with key sector employers in advanced engineering & manufacturing, agriculture & agri-tech and construction revealed that new entrants to the workforce were sometimes described as lacking work-readiness skills. Some employers speculated that this was due to lack of experience in the workplace. Despite programmes in place to support work experience and employability skills, more is needed.

Digital tech & creative employers described that remote working required during the pandemic had resulted in current employees becoming too independent and needing to improve their communication and team-working skills.

National student surveys tell us that 23% of students report their mental health declining since starting work and 1 in 6 students are worried about their long-term career prospects.⁵⁵

Digital Skills

The need for digital skills is a reoccurring theme, from basic IT/digital skills such as use of Excel, email, word and cloud-based systems to more advanced digital skills such as CRM, project management, coding and automation (Table 1, above).

The Dorset LEP noted in 2020 that the most commonly experienced skills issues were in digital and analytical skills. A third felt staff's advanced or specialist computer skills needed developing.⁵⁶

Covid had a positive impact in terms of increasing the number of people who hold basic digital skills; however, the 'hidden middle' remains – approximately one-third of the workforce still lack essential digital skills for work.⁵⁷ Those more likely to lack essential digital skills include women, those aged 55+, those working part-time, in small or micro-businesses, those in the service sector and without formal qualifications.

The Dorset Digital Skills Partnership is a strategic group of public, private and voluntary sector organisations who support the improvement of digital skills in the area. Less than half (43%) of the UK workforce can do all 20 tasks deemed the Essential Digital Skills for Work. 58% of people say they have never received digital skills training at work.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Cibyl mental health survey, 2022

⁵⁶ Dorset LEP Local Skills Report, 2020

⁵⁷ [The 'hidden middle': Unlocking the essential digital skills opportunity \(techuk.org\)](https://techuk.org)

⁵⁸ 2022 Lloyds Bank Consumer Digital Index via Dorset Digital Skills Partnership

Net Zero | Sector Report

The first LSIP survey to 276 local businesses found that all key sectors are similarly lacking in their ability to meet the transition to Net Zero, just over half of businesses know what is required to meet Net Zero targets. A third of businesses felt their staff have the knowledge needed to meet targets. Just over a quarter (27%) felt that they had staff with required technical skills to meet targets. Only 36% of businesses felt that they had the financial capability to meet Net Zero targets.

A second Net Zero survey of 202 organisations across a multitude of sectors and 9 additional interviews were conducted for further insight. It revealed that the transition to Net Zero is considered 'a top priority', but not the 'most important' to businesses. There is a clear lack of knowledge on how to achieve the transition, businesses are 'somewhat aware' of steps required. More than 65% of businesses indicated that they had not currently measured their carbon footprint. In 2021, a national FSB survey of members found that 36 % of small businesses have a plan to combat climate change, but only 30 % have made changes to their business as a result of that plan. 69% of small businesses don't know how to measure how much carbon emissions their business produces.⁵⁹

Size of business made a difference. Larger businesses had done more work towards the transition to Net Zero, had greater motivation, and were more financially prepared for the transition to Net Zero. Smaller businesses are less financially prepared and less capable to meet the needs of the transition.

Businesses outlined a desire for trusted sources of information that can provide step-by-step roadmaps alongside clear evidence-based guidance and knowledge about new technology, equipment, and products. Interviewees stressed that government support grants and funding will be important within this, particularly from those who were concerned about the financial implications.

Job posting data showed c200 jobs posted in 2021 relating to green skills. Typically, jobs were posted twice before they were filled and were evenly spread across the two local authorities. Top recruiters predominantly included public sector bodies such as the Environment Agency, NHS, Bournemouth University, and local authorities. Large engineering firms also featured. Communication, management and planning were top skills required, while specialist skills included waste management, auditing, ISO 14000 series and environmental law.

As businesses prepare and adapt for Net Zero, workforce skills needs will change across all sectors i.e., to fulfil the 2030 carbon target it is estimated the UK needs 170,000 more workers to qualify per year than currently available in areas such domestic retrofit, renewable heat and EV manufacturing and infrastructure.

2.4 Learner demand

A learner's route to a chosen occupation can vary massively depending on sector, course availability, learner background, location, funding and level. Learners (19+) are accessing programmes through different provider types, summarised below.

Adult Skills funded provision in Dorset

There are fewer adult learners across all subject areas in further education and training than there were five years ago (21,350 2020/21 vs 23,870 in 2017/18). There has been a significant decline in basic skills participation, Levels 2 and 3 over the past few years. However, there has been a significant increase in Level 4 participation mirroring the needs of the economy and the continued projected need for higher level qualifications.

Qualifications in health, public service & care are the most popular courses by a very significant margin (3,570 in 2020/21), most of which is at Level 2 (2,920) with much smaller levels of Level 3 (420) and even smaller Level 4 (70).⁶⁰

Provision for the digital tech & creative sector is from ICT sector subject areas and arts, media & publishing. Most of the provision for ICT is Level 2 (230 of 460 starts) small numbers at Level 3 and 100 starts at Level 4; while most of the arts, media and publishing provision is at Level 3 (170 of 210 starts).

- There were 310 starts in agriculture, horticulture and animal care within the Dorset LSIP area, the majority at Level 2 (160 2021/22), Level 1 (60), Level 3 (70).

⁵⁹ 'Accelerating Progress', FSB 2021

⁶⁰ 2020/21 data FE training and skills data enrolments & achievements

- Construction (260 starts 2021/22) in comparison to other subject areas, most further education and training activity in Construction was at Level 1 (170), with significantly fewer Level 2 (60), Level 3 (30), and 0 at Level 4
- There were 360 starts for engineering and manufacturing technologies, the majority at Level 2 (320), 40 at Level 3 and 0 at Level 4
- Lightcast provides an analysis of achievement data 2020-2022 which has been compared to average openings in jobs associated with course content. There are limitations to this approach, namely this only looks at Dorset data and doesn't allow for movement of learners geographically or sectorally, and it also doesn't account for jobseekers that are already qualified applying for jobs or for moving into a different sector of work. There are some key themes: Lack of learner demand for medicine & dentistry courses (-502), nursing and subjects and vocations allied to medicine (-844), manufacturing technologies (-527), agriculture (-295), building and construction (-147). There is an excess demand for engineering (+690)

