Item 3 – Skills: delivery plan

WLEP SKILLS UPDATE

Over 2023, the work of the Skills team has continued to work with both the LEP and County Council priorities. Directly supporting WCC's Open for Business theme of their Corporate Plan, and the economic priorities of the County Council. Whilst continuing to work toward the priorities identified in the 2022 Local Skills report and responding to Government policy and direction around employment and skills.

3.1	**Local Skills Report**	
3.1.1	The Local Skills report outlined five priorities as follows: - **3.1.1.1** To enhance the coordination within employment support aimed at reducing claimant levels and improving individual health and well-being whilst impacting positively on economic activity within the county. **3.1.1.2** Aim for all educational establishments to continually meet all 8 Careers education benchmarks annually, with a particular focus on the Worcestershire economy. **3.1.1.3** Create an education and training provision eco-system that meets local needs and future trends of Worcestershire's economy i.e. ensuring FE and HE are responsive. **3.1.1.4** To increase the number of graduates and skilled young people in Worcestershire to spend more of their economic life in Worcestershire. **3.1.1.5** To improve the economic activity rates in our older workforce by creating a culture of flexible work environments and upskilling/reskilling opportunities	
3.1.2	All workstreams delivered over 2023 and into 2024 will support improving the outcomes driven by these priorities.	
	Where are we now?	
3.1.3	Universal Credit claimant levels in the County are continuing to reduce to a level similar to those experienced prior, to March 2020, with around 10725 individuals currently claiming support.	
3.1.4	However, these figures hide a growing trend of young people who have been disproportionately affected, with high levels of 18-24s at 1955 residents (4.7%)	
3.1.5	Whilst activities and programmes in some districts continue to impact successfully on the picture, with Worcester at 4.3%, other such as Redditch at 6.4 % continue to raise alarm.	

3.1.6	NEET (Not in Education, Employment and Training) Levels in the County also experienced growth and are likely to continue to impact future youth employment levels, with an increase.	
3.1.7	Numbers currently sit at 3.9% of the cohort and exceed those in similar timeframe prior to the pandemic.	
3.1.8	What is known, is that education and careers advice in the Covid period, and mental health are significant factors driving this increase. This is replicated nationally.	
3.1.9	Over the last twelve months, The Herefordshire and Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce have conducted significant research into skills gaps.	
3.1.10	Whilst employers continue to report skills deficits, work is underway to support employers to articulate skills and to influence the planning of curriculum through the Local Skills Improvement Plan.	
3.1.11	Latest intelligence from the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce report, reflected that 58% of respondents are finding it difficult to recruit staff, citing skills deficits most frequently. But that this represents a 20% decrease on the previous year where labour markets were significantly challenged.	
3.2	**<u>Local Skills Improvement Plan and the Direction in Worcestershire</u>**	
3.2.1	The Department for Education allocated the delivery of LSIP's to Employer Representative Bodies throughout England.	
3.2.2	Herefordshire and Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce, worked through a process, collecting intelligence from Worcestershire based businesses from October 2022, to help form the Worcestershire Plan.	
3.2.3	This plan highlighted the findings and suggestions, for alleviating the skills issues raised, moving forwards.	
3.2.4	The DfE confirmed their support of the report, in July 2023. The report identified the following priorities for the county. 3.2.4.1 Equipping workers with technical skills & knowledge needed to alleviate employers' skills shortfalls and enable individuals to progress in their career. 3.2.4.2 Developing the common skills and promoting a culture where workplace behaviours that will promote employability and progression opportunities. 3.2.4.3 Developing the workforce planning capabilities of managers to enable businesses to identify their skills needs and providers to adapt training accordingly. 3.2.4.4 Encouraging a business leaders recognise the strategic importance of proactively developing people &talent to the productivity of their businesses. 3.2.4.5 Encouraging a collaborative skills system in which provision can be tailored to the needs of employers.	

