Worcestershire
Local Enterprise Partnership

Local Skills Report: 2022

FOREWORD FROM CHAIR OF THE EMPLOYMENT AND SKILLS BOARD

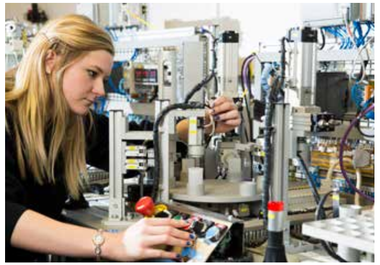
As Chair of the Employment and Skills Board for the Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership, I am delighted to present our second version of the Local Skills Report 2021-2025.

This Local Skills Report builds upon the report from last year, recognises the impact of Covid 19 on our employment and economy and continues to drive the necessary changes to support the local economies path back to growth. The Local Skills Report focuses on steps required to improve the skills of both our existing and future workforce and takes practical action to respond to those changes that the last few years have brought.

Covid 19 has impacted our county and changed the face of our workforce. Businesses require skilled individuals to drive forward the productivity of our employers. There is no doubt that Covid has changed the demands of our employment moving forward and that we must recognise the need to change our working practices, invest in our staff and invest in our future workforce to support our recovery. At the same time, we also need to focus on those individuals who have been adversely affected by the pandemic as well as those in marginalised groups and create opportunities through inclusive practices to allow them to respond positively and re-engage with our labour market, placing themselves firmly back into positive and successful career paths.

Covid 19 has impacted our county and changed the face of our workforce. Businesses require skilled individuals to drive forward the productivity of our employers.

The recent launch of the Worcestershire's Plan for Growth 2040, outlines a vision to create a connected, creative and dynamic economy for all. This strategy responds to that vision and recognises the long term impacts of climate change and digital enablement on the local economy and the skills required to adapt to these changes.



Over 2021, the board focused its attention on the support provided to young people in the county who had been adversely impacted, launching and supporting the Kickstart scheme and placing over 500 young people back into work. Alongside this the board launched the Midlife MOT programme to support employers with workforce planning and help to recognise the growing challenges within the county around the ageing workforce, most recently being seen in the logistics industry.

Worcestershire continues to prioritise its resources to meet the needs of our employers who are finding the current economic and labour market conditions challenging. However, its by working in partnership that we can bring together intervention and solutions to respond to these challenges.

It is important to recognise the last year and our partners across schools, further and higher education, apprenticeship and education providers, employers and public partners that have supported us to make a start towards resolving these issues.

The Local Skills Report continues the priorities set in 2021 and reinforces over the next 3 years how partners from businesses, public sector agencies and from employment and skills providers can work with us to support the strategy moving forward.

As in 2021, the successful delivery of this strategy will require commitments from all partners and should be seen as a call to arms. Specifically, we ask:

For all **Employers**,private, public and third sector, to engage with this Strategy, increasing their commitment to investing in the skills development of the current and future workforce;

For the **Government**, and its delivery agencies, to maintain an open and responsive dialogue, to work jointly with us and allow us to shape policy and programmes in order to ensure they address Worcestershire needs;

For **Individuals** to use the support available to them, to assist them to make positive employment and skills choices; and

For **'Providers'**, to more closely respond to the changing needs of the Worcestershire economy and its businesses.

At this time of great challenges within our employment market, I believe that the actions within this report can continue to deliver on the priorities outlined and together we can deliver on the Worcestershire LEP vision of creating a connected, creative and dynamic economy for all.

Carl Arntzen, Managing Director, Bosch Thermotechnology.

Chair of the Employment and Skills Board

WORCESTERSHIRE LEP

OUR AREA

Worcestershire benefits from a diverse economy with no dominant single employer or sector driving the local economy. In fact, Worcestershire can be described as having five distinct geographical areas:

- **North Worcestershire is a hub for advanced manufacturing and business services;**
- **Worcester City has a strong manufacturing base and strengths in the health and care, and business and professional services sectors;**
- **Malvern Hills is home to the Malvern Hills Science Park and a cluster of cyber and technology-led businesses;**
- **The Vale of Evesham has a rich history and thriving present in the horticultural sector; and**
- **The Rural Heartlands are home to many small and micro businesses that are a significant asset to the county's economy.**

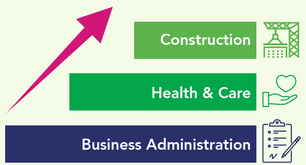
Worcestershire is a county which has an enticing offer for those looking to get the best of urban and rural life. We boast a Cathedral city, beautiful market towns and industrial centres. We have natural assets such as the River Severn, the Clent Hills and the Malvern Hills.

We have cultural assets including Worcester Cathedral and Malvern Theatres, sporting assets such as Worcestershire County Cricket Club and Worcester Warriors Rugby Football Cluband visitor attractions such as the Severn Valley Railway and West Midland Safari Park. At the same time, we are well connected and strategically located within the UK.

Our Economy

Worcestershire has relatively high employment, but faces challenges including low wages and productivity, with high levels of out-commuting to higher wage areas.

Located in the centre of the country, Worcestershire has good links to the major centres and is home to one of the UK's first 5G testbeds, successfully deploying the first live factory 5G trials in the country, placing the county at the forefront in developing digital connectivity.



Worcestershire has a high rate of business creation and the number of businesses now exceeds 29,000[1]. Sector strengths include health & care, business administration & professional services and construction, with opportunities for growth in advanced manufacturing, cyber security, IT and defence and horti/agricultural technology.

The Impact of COVID-19…

Prior to the pandemic Worcestershire's economy was worth £14.5 billion[2]. We had seen annual average growth at 4.0% with an increase in GVA from £11.7 billion to £14.5 billion between 2013 and 2019. The number of jobs in the county fell by 4,000 in 2020, but has still increased by 34,000 since 2013. House building slowed in 2020 as a result of the pandemic with a 30% decrease in housing starts between 2019 and 2020 compared with 15% nationally. Completions decreased by 20% compared with 17% for England.

…on our sectors

The Accommodation and food services sector has seen the largest fall in employment with 6,000 fewer working in the sector in 2020 compared with 2019. Restrictions have also significantly affected the wholesale and retail sector where 1,590 employees were on furlough when the scheme closed , accelerating the challenges faced by high streets by the shift to online. However despite this online growth retail employment remains at a similar level where as the Accommodation and food services sector fell by 2%.

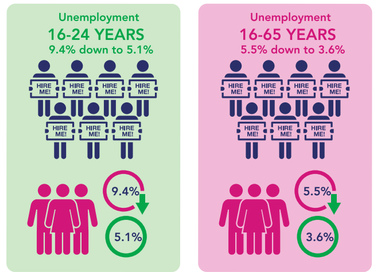
Sectors of high employment previously such as Manufacturing and Administrative and support services have also been impacted by COVID-19, with 1,900 and 1,100 employees on furlough respectively when the scheme closed . Overall Manufacturing declined in 2020 and fell to become the 3rd highest employment sector in the county, previously having been the 2nd highest and was replaced by the growth in Business administration and support services that was felt in 2020.

Not surprisingly Covid accelerated growth in Public service, Education and health care within the county over 2020.

…on our employment

There have been significant impacts on the labour market in Worcestershire. Overall, 109,800 jobs were furloughed at some point, and 25,200 individuals have been supported through the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS). After more than doubling in 2020 claimant count unemployment has fallen steadily over 2021 but remains 57% higher than before the pandemic . The impact has been greatest on young people with 5.2% of those aged 18-24 now claiming unemployment related benefits.

May 2020 - December 2021



…on our businesses

There are signs of economic recovery with half of businesses reporting increases in sales and a third seeing an increase in cash flow. However, businesses are facing challenges around labour shortages are supply chains with 69% of businesses attempting to recruit experiencing difficulties.

[1] *UK business: activity, size and location - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk)*

[2] *Regional gross value added (balanced) by industry: city and enterprise regions - Office for National Statistics*

[3] *Local Authority county - Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES): Table 5 - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk)*

[4] *Live tables on housing supply: indicators of new supply - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)*

[5] *Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme statistics: December 2021 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)*

[6] *Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme statistics: December 2021 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)*

[7] *Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme statistics: December 2021 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)*

[8] *Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme statistics: December 2021 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)*

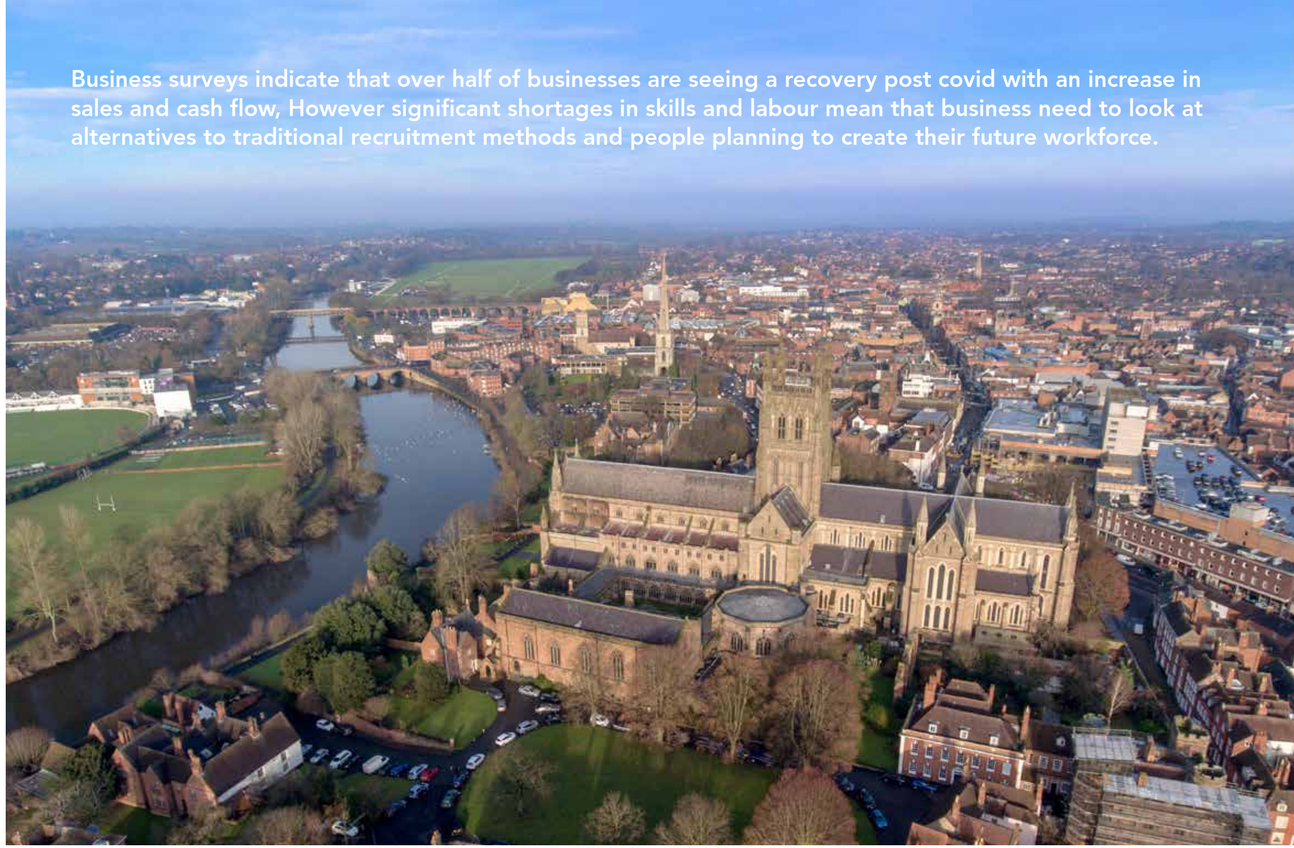
[9] *Self-Employment Income Support Scheme statistics: December 2021 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)*

[10] *Labour Market Profile - Nomis - Official Labour Market Statistics (nomisweb.co.uk)*

[11] *Q3 2021 Quarterly Economic Report - Herefordshire & Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce (hwchamber.co.uk)*

[12] *Herefordshire and Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce, Quarterly Economic Survey Q4 2021*

[13] *Herefordshire and Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce, Quarterly Economic Survey Q4 2021*



Business surveys indicate that over half of businesses are seeing a recovery post covid with an increase in sales and cash flow, However significant shortages in skills and labour mean that business need to look at alternatives to traditional recruitment methods and people planning to create their future workforce.