Apprenticeships

- Apprenticeship participation has broadly been maintained over the past few years during apprenticeship reform and the disruptive influence of the pandemic. However, (21/22) starts are below the level seen prior to 2018/19⁶¹
- The most popular apprenticeships in 2021/22 were Health, Public Services & Care with over double the starts (2,040) of the next popular sector ICT (800 starts). Locally, the number of Engineering & Manufacturing apprenticeship starts dropped by nearly half in 2020/21 and have not yet recovered at 730 starts in 2021/22, while Construction apprenticeships grew to 320 starts in 2021/22. Agriculture had 130 starts. Arts, Media & Publishing (30 starts).⁶² The number of apprenticeships has been significantly impacted by the pandemic as employment sectors responded differently
- Apprenticeship participation by level has changed significantly over the past five years and now looks more even across the levels. This means that in 2021/22 there were fewer Intermediate Apprenticeships (Level 2), the number of Advanced Apprenticeships (Level 3) stayed similar, while Higher Apprenticeships (Level 4 and above) continue to show strong growth.⁶³

Learner demographics

- Apprenticeship starts were more evenly distributed by age in Dorset Council area with 1/5th under 19, 2/5th 19-24 and 2/5th 25+, in BCP just over half the starts were for 25+, around a third 19-24 and a fifth for under 19s.

Adult & Community Learning

- There has also been a fall in provision of community learning over the last few years with participation rates <50% of previous pre-Covid levels⁶⁴
- Community Learning is important for mobilising potential workers by working with unemployed people and those moving into the job market. It covers a wide range of areas such as English, maths, digital skills and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) qualifications, as well as learning aimed at developing employability skills. Community Learning also seeks to improve well-being, offers family-oriented programmes, and learning for leisure and enjoyment
- Most community learning provision is at Level 2 (equivalent to GCSE level) or below, including non-formal learning which does not lead to accreditation.

Young People's work-readiness

Two-thirds of GCSE (Y11) learners nationally identify themselves as having essential skills for life and work (69% nationally). These are a combination of creativity, problem-solving, leadership, teamwork, listening, speaking, staying positive and aiming high.⁶⁵ However, this is not always the experience shared by employers.

Perceptions of technical education

Learner demand for technical education is impacted by the perceptions of teachers, parents, employers and learners. During the LSIP process providers have talked of poor understanding of apprenticeships by employers and learners. T level events have been organised to address the poor understanding of learners. The Careers &

⁶¹ Unit for Future Skills, Annex B Graph 25

⁶² Unit for Future Skills, Annex B Table 27

⁶³ Unit for Future Skills, Annex B Table 25.1

⁶⁴ Unit for Future Skills, Annex B Graph 28

⁶⁵ Careers & Enterprise Company Future Skills Questionnaire 2023 (shared by Dorset Careers Hub)

Enterprise Company finds, nationally, that 79% of GCSE learners understand Apprenticeships, 43% understand T-levels and 58% understand other vocational routes.⁶⁶

In 2022 Dorset Careers Hub commissioned the [Dorset Young Researchers report](#) to undertake youth led research into the perceptions of Apprenticeships. They found:

- Apprenticeships are often heard about at ages 15-17 and continue to be aimed at lower attaining students
- Only 56% knew someone who did really well in an apprenticeship
- Parents perceptions of apprenticeships were formed when they were at school
- There is a difference between the Post16 options adults *think* young people are interested in compared to what young people are actually interested in
- 58% of young people associate apprenticeships with manual jobs or STEM jobs (23%).⁶⁷

This initial skills supply analysis goes some way to validate the feedback received from businesses that there is not enough skills provision at the right level in certain sector subjects to meet business needs. Analysis of the 16-18 FE data is required for a full picture of technical education.

2.5 Supply side

The supply of technical education is influenced by learner perceptions, the funding and collaboration with employers, investment in equipment and facilities, achievements and learning destinations.

Dorset is home to three universities, three further education colleges, independent training providers, a specialist college and school sixth forms which offer technical qualifications. Some businesses also deliver their own in-house training and apprenticeships.

Investment

In September 2022, the Strategic Development Fund allocated £1.5 million (capital & revenue) and supported a partnership delivery approach to two FE Colleges and BCP Council to support the delivery of electric and Hybrid Vehicles skills, a Green Construction skills Hub (Weymouth College), and Marine provision (Bournemouth & Poole College). This investment has updated equipment, upskilled staff and provided free training courses that are very short,⁶⁸ short⁶⁹ or longer in duration. Dorset will be seeking further opportunities for investment from the Local Skills Improvement Fund and elsewhere to ensure provision meets employer needs. Going forwards funding that can be used over two years would facilitate recruitment. There has been recent investment in Dorset to support the delivery of T levels. Some of the approved T level providers have benefitted from capital funding to develop the provision for these new technical programmes.

Through Accountability Agreements providers have been asked to prioritise delivery programmes that have been co-designed with employers. To date, this is primarily apprenticeship provision in Dorset where participation is stable, but volume of starts and achievements are lower⁷⁰.

Some Providers have withdrawn their apprenticeship offer this year. Skills Bootcamps have been offered in small numbers by two colleges. T levels will first be offered in Dorset from September 2023.

Apprenticeship achievement

The apprenticeship achievement rate was higher in Dorset (544 per 100,000) than national (389 per 100,000) in 2021/22. This was despite the challenges experienced nationally: some apprentices complete the sector qualifications required and then don't complete the apprenticeship; poor job retention rates in certain sectors, e.g. health and social care which has a detrimental effect on achievement levels; and an increase in providers delivering the new type of apprenticeship 'standards' designed to be more rigorous with an end point assessment (nationally 85% in 2021/22 compared to 46% 2019/20).

That said, the volume of apprenticeship achievements in 2021/22 fell across the area; to two-thirds of levels seen 2018/19 across Dorset Council and three-quarters across BCP (Annex B, Graph 26). The fall in the volume of achievements is related to the reduced number of starts noted earlier. During this current academic year 2022/23

⁶⁶ Careers & Enterprise Company Future Skills Questionnaire 2023 (shared by Dorset Careers Hub)

⁶⁷ Participation People [Perceptions of Apprenticeships: Youth Led Research Project](#) 2022

⁶⁸ 1-5 days or 30 guided learning hours

⁶⁹ 2-4 weeks or up to 120 guided learning hours

⁷⁰ Unit for Future Skills: Annex B, Graph 25

some smaller local providers have decided not to continue offering apprenticeships due to delivery being financially unviable.

Learner Destinations

The vast majority of 16-year-olds in the Dorset LSIP area progress into sustained positive education, employment or apprenticeship destinations following Year 11, remaining above England (BCP 95%, Dorset Council 94.8% vs 94.1%, 2020/21).