	Next Steps of the Local Skills Improvement Plan	
3.2.5	*Industry skills councils* have been established and are due to begin meeting on a quarterly basis from January 24, to discuss skills challenges in each industry and where improvements can be made. Industry councils will be led by industry to embrace projects that will support the development of improved outcomes for employers.	
3.2.6	*The Skills innovation lab* is a trial and error approach, to the conversations borne out of skills councils. The LSIP provides a pot of funding that will allow providers to extract smaller elements of their current training offering, or elements that are currently unavailable within the locality, and support employer need through them. This pot has been amplified through support by Worcestershire County Council who have added another £100k to the lab to move solutions forward. Total pot £115k.	
3.2.7	*The Workforce planning work strand* was identified as a key skill need within the county. The HWCC, will work in partnership with WLEP and WGH, to support the creation of a diagnostic, and providing training to businesses, who want to learn more about this process. The Chamber will be responsible for supporting referrals of businesses into the service.	
3.2.8	*Incentives and benefits research* will be conducted, through a series of questionnaires, targeted at both employers and employees. Investigating why both groups choose to pursue training, and/or what the barriers are to them training. The information gathered from this research will help to inform a business culture campaign (to be renamed as appropriate). This campaign aims to improve employers' recognition, of the importance, of developing their workforce to improve staff retention, recruitment, business growth and productivity etc.	
	The LSIP and the Local Skills Improvement Fund	
3.3.1	Following on from the development of the Local Skills Improvement Plan, the Department for Education committed funding of £165million over 2023/24 and 2024/25 nationally.	
3.2.2	The funding is to support, collaborative partnerships of Further Education Colleges and training providers, to support delivery of outputs against the LSIPs.	
3.3.3	As part of the initiative, Worcestershire was allocated £2.5million over the two financial years, approximately £600k of which is revenue funding. Whilst the remainder is ring-fenced for capital expenditure.	
3.3.4	All revenue funding must be spent by March 31st, 2024, and has strict rules around eligible expenditure.	
3.3.5	DFE guidance on the LSIF, states that the project must be led by a Further Education College, and that whilst training providers can utilise revenue and purchase of capital equipment, capital building works, can only be funded in FE colleges.	
3.3.6	It was agreed by the Worcestershire colleges (Heart of Worcestershire College, Warwickshire College Group and Kidderminster College) that Kidderminster	

3.3.7 **3.3.8** **3.2.9** **3.2.10**	College would lead the collaborative project, with a further three project workstreams that would be led by one of each of the colleges. Each of which is aligned to strategic skills priorities identified in both the WLEP Skills Report 2022 and more recently in the LSIP: 3.3.6.1 Leadership and Sustainability Hub – Kidderminster College 3.3.6.2 Digital Leadership Hub – Heart of Worcestershire College 3.3.6.3 Sustainable Agri-tech Hub – WCG All three projects, seek to build on previous investment in the respective skills areas. Furthermore, providing legacy, through buildings, resources and training outputs that will benefit Worcestershire residents and businesses beyond the life of the LSIP project. In particular, the Leadership and Sustainability Hub at Kidderminster College, builds on previous capital investment by the WLEP, to enable fit-out of the mezzanine floor at the new Construction and Automotive Green Technology Centre. Where the hub will be established. Due to the scale and complexity of the Kidderminster College capital project, this has been profiled for delivery in year 2, which commences 1st of April 2024, with a targeted completion date of September 2024.	
	<u>The LSIP and the Local Skills Improvement Fund</u>	
3.3.1 **3.3.2** **3.3.3** **3.3.4**	Following on from the development of the Local Skills Improvement Plan, the Department for Education committed funding of £165million over 2023/24 and 2024/25 nationally. The funding is to support collaborative partnerships of Further Education Colleges and training providers to support delivery of outputs against the LSIPs. As part of the initiative, Worcestershire was allocated £2.5million over the two financial years, approximately £600k of which is revenue funding, whilst the remainder is ring-fenced for capital expenditure. All revenue funding must be spent by March 31st, 2024, and has strict rules around eligible expenditure.	
	<u>UK Shared Prosperity – People and Skills</u>	
3.4.1 **3.4.2** **3.4.3**	The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) is a central pillar of the UK government's ambitious Levelling Up agenda, and a significant component of its support for places across the UK. It provides £2.6 billion of new funding, for local investment, by March 2025, with all Districts in Worcestershire receiving an allocation from the Fund, via a funding formula rather than a competition. The Fund Prioritised in Year 3, an allocation for People and Skills, with some funding of limited quantities released in earlier years, to allow continuation of programmes under charity status. The funds are specifically about supporting residents aged 16+ to access employment and skills support.	