SKILLS ADVISORY PANELS – INTRODUCTION

Skills Advisory Panels: the national context

Since 2018, Skills Advisory Panels (SAPs) have been bringing together employers, skills providers and key local stakeholders to better understand and resolve skills mismatches at a local level. SAPs are part of Mayoral Combined Authorities and Local Enterprise Partnerships and there are 36 in total across England.

The Department for Education (DfE) has supported SAPs with grant funding primarily to produce high-quality analysis of local labour markets and publish Local Skills Reports, which set out the local skills strengths and needs and how the SAP proposes its area addresses its key priorities.

This second iteration of SAPs' Local Skills Reports comes at a time when DfE is Trailblazing new Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs), in eight areas of the country. Developed by Employer Representative Bodies, LSIPs are part of a suite of reforms launched in DfE's "Skills for Jobs" White Paper that aim to put employers more firmly at the heart of the skills system. An evaluation of the eight Trailblazers will inform the national roll out of the programme. In the meantime, and before LSIPs are rolled out across the country, it is DfE's intention that Skills Advisory Panels and this Local Skills Report should continue to influence the behaviour of local partners and feed intelligence to central government, including to sectoral focussed skills teams and the national-level Skills and Productivity Board (SPB).

Skills Advisory Panel: Worcestershire

The Skills Advisory Panel (SAP), known as the Employment & Skills Board for Worcestershire, is one of Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership's four policy boards and acts as the designated body to set strategy for employment and skills in Worcestershire.

The Employment and Skills Board for Worcestershire was formed in 2012 and was refreshed in 2019 to undertake the role of Skills Advisory Panel for the county.

The Board reports to the main board of the Local Enterprise Partnership and meets four times each year.

Membership

The Worcestershire Employment and Skills Board is an employer-led group of between 12-15 members:

- the majority of members, including the Chair, are drawn from the private sector.
- representatives from secondary schools, nominated by the Worcestershire Association of Headteachers
- two Principals from FE Colleges, nominated by Worcestershire FE Principals
- a nominee, at Head of Faculty level, from the University of Worcester
- the Cabinet Member for Economy and Skills from Worcestershire County Council
- senior representatives from funding bodies such as the Education Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) and Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)
- a representative from the Training Providers Association

The Employment and Skills Board terms of reference can be found, along with its membership, at: https://www.wlep.co.uk/about-wlep/people/employmentandskillsboard/

The Board plays a wider influencing role, responding to Government strategy and seeking to share analysis and best practice - as widely and transparently as possible - with central government and other Skills Advisory Panels to learn from each other and tackle wider skills challenges.

Locally, the Employment and Skills Board engages, consults and collaborates with local partners to deliver this Skills Action Plan and to identify and maximise the resources needed to do so.

SUMMARY - SKILLS STRENGTHS AND NEEDS

- Worcestershire has good qualification levels, similar to the England average, although some districts have lower proportions of learners with a Level 4+ qualification.
- There are high rates of positive destinations from education and training, particularly into sustained employment at all qualification levels.
- There is a broad range of high-quality education and training provision including the University of Worcester, three Further Education colleges and a Sixth Form College as well as a range of both generalist and specialist Independent Training Providers.
- Whilst current achievements broadly align with sector needs in county, FE and HE achievements align with the priority sector of Health, with apprenticeship achievements also aligning with Advanced manufacturing and Business administration & professional services. Moving forward it is a important to retain momentum in our key sectors.
- Worcestershire has a diverse range of businesses of all sectors and sizes, meaning that impact of economic shocks can often have a lesser impact, but national Policies often rely on employer engagement and in Worcestershire, large numbers of SMEs mean there is a greater need for co-ordinated and clear messaging from stakeholders to ensure maximum impact.
- Key strengths in training including health and care, education and Engineering and Manufacturing, Business Administration where achievements are higher than the England average.

SKILLS SUPPLY

Qualification levels

Worcestershire's qualification levels are similar to national figures, although there is variation between districts with some having a lower proportion of residents with a Level 4+ qualification.

Malvern Hills has the highest density of Level 4 qualifications in England.

Education and training

- There continue to be high rates of positive destinations from education and training , particularly into sustained employment. This may reflect the strong recovery of employment levels in the local labour marke as well as positive levels of engagement with, and achievement of, the Gatsby Benchmarks for Good Career Guidance by schools and colleges.
- COVID-19 and the effect of lockdowns continues to impact on the local delivery of education and training. Post-16 providers are reporting both a dip in education levels and behavioural challenges following lockdowns, which could leave some young people unable to successfully achieve their courses and Apprenticeships.
- Whilst Careers Planning remained strong in education settings in the county, Employer Encounters in 2020/21 showed 25% less young people receiving encounters of the workplace which when delivered helps to influence education choice and offers an opportunity to trial employment. These factors can impact on future education achievement post 16 and post 18. Alongside this Careers Advice whilst strong in 2020/21, was impacted by the wider societal views and showed fewer young people wanting to move out of education and continue in their known environment.
- Current Education Provision has a number of challenges, the overall need to be responsive to employers creates financial and logistical pressures in the delivery of curriculum, often escalated in our growth sectors where there is a shortage of lecturers who can often earn more money working in industry, a need for funds to support education staff upskilling and long-term capital investment is necessary to meet needs of new technologies such as digital and net zero.

> **There are high rates of positive destinations from education and training, particularly into sustained employment.**

Apprenticeships

- Apprenticeship starts have declined since the onset of the Covid pandemic, data shows that whilst 2020-21 starts have improved, there is still a long way to go to recover the pre pandemic levels.
- Apprenticeship starts have been adversely impacted in Engineering and Manufacturing, due to economic conditions, decline in workforce numbers and impact of social distancing in workplaces. As the economy recovers, providers report positive employer engagement in the sector, therefore it is likely that numbers will return, but how businesses recover financially, and availability of candidates will be key to this assumption.

- Whilst local and national Government intervention has been helpful in Apprenticeship starts and has encouraged employers to consider Apprenticeships as schemes to introduce employees into their workforces, the largest challenge has been the availability of candidates over 2020/21.
- A continued focus on the use of Apprenticeship levy transfer has been successful over 2020/21 with the Local Authorities supporting employers to undertake apprenticeships in county.

SKILLS STRENGTHS AND NEEDS

- Starts over 2020/21 suggest that the use of all-age Apprenticeships (funded by the levy) to succession plan in workforces within Worcestershire, has started to show signs of positive growth, with an increase in higher apprenticeships and the take up of those over 25+.

- We support a continuing focus on sectors that are appealing to both the workforce and employers and will serve the local business community well – for example, roles such as Software Development Technician and Mechanical Manufacturing Engineer.

- Worcestershire benefits from the Worcestershire Apprenticeships brand which continues to support employers to create vacancies and young people to engage in vacancies.

Worcestershire Apprenticeship Virtual Awards

Further education

- Worcestershire has three further education colleges with a presence in seven areas of the county, making the county well supplied with provision. The colleges offer a good distribution of full-time post 16 provision, higher education and a range of Apprenticeships.

- Technical Levels (T Levels) offered in Digital and Education from two of our colleges have not seen the demand from young people in 2021. Colleges are focused on working with schools for enrolments in September 2022.

- The county benefits from a specialist offer in Horticulture and Agritech, from the campus in Pershore, as well as excellent engineering facilities in several locations.

- Colleges offer a range of provision to support vulnerable learners and focus on supporting young people into employment beyond education.

Higher education

- There is only one university in the county: The University of Worcester's offer is focused on public services, supporting the county's 24% employment within this sector.

- The University is currently expanding its provision, moving further into the Health economy to support the LEP priority sector.

- Whilst the University does offer a range of courses relevant to some of our priority sectors, it does not offer any Engineering, Manufacturing, or Construction courses.

- However, local further education is recruiting learners into degree level courses within Engineering and other subjects, but with limited capacity. This means that many of those wishing to study these subjects must attend a higher education institution in a different locality.

- Although most graduates from local institutions remain in the region, fewer than half the Worcestershire residents, who leave for higher education, return to the county after graduating. Further establishing the need to market the county and its employment to young people whilst within Education establishments to reverse this trend.

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Support for Claimants

- Worcestershire benefits from a good provision offer to its unemployed residents on the ground, ranging from large national DWP provision to small community-based providers. From short term retraining solutions, Sector Work based Academy Programmes and digital bootcamps to full time vocational provision, there are options available to all residents. The county's geography however can often be the determining factor in provision and become a barrier to entry.
- The recent introduction of the Restart programme into Worcestershire under Serco and Seetec and the approach to delivery has seen improved working on the ground to improve outcomes for residents over 2021.
- Worcestershire's Kickstart Intermediary Gateways have supported over 400 young people in 2021 to access employment opportunities, with a number of large employers offering direct placements to young people.
- Worcestershire Jobs introduced in April 2021 aimed to support job seekers to access a greater range of vacancies as well as support employers to promote the range of vacancies within the county. Since its introduction the site has had over 40,000 unique visitors.

In-company training

- Skills and succession gaps for some employers within Worcestershire have been brought into sharper focus during the COVID-19 pandemic, but for many employers the efforts needed to keep businesses going under the restrictions imposed during lockdowns has impacted on time and resources available for training.
- Prior to the pandemic the majority of the county's employers say they provide training for their staff, with the most frequently mentioned topics cited as: job specific, health and safety/first aid, and basic induction training. The most frequently cited barriers to providing this training are time and appropriate funding, either through government sources or within the employer's budget. Whilst the pandemic has impacted employer's ability to train staff, recovery has commenced with 29%[12] of businesses reporting upscaling of training plans over the next quarter.

- Over the pandemic the need for digital skills has increased across Worcestershire with employers reporting need for both data analysis to support increase process automation or digital marketing to work with new and increased online marketplaces.
- Apprenticeship starts show increase in employers using apprenticeships to train existing staff and upskill, with an increase in over 25s and high levels, whilst this is positive for Worcestershire there is still significant work to do to continue to further this trend.