Most 18-year-olds (81%) go on to positive sustained destinations in the Dorset LSIP area (2020/21), higher than England (79.4%) and regional (80.6%). However, fewer young people go on to higher and further education options in Dorset LSIP area (47%) compared to nationally, 51%, although positive progress has been seen in BCP in closing this gap. The high positive destination rate locally is due to strong demand for employment options (BCP 25.0%; Dorset Council 30.8%) over education, this follows the regional trend while the national average is lower (21.1%). Following this demand for employment options, traditionally apprenticeship destinations are higher than national averages. In 2020-2021 BCP continues this tradition 7.6% but has seen a drop from the previous year which was nearly 10%. Dorset Council's apprenticeship destinations (6.0%) fell to below national (6.4%) for the first time.⁷¹

The proportion of 19+ learners from the area who sustained positive destinations the following year was 7 ppt higher in 2019/20 than nationally showing the strengths of local provision. 73% of Dorset 19+ learners had sustained employment rates (10 ppt higher than nationally).⁷²

There has been an increase in Bournemouth University undergraduate retention in Dorset: 21% of those who graduated in 2019/20 were working in Dorset up from 17% the previous year, most were originally from Dorset.⁷³

Challenges to delivering technical education

There are areas of significant deprivation throughout the area, 15 neighbourhoods concentrated in Weymouth and Portland, Bournemouth and Poole fall amongst the 10% most deprived in England (ONS Indices of Multiple Deprivation, 2019). There is an attainment gap between disadvantaged young people and their peers, and lower aspirations for destinations to higher and further education. Access to learning is challenging particularly in rural areas in Dorset where two-thirds of secondary school pupils are within 10% of the longest journeys to school in Europe⁷⁴ and the general FE Colleges are located on the edges of Dorset Council area, one of which is reported as the 3rd most isolated general FE College in the country.

There are school sixth-forms scattered throughout Dorset Council area. Within the urban conurbation there are four selective single-sex grammar schools with sixth forms, two in Bournemouth, two in Poole. The grammar schools add to a traditional narrative around Excellence in academic options.

Providers report the recruitment and retention of tutors in industry leading areas is challenging when salaries are higher in the sector areas rather than education.

Employer engagement is challenging at a time when the labour market is so tight. Employers naturally prioritise their immediate business need over medium to long term skills investment, and this was experienced directly by the project through event attendance and engagement levels.

2.6 Summary of core challenges

Alongside the labour market analysis and new evidence from the survey and interviews with local employers, anecdotal employer needs have been gathered since the launch of the LSIP process at employer networking meetings and events. There is current unmet labour demand that is impacting on businesses. Projections suggest this will continue. It is unclear whether the workforce can be expanded further, this places an imperative on fully utilising the skills of the current workforce.

⁷¹ Department for Education Data Explorer Annex B, Graph 29

⁷² Further Education: outcome-based success measures, 2019/20 Annex B, Table 30

⁷³ Office for Students 2019/20 Graduate Outcomes, data supplied by Bournemouth University

⁷⁴ Defra statistics via Dorset LEP Local Skills Report, 2020

What Dorset Employers Want

- The overwhelming need is for work ready staff who are committed and passionate not necessarily skilled, although skilled workers are also required. Employers in agriculture, healthcare and construction are concerned that there is a lack of interest from young people in their sector, however, this is not always evidenced. It could be the strong demand for labour is obscuring their view. In 2020, there was little evidence that most employers are actively looking to diversify their workforces or use recruitment and retention initiatives to attract and retain staff.⁷⁵ In turn, learners need to be able to understand and experience chosen career paths and be able to move into new sectors
- A closer relationship with education – employers envisage a deeper relationship enabling designing courses that better meet their needs and encouraging new entrants to their sectors. However, providers, and some employers, acknowledge challenges with turning this into reality due to current labour shortages
- An emphasis on the importance of work readiness skills, including communication skills using the phone and talking to people rather than texting or messaging. Young people are thought not to be work-ready by some employers, educators perceive them to have skills for a future workforce but needing experience
- Available courses of all lengths depending on their need. More apprenticeships as they are well regarded, employers need support with accessing them. There are some employers who don't know the full range of current provision available or providers delivering in the area. Online, modular courses are also required to get staff up to speed and productive fast
- A better understanding of the full range of technical provision and benefits. These are not well understood by employers or learners. Technical courses are not always given the value they deserve
- Digital skills – from basic to advanced. Older workers need upskilling with the basics e.g. Excel, Office and industry standard packages and apps. New entrants are using cloud-based IT at school and college, but most employers advertise posts seeking more traditional skills e.g. Excel, Office, email. Knowledge and use of the latest digital packages and technology to support occupation or sectors. Formal qualifications in coding are important
- English and maths remain a significant building block for future skills development across all sectors
- Leadership & management training at all levels supports career progression and business operations
- Support planning for transition to Net Zero; businesses know this is important but require the specific knowledge and understanding to be able to make a plan.

Employers' contribution

ONS concludes that employers have a key role to play too with labour market and skills demands. Employers can help people to stay in work and enable more people who are out of work to return – in particular through more inclusive recruitment practices, flexible job design, better training and support in the first few months of employment, improved line management and better access to workplace support.⁷⁶ Similarly employers can provide time for training and invest in developing a training plan.

3.0 Local Provision – Taking Forward the LSIP priorities

3.1 Why change is needed

The local system change needed now should focus on more strategic communication and collaborative processes to create the behavioural change often described and written about in other plans. A collaborative culture between some education and training providers is established in Dorset for strategic working. The LSIP provides the opportunity to widen the conversation to a larger audience of training providers and supporting operational partnerships. Not all feel equally included to date.

The Dorset LSIP process has also started a new opportunity for providers to work with employers and other enablers in a structured way to improve skills provision to meet identified local needs. This will help provision become even more responsive to employer needs and those of the local economy. This was previously identified by Dorset LEP 2020 Skills report and work has began.

⁷⁵ Dorset LEP Local Skills Report, 2020

⁷⁶ ONS Labour Market Statistics, Institute for Employment Studies April 2023

3.2 Enhancing current skills/training provision

Technical education providers are core to the plan. Through ongoing consultation, the LSIP has sought input from these stakeholders to understand current provision, opportunities, future plans and barriers.

Providers in Dorset are responsive and well-engaged with the LSIP. As a result of the regular consultation with partners throughout the LSIP Stage 1 we have already seen providers begin to respond to findings from the LSIP. Initial findings from the employer research about the importance of work readiness is being acted on. One provider is redeveloping their three-year differentiated plan (based on curriculum area), including a review of sequencing of content. The priorities have also influenced the development of projects for delivery through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund that will locally engage and upskill 700 economically inactive, unemployed, people with barriers to work or low digital skills, moving them closer to work and into better jobs with training.