3.4.4	In Worcestershire, the Skills team have worked with the Districts, to both advise and facilitate programmes.	
3.4.5	The team has secured programmes from all, and ensured county wide coverage so that residents in districts are not faced with a postcode lottery.	
3.4.6	The programmes commence in April 2024 and are worth around £1.5M, details are within this paper as to how these funds are being utilised.	
3.4.7	Outside of this the districts have supported other programmes including: - 3.4.7.1 Inactive Over 50s – Redditch and Bromsgrove working with Seetec Pluss are looking to support people over 50 in their districts back into work. 3.4.7.2 Net Zero Green Skills – Worcester City are in process of commissioning a £100k programme around developing residents' skills towards net zero. 3.4.7.3 Business Skills – working with the Chamber of Commerce, Wychavon and Worcester will be supporting residents to access sessions targeting improving employee behaviours, this two-day programme covers subjects such as time management, communication and resilience. 3.4.7.4 Unity – working with the Community Trust programmes in Malvern and Wyre Forest target support at those residents deemed to be furthest from the labour market.	
	<u>The Workstreams of the Skills Team over 2023 and into 2024.</u>	
3.5.1	Over the last twelve months, the teams have expanded its programmes and implemented several new programmes to meet the WCC corporate plan and the LEPs strategies.	
3.5.2	Working overall to coordinate the efforts of itself, partners and stakeholders to improve the careers and employment prospects of residents and to develop and expand the services to meet the needs of the local businesses.	
3.5.2	Over 2023, the team has brought in several new funding streams from both DWP, DfE and other sources, to maximise local capacity and support the investments made by Worcestershire County Council and LEP.	
	<u>Careers and Enterprise Company Programme in 2023</u>	
3.6.1	Over 2023, The Careers and Enterprise Company Programme, working with our 62 Education establishments and 3 Further Education Colleges, supported cohorts of young people, from Year 7 up to year 13 across the county.	
3.6.2	It has continued to improve the quality of careers planning of young people.	
3.6.3	Over 2023, the team has focused on several work packages as follows: 3.6.3.1 Implementing the Governments Provider Access Legislation ensuring that all young people receive encounters from Further Education, Higher Education, Apprenticeships alongside academic routeways. 3.6.3.2 Focusing on the most vulnerable through work such as Designated Teacher Training in Careers, working with those teachers who look after young people in Care and with SEND needs. To understand	

	the careers offering available within their settings, and ensure that their young person receives that offer. Also, supporting the Virtual School in WCF, to change its Personal Education Plans, to create conversation around young person's careers and education alignment. 3.6.3.3 Improving the System of Careers, to ensure those that need support most, receive that support. The team, working with WCF, conducted a full review of the Risk of NEET Indicator. A tool, designed over 15 years ago, to use data determinates to predict a young person's chances of not being in Education, employment, or training. This tool allows schools to focus resources on those young people who need help most, ensuring the indicator is informed by a range of data sources from across services. 3.6.3.4 Implementing Events to support young people – 2023 saw the return of the Worcestershire Skills Show, in its first year since 2020, the day in March was attended by 3965 young people from 28 schools. 3.6.3.5 Progressing the Benchmarks, Worcestershire improved its Benchmarks from a position of 4.75 in Summer 2022 to 6.35 in Summer 2023. 3.6.3.6 Across years 10 and 12 where work experience is relevant 80% of all young people received an employer encounter over 2022/23, equating to 7070 young people. 3.6.3.7 Worcestershire over 2022/23 remained in the top 3 highest performers in England.	
3.6.4	Delivery of Your Future Opportunities LMI tool to schools highlighting careers and real jobs in Worcestershire's economy. Your Future Opportunities | Worcestershire County Council	
	Careers and Enterprise Company Programme 2024 Workstreams	
3.7.1	Contracts are not yet in place for the academic year 2024/25, but this is not unusual at this stage.	
3.7.2	Expectation is a like for like contract of last year, but with expectations on economies of scale over time.	
3.7.3	Approx Value £320k, Match Funding from WCC £200k. Currently 7.1 FTEs in team. 3.7.3.1 Focus on those most vulnerable. Working with Schools to identify those young people most at risk, and ensure they are given appropriate careers. IAG sessions from qualified advisors, impartial to the setting. This has been conducted by the team at Careers Worcestershire to offer continuity of support. 3.7.3.2 Launch of Simply Careers Platform. Developed over 2023, launching a comprehensive online careers platform for schools, to use across careers education. The focus on Local Labour Market and careers and employers within, Platform uses local filming of employers to bring to life the county and its careers journey. Simply Careers 3.7.3.3 Teaching Encounters. Working with Teachers in Training, to educate them around Careers Planning and how they can embed in everyday curriculum. Supporting Senior Leaders from Schools to	