Existing workforce

- The proportion of staff who are not fully proficient is slightly lower than nationally, whilst the proportion of employers with under-utilised staff is above the national average, with a similar difference in over qualified staff. This suggests that there is a local oversupply of some skills.
- Worcestershire's population is older than the national picture, and is ageing more rapidly, making it a priority to help people extend their working lives.
- The introduction of the Midlife MOT pilot was welcomed but the need for improved workforce planning across the county is prevalent and a key to success post pandemic into recovery.

There is a local oversupply of some skills.

SUMMARY - SKILLS DEMAND

- One of the key concerns for Worcestershire employers is the availability of a skilled workforce with IT, job specific and technical skills the most commonly cited skills deficits.
- The ageing population in Worcestershire is likely to see increased demand for Health and care skills in the medium-longer term and also signals the need for continuing replacement of skills levels which are either lost to retirement or job migration.
- The impact of an older workforce highlights the need for employers, training providers and Skills Advisory Panel to concentrate on the need for replacement demand and succession planning as well as encouragement of skills required to successfully manage new recruits.
- Key sectors may experience changing needs for the skills base such as increased automation of production processes, but this could also encourage demand for a higher level of skills needed to programme and maintain machinery.
- COVID-19 has impacted many sectors in Worcestershire particularly for Arts & entertainment, Retail and Accommodation & food services sectors. Whilst the indications are for the continuation of recovery within these sectors, they remain susceptible to changes in consumer spending levels and also remain at the forefront of any potential further lockdown measures.
- Adult Careers Advice in Worcestershire is limited adding barriers to growth through a lack of relevant advice around skills and careers that contribute to the future of the economy.
- The impact of net zero and Government policy in this area will affect demand in Worcestershire for skills, it is important for the county to establish how it meets this need moving forward.

SKILLS DEMAND

Employer demand

- Businesses have identified a shortage of skilled staff as a barrier to innovation and growth within the county and is one of the major worries for local employers. Recent analysis of the online vacancies shows a 92% increase in demand for new recruits since December 2020.
- Ongoing Surveys show a growing number of employers reporting challenges in recruiting[13], with the last quarter of 2021, showing that 74% of employers experienced difficulty recruiting
- The most frequently cited skills deficits are at higher levels in IT, job-specific, and technical skills.
- We have a higher proportion than England of hard-to-fill vacancies: these are highest amongst middle-skill roles, particularly Skilled Trades.
- Worcestershire's employers report a need for understanding of their sectors in education and embedding a greater level of careers support to move successfully into industry post school, further or higher education. Many Employers understand the need to have a role in supporting the longterm supply of talent into Worcestershire's employers.

Decreasing employment opportunities

- The largest percentage falls in employment within 2020 were within Manufacturing and the Hospitality Industry, predictions suggest this will continue to decline into 2021 with the offset of the furlough scheme and the outcomes are as yet unknown.
- The continued acceleration of automation is likely to contribute to a continued fall in demand for Process, Plant & Machine Operatives, although this may be offset to some extent by replacement demand.

Without action to change the local economy's structure, future growth may be driven to a disproportionate extent by low-skilled and public sector jobs.

Increasing employment opportunities

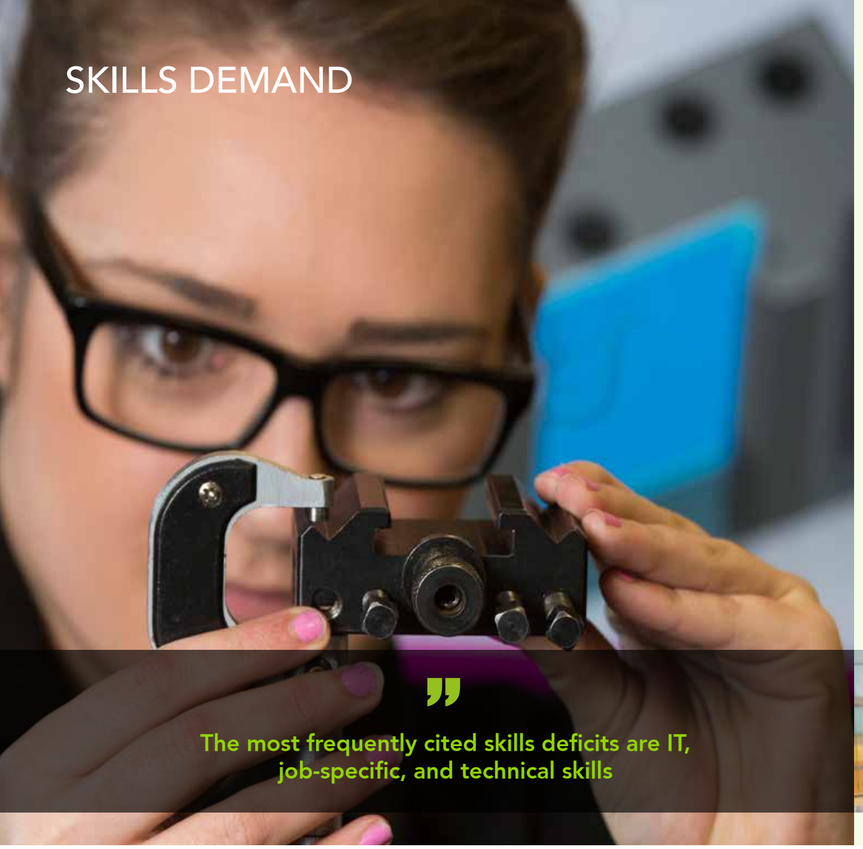
- In 2020 Employment grew in Professional Services, Retail, Transport, Logistics and Warehousing and across Health, moving forward these sectors are likely to continue to demand labour through growing pressures and demand.

- Recent legislation changes around vaccination status and our demographic of an older and more rapidly ageing local population is likely to lead to a continued growth in caring-related personal service occupations.
- The ageing workforce dynamic of the county continues to be more prevalent in certain industry sectors such as public sector, education, heavy goods driving and healthcare - this suggests that workforce county wide strategies need to be adopted to consider replacement demand and ensure skilled labour is available as needed.

Impact of new technologies : Automation

- The impact of automation will be significant, with 10% of low-skilled jobs likely to be affected. Worcestershire faces significant risk due to the presence of routine/ lower-skilled jobs and industry processes, such as Process Manufacturing. However, some higher skilled roles (such as those within Finance and Business Services) are also susceptible to automation. Without action to change the local economy's structure, future growth may be driven to a disproportionate extent by low skilled and public sector jobs.

SKILLS DEMAND



> The most frequently cited skills deficits are IT, job-specific, and technical skills

Levering the Worcestershire Economy to deliver Net Zero

- The current acceleration of demand around sustainable business practice and the drive to net zero is in those growth technologies around construction sustainability innovation, such as energy efficiency and structural design as well as the manufacturing and fitting of new technologies. It is essential that the county looks forward to understand the increasing demand and how to supply the necessary skills

- The sector worth around £1.5bn in sales, currently employs 11000 people across 700 organisations and is predicted to grow at a rapid rate, increasing staff levels by around 200% to deliver net zero.

- Worcestershire's education provision is currently exploring the impact on trades and the broader skills base needs in individuals to move towards new careers in the sector and sectors affected.

Digital skills

- Worcestershire has a lower level of employment in the digital sector than the England average however digital skills remain in the highest demand from the county's employers, whether for new entrants, replacement labour, or when reskilling existing staff. The skills most frequently mentioned relate to the use of online platforms, such as Zoom, and the use of social media. 30% of Worcestershire employers, in the Chamber of Commerce Employment Survey (2020), cited digital skills as the skills gap causing them the greatest recruitment difficulties.

- These digital skills do not tend to vary with the workforce demographic, although companies with a younger workforce are more likely to mention a need for technical networking skills.

- Digital marketing and cloud-based computing have the greatest current and predicted use amongst Worcestershire employees, although a lower proportion of the smallest companies (0-4 employees) use cloud-based computing.

- Salaries within digital skilled roles have increased by up to 35% over the last year in Worcestershire demonstrating the demand that these skills can bring.

- There is widespread use of e-commerce, along with anticipated growth, and almost 50% of companies are using, or expect to use, CRM particularly within the Professional, Scientific, and Technical sectors. Business support schemes are in place to encourage the uptake of technology adoption; this will drive our skills needs and improve business productivity.

- Employers in the IT sector are the most likely to cite insufficient availability of suitable training as a barrier, and to rate local digital skills training provision as poor.

Impact on Industries

- A lack of specialist skills, or the knowledge needed to perform a role, are the most frequently mentioned difficulties.

- Worcestershire has high proportions of vacancies where management and leaderships skills have been identified as essential, suggesting a lack of available skills in the marketplace and a need to develop skills within employers.

Engineering and Manufacturing

- Worcestershire's Engineering and Manufacturing continues to have the highest number of vacancies in the county. Currently there are over 1400 vacancies in this sector. Maintenance Engineering vacancies being the top posted role in 2021 as well as the hardest to fill.

- This challenge of recruiting talent alongside the dynamic of an ageing workforce, where one in two employees within some organisations is over 50, represents the greatest challenge for the sector.

- The sector is predicted to grow by around 3% over the next 5 years but the challenge of replacement demand could equate to around 8500 individuals needing to be trained and skilled.

- Over 2020/21 the drop off in apprenticeship starts caused by the impact of Covid 19 on the sector, continues to add to the recruitment challenge, where 25% less apprentices started last year, almost half of the starts pre pandemic. Company levy spend or training budget (many Worcestershire manufacturers at SMEs) will have to be reinvested in new apprenticeship starts to support succession planning in the sector.
- The Engineering and Manufacturing sector continues to report a higher percentage of hard-to-fill vacancies than other industries in Worcestershire despite declines in the overall employment numbers, with skills shortages reported for a range of roles including: Project Engineers; Design Engineers; IT Specialists; Welders; CNC Machinists; Fabricators; and specialist/niche positions, such as Combustion Engineering and Spring specialisms .

Construction

- Despite a decline in employment numbers over the last twelve months, projected growth within the county's Construction sector suggests that an additional 700 workers will be required by 2027, as well as replacement demand to meet the 17,260 employees needed.

an additional **700**
construction workers
required by 2027

- The sector reports the greatest challenges are in recruiting Level 3 qualified trades, with demand for electricians, plumbers and gasfitters driving growth. Alongside this the sector in Worcestershire struggles to attract Construction management roles with Surveying, Site Management, Contract Management as hard to fill roles.
- Apprenticeships in Construction are strong in Worcestershire, growing year on year since 2016.
- Provision remains challenging in Worcestershire, where the sector struggles to recruit skilled lecturing staff but also there is a need for a greater variety of disciplines and better access for employers both in upskilling and in entering the trade.
- The attractiveness of the sector remains low to potential applicants even in higher paid roles and careers.

Haulage and Logistics

- Employment continues to grow inthe Transport and Logistics sector within Worcestershire, a number of major capital investment in county by large ecommerce employers drive competition in the market. Organisations reported wage increases across the board with hauliers increasing wages up to 25% to retain drivers. To date there are over 900 advertised roles in this sector in the county.