Key to the LSIP are providers in scope for enhanced Ofsted inspections and those required to submit Accountability Agreements: Adult Skills and Learning, Bournemouth and Poole College, Kingston Maurward College, Weymouth College. Providers have been invited to share their current relevant provision in the key sectors and aligned to the findings, what they already plan to change and what they could deliver if resources become available. The same information was invited from stakeholders who enable technical education and providers who deliver to significant numbers in Dorset but are located outside of the area, this includes Brockenhurst College and Yeovil College who attract c40% of their students from the Dorset area.

The following table shows an overview of the current, planned and potential provision information that has been shared by providers and stakeholders. Provision has been matched to actionable priorities in the key sectors and cross cutting themes – digital and Net Zero.

| | AECC | Arts University Bournemouth | BCF Council | Bournemouth University | Brockenhurst College | Bournemouth & Poole College | CITB | Dorset Careers Hub | Dorset Chamber | Dorset Community Action | Dorset Council | Dorset Digital Skills Partnership | Dorset LEP | DSTPN | DWP | Ferndown Upper School | FSB | Kingston Maurward College | Skills & Learning | Seelec Plus (NCS) | The Colleges Partnership | Training Now | Weymouth College | Yeovil College | Young Enterprise |
|--|------|-----------------------------|-------------|------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|------|--------------------|----------------|-------------------------|----------------|-----------------------------------|------------|-------|-----|-----------------------|-----|---------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|--------------|------------------|----------------|------------------|
| Health and Social Care | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Advanced manufacturing and engineering | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Construction | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Digital tech and creative | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Agriculture, agri-tech and aquaculture | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Net Zero | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Leadership and Management | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Digital Skills and IT | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Work readiness | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Workforce expansion | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

Table 2: Current, planned and potential provision information

Independent Training Providers are highly relevant to the change process, particularly for upskilling, but as they're not required to meet new obligations for LSIP collaboration, most are currently not yet visible in the Plan. ITPs have been invited to participate and engage through the Dorset and Somerset Training Provider Network. Training Now, a Dorset-based nationwide training company specialising in practical social care, education and business apprenticeships has fully participated.

4.0 Roadmap for Change

4.1 Shaping Technical Provision for the Future

The roadmap for technical skills is based on the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education Occupational maps, with one table per sector. They identify employers' current and future skills needs alongside the ways to address these (actionable priorities) for both 16-18 year olds and existing employees/older workers.

An occupation is a set of jobs whose main tasks and duties have a high degree of similarity across a relevant sector or sectors, rather than being associated with a single employer. Apprenticeships, T Levels, and many other technical and professional programmes are based on occupations or groups of occupations.

| Health and Social Care Occupations | Current and future skills needs (sector/sub sector) | Actionable Priority: for 16-18, 19+ and upskilling adults | Stage 2: Delivery |
|--|---|---|---|
| Healthcare assistant Healthcare support worker Senior healthcare support worker Adult care worker Lead Adult Care Worker Lead Practitioner in Adult Care Leader in Adult Care Dental Nurse Dental Practice Manager | Address sector labour shortages Core care skills Dementia focused care Technology in healthcare Healthcare platforms/IT skills Patient centred care Interpersonal skills Functional skills (English, maths) Basic digital skills & Leadership and management | Signposting, sector career progression and practical work experience. Promoting awareness, understanding and availability of apprenticeships and other technical education i.e. T level in <u>Health</u> Promote available Skills for Care/WDF funded L2/L3 Work with providers i.e. Partners in Care, DSTPN. Signpost to, or develop, funded or free short upskilling and training programmes (LSIF, Boot Camps, Skills for Care/WDF, Commercial or new AEB funded programmes), against specific skills needs ie. dementia, assisted living technology, core care skills. Promote adult education courses. Multiply, IT skills. | Develop Dorset skills advice hub to provide independent advice to learners, employers. Strategic comms campaign to widen learner and employer awareness. Working Group with providers to agree implementation Deep dive with curriculum leads, sector representatives and employers to define further the specific needs of employers to understand detail and get to course level info. |

| Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering Occupations | Current and future skills needs (sector/sub sector) | Actionable Priority: for 16-18, 19+ and upskilling adults | Stage 2: Delivery |
|--|---|--|--|
| <p>Engineering manufacturing technician, Engineering maintenance technician, Manufacturing and process operative or technician Aerospace engineering technician General Welder Arc Processes Engineering fitter Design & development technician</p> | <p>Skills & people: Mechanical and electrical engineers and technicians Programming, software and automation Sustainable (Net Zero) production and manufacturing Programming and automation using new technologies i.e.. AI – AR – 3D printing Changing ways of working to adapt to automation. Lean manufacturing processes/improvements Building skills in those with sector expertise including repair and maintenance (upskilling workforce). Upskill staff to use Excel, word and email.</p> | <p>Signposting, sector career progression and practical work experience using Clearer sector focussed pathways ie. Aviation, marine, smart tech Promoting awareness, understanding and availability of apprenticeships and other technical education i.e. T level, Skill Bootcamps Signpost to, or develop, funded or free short upskilling and training programmes (LSIF, Boot Camps, Skills for Care/WDF, Commercial or new AEB funded programmes), against specific skills needs ie. programming and software skills, production operatives, manufacturing. Co-creation of curriculum with employers to produce courses which meet employer needs Promote adult education courses eg Multiply, IT skills.</p> | <p>Develop Dorset skills advice hub to provide independent advice to learners, employers. Strategic comms campaign to widen learner and employer awareness. Working Group with providers to agree implementation Deep dive with curriculum leads, sector representatives and employers to define further the specific needs of employers to understand detail and get to course level info. Attract more tutors to teach, encourage employers to second staff and equipment.</p> |
| Digital Tech and Creative Occupations | Current and future skills needs (sector/sub sector) | Actionable Priority: for 16-18, 19+ and upskilling adults | Stage 2: Delivery |
| <p>Digital front-end developer, Software development technician, Digital marketer, Marketing manager, Marketing executive, DevOps engineer, Computer science or software engineer, Creative digital design professional, Digital UX professional, Software developer, Software tester, Digital content administrator, Digital content manger, AI data specialist, Data analytics specialist, Digital business and enterprise systems architecture specialist, IT operations management, Software engineering specialist, IT consultant, Data technician, Business analyst, Data analyst, Data scientist, Data engineer</p> | <p>Programming and software skills for reading and writing code, ability to code as part of a team. Formal qualifications are preferred. Using latest software. Current and Future need for new starters. Upskill existing staff to formal qualifications. Related demand for more electronics engineers to modify equipment and use software to organise and monitor automation. Data analysis – statistical analysis, data management and data visualisation. Digital Design – web design, photo editing, digital creativity, video editing and production. Proficiency in using latest software. Smaller businesses require employees with a broader skill set. This includes: CRM, financial planning, social media marketing, project management and customer support.</p> | <p>Signposting, sector career progression and practical work experience using Clearer sector focussed pathways ie. Design pathways Promoting awareness, understanding and availability of apprenticeships and other technical education i.e. T level, Skill Bootcamps Signpost to and develop, funded or free, short upskilling and training programmes (LSIF, Boot Camps, Commercial or new AEB funded programmes), against specific skills needs ie. programming and software skills. Co-creation of curriculum with employers to produce courses which meet employer needs</p> | <p>Develop Dorset skills advice hub to provide independent advice to learners, employers. Strategic comms campaign to widen learner and employer awareness. Working Group with providers to agree implementation Deep dive with curriculum leads, sector representatives and employers to define further the specific needs of employers to understand detail and get to course level info. Attract more businesses to provide work placements i.e.. supporting T level expansion</p> |