	visit employers to understand careers outside the education system. 3.7.3.4 University of Worcester Trainee Teachers Career Education Pilot. Changing the systems and piloting the delivery of careers education in initial teacher training. This is following recommendation,s from the Select Committee. The module is commencing in January 2024, and has recruited 26 students. The sessions include visits to employers and a deep dive into how trainee teachers can embed careers into curriculum from day one. 3.7.3.5 Skills Show 2.0. Last year's Skills show, whilst a success, felt very busy at times and quality was impacted. In order to have a greater impact, the skills show is being split into 2 days, following consultation with the Future Skills Board and will host 65 employers and around 2000 kids daily. 3.7.3.6 Primary Schools Careers Offer. Following the Governments pilot programme in Careers for Primary Schools, Start Small, Aim Big being piloted in areas of England, Worcestershire is getting ahead of the game by running three programmes to Primary Schools from a STEM Primary Competition, Financial Management and Careers Curiosity programme.	
	<u>Careers Worcestershire</u>	
3.8.1	Over 2022 into 2023, the brand of Careers Worcestershire continued to grow.	
3.8.2	Supporting young people across the county aged 16-24, to make both career decisions and to access employment opportunities.	
3.8.3	In July 2022, the service expanded to create a "youth hub", with the support of DWP in Worcester City, located in the Hive.	
3.8.4	The Youth Hub, is to bring together holistic support around a young person, from housing, health and employment. With the aim of moving them off benefits and into sustainable employment.	
3.8.5	Over the last 12 months, the team has worked with 597 young people in the Hub, with around 170 of those moving into employment.	
3.8.6	Alongside this, in the wider European Programme, around 900 young people have been supported to access education and employment, including apprenticeship outcomes across the county. With 517 of those, now in education or employment.	
3.8.7	In October 2023, Careers Worcestershire held two events aimed at years 10 upwards in Worcester, and for the first time Redditch engaging 900 young people over the two evenings.	
3.8.8	In December 2023, the Hub was visited by the DWP Regional Director Helene Dearne OBE, who cited Worcester City's Youth Hub, as one of the top 10 out of the 102 in the United Kingdom. Citing the partnership working and outcomes/value for money as high quality.	
	<u>Careers Worcestershire 2024 Workstreams</u>	
3.9.1	Contracts are in place from DWP, for Worcester, and in negotiation for Redditch Youth Hub.	

3.9.2	Contracts agreed with District Councils, under UK Shared Prosperity Funding, to extend model to all districts, with focus on employment outcomes.	
3.9.3	Contracts value approx. £1.8M.	
3.9.4	Currently FTE 7.8 in Team, with ongoing recruitment to 3 FTE posts, total 10.8 over service.	
3.9.5	Contracts to support of value £1M working with 9 contractors. 3.9.5.1 Moving into Redditch – Launching in April 2024 a Youth Hub model into Redditch Heart of Worcestershire Campus to support young people claiming benefits in Redditch to move off benefits and address holistic barriers around employment. 3.9.5.2 Extension of Services – Growing the service into a more proactive approach to target young people aged 16-24 who are inactive i.e. in education or seeking employment in all districts across Worcestershire and bringing informal hub models into play in Wyre Forest as well as extend working through partners in all districts. 3.9.5.3 Extension of Health and Wellbeing Support – Growing of services to ensure that all young people seeking support for employment have access to health and wellbeing services to support increased resilience and directly support to guide them through the "change" journey into employment.	
	<u>Worcestershire Apprenticeships</u>	
3.10.1	Apprenticeship numbers in Worcestershire over 2022/23 stand at 3540. With steady recovery across the county from the decline experienced in the pandemic.	
3.10.2	Growth has been significant in both 19–24-year-olds accessing Advanced Apprenticeships, and growth into Higher Apprenticeships, alongside a growth in numbers across digital standards.	
3.10.3	However, challenges remain, with both a need to engage more candidates to fill vacancies, and challenges in available provision.	
3.10.4	Addressing the quality of provision, but also the ability of providers to respond to entry level standards, because of cost-of-living increase impact on costs.	
3.10.5	The first quarter of 2023/24 has seen positive recruitment, with growth of 108% on last year across all apprenticeships.	
3.10.6	With significant growth in individuals entering apprenticeships, in Engineering and ICT, in comparison to this point last year, alongside a growth in young people under 19 dramatically affecting the data.	
3.10.7	The brand of Worcestershire Apprenticeship, goes from strength to strength, and over 2023 worked with 20'000 young people across schools and Jobcentres, engaging them in Apprenticeships and challenging them to consider.	
3.10.8	The brand runs a helpline, events, and face to face support service for Apprenticeships, for both potential apprentices, their families and businesses.	