- The sector reports challenges in recruiting HGV drivers and warehouse staff, the challenge of the ageing workforce in HGV driving was not an immediate concern, of those surveyed around 50% of drivers were over 50. Whilst acknowledged in employers, they did not register age as an overruling concern stating this was a norm in the sector. However, they did feel that perceptions of the sector were misrepresented and that more needed to be done in the right way to attract new drivers.
- Hauliers registered both a lack of available training, concerns about the driver CPC and whether it was fit for purpose and no pipeline of new talent as pertinent alongside both costs and delays in training new drivers. The average cost of a new driver to a business, from the point of entry to being fit for purpose is an estimated £25k in productivity losses.
- It is acknowledged that Covid 19 had caused a number of challenges for the sector including increasing demand through the exponential growth in online sales. The sector in Worcestershire needs support to grow talent and to highlight the important role that logistics plays in the Worcestershire and wider economy.

Adult Social Care

- Adult Social Care in Worcestershire employs around 15,000 people, currently there are around 1000 advertised care vacancies across the county with the average age of the care workforce at 44 years old with around a third being over 50.
- Worcestershire's education market through Further and Higher Education is well cited to deliver with a higher-than-average level of individuals achieving qualifications in Health and Care.
- There is a perception in the sector locally that these roles are not considered to be careers but more short-term jobs and therefore staff turnover is high at 31% in 2020/21 (representing 4200 leavers) as staff feel undervalued and underpaid and seek out higher paid roles.
- Worcestershire's care market is further challenged by its geography and the rural pressures creating a barrier making the availability of labour and the delivery of care difficult.
- High staff turnover in itself creates a barrier to training investment by employers. Skills needed include dementia awareness, care for the vulnerable and the elderly and safeguarding knowledge.
- Alongside this funding pressures in Worcestershire County Council escalate this picture, driving low wage rates and leading to challenges in workforce numbers, morale and the ability to successfully deliver adult social care to residents.

SKILLS STRATEGY

Skills Strategy

Worcestershire LEP's skills vison is to work with employers and education providers to prioritise local needs, informed by stakeholder engagement and research into the challenges faced within our local geography. Through our formulation of the Plan for Growth we identified in 2021 our key areas of focus based on evidence informed by data, consultation, and research.

We have identified our 'People' challenges as:

- **A higher number of claimants than pre Covid**, with young people, females and some geographies disproportionately impacted, which is affecting economic activity with comparatively lower wealth-generating capacity. This leads to lower productivity in the county, currently exacerbated by a supply and demand skills and employment challenge resulting from COVID-19 and its impact on employment.
- In addition to our **ageing demographic forecasts** until 2041, the economic effect driven by the working age of people within our economy has the potential to be compounded further: 1 in 3 of our current workforce is over 50 years of age, with a higher rate in some of our larger sectors i.e. Public Services, Engineering and Manufacturing.
- We have a relatively highly skilled resident population, with high levels of out-commuting due to **low awareness of high-value career opportunities within the county.**
- Residents with higher levels of income will have an impact on housing demand, therefore affecting the type, provision, and affordability of homes. This can act as a major barrier to **attracting younger highly skilled individuals** to work in the county.
- Worcestershire residents with low/no qualifications cannot always afford housing in the areas they live – leading to **systemic social mobility cold spots** in the county.
- Worcestershire demonstrates good educational attainment for under-16-year-olds, but further work is required to **improve post-16 performance,** including the promotion of technical education at an early stage in the career planning process.

To address these challenges, Worcestershire's Skills Action Plan aligns all interventions with the key aims of the People strategy; these aims are designed to positively impact the challenges faced by Worcestershire's employers and residents and, in turn, improve the county's economic prosperity. This is further reflected within the Worcestershire Economic Strategy 'People' strand and Logic Chain, which can be seen within the appendices. https://www.wlep.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/WLEP-Plan-for-Growth-2020-2040-FULL-VERSION.pdf

The rationale behind our Skills Strategy prioritisation is to:

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.**

   In December 2021, Worcestershire's claimant figures are lower than those in the West Midlands and England. However levels of youth unemployment remain high at 5.1% highlighting that the recovery of youth employment has been slower. Employers during 2021, often ideally sought individuals who had the skills they required to become productive immediately and therefore young people were competing for roles with older and more experienced workers. In the first half of 2021, Apprenticeships which could facilitate that retraining had declined in number having a detrimental effect on opportunities for young people. Many of the sectors which young people have typically worked in had further disruption across 2021 - including the Service and Retail sectors through both enforced closures and changed

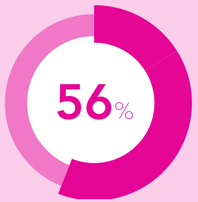
behaviours such as social distancing and online shopping. There is a need in the county to ensure that all claimants are effectively progressed and that support is both available and coordinated to ensure those seeking work are supported to transition effectively.

2. **Attract and retain a high-quality workforce in Worcestershire, focusing on our local population and selling Worcestershire to non residents as a place to work and live.**

Availability of a skilled workforce continues to be the top employer concern in Worcestershire, and has been consistently raised in employer surveys, the most recent of which being the Chamber of Commerce Employment Survey from Autumn 2021. This survey found that, during the pandemic - with higher levels of possible recruits available - 65% of employers reported challenges in recruiting the staff they needed; more than 50% of this number cited a lack of requisite skills. In 2018, more than 50% of Worcestershire jobs advertised online required a degree-level qualification, which demonstrates the demand for high-level skills in the county.

Although 75% of current residents live and work in the county, the impact of our ageing workforce is a significant concern for Worcestershire. We have an ageing workforce and a declining demographic of under-30s. Worcestershire must therefore seek to influence students within its educational establishments, helping them to choose careers which will address skills shortages moving forward.

Worcestershire must attract people to live and work in the county to impact positively on productivity for the County. In Worcestershire, 56% of our young people aged 15-19 years old leave to study and don't return. Those who do stay are often employed in lower skilled work or choose to study locally where subject choice can be a limiting factor on their attainment of higher-level skills.



56% of our young people aged 15-19 years old leave to study and don't return

Worcestershire needs to market itself as a place to live and work. One of the challenges for young people within our county, and returning graduates, is the affordability ratio of housing, which makes it hard for them to find suitable accommodation *(Malvern and Bromsgrove have some of the highest affordability ratios in the West Midlands: 1:10 average salary).*

"One of the challenges for young people within our county, and returning graduates, is the affordability ratio of housing, which makes it hard for them to find suitable accommodation

3. **Support employers to invest in their brand, and the wider "Worcestershire" brand, to attract the county's future workforce.**

Worcestershire's employers across 2021 are showing a deeper understanding of the challenge they face. A growing number are starting to consider how they influence their future workforce and sell Worcestershire and their industry and employment opportunities, as evidenced through the Careers and Enterprise Company report "Closing the Gap" (2020), which showed that Worcestershire's young people had the highest level of employer encounters in England.

Covid 19 and the knock-on impact of skills shortages across employers has grown the need to look outside of the traditional recruitment methods. Employers in the county are starting to focus further on selling their brand, industries and organisations to future talent. Whilst the pandemic had significant impacts on the numbers of employers offering encounters within education, in 2021 Worcestershire LEP has seen green shoots of recovery to return to and increase previous levels.

4. **Focus our education settings, from schools through to higher education, on supporting education leavers to positively respond to the needs of Worcestershire's employers.**

Worcestershire's education settings need to support their young people to actively participate in, and understand the opportunities within, the Worcestershire economy – this starts with a commitment to careers planning, understanding the opportunities, and improving their level of engagement with employers.

Whilst work in this area continues to be positive, and Worcestershire has shown some of the highest results in the country, the agenda needs to become even more embedded within wider education and ensure reach to all young people.

The Careers and Enterprise Company's work in schools needs to be the starting point for young people's learning about the Worcestershire employment landscape. There are positive levels of employer encounters across the county, with young people participating in work interventions resulting in their improved understanding of employment in Worcestershire.

This work needs to continue and be further embedded within further and higher education settings. This will offer additional opportunities for young people to explore employment within the county and extend local and national initiatives – such as T levels and internships - aimed at bringing employers closer to education.

Worcestershire's education settings need to support their young people to actively participate in, and understand the opportunities within, the Worcestershire economy

5. **Skills interventions need to focus on up-skilling and re-skilling in response to changing demographics, and technology impacting across sectors, to address replacement demand and meet the needs of growth and future sectors.**

Worcestershire's challenge is how best to represent its sectors in their entirety. Employers' current skill needs are predominately focused upon ICT and technical skills, especially for roles such as Network Engineers, Web Developers, Technical Architects, and enhanced Engineering/Manufacturing skills. The introduction of new concepts, and impact of technology - such as the development of Hydrogen and alternatives in response to net zero, and changes this will bring to vehicles, buildings and processes are also beginning to feature in employers' skill needs and planning moving forward. Our education settings need to be able to consider their existing curriculum and refresh their offer in line with employer needs.

Whilst Worcestershire's education settings must be ready and able to respond to employers' demands, which will require early interventions to explore infrastructure and capital needs to deliver the skills required for these changing needs, this response must work together with our careers planning at the same time as education leaders work with employers to understand how to adapt/ expand their curriculum and qualifications offer.

Demand of employers must be replicated in young people choosing education that will be employment rich in future years, as well as supporting the need to meet replacement demand as older workers retire.

Education faces the need to influence choice and introduce concepts through mainstream education that are of growing importance to employers such as sustainability, whilst continuing to develop innovation and creativity through our young people that will be essential to future growth.

Qualifications have often been designed with, and influenced by, large corporate organisations and do not reflect the roles and skills required by SMEs. This is a national issue, but Worcestershire must create its own future by seeking to influence national funding streams, as well as innovating and leading the way around agendas of importance to the county.

6. **Interventions need to focus on the health and wellbeing of residents, including those in work and those moving towards employment.**

Recognising the demographic of our county - and that 1 in 3 of our workforce is aged over 50, with an even greater prevalence in some sectors - Worcestershire must continue to focus on the health of its workforce, helping them to stay healthier and more productive for longer. Alongside this, whilst people remain in work for longer, the culture of skills development must ensure that our older workers upskill and retrain so they can use and adapt to new technologies, where necessary.

Worcestershire needs to look beyond typical skills stakeholders, and work with organisations and government departments - such as Public Health England and its NHS partners - to implement support to help residents remain healthy in work. This focus should include the implementation of early interventions that recognise potential health challenges, with actions to address them at an early stage.

7. **Accepting our ageing workforce, and the declining demographic of young people, Worcestershire's employers need to offer more flexibility and working options that will attract and retain talent, encouraging people to extend their working lives.**

Worcestershire's employers need to continue to offer and implement flexible working options which suit changing lifestyles and enable residents to work for longer. This will include those within the current workforce, and those currently out of work; for example, there currently are a higher number of females in the claimant pool than prior to Covid 19, who have been impacted by the loss of opportunities within part time work and the impact of Covid on their caring duties within their families.

Worcestershire needs to look beyond typical skills stakeholders, and work with organisations and government departments

Worcestershire needs to consider how interventions from government respond to this, helping them to make a quick and effective return to the workforce and contribute towards our economic prosperity.

Alongside this, Worcestershire needs to continue its work with its employers to develop and improve succession planning for talent to enter and be retained into the workforce.

Worcestershire must then provide skills interventions to support sectors where talent is recognised to be in deficit.

8. Consider national policy and how to both maximise potential and contextualise for local geography to make the most of opportunities for Worcestershire.