| Construction Occupations | Current and future skills needs (sector/sub sector) | Actionable Priority: for 16-18, 19+ and upskilling adults | Stage 2: Delivery |
|--|---|---|--|
| <p>Carpentry and Joinery, Floorlayer Bricklayer, Roofing Electrician, Site Supervisor, Construction site management, Construction operatives or supervisors, Building services, Low carbon heating technician, Smart home technician</p> | <p>Labour shortages for Skills and People utilising practical traditional skills and techniques including fully qualified and competent Electricians, Carpenters, Joiners, Bricklayers, Roofers, Floorers.</p> <p>Responding to changing building environments (retrofit, building for the future, eco-needs, Net Zero)</p> <p>Design skills and in the future more digital focussed design skills</p> <p>Fundamental skills and trades i.e. mathematics, working from drawings, use of hand tools and measurements and understanding plans</p> <p>Leadership & Management</p> <p>Work readiness skills</p> | <p>Signposting sector career progression, practical work experience and technical pathways to learners</p> <p>Promoting awareness, understanding of Apprenticeships and pathways to apprenticeships to employers</p> <p>Continue to develop Green curriculum and offer funded or free short upskilling and training programmes (LSIP, Boot Camps, or new AEB funded programmes), against specific skills needs i.e. Installation and maintenance of sustainable construction/ engineering services ie. retrofit, EV charging</p> <p>Increase progression into and numbers achieving electrical Apprenticeships to 5% of population.</p> <p>Include fundamental skills within relevant courses where required</p> <p>Include Leadership & Management in L4 apprenticeships to support progression.</p> <p>Promote CITB funding Skills and Training Fund & Leadership and Management Development Fund</p> <p>Include work readiness as part of course preparation for employment</p> <p>Promote adult education courses eg Multiply, IT skills.</p> | <p>CITB New Entrant Employer Support Advisor; Coordinated campaign by providers. (LSIF)</p> <p>Develop Dorset skills advice hub to provide independent advice to learners, employers.</p> <p>Strategic comms campaign to widen learner and employer awareness.</p> <p>Working Group with providers to agree implementation</p> <p>Deep dive with curriculum leads, sector representatives and employers to define further the specific needs of employers to understand detail and get to course level info.</p> <p>Attract more tutors to teach, encourage employers to second staff and equipment.</p> |

| Agriculture Occupations | Current and future skills needs (sector/sub sector) | Actionable Priority: for 16-18, 19+ and upskilling adults | Stage 2: Delivery |
|--|---|--|---|
| <p>Animal Care Worker, Farm worker, Farmer, Farm manager, Land manager, Land based service engineer, Agricultural engineering professional, Estate manager, Agriculture support worker, Livestock unit technician, Agricultural engineering operative or technician, Agricultural engineering manager or professional, Agricultural operative or technician, Agricultural manager, Agricultural professional, Environment professional, Environment specialist</p> | <p>Skills and People Traditional skills and techniques Responding to changing environments (automation) New methods of sustainable food production and land management. Science of agriculture/land management Animal husbandry Plant machinery/ equipment maintenance and use (existing and future) IT/Technical skills(essential and specific) English skills (reading instructions, operational) Maths skills (data analysis, business planning, operations) Work readiness skills Improving financial viability of sector</p> | <p>Signposting, sector career progression and practical work experience. Growth in apprenticeships. Develop Bootcamps to meet current skills needs Promoting awareness, understanding and availability of apprenticeships and other technical education i.e. T levels Co-creation of curriculum with employers to produce courses which meet changing needs Promote adult education courses. Multiply, IT skills</p> | <p>Develop Dorset skills advice hub to provide independent advice to learners, employers. Strategic comms campaign to widen learner and employer awareness. Working Group with providers to agree implementation Deep dive with curriculum leads, sector representatives (eg NFU) and employers to define further the specific needs of employers to understand detail and get to course level info.</p> |
| CROSS CUTTING Net Zero Occupations | Current and future skills needs (sector/sub sector) | Actionable Priority: for 16-18, 19+ and upskilling adults | Stage 2: Delivery |
| <p>Environmental practitioner, Corporate responsibility and sustainability practitioner, Improvement practitioner, Improvement specialist, Improvement leader, Sustainability business specialist</p> | <p>Business leaders require understanding of requirements, approaches and resources that can be used. Understanding of new technologies and resources that can be utilised as technologies and polices evolve.</p> | <p>Develop/offer accessible courses, for whole workforce, to meet need. Embedding Net Zero learning in all delivery, tailored for sectors. Topics could include understanding of targets, improving business practice to address impact, measuring carbon footprint. Entry level 'sustainable' pathway (most are more senior level 5 +) Upskill senior leaders to embed Net Zero behaviours in planning and operations.</p> | <p>Identify and communicate/signpost to Government support and funding incentives available for meeting Net Zero targets Deep dive with curriculum leads, sector representatives and employers to embed Net Zero learning in delivery Develop a roadmap to support Dorset businesses to achieve Net Zero (enabling supply chain opportunities)</p> |