3.10.9	Alongside this, the team put in place a grant to incentivise young people to take on apprenticeships and implemented the WA Account which simplifies access to multiple providers for young people.	
3.10.10	The WA Account programme saw around 100 young people access the system in 2023, looking at around 300 different apprenticeship provisions. To date 40 of these have secured and started apprenticeships claiming their bursary payments.	
	Apprenticeships 2024 Workstreams	
3.11.1	Worcestershire Apprenticeships, is funded from Open For Business and Core Funds around £300k, WCC and WLEP employ a Project manager.	
3.11.2	Communications officer and Project Support role, to administer the various strands of work.	
3.11.3	Alongside this, in 2024, WCC have commissioned the Worcestershire Training Providers Association to support young people in schools' years 12 and 13, alongside their wider role of marketing to schools from year 7 upwards.	
3.11.4	This has been funded through the support of UK Shared Prosperity Funding as part of the Careers Worcestershire package. 3.11.4.1 Ongoing Marketing of Worcestershire Apprenticeships: Take Marketing to new level to include messaging for parents, young people and employers, including specific collateral such as parent podcasts (Guardians of the Apprentice) Teacher information on what is an apprenticeship and employer events in each district. 3.11.4.2 Continued Improvements to WA Account: Work through the blockers and simplify access in WA Account and support more providers to become part of system. Focus on increasing use and translation into starts. 3.11.4.3 National Apprenticeship Week Myth Busting Campaign: Running a social media campaign on Myth busting working with around 10 employers and 10 Apprenticeship providers across the county to amplify the messaging and reach wider audiences. 3.11.4.4 10-year celebration event In Summer 2024, Worcestershire Apprenticeships will host an event to celebrate the 10 years of the brand 3.11.4.5 UKSPF Wychavon Focus on Apprenticeships: Support employers in Wychavon to understand and implement apprenticeships, programme is worth £50k.	
	DfE Bootcamps	
3.12.1	Launched in September 2022, HM Government announced a programme of vocational bootcamps.	
3.12.2	A 16-week accelerated programme, enabling individuals to upskill and reskill.	
3.12.3	Worcestershire LEP, was successful in applying to deliver Bootcamps in Construction, Engineering, ICT and Health and Care, working with 5 providers across the county.	