Worcestershire as a geography in procurement terms often sits within wider geographical patches for large contracts offered by the Department for Work and Pensions such as the Restart programme introduced across 2021. The challenge being that the demography is significantly different from either central Birmingham or rural Herefordshire and Worcestershire must ensure it is recognised within these opportunities and that provision is tailored. This can be done through improved partnership working both with our LEP colleagues, central government, and local contractors. Worcestershire must work with provision to deliver and respond to the needs of the County embracing appropriate opportunities to grow and further our economic future.

Worcestershire's Skills Action Plan develops these aims, and aligns potential interventions alongside them, recognising the need to explore national and local interventions.

The priorities are:

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**
2. **To aim for all educational establishments to annually meet all 8 Gatsby Benchmarks of Good Career Guidance, with a particular focus on the Worcestershire economy.**
3. **To create an education and training provision eco-system that meets local needs and the future trends of Worcestershire's economy i.e. ensuring further and higher education are responsive.**
4. **To increase the number of graduates and skilled young people who spend a significant part of their economic life in Worcestershire.**
5. **To improve the economic activity rates amongst our older workforce by creating a culture of flexible work environments and upskilling/reskilling opportunities.**

SKILLS ACTION PLAN

Skills Action Plan

Priority 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.

This priority combines the need to reduce the number of claimants within Worcestershire, with a focus on addressing both short and long-term health and career planning. It recognises the need to focus on our continued higher level of youth claimants, returning them to work and supporting employers to enable succession through Government and local initiatives.

The LEP recognises the need to ensure that employers are supported with accessing opportunities to create roles within their organisations. Furthermore, it recognises the need to build on these schemes and support employers to sustain these employees beyond the initiatives.

Actions:

1. Support the messaging and promotion to employers through the Worcestershire Growth Hub, to maximise interventions in the HM Government's Plan for Jobs. This includes continued working with local authority and other partners to complete the ongoing work as Kickstart Gateways for Worcestershire's SMEs, with a focus on long-term outcomes for young people and employers.
2. Demystify and signpost to careers services which help our unemployed residents to understand the transferable aspects of their career experience, existing skills and general know-how for jobs and employment opportunities (e.g. the National Careers Service and local provision).
3. Work with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to embed national, and create local, programmes for the Worcestershire geography whilst enabling better relevance of local training provision to claimant and employer needs.
4. Explore collaborative working with health providers and programmes across Worcestershire to ensure health interventions are embedded within employment support programmes, thereby reducing health inequality within the county.
5. Support the drive to meet the recruitment needs of key cornerstone sectors within the county and promote opportunities to claimants and new entrants i.e. Engineering/ Manufacturing, Digital, Care, and Construction.
6. Market and communicate employment interventions (Including the continued promotion of Worcestershire jobs) to residents within social mobility hotspots.

Full time Employment grew in 2020, to over 171,000 full time employees across Worcestershire.

Progress to date:

Since the onset of COVID-19, and with growing numbers of unemployed residents, the Skills Advisory Panel has monitored employment levels and focused its efforts on supporting the recovery, as well as seeking to support employers with their recruitment needs. The LEP, working alongside its local authority partner - Worcestershire County Council - responded by setting up Worcestershire Jobs in April 2021, to provide a one stop shop for jobs, training and apprenticeships online. The online service pulls all online and advertised jobs together into one place to enable more efficient job searching. Since its inception the site has recorded over 40,000 page views, supporting residents into new employment.

CASE STUDY: WORCESTERSHIRE JOBS

COVID-19 left many residents in Worcestershire without employment and impacted the recruitment market severely, Worcestershire Jobs created in April 2021 was designed to ease access to jobs and education opportunities within Worcestershire.

The site hosts around 8000 vacancies at any one time and offers quick access to apply for those roles. The next phase of Worcestershire Jobs will aim to improve access to those sites which are outside of current processes including developing links to the NHS jobs website, which would be the first outside site to host NHS jobs nationally outside of its own.

Worcestershire LEP has continued to support young residents through its **Worcestershire Careers Helpline** supporting young people to transition to their next steps in employment or education post 16 and 18. The helpline service hosts the opportunity for young people to access qualified careers advisors as needed and discuss their aspirations as well as gain practical, support and advice. In Summer 2021, 95.7 % of young people had a positive destination for September recorded , this support alongside the work of the Local Authority teams has proven invaluable during the ongoing pandemic.

Recognising the growing employment needs of certain sectors within the County, Worcestershire LEP continues to seek ways of improving access to candidates and encouraging greater inclusive practices from employers. Over 2021, Worcestershire LEP launched its **Future of Employment Support event**, chaired by a member of the Employment and Skills Board and designed to improve working practices between the sector and employers. The first meeting held in November 2021, saw 23 employment support providers explore connections and commit to improved partnership working in 2022.

Worcestershire LEP continued its work as a **Kickstart Intermediary Gateway**. Over 2021, the Gateway leveraged its stakeholders and Growth Hub to provide vacancies and enable support to SMEs, successfully placing over 230 young people into placement opportunities and supporting over 200 employers to host those placements. Working alongside the Chamber of Commerce who celebrated placing 200 young people into placements in December 2020, the partnership has locally co ordinating the activity and support available to young people working on the ground in Jobcentre Plus offices. To date around 25% of those successful placements have transitioned into full time employment.

The LEP is currently supporting more than 200 employers with around 400 vacancies.

CASE STUDY: KICKSTART IN WORCESTERSHIRE

One of Worcestershire's kickstart success stories, is Jess, who has just started a work placement at Adapt IT.

The Kickstart Scheme offers an innovative, alternative strategy to benefit young people struggling to enter the labour market.

We caught up with her manager, Simon O'Gorman, Managing Director at Adapt IT, who gave her a rave review for her first few weeks. He said: *"Jess joined our company on the 13th July. Initially she was quite nervous as it was a really new environment and as family run business at first sight could be quite daunting. But Jess has thrived, helping us build our website and web presence and inputting her ideas into what we could do to better promote and build the business. She is a hard worker and quick learner. She has embraced the different elements of the business and the projects we have given her and we are working on giving her the experience and training to grow even more.*

The Kickstart scheme has really helped us as a small business and not only provided us with someone who is keen and as passionate as we are, but also the support to start on the path to growth and hopefully something to build on for further recruitment opportunities in the future."

Worcestershire LEP, recognising the need of employers in certain industries is working over 2022 to launch a number of Sector based Work academy programmes, working with its DWP and Jobcentre Plus, the Further Education college – Heart of Worcestershire and Restart Programme Partners – Seetec Plus to respond to employer needs and support out of work residents into opportunities. The first programme to start in February 2022 focuses on Care recruitment and is working with a group of local Care providers to offer employment to successful participants. Worcestershire LEP will look to grow this provision over 2022.

MOVING FORWARD 2021-2025

Actions	Activities	Timescales: Short Term – 0-1 year Medium Term – 1-2 years
Support the messaging and promotion to employers, through the Worcestershire Growth Hub, to maximise interventions in the HM Government's Plan for Jobs. Includes working with Local Authority partners to act as an Intermediary Gateway for Worcestershire's SMEs, with a focus on long-term outcomes for young people and employers.	Complete HM Government's Kickstart programme and deliver support for participants leaving placements Deliver Communications Plan to promote employer interventions across the county. Implement the county Placement Strategy for engaging employers including marketing campaign to launch in Spring 22.	Short/Medium Term Short Term Medium Term
Demystify and signpost to careers services which help unemployed people to understand the transferable aspects of their career experience, existing skills and general know-how for jobs and employment opportunities (e.g. the National Careers Service and local provision)	Annual mapping exercise of employability programmes across the county Launch unemployment offer on Skills4Worcestershire. Improved working and targeting of the National Careers Service within the county Focus on an all-age careers service for Worcestershire.	Short Term Medium Term Medium Term Long term
Work with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to embed national, and create local, programmes for the Worcestershire geography whilst enabling better relevance of local training provision to claimants' and employers' needs.	Develop further Sector Work-based Academy Programmes for Worcestershire with DWP Support CAEHRS framework providers to implement and embed provision in the county. Launch Youth Hub within Worcester City in 2022 Embed Youth Hub Spokes into all districts. Embed role with DWP locally, to create appropriate programmes and support interventions for the county	Medium Term Medium Term Short Term Long term Long term

Actions	Activities	Timescales: Short Term – 0-1 year Medium Term – 1-2 years
Explore working with health providers and programmes across Worcestershire to ensure health interventions are embedded within employment support programmes, reducing health inequality.	Build relationships with Public Health England in Worcestershire Align the county's Health and Wellbeing Strategy and Skills Action Plan priorities Develop and bid for appropriate funding to develop support long term Create Health and Wellbeing Hubs with an employability focus across all districts in Worcestershire	Medium Term Medium Term Medium Term Long Term
Support the identified drive to meet the recruitment needs of key growth and cornerstone sectors within the county, and promote opportunities to claimants and new entrants	Improved focus of ESF/UKSPF programmes to support workless residents. Develop Action Plan/s for growth and cornerstone sectors to support recruitment aligning with Government initiatives such as Digital Bootcamps and career pathway programmes. Continue to work with WCC to develop a Careers into Care programme Develop Skills4Worcestershire to market growth and cornerstone sectors	Medium Term Short Term Short Term Long term
Focused effort on marketing and communicating to residents within social mobility hotspots around employment interventions, including launch of new Worcestershire jobsite.	Continue to market Worcestershire Jobs in 2022/23 and develop links into site. Target communication plan for site, including a focus around social mobility hotspots. Building on the work within Westlands Droitwich, identify further programmes to target employability hubs within social mobility hotspots.	Short Term Medium Term Long term

SKILLS ACTION PLAN

The COVID-19 impact in Education and young people will continue to be felt most in those young people who are considered most at risk of not entering our labour market and it is therefore essential that our programmes focus on all young people and that they continue to be advised and informed about the labour market and its needs, so they are well placed to engage with it.

Over 2021, Worcestershire LEP created over 150 industry and careers resources, including the launch of a virtual work experience in Engineering and Manufacturing.

Priority 2:

To aim for all educational establishments to annually meet all 8 Gatsby Benchmarks of Good Career Guidance, with a particular focus on the Worcestershire economy.

Worcestershire's demographic challenge can only be resolved through succession planning. It is essential that young people are given help and support to understand their future careers and, alongside this, the careers available in Worcestershire.

The Careers and Enterprise Company Careers Hub initiative in the county, continues to strive forward with outstanding results being recorded. However, over the past year, the greatest impact on this work has been the challenges in engaging with employers who have been unable to support the programme because of the challenges they faced over this time. Worcestershire needs to recover its focus on employer engagement and ensure all young people have a good number of employer encounters over the lifetime of their schooling. Prior to the pandemic Worcestershire saw good levels of success, with 83% of all young people having good levels of employer encounters and this must be the focus to ensure that young people are aware of employment opportunities that Worcestershire can offer.

Apprenticeships in Worcestershire over 2020/21 improved from the previous year but overall are still significantly down on previous levels. Worcestershire and its work on the Worcestershire Apprenticeships brand seeks to address this and to continue to work with employers and young people in the county to utilise apprenticeships as a key vehicle for succession planning in Worcestershire.