| CROSS CUTTING Occupation | Current and Future skills needs | Actionable Priority: <i>Training need/opportunity in 16-18, 19+ Upskilling</i> | Stage 2: Delivery |
|--|---|---|--|
| <p>Workforce Expansion HR Support, HR Consultant Partner, Learning and development consultant business partner, Learning and development practitioner, Recruitment consultant, Recruitment resources, Diversity and inclusion officer</p> <p>Leadership and Management Associate project manager, Project Manager, Marketing Manager, Coaching Professional, Team Leader Supervisor Operations or departmental manager Senior Leader</p> <p>Work Readiness Business administration, Business Admin, Improvement Practitioner, Employability Practitioner,</p> | <p>Labour shortages, skills gaps and skills shortages</p> <p>Leadership & Management at all levels to support progression</p> <p>Work readiness: Communication skills Problem-solving Basic IT skills (Excel, word, email) Digital skills (CRM, project management, coding & programming) Functional English & Maths skills</p> | <p>Develop free (LSIP / AEB) funded courses to meet upskilling needs.</p> <p>16-19 Providers to include opportunities for learners to develop work readiness skills, potentially co-design and co-deliver with employers, and learners to evidence them</p> <p>Signposting, sector career progression and practical work experience.</p> <p>Promoting awareness, understanding and availability of apprenticeships and other technical education routes</p> <p>Promote adult education courses. Multiply, IT skills</p> | <p>Develop Dorset skills advice hub to provide independent advice to learners, employers.</p> <p>Strategic comms campaign to widen learner and employer awareness.</p> <p>Working Group with providers to agree implementation</p> <p>Deep dive with curriculum leads and employers to define further the specific needs of employers to understand detail and get to course level info.</p> |

4.2 Stakeholder - a whole system approach: Stage 1 Recommendations

These recommendations reflect the evidence, consultation and feedback gathered since November 2022, shared in this report and online, and the system experience and leadership provided by Dorset Chamber working with the FSB, BCP and Dorset Councils, the LEP, Providers, Learner Demand teams and the SAPB. Many of these recommendations will already be happening. So, increasing visibility, joining up activity and sharing good practice will be a priority in Stage 2.

The LSIP process has highlighted employers of all sizes and sectors are being challenged right now. Cost increases and changing employee expectations are just two of many current issues. Finding employers' time to consider their skills needs and to answer research questions has not been easy. The following recommendations may not be easy to do either but are shared with the expectation there will be a positive return on investment.

It's recognised technical education and training is a competitive market with commercial drivers. It's recognised the wide-ranging pressures on skills system leaders. It has been made clear that local FE Colleges cannot afford to take commercial risks or deliver unfunded or unviable courses. Recruitment of Tutors is difficult as Providers are competing with the salaries in the relevant industries, and housing costs have risen due to a surge of early retirees and remote workers seeking the Dorset lifestyle and hybrid living. Local FE Colleges consider that employer needs are being well met and that there are no resources for significant change. Providers are already at times working in partnership with each other, and HE.

A 3-way transformation is required to ensure Dorset has a larger, more progressive workforce that will enable local economic prosperity, social cohesion, and inclusion. Employers, education and training providers, and learners, all need to evolve their beliefs, knowledge, and behaviours to better align with current and future workplace skills requirements and the fast-changing economic landscape.

It is proposed that in all cases, Public Sector bodies role model and trailblaze these recommendations and support Dorset's micro and small businesses to do so too. Supply chain support is a good place to start. Bodies such as the NHS and Councils will be galvanised in Stage 2.

Recommendation: Continue to develop the LSIP process as a facilitator for change

- Provide clarity of roles so all parties understand what to do to affect change
- Work with Dorset LEP to continue providing and sharing labour market and skills analysis

- Support employer-led sector training groups e.g., Digital Skills Partnership, Construction Skills Training Forum.

Recommendation: In all sectors, Providers could focus on strengthening:

- Communications and collaboration skills in current courses – in person and online
- Basic IT and business skills, commonly Microsoft packages particularly Excel, email protocols and telephone confidence, tasking and reporting by tablet or smart phone
- Why Mathematics and English matters to employers – messages for learners and parents and carers.

Recommendation: In all sectors, independent information about Apprenticeships and technical provision options:

- Awareness raising of range of technical provision available and its benefits
- Information about learner achievement to ensure employers are up to date with performance.

Cross-cutting priority actions:

To support the transition to Net Zero

| Employer Recommendations | Education and Training Provider Recommendations | Learner Support Recommendations | System level |
|--|--|--|--|
| <p>Develop plans with Net Zero goals</p> <p>Measure organisation's carbon footprint</p> <p>Engage staff in conversation</p> <p>Work with sector representative bodies to share information and skills needs with education providers</p> | <p>Develop corporate strategies with Net Zero goals</p> <p>Embed Net Zero learner goals and understanding in every current course</p> <p>Develop capacity and courses to improve employer awareness and ability to make informed plans by championing new ways of working, new materials, and new technologies (AEB / LSIF funded)</p> | <p>Promote learner understanding of Net Zero transition, how to measure carbon footprint</p> <p>Promote Net Zero careers and occupations</p> | <p>Create a joined-up offer to promote the measurement of carbon footprints and provide free short courses (particularly for SMEs and micros) for how to create a plan with low-cost actions to reduce carbon footprint</p> <p>Promote sector specific Net Zero resources to employers e.g. ECA Leading the Charge initiative here</p> |

Create closer working relationships between employers and educators: Increase Apprenticeship starts and awareness; Increase tutor recruitment

| Employer Recommendations | Education and Training Provider Recommendations | Learner Support Recommendations | System level |
|--|--|---|--|
| <p>Allow time, however small, for forward planning and learning for all staff, even if it's from each other</p> <p>Develop a culture of learning and outward facing behaviours</p> <p>Develop partnerships with providers – co-create curriculum, offer tutors' industry time, provide equipment shares</p> <p>Work with providers / sector bodies to create information about current & future skills needs for careers professionals</p> <p>Provide work experiences for learner & teacher interactions with employers (videos, talks, projects, visits, placements)</p> | <p>Offer courses to train industry staff to teach in FE</p> <p>Share information about course needs: Tutors, skills, or equipment</p> <p>Develop flexible /short courses, outside of core hours where demand evidenced</p> <p>Proactively seek new/different apprenticeships and pathways</p> <p>Work with sector bodies and local ERBs to channel messages and gain feedback e.g., Dorset Chamber, FSB, CITB. NFU</p> <p>Develop corporate plans with</p> | <p>Create innovative ways for young learners and out of work people to meet employers and learn from each other</p> <p>Online / Open doors</p> <p>Educate learners and their parents and carers about different technical routes, their benefits and how to access them</p> <p>Actively support use and understanding of sector destination data and schools' promotion of all routes to all pupils (Baker Clause)</p> <p>Emphasise that employers are seeking people with good communication skills,</p> | <p>Facilitate sector level employer: provider curricular development groups. Link to HoSW SDF project findings Green Curriculum, Advanced Engineering, Electric Vehicles & Digital.</p> <p>Increase awareness and understanding of all technical education pathways available to learners and employers</p> <p>Offer employers independent training needs analysis with advice about funded options available</p> <p>Support businesses by creating pathways to upskill</p> <p>New cross partner strategic</p> |