3.12.4 **3.12.5**	To date, the programme has delivered 172 Bootcamps to residents, with 45 of those moving into work. Worcestershire LEP, has been confirmed to deliver further Bootcamps into 2024/25 with new curriculum and providers coming on board.	
	DfE Bootcamps 2024 Workstreams	
3.13.1	Contracts are in place from DfE for £1.7M of delivery ,over 2024/25.	
3.13.2	Currently have 3 FTEs working on this programme. 3.13.2.1 Exploration of new Bootcamps and Providers to identify new organisations to deliver in Worcestershire to meet needs identified in the Employment and Skills Board and add additional subjects to the Bootcamp offer including Leadership and Management. Sustainability and Early Years.	
	INclusive Worcestershire	
3.14.1	Over 2023, Recruitment has been challenging for businesses in Worcestershire and employers needed to look outside of their normal recruitment processes to appeal to more diverse audiences.	
3.14.2	In Worcestershire, the disability employment gap has been at its highest levels of 27%, between those with and those without disabilities.	
3.14.3	Highlighting, a group of potential employees, who often have the skills but need adjustments to move into the workforce.	
3.14.4	This initiative was launched in March 2023, as part of the Governments drive to increase numbers of Supported Internships in the country.	
3.14.5	The programme, brought forward strands of work, including a seminar programme and magazine for employers, a forum for stakeholders, and a programme to increase numbers of young people into internships and apprenticeships.	
3.14.6	Worcestershire commenced a drive toward supporting businesses to be more inclusive, with the overall objective being, to increase the number of employers willing to take on individuals with Health Conditions and Disabilities.	
3.14.7	This project is also looking at how to make systemic improvements, to reduce barriers for individuals with Health Conditions into employment.	
3.14.8	The recent Neurodiversity Seminar hosted 45 business people with excellent feedback.	
3.14.9	Outcomes of the work to date, have been improvements in the process around SEND finance to Colleges, launch of an Inclusive Apprenticeship programme in an FE College, new providers in county, delivering and increasing capacity in supported internships, Launch of a Supported internship bursary, and a quality assurance programme across all Internships.	
	INclusive 2024 Workstreams	

3.15.1	Contracts are in negotiation of £50k, to deliver this work over 2024/25, alongside wider investment from the WLEP and WCC of around £25k,	
3.15.2	Currently have 1.5 FTEs working on this programme. 3.15.2.1 Launch of INclusive Leaders Worcestershire to recognise organisations in Worcestershire who offer best practice and are inclusive champions for the region but also to support organisations to meet standards and open up more inclusive opportunities to benefit their recruitment practices and support residents with Health Conditions in Worcestershire. **3.15.2.2** Exploring the potential – Worcestershire is keen to develop its programmes in this area of work with incoming strands of work from DWP under the Universal Support programme and through Premier Inn with the Thrive Programme, 2024 will focus on exploration of these programmes, implementing to benefit and support employers and residents to access.	
	<u>The Skills team new programmes for 2024</u> **Skills Boost – Upskilling Grant Programme for Worcestershire.**	
3.16.1	Launching in April 2024, Worcestershire Growth Hub will launch a £1M county wide programme, funded by the six districts under UK Shared Prosperity Fund, to upskill Worcestershire's employed residents.	
3.16.2	Businesses will be able to access grants to support skills needs, identified through Skills Needs Analysis and commenced in 2024/25 Financial Year.	
3.16.3	Currently the staff are being recruited to support this programme, both to manage and administer the grants.	
3.16.4	Promotion will be completed through the existing Growth Hub team and supported by local training and skills providers own mechanisms.	
	Workforce Planning – The new Diagnostic support tool for Worcestershire.	
3.16.5	Worcestershire County Council, alongside Worcestershire's Growth Hub, are launching support for Workforce Planning.	
3.16.6	Enabling local businesses to implement an online diagnostic which supports achievement of transformation and growth through talent investment and succession planning.	
3.16.7	Skills and labour shortages are now cited as one of the biggest challenges for Worcestershire businesses, acting as a barrier to performance and transformation.	
3.16.8	With the pace of change becoming the norm, and the skills challenge predicted to intensify with an estimated 7 million additional unskilled workers in the UK by 2030 (Industry Strategy Council, 2019), there is a need to act now.	
3.16.9	The Workforce Planning Programme, seeks to support Worcestershire businesses to recruit and retain a diverse and talented workforce. Whilst also enhancing business agility for continued transformation and growth in an ever-changing world.	

3.16.10	This programme funded through Open for Business will conclude in a diagnostic programme alongside support from a project manager. **2024 and beyond.**	
3.16.11	This report, outlines the priorities and a clear delivery plan for 2024/25, whilst recognising the constraints of the funding landscape, most contracts are tied into a March 2025 finish and decisions beyond this are currently unclear.	
3.16.12	There are a few local discreet programmes within this that will continue recognising the financial challenges faced. I look forward to welcoming the Board to the Skills show for the Board meeting in March and showcasing some of the work of the team. ***Judy Gibbs*** ***Director for Skills, Worcestershire LEP***	