Actions:

1. Support the Careers and Enterprise Company (CEC) programme, and deliver careers planning and education support in 65 education establishments across the county.
2. Annually collate labour market intelligence (LMI) and insights from partners and stakeholders to build a resource library which can be accessed by young people and Worcestershire's education establishments.
3. Continue to build and extend the work of Worcestershire Apprenticeships, ensuring young people understand all post-16 options including Apprenticeships, academic and vocational pathways.
4. Lead on exploring, co-ordinating and promoting options for employers to maximise their engagement with education such as work experience, graduate internships, T Level placements, and Apprenticeships.

Progress to date:

Recognising the challenges faced in Worcestershire, around both the ageing workforce and the need to retain young people to meet our skills needs, the Skills Advisory Panel has led a number of projects since 2012 focused on engaging education with local employers. From these programmes, the **Inspiring Worcestershire** initiative was launched in 2018, focused on connecting education to employers, highlighting future careers, meeting skills demand, and supporting/ addressing our ageing workforce through succession planning. The initiative brings together various Government initiatives and local programmes aimed at young people and career planning for Worcestershire.

> **Inspiring Worcestershire is recognised as one of the exemplar projects in Careers planning in England.**

At the centre of this initiative is the work of the Careers and Enterprise Company (CEC). In 2015, Worcestershire was identified as a cold spot for career planning support. These indicators drew together data from education and the labour market to identify economic disadvantage, outcomes for young people, and employer engagement opportunities. The CEC report identified Worcestershire as being in the bottom third for employer engagement and work experience as well as being one of the "coldest" areas in the country for wider support.

Worcestershire continues to embrace the work of the Careers and Enterprise Advisor programme in 2021 despite the challenges in supporting schools over this time. The launch of the Middle School Careers hub in September 2020, saw all Education establishments in Worcestershire with a year 7 pupil be offered support within the programme, meaning that no matter which school system or district you accessed your education, careers planning support is offered centrally through the teams embedded in the LEP and Local Authority Structures.

Over 2021, Worcestershire continued to perform against other regions in England, and returned results of 6.14/8 Benchmarks being met in schools meaning that young Worcestershire residents were receiving high levels of careers support.

Worcestershire LEP over the period of April 2020 to March 2021 created over 150 Careers resources highlighting local industries and employment to students, hosted on the Skills4Worcestershire website for education to access. Alongside this the team has commenced the development of **Virtual Work experience builds** for the County across its key growth sectors. The first launched in 2021 focuses on Engineering and Manufacturing, hosting 6 employers and over 45 hours of content for students to access including livestream webinars streamed in Tomorrows Engineering Week in November 2021. To date 45 student in the Autumn Term of 2021 have completed this content.

	Worcestershire Benchmark set in July 2018	Worcestershire: December 2021	National average: December 2021
Average number of Gatsby Benchmarks met per establishment (Wave 1)	1.92	6.14	4.80

**Worcestershire LEP December 2021 Report – Careers and Enterprise Company (CEC)*

Over 2021, to support the Careers and Enterprise Company's work and Worcestershire's overall ambition to ensure that those young people at risk do not become Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET) and that the programme is effective in contributing to the reduction of young people being NEET in future years, the team secured additional funding to review the system used to determine the chances of a young person being NEET. This project known as "Challenging the RONI*" is designed to ensure that young people who are identified as being most at risk of becoming NEET receive the support that they need to progress within their Careers. This additional project has the potential to improve outcomes for many of our young people within Worcestershire and reduce the financial impact that being NEET can cause to public services.

**Risk of NEET Indicator*

CASE STUDY: CHALLENGING THE RONI

Challenging the RONI proposes to develop current systems to improve identification of those most at risk within our education settings. This programme is designed to level up the support between young people with low social mobility and their peers. The project aims to improve the destination outcomes of our young people most at risk and to ensure that Careers resources are effectively targeted to meet their needs. In the long term, this project aims to reduce the level of NEETs and the levels of movement around post 16 education.

Apprenticeship Ambassador Network West Midlands

Alongside the work of Inspiring Worcestershire, Worcestershire has worked to expand and highlight its Apprenticeship programme, continuing its Worcestershire Apprenticeship brand this year. Over 2021, Worcestershire Apprenticeships has worked with the West Midlands Worcestershire Apprentice Ambassador Network to agree a joint strategy for the County.

The Worcestershire Apprenticeships board is focused on the recovery of Apprenticeships post Covid, utilising the incentive schemes under the HM Government Plan for Jobs to expand the number of employer opportunities in the county. Over 2021 more employers considered apprenticeships as part of their workforce plan and Worcestershire Apprenticeships focused on the promotion of Apprenticeships to young people, co ordinating messaging within the county through its websites, school engagement programme, campaigns such as National Apprenticeship Week, and virtual events . This year, the Worcestershire Apprenticeship Annual Awards were hosted online to over 700 viewers, celebrating Apprenticeships and recognising talent and exemplar employers.

Alongside this, Worcestershire LEP completed the commissioning of a £2.97M European Social Fund Programme to act as Employment Support Hub for the county to engage young people aged 15-24, designed to support more than 1900 young people into Education and Employment including sustainable Apprenticeships, and monitored through the Skills Advisory Panel.

CASE STUDY: WORCESTERSHIRE APPRENTICESHIPS AWARDS 2021

Worcestershire Apprenticeships first hosted in 2015 its awards to an audience of 300 employers, training providers and apprentices. In 2021 the executive team decided to host a virtual event which would recognise the steps taken over 2020 and 2021 in the Apprenticeship agenda in Worcestershire. The event hosted over three evenings focused on apprentices, employers and the providers across the county and was viewed 700 times.

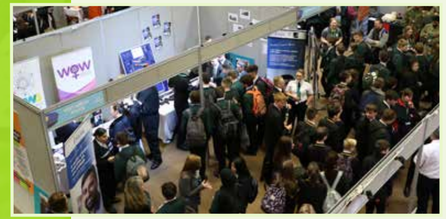
The event recognised the impact apprentices had made over the pandemic and included an award to recognise the contribution made by an apprentice during this time. The winner of this was Chloe Harris, a nursing apprentice within the NHS Hospitals Trust. Chloe worked on the front line over 2020, nursing end of life Covid patients, despite this challenging time and challenges within her own personal life, she showed significant resilience and completed her nursing apprenticeship in 2020 to complete her dreams of being a nurse.

MOVING FORWARD 2021-2025

Actions	Activities	Timescales: Short Term – 0-1 year Medium Term – 1-2 years
Support the Careers and Enterprise Company (CEC) programme and deliver career planning and careers education support in 65 education establishments across the county.	Continue to deliver the Careers Hub programme for Worcestershire, embedding the programme into middle schools. Deliver the annual Worcestershire Skills Show Roll out employer encounters into primary schools, to support the exploration of careers at an earlier age.	Short/Medium Term Medium Term Long Term
Annually collate labour market intelligence (LMI) and insights from partners and stakeholders to build a resource library that can be accessed by young people and Worcestershire's education establishments.	Launch an LMI Video for Worcestershire in 2022. Engage employers in virtual work experience/resources. Develop a new LMI tool for Worcestershire	Short/Medium Term Short Term Medium Term
Continue to build and extend the work of Worcestershire Apprenticeships, ensuring young people understand all their post-16 options including Apprenticeships, academic, and vocational pathways.	Review Standards available in Worcestershire and complete gapping exercise. Work with delivery providers to further embed WA into their organisations. Continue to fund the work of Worcestershire Apprenticeships. Celebrate Apprenticeship success through an annual awards ceremony. Run an annual Apprenticeship recruitment event. Lead on a county Apprenticeships communications plan, targeting employers and young people. Continue to source sustainable funding to maintain the Worcestershire Apprenticeships programme	Short Term Medium Term Short Term Short Term Short Term Short Term Long term
Lead on exploring, coordinating, and promoting options for employers to maximise their engagement with education e.g. work experience, graduate internships, T Level placements, Apprenticeships etc.	Create a Placement Strategy for Worcestershire Create a skills hub within the Growth Hub. Lead on the promotion of education encounters to employers Work with FE to promote T Levels and work placements Build a countywide database of employers to support further activity of education partners	Short Term Medium Term Short Term Medium Term Long Term

SKILLS ACTION PLAN

> Worcestershire LEP is considering how it creates demand for careers in our key sectors within young people.



Priority 3:

To create an education and training provision eco-system that meets local needs and the future trends of Worcestershire's economy.

This priority acknowledges the Department for Education's desire for local skills provision to align with local employer needs and labour market trends. It recognises that the Skills Advisory Panel has a role to play in consulting with stakeholders and employers, offering local leadership of the skills agenda and creating the conditions where education can work successfully to meet the county's employment needs. It recognises the need to promote our key sectors and their skills needs, recognising the challenges of replacement demand in key industries.

Over the last year, Worcestershire LEP has worked with its Further Education settings to expand the offer to Social Care and support the recruitment of carers into the workforce as well as considering how it creates demand for careers in Care within young people.

Worcestershire LEP also recognises the need to improve digital skills in all areas of the working population. The aim is to support a move to greater flexible working and the expansion of digital marketing, accelerated by COVID-19, existing skills gaps and the impacts of increased automation and digitalisation within our employers.

Alongside this, Worcestershire LEP acknowledges the need to consider the challenges of moving to Net Zero, current studies suggest that within the county the need for new skills sets will be significant, but the major concerns are over the needs for existing curriculum and the acceleration of demand that is caused by this agenda, such as the impact on Construction Trades. In 2021, Worcestershire LEP held Green Skills Week in December responding to COP 26 , highlighting to young people within education settings the careers impact of net zero.

Actions:

1. Explore diverse ways of addressing skills gaps, such as digital, in the Worcestershire economy, by utilising Government schemes such as T Levels, Apprenticeships and Digital Bootcamps as well as local initiatives.
2. Engage closely with training providers, further, and higher education in the LEP area to help promote their education and employability offer, their areas of research excellence and innovation, and to support them with their enhanced engagement with business.
3. Consider the needs of new technologies, and support employers to address their future skills needs - resulting from innovation – within the existing workforce and for new entrants.
4. Establish a digital skills strategy for the county, for those reskilling and for new entrants, which maps the county's digital skills provision and considers capital and revenue investment needs.
5. Establish a Green skills strategy for the county which demonstrates employer skills needs created by the net zero movement, mapping the county's existing skills provision and highlighting those gaps and potential implications of the agenda for education.
6. Work with Worcestershire's employers in cornerstone sectors, such as Care and Construction, to understand the impact of factors such as Covid 19 and net zero, supporting workforce planning within the sectors.
7. Lead a review on the capital needs of post-16 education establishments and create a project pipeline for future Government investment.
8. Position the LEP, including the SAP, as an established partner with Government to contribute and pilot national skills policy developments.

Progress to date:

Worcestershire's Skills Advisory Panel understands the county's skills deficits and regularly seeks to influence provision that meets labour market needs. As part of this conversation the board is aware of the challenges around premises and equipment that are faced by the Education providers in county in transforming the deficit in skills. Since 2018, the board identified a number of challenges that were impeding growth, one of those being that Apprenticeship capacity was preventing an increase in young people's skills and a lack of provision in county around Construction. Worcestershire LEP therefore committed **£8.3 million investment of Local Growth Funding** into skills capital schemes to support the expansion of facilities across the county, the latest of these being in Kidderminster. This facility supports the work of the college to expand its offer in Construction and Automotive with a focus on new technologies, such as electrification/hybrid tech and sustainable construction alongside higher-level courses in construction disciplines. This investment of Local Growth Funding has to date increased local capacity to 1275 placements per year within our Worcestershire education establishments.