| | | | |
|---|---|--|---|
| <p>Commit time for employees to upskill e.g. core digital skills / coaching work readiness</p> <p>Use apprenticeship levy transfers when relevant</p> <p>Share staff / equipment for training</p> | <p>employers' needs embedded in every strand</p> <p>Review the current employer customer base against the potential target market</p> <p>Review mechanisms for measuring employer satisfaction and monitoring at SLT level</p> <p>Develop more two-way learning with employers to better understand their fast-moving and changing environment, share expertise and equipment, and develop flexible training solutions</p> <p>Check course curriculum and programmes are understood by employers</p> <p>Develop more collaborative projects and bids for funding between provider types</p> <p>Evolve the Employer/Student customer status, develop a culture of equal service provision to both</p> <p>Review strategic communication strategies and target employers with messages around all the above – common messages and campaigns</p> | <p>commitment, and a passion for their business, as much as the highly technical skills</p> <p>Campaign to promote routes into occupations in high demand locally. Highlight the experience, qualifications and work readiness skills required. Highlight the benefits and rewards of working in the industry linked to opportunities to train and enter the workforce.</p> <p>Promote a centralised shared portal for young people and adults to access information, advice and guidance about careers in Dorset initially in key sectors with links to work experience and paid work opportunities</p> | <p>communications strategy with metrics to demonstrate improved perceptions and changed behaviours around technical education to increase uptake and engagement</p> <p>Undertake deep dives for key sector areas</p> <p>Identify unfunded training needs in readiness for bidding opportunities</p> |
|---|---|--|---|

Expand the workforce

| Employer Recommendations | Education and Training Provider Recommendations | Learner Support Recommendations | System level |
|---|---|--|--|
| <p>Develop plans with consideration of employee needs embedded in every strand - what impact will plans have on people, what are the implications for people</p> <p>Recruit from a wide pool of people, globally and inclusively, to ensure all the talents are recognised, nurtured, and encouraged – role model employers to be showcased during Stage 2</p> <p>Be Disability Confident</p> <p>Mitigate unconscious bias</p> <p>Flexible job design</p> | <p>Investigate developing a work readiness short course (AEB) with guaranteed interview</p> <p>Review and consider the pan Dorset offer for young people and adults with SEND and work together to expand it to enable occupation or employment</p> <p>Review and consider the pan Dorset offer for unemployed people and work with DWP to expand it to enable employment</p> <p>Review and consider the pan Dorset offer for economically inactive people to enable employment</p> | <p>Work with sector representative bodies to provide information and advice on how employers can better understand and meet the needs of neurodiverse workers</p> <p>Continue to embed local employers and employment opportunities in all subjects and courses to support ambition, social mobility and eliminate stereotypes of different sectors from Primary school</p> <p>Signpost employers to making changes to their employment offer to broaden access, e.g. Disability Confident</p> <p>Support high quality training and support of Careers Leaders and Careers Link Governors at Special schools</p> | <p>Promote benefits of diverse workforce, inclusive recruitment practices and workplace cultures utilising employer champions e.g. Supported Internships</p> <p>Continue to share LSIP findings with UK Shared Prosperity Fund providers to encourage more diverse working population.</p> <p>Engage directly with local groups supporting expanding the workforce to understand how well initiatives are linked</p> <p>Promote DWP initiatives e.g. Access to Work and Able Futures</p> |

| | | | |
|--|--|--------------|--|
| | | and colleges | |
|--|--|--------------|--|

Improve retention

| Employer Recommendations | Education and Training Provider Recommendations | Learner Support Recommendations | System level |
|---|--|--|--|
| <p>Consistently induct new joiners</p> <p>Understand the specific needs of the younger COVID generation and returners to the workplace – aim to reduce anxiety for new starters</p> <p>Create and embed a flexible, supportive culture for all workers</p> <p>Flexible hours/place of work/ hybrid living</p> <p>Phased starts for joiners returning to work, P/T to F/T</p> <p>Consider the needs of remote and home workers, the impact of working alone</p> <p>Enable structured 2-way performance feedback</p> <p>Support upskilling and encourage future gazing and expectations of change</p> <p>Develop benefits more suitable to a post Covid workforce</p> | <p>Provide opportunities to learn more about occupations and working environment during courses for Health & Social Care. Increase availability of IAG during course.</p> <p>Offer Leaderships & Management training, mentoring and coaching to enable learners to progress in the workplace.</p> <p>Offer mental health and well-being awareness courses to increase employee resilience and attendance</p> | <p>Work with sector representative bodies to provide information and advice on how employers can better understand and meet the needs of neurodiverse workers</p> <p>Continue to embed local employers and employment opportunities in all subjects and courses to support ambition, social mobility and eliminate stereotypes of different sectors from a very young age, 7+</p> <p>Continue to provide high quality CPD for Careers Leaders and Careers Link Governors in schools and colleges</p> | <p>Create HR best practice sharing groups for micro and small businesses to access best practice take-aways</p> <p>Promote the benefits of gen z and their motivations to employers (resources eg Ethical Leader). Share good practice</p> <p>Promote DWP initiatives (mental health) Able Futures</p> |