Over 2021, Worcestershire LEP held a number of pilot virtual events around **Workforce Planning** to support employers within the county to understand how to effectively plan their future recruitment and consider their future skills needs. This work was piloted to understand the challenges some of our SMEs were facing over 2021 and consider the support mechanisms available. The expansion of this programme will continue into 2022 where suitable funding can be identified.

PRIMARY STEM CHALLENGE
CREATING OUR FUTURE WORKFORCE

MIDDLE SCHOOL STEM CHALLENGE
CREATING OUR FUTURE WORKFORCE

Worcestershire's Skills Advisory Panel regularly seeks to influence provision that meets labour market needs. As part of this conversation the board is aware of the challenges around premises and equipment that are faced by the Education providers in county in transforming the deficit in skills. Since 2018, the board identified a number of challenges that were impeding growth, one of those being that Apprenticeship capacity was preventing an increase in young people's skills and a lack of provision in county around Construction. Worcestershire LEP therefore committed **£8.3 million investment of Local Growth Funding** into skills capital schemes to support the expansion of facilities across the county, the latest of these being in Kidderminster. This facility supports the work of the college to expand its offer in Construction and Automotive with a focus on new technologies, such as electrification/hybrid tech and sustainable construction alongside higher-level courses in construction disciplines. This investment of Local Growth Funding has to date increased local capacity to 1275 placements per year within our Worcestershire education establishments.

Worcestershire LEP as part of the continued drive to increase STEM skills in the county, continued to support its **STEM based Primary School Competition**, highlighting the STEM agenda by setting challenges to be solved in small teams. The competition launched in 2018 concludes in each school's winner moving into a county final, held this year virtually. The challenges are localised and have included STEM challenges such as: building the Worcester City river bridge, designing train platforms for Parkway Station, autonomous vehicles with 5g technologies, and Agritech production techniques in Evesham farms. This year (2021/22) the challenge is themed around recycled materials in line with COP 26 and currently 65 primary schools will take part over 2021/22, involving around 2500 pupils.

CASE STUDY: WORCESTERSHIRE PRIMARY SCHOOL STEM CHALLENGE 2020/21

Worcestershire schools have been getting involved in STEM challenge workshops to help inspire their pupils. After being postponed in 2020, the Worcestershire Primary School STEM Challenge made a return in 2021 alongside the new Middle School STEM Challenge which was launched as a one-year special programme this year. The challenges this year were around designing an eco-friendly house and to identify a problem that may be affecting the food manufacturing industry and create a solution to that problem. Many congratulations to the winners for the Primary STEM challenge, Anya and William from Holy Redeemer Primary School and the Middle School STEM challenge, Millie and Steph from Westacre Middle School.

MOVING FORWARD 2021-2025

Actions	Activities	Timescales: Short Term – 0-1 year Medium Term – 1-2 years
Explore diverse ways of addressing skills gaps in the Worcestershire economy, such as Digital, by utilising Government schemes including T Levels, Apprenticeships and Digital Bootcamps as well as local initiatives.	Work with FE providers to explore Government initiatives and ways of working cross-county.	Short Term
	Secure DFE Bootcamp Funding to respond to employers immediate skills shortages within key sectors	Short Term
	Create a skills hub within the Growth Hub.	Medium Term
	Secure funding to support employers with workforce planning/ engagement strategies	Long Term
Engage with training providers, further, and higher education in the LEP area to help promote their education and employability offers, their areas of research excellence and innovation, enhance their engagement with businesses.	Continued and ongoing promotion of Government initiatives, such as T Levels, to the wider community through schools and directly to employers using stakeholders in county.	Short Term
	Termly meetings with FE, HE and training providers to explore opportunities.	Short/Medium Term
	Ongoing engagement with SAP from HE, FE and training providers	Short/Medium Term
Consider the new technologies impacting employers and support them to address their future skills needs through their existing workforce and new entrants.	Complete research into skills created by Net Zero in the county.	Short Term
	Work with skills providers to map current provision and explore provision gaps using government initiatives	Medium Term
	Create a skills focus on the specific technologies of importance to Worcestershire employers, such as low carbon and 5G technologies.	Medium Term
	Develop a Digital Skills strategy for the county, mapping the current offer in county and consider investment needs.	Medium Term
	Explore need for facilities to expand digital provision within the county	Long term
Work with Worcestershire's employers in cornerstone sectors, such as Care and Construction, to understand the impact of digitalisation on their employment and to meet their skills needs.	Develop action plan(s) for cornerstone sectors to support recruitment, aligned with Government initiatives such as Digital Bootcamps and career pathway programmes.	Short Term
	Seek resources to support education partners in resolving systemic challenges that cause inability to deliver education provision to meet employer need.	Short Term
	Continue work around Careers in Care commenced in 2021 with NHS, Local Authority and Care providers to increase numbers into care recruitment.	Short Term
Lead review on the capital needs of post-16 education establishment and create a project pipeline for future Government investment.	Review capital needs in county and establish a project pipeline for future funding.	Medium Term
	Work with further education to review site needs.	Long Term
	Support the University to expand its Healthcare provision	Long Term
Position the LEP (including the SAP) as an established partner with Government to contribute and pilot national skills policy developments.	Continue to embed the Skills Advisory Panel into the LEP and HM Government infrastructure, and challenge and create policy locally and nationally	Short/Medium Term

SKILLS ACTION PLAN

Priority 4:

To increase the number of graduates and skilled young people who spend a significant part of their economic life in Worcestershire.

We want young people to view Worcestershire as a place to work and live, as this will help to support the high skills needs of our economy both now and in future years. The challenge of encouraging graduates to return to Worcestershire can be solved by informing young people about local opportunities throughout their careers education, enabling them to leave for study – if they wish - but to plan to return for graduate employment. Continuing to increase the number of employer encounters, to support this messaging to young people, is essential for the marketing of Worcestershire and its labour market opportunities.

> **We want young people to view Worcestershire as a place to work and live, as this will help to support the high skills needs of our economy both now and in future years.**

Twenty-four per cent of jobs in Worcestershire are within the following sectors - Health, Education, and Public Services - supplied by the University of Worcester. This opportunity to recruit from a local university should be further explored to benefit our local services and build the workforce to support our local residents' health and education needs.

Worcestershire Apprenticeships must expand its exploration of the Apprenticeship levy with employers, and the opportunities to develop higher level Apprenticeships to enable more organisations to access them through levy transfer.

Actions:

1. Support the work of Worcestershire Apprenticeships following COVID-19, helping them to grow Apprenticeships, consider the use of levy funds and the opportunities offered to employers by higher-level Apprenticeships.
2. Continue to build on the high level of employer encounters with young people in educational establishments, including the continued development of the Worcestershire Skills Show to highlight Worcestershire's opportunities for young people.
3. Work with the University of Worcester to build a Public Sector Centre of Excellence, to offer increased opportunities for Worcestershire communities to access higher education and maximise its potential to attract and employ university graduates directly into Worcestershire's public services.
4. Build on the existing initiative of "One Worcestershire" - the inward investment brand hosted by Worcestershire County Council - and explore how it can highlight employment opportunities and growth employment sectors to young people outside the county.

Progress to date:

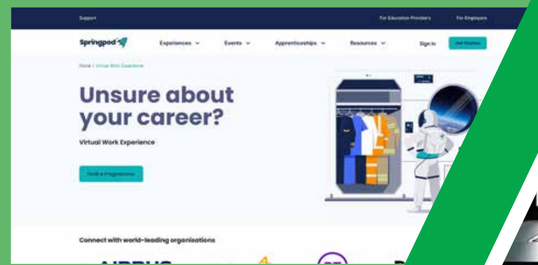
The 'Inspiring Worcestershire' programme - with the Careers and Enterprise Company (CEC) work and the Worcestershire Apprenticeships brand embedded - has been designed to support the key messaging of Worcestershire's employment market and to help young people progress into positive destinations. For the first time in 2021, the data for graduate outcomes shows **higher levels of graduates returning to the county** suggesting the highlighting of employers and opportunity through the work of Inspiring Worcestershire is showing positive impact.

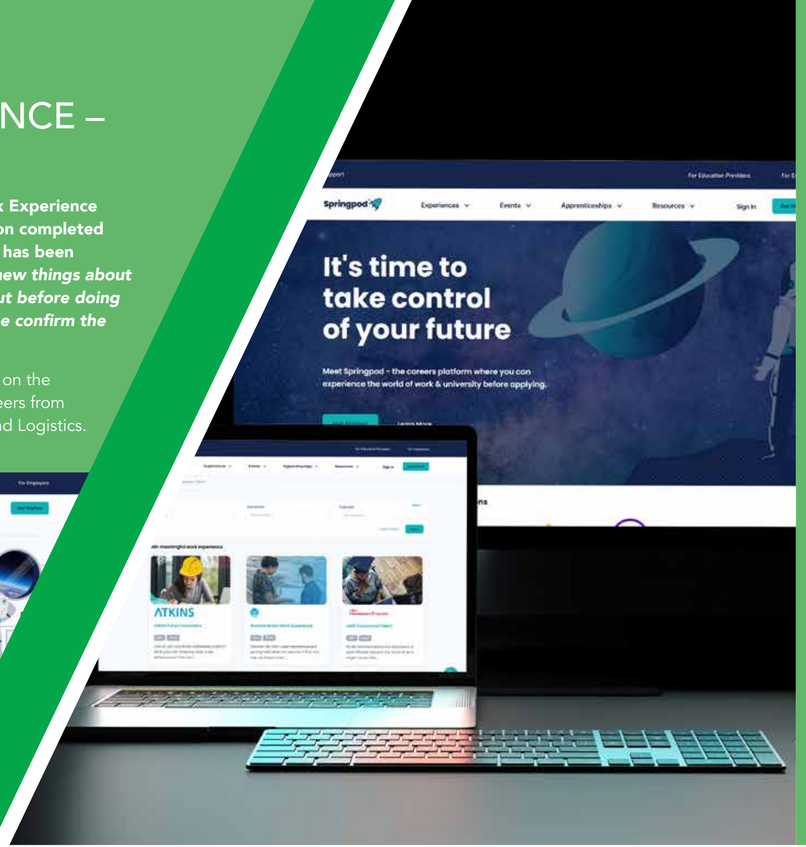
To further this work and mitigate the impacts of Covid on employer encounters and work experience, the creation of the first of five **Virtual Work experiences** was launched into our education settings. This product goes further than a traditional work experience placement, able to engage many students at one time as well as widen the experience received. It looks at several employers within an industry and within Worcestershire. The first virtual work experience launched in "Tomorrows Engineering Week" in November 2021 focused on Engineering and Manufacturing , highlighting the industry, many of the engineering processes within the industry, the variety of engineering roles and the differing career paths that can be taken to enter the industry.

CASE STUDY: VIRTUAL WORK EXPERIENCE – SPRINGPOD

In 2020, Worcestershire launched its first Virtual Work Experience platform. Over the Autumn term 45 pupils in Education completed the 90 hour programme. Feedback from the platform has been overwhelmingly positive. *"I really enjoyed Learning new things about different sectors of engineering I had not known about before doing the virtual programme. The programme has helped me confirm the career path that I want to take."*

The second build due to launch in Spring 2022 will focus on the Field to Fork journey of Food, encompassing several careers from Agri and Horticulture, Food Manufacture, Wholesaling and Logistics.





CASE STUDY: THE INSPIRING WORCESTERSHIRE CAMPAIGN CONTINUES

At its 2019 conference, Worcestershire LEP launched the "Inspiring Worcestershire" pledge campaign. This campaign specifically targeted employers across Worcestershire to pledge their support to participate in careers-related activities taking place across our network of education establishments. These pledges covered traditional activities such as mock interviews and CV workshops, but also encouraged local employers to open their doors thereby enabling young people to gain workplace insights and have valuable workplace encounters. In the CEC's 2019 report - Closing the Gap - Worcestershire was leading the way with 83% of its young people having an employer encounter.

These programmes to engage employers with education are impacting upon the county's Gatsby Benchmarks of Good Career Guidance performance, with growing numbers engaged in employer encounters and more significantly ensuring that our young people are given Labour Market Information to challenge their education choices and support the county to close its skills gap in future years.

INSPIRING WORCESTERSHIRE

	Worcestershire Benchmark set in 2018	Worcestershire: Summer 2020	National average: Summer 2020
% of young people receiving encounters with employers	42%	83%	64%
% of young people receiving experiences of the workplace	44%	64%	53%

**Worcestershire LEP Summer 2020 LEP Report – Careers and Enterprise Company (CEC)*

MOVING FORWARD 2021-2025

Higher-level Apprenticeships over the period of 2020/21 continue to grow in line with national trends. Whilst apprenticeships have slowed since the onset of the pandemic, employers continue to utilise higher apprenticeships to recruit talented young people into their organisations and grow their skills base

Worcestershire LEP continues to build momentum and increase these numbers working with levy providers to redistribute the Apprenticeship levy to SMEs. During 2020-2021 Worcestershire LEP worked with Worcestershire County Council to redistribute £250k of levy to SMEs as part of a **levy transfer scheme** for the county.

Actions	Activities	Timescales: Short Term – 0-1 year Medium Term – 1-2 years
Support Worcestershire Apprenticeships to help stabilise the labour market, following COVID-19, and grow Apprenticeships. Consider the use of levy funds and the opportunities for higher-level Apprenticeships.	Map levy employers and facilitate ways to transfer the levy to SMEs. Support employers to access incentive schemes for Apprenticeships. Explore creation of Local incentive schemes through local government	Medium Term Short Term Short/Medium Term
Continue to build on the levels of employer encounters for young people within educational establishments, including the continued development of the Worcestershire Skills Show to raise young people's awareness of local opportunities.	Increase levels of employer engagement in education through an increased focus on Skills and Growth Hub Support providers to access appropriate employer interventions for young people. Lead on the annual Worcestershire Skills Show	Short/Medium Term Short/Medium Term Medium Term
Work with the University of Worcester to build a Public Sector Centre of Excellence, offering an increased opportunity for Worcestershire communities to access higher Education and maximise the potential to attract and employ university graduates directly into Worcestershire's public services.	Explore the concept of a Public Sector Centre of Excellence, working with the University of Worcester, local authorities, Health and Education partners	Medium Term
Explore the development of the "One Worcestershire" inward investment brand, hosted by Worcestershire County Council, including how it could highlight local employment opportunities to young people outside the county.	Create a communications strategy with One Worcestershire to target young people and highlight career opportunities in Worcestershire	Medium Term

SKILLS ACTION PLAN

> One in three of Worcestershire's workforce is aged over 50, and we have an ageing demography through to 2041.

Priority 5:

To improve the economic activity rates amongst our older workforce by creating a culture of flexible work environments and upskilling/ reskilling opportunities.

One in three of Worcestershire's workforce is aged over 50, and we have an ageing demography through to 2041. People are working longer which is creating greater demand for flexible working to meet lifestyle changes as well as a need to keep reskilling to remain in the workforce for longer.

The Impact of Covid and the demand of employees to work more flexibly has positively affected our overall number of flexible jobs within the county over the last 12 months, although it is as yet unclear to the degree.

In the recent Salary and Benefits survey conducted by the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce the county saw an increase of 53% of employers from the previous year who were offering flexible working options, including working from home and an overall increase in those offering part time and job share roles.

The survey suggested that in total 80% of all companies that responded were offering a package that included the ability to work flexibly. The caveat to this is that it is as yet unknown whether current situations are being affected by government guidance around "working from home" and whether this will change in the long term when employers are able to bring back workforces en masse.

Worcestershire's employment data from 2020 is showing covid impacted part time opportunities more than full time, with a reduction of over 8000 employments, but recovery looks positive with part time roles increasing by 5% in the second quarter of 2021. This increase in flexible working can only be seen as beneficial for the county, particularly women, older workers and those with health and disability issues will be able to further contribute to, economic growth in the region, and continue to drive the pressing need for structural change in the Worcestershire jobs market. Worcestershire needs to continue its efforts to increase this picture for the long term and work with its employers to open flexible working for all.

Actions:

1. Continue to work with the Worcestershire LEP Growth Hub to continue encouraging and enabling businesses to consider alternative employment models and the upskilling/reskilling of staff.
2. Develop Workforce Planning programme to support employers to understand recruitment needs now and in the future.
3. Explore opportunities to introduce programmes and initiatives into the county that offer upskilling and reskilling to local employers e.g. Digital Bootcamps.
4. Develop a skills hub within the Growth Hub to support employers to access training options and gather intelligence on their skills needs.
5. Continue the work of the Midlife MOT in Worcestershire, recognising and building on existing interventions created in 2021.

WORCESTERSHIRE MIDLIFE MOT
HEALTH · WEALTH · EMPLOYMENT
www.midlifemot.org

> …there is a pressing need to drive structural change in the Worcestershire jobs market.

Progress to date:

Since 2020, Worcestershire LEP has implemented a number of pilots to support employers to identify their skills and recruitment needs. The Department for Work and Pensions supported Worcestershire to launch its Midlife MOT portal which served a dual purpose of supporting older workers to understand their career, finance and health choices but also to support employers to plan for the retirement and loss of skill set of these vital employees.

CASE STUDY – WORCESTERSHIRE'S MIDLIFE MOT

Worcestershire launched in January 2021, the Midlife MOT website designed to offer individuals over 50 years old, a single tool to explore their career, health and wealth over coming years. The tool enables them to financially plan, undertake a preventive health assessment and consider their training needs to continue in employment for as long as they require prior to retirement. The tool also enables employers to access tools supporting them to workforce plan and pursue conversations with older workers. The resulting impact being that employers are able to ensure that older workers continue to be productive and at the same time plan for their succession within the workforce replacing skills and labour.

Over 2021, Worcestershire LEP continued to work through its Growth Hub to encourage employers to consider their workforce demographic, recognise the need for succession planning, and offer more flexibility to current employees.

Since 2019, employers have received effective upskilling support through European Funding programmes, with over 315 employers taking part and 1639 employees, however it is recognised there is still more to do in Worcestershire to engage more employers in understanding the benefits of succession planning and reviewing their workforce needs. Employers continue to regularly articulate skills gaps, with older workers needing digital skills, as well as wider recruitment shortages which have become prevalent over the pandemic in all industries. Worcestershire LEP recognises the need to continue supporting employers to workforce plan to consider succession and upskilling needs moving forward into 2022.

WORCESTERSHIRE MIDLIFE MOT

CASE STUDY: SKILLS SUPPORT FOR THE WORKFORCE

Worcestershire launched in April 2019, the Skills for the Workforce Programme supporting individuals within SMEs to upskill. One such business is Transmec a Transport, Warehousing and Logistics business, based in Redditch. The organisation identified that there was rapid growth within the company at a time when there is competition in the labour market for skilled logistics and warehouse personnel.

In order to recruit, the organisation needed to upskill some of the existing workforce in coaching, mentoring and leadership and management. Encouraging leaders and managers to consider new ways of working and build a strong team ethos. The Skills for the Workforce team worked with Transmec to complete a training needs analysis to identify the best training to meet the business needs. Following this, 19 employees completed a Level 2 in Effective Team Member Skills and ILM Level 4 in Leadership & Management, all fully funded through the programme. Transmec following the training felt it had been a great investment in time to encourage fresh thinking and delivered an improved team ethos using a learning approach of both online and face-to-face delivery.

One of the learners said, *"This has been one of the best things I have done. I have got to know people on a personal level like never before, and feel loads better knowing we are supporting one another."*

European Union
European Social Fund

Education & Skills Funding Agency

MOVING FORWARD 2021-2025

Actions	Activities	Timescales: Short Term – 0-1 year Medium Term – 1-2 years
Work with the Worcestershire LEP Growth Hub to continue encouraging and enabling businesses to consider alternative employment models and the upskilling/reskilling of staff.	Seek resources to implement the Employer Excellence Charter, supporting employers to implement different contract models and employ a diverse workforce. Map the reskilling offer for Cornerstone sectors as part of the action plan(s) development to support recruitment and upskilling aligned with Government initiatives and including ESF programmes locally. Seek funding to implement a county-wide business support programme around workforce planning and succession	Medium Term Medium Term Long Term
Explore opportunities to introduce programmes and initiatives into the county that offer local employers upskilling and reskilling, such as Digital Bootcamps.	Support the implementation/ introduce opportunities locally that respond to Worcestershire's economic priorities, such as Digital Boot camps, Lifetime Skills Fund etc. Create a skills hub within the Growth Hub.	Medium Term Medium Term
Work with the National Careers Service and Public Health England to to build on the implementation of the Midlife MOT DWP Initiative in Worcestershire, recognising and building further on existing local interventions.	Develop the current Midlife MOT pilot seeking alternative funding sources. Work with Public Health to extend work of Worcestershire Works Well to support workforce retention	Short/Medium Term Long Term

CALL TO ACTION - THE IMPORTANCE OF COLLABORATION

Now more than ever, Worcestershire LEP's skills action plan requires a collaborative approach to addressing the challenges in our skills and labour market. The Skills Advisory Panel encourages and supports an approach which sees our partners in schools, further and higher education, Apprenticeships and community education working together to provide our young people - and those out of work - with clear pathways to employment as well as supporting our employers with the skills they need for their existing and future workforces.

The Skills Advisory Panel supports the need to place the employer at the heart of skills development and, as such, encourage our businesses - large and small - to look beyond today and work with the LEP and its stakeholders for our joint future. Supporting our education providers to develop greater levels of employer encounters for young people, innovative recruitment practices around new entrants, and support to develop a curriculum that is fit for their organisation and the future of employment in Worcestershire.

> **The Skills Advisory Panel supports the need to place the employer at the heart of skills development and, as such, encourage our businesses - large and small - to look beyond today and work with the LEP and its stakeholders for our joint future.**

To see how your organisation can positively contribute to the conversation, get involved with the Skills team.

Email Judy Gibbs, Director of Skills: jgibbs@worcestershire.gov.uk or contact us through our contact details below.

References

Local Skills Report – Annex A

Worcestershire LEP evidence review

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Worcestershire EMSI Viewpoint 2019

Herefordshire and Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce Quarterly Economic Survey March 2020

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