To attract workers to the sector

| Employer Recommendations | Education and Training Provider Recommendations | Learner Support Recommendations | System level |
|---|---|--|--|
| <p>Use social media to demonstrate a day in the workplace and workplace experiences</p> <p>Provide in school experience e.g., after-school clubs / annual event that develop skills and understanding of their sector and jobs in demand e.g. coding clubs. Engineers.</p> <p>Provide inclusive work experiences and placements for all ages, job roles and needs</p> <p>From online distance workshops to full 1-year placements Unleashing the Potential for Work Experience: A Guide for SMEs (hopinto.co.uk)</p> <p>Offer work placements for education staff (trainers, assessors, lecturers), second industry staff to support curriculum</p> | <p>Raise the profile of schools careers education to learners and parents if appropriate</p> <p>Continue working towards achieving all 8 Gatsby benchmarks</p> <p>Promote their independent careers advice services to learners</p> | <p>Continue to provide Labour Market Information to schools and colleges with high quality CPD and upskilling to professionals working in schools and colleges.</p> <p>Target Healthcare, Construction and Agriculture employers all perceive low interest from new entrants Work with employers and providers to deliver careers fairs and information evenings</p> | <p>Work with Dorset LEP to continue providing labour market and skills analysis. LSIP to provide opportunities for sector discussions at all levels</p> <p>Support sector groups to run employer led careers events e.g. Engineering evenings at Airport</p> |

| | | | |
|--|--|--|--|
| design and delivery by Providers, and contribute facilities and specialist equipment to Providers on either site | | | |
|--|--|--|--|

Improve work readiness:

Learners of all ages not working need to be supported to understand work cultures and meet expectations. In-work learners need to be supported also to understand new processes and technologies, to sustain and evolve their skills as their work environment changes.

| Employer Recommendations | Education and Training Provider Recommendations | Learner Support Recommendations | System level |
|---|---|---|---|
| <p>Consistently induct new joiners & provide work readiness skills training (inc basic IT, maths, english, communication skills, problem-solving)</p> <p>Improve awareness of the benefits of employing younger e.g., cloud-based tech & social media and areas they need support when entering the workplace</p> | <p>As a group, utilise economic indicators and discuss how provision needs match developing industry needs pan Dorset</p> <p>Share expertise, kit and equipment</p> <p>Support learners to develop wider business skills (e.g. finance, marketing) in preparation for self-employed, micro and SME employment</p> | <p>Promote the importance of work readiness skills & attitudes: e.g., communication, problem-solving and provide opportunities to practice and evidence.</p> <p>Signpost to The Skills Builder Partnership</p> <p>Increase focus on 16 & 17 year olds at risk of NEET and curriculum offer to re-engage NEET young people</p> <p>Create messages for learners highlighting why mathematics, English, digital and coding skills are important in every role at every level</p> | <p>Create strategic communications campaign</p> <p>Promote volunteering opportunities as a way to build work readiness. Volunteer award</p> |

4.3 Managing effective delivery

System level

The process in Stage 1 has been effective and anecdotally appreciated as consultative, inclusive, and transparent. It will be formally reviewed and amended working with stakeholders at the start of Stage 2 (July 2023-June 2025). The expectation is a continuation of the three key stakeholder groups with advice and guidance from the new LEP enabled Skills Board. This group is no longer funded by the DfE but builds on the previous board and joins together the wider skills agenda for Dorset and other publicly funded skills activity.

Dorset Chamber has worked to align the LSIP with local strategies in ways that are mutually reinforcing, particularly as Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) allocations have been announced in both local authority areas and BCP Council is delivering its own Skills Plan.

The Plan for Stage 2

There is collective work to do to enable local technical education and training planning and delivery to be truly employer needs led. The key issues are:

- Employers are time short
- Providers must run financially viable courses
- Learners do not know enough about the skills employers' value and why, to make informed decisions.

Stage 2 planning requires reflection on progress to date, and on delivery roles and responsibilities, with each stakeholder group.

In addition, Dorset Chamber will:

1. Continue to work with the British Chambers of Commerce and the 31 other Chamber ERBs to share best practice
2. Work with the FSB and LEP
3. Work with the other cross county skills projects
4. Work on understanding in detail how best to build on current employer provider engagement practices. Maximising employer time and resources when available is essential, with a visible and measurable return on their investment if they are to help develop the local system. Sharing employer expertise, and equipment, will be important to colleges particularly if courses are to keep pace with technological changes. Employers are also understandably keen to maximise public funding and levy returns
5. Engage with the NHS, the largest employer in Dorset
6. Engage with large businesses (not the focus for Stage 1), and more sector representative bodies such as Skills for Health, Skills for Care
7. Identify gaps in LSIP plan delivery and encourage/support as required
8. Lead the development of a strategic communications strategy with all stakeholders to create a shared actionable plan for communicating relevant, consistent key messages to meet LSIP priorities. This will include campaigns on specific actions articulated within the Dorset LSIP plan. For example, promoting the opportunity for workforce expansion with disability confident employers or upskilling leadership and management skills within the current workforce. This would also consider channels for connecting with under-30s i.e., using TikTok
9. Help get the right people in the room to talk about the curriculum. Dorset LSIP team to work with stakeholder groups to bring together expert representatives and expert facilitators (employers or trade bodies) for each sector who can input on provision development and future innovation
10. Deep dive with curriculum leads and employers to define further the specific needs of employers to understand detail and get to course level information, progression and achievement
11. Work to fully engage with supported employment providers and SEND providers including a deep dive of provision to support expanding the workforce
12. Reissue the employer skills satisfaction baseline survey in January 2024 and 2025
13. Publish progress and impact reports in 2024, and 2025
14. Host a Dorset stakeholder event in 2024 and March 2025.

Success and measures

Success will look like more businesses engaged, more learners on technical education courses, higher productivity and job satisfaction, more collaborative bids for funding, more skills in sectors that are growing and changing, more suitable and flexible training opportunities.

Each Chamber and partner action will have its own measures. In addition, Dorset Chamber will report on and measure:

- Impact of governance on the clarity of roles – do all parties understand what they need to do to affect change and what change is required
- Number of employers engaged in sharing their experiences, needs and supporting others to affect change
- Shared strategic thinking and collaborative bids for funding
- Agile and nimble changes in Dorset local skill system
- Skills in areas of focus
- Number of learners participating in technical education programmes
- More suitable and more flexible training opportunities
- Qualifications available in Dorset
- Impact of a new Strategic Communications Strategy
- Working population and economically inactive
- Productivity measured as GVA per hour worked and GVA per filled job.

It became clear early in the process that silos of expertise are not maximising the opportunity to develop the right skills across the workforce due to limited knowledge and appreciation of the reality of other parties. Perceptions and assumptions have created barriers to advancement and beliefs that change is needed but somewhere else, have held back progress. Knowing what others should do differently seems easier to articulate than internal change. This scenario is already starting to shift but significant system development depends on all parties - employers, providers, and learners – behaving differently in future.

The process to date has been fast, energetic, and well supported which is appreciated by Dorset Chamber. Positive engagement and change have been witnessed from the launch event onwards. There is lots to learn and understand about our different environments. Each slight change made will accumulate and move the status quo in Dorset from good to excellent.

Dorset Chamber | August 2023