



Funded by
UK Government

Buckinghamshire Local Skills Improvement Plan

Progress Report

JUNE 2025

Contents

Purpose of the report	1
Summary of the LSIP	1
Strategic and economic context update	3
What has been achieved so far?	6
What still needs to be achieved?	13

Purpose of the report

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the progress made so far through the Buckinghamshire Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) in addressing the skills priorities for the county. The Buckinghamshire Local Skills Report was published by Buckinghamshire Business First (BBF) in August 2023.

This report is aimed at key stakeholders in Buckinghamshire including:

1. Employers – in order to demonstrate that critical work is going on to address skills gaps and skill shortages in the county affecting employment and productivity and identifying ways employers can get involved in developing solutions
2. Education and Training Providers – to identify areas they can focus on to improve skills provision
3. Learners – to highlight employment and training opportunities
4. Buckinghamshire Council – which has developed the [Buckinghamshire Skills and Employment Strategy](#) of which the LSIP forms a key part
5. Other key stakeholders – to identify areas where support is still needed to meet the aims of the LSIP.

This progress report has been prepared in accordance with [Local Skills Improvement Plans: Stage 2 Guidance \(dated November 2023\)](#) and is intended to review progress against the Local Skills Improvement Plan published in August 2023 and Annual Progress Report published in June 2024.

Summary of the LSIP

LSIPs aim to make changes to post-16 technical education and training in order to meet the skills needs of businesses more closely. They provide an agreed set of actionable priorities that employers, providers and other stakeholders in a local area can get behind to drive change. LSIPs are envisaged by government as a ten-year change programme with a 3-year cycle. This report represents the progress at the end of the first 3-year cycle.

The Buckinghamshire LSIP and previous progress report may be downloaded [here](#).

This report is accompanied by three annexes:

- [Annex A: Priorities and Actions \(Roadmap\)](#) – LSIP action plan and progress to date
- [Annex B: Case Studies](#) which highlights some of the projects undertaken as part of the plan
- [Annex C: KPIs and Baseline Metrics](#) which will be used to measure the impact of the plan.

Overview of skills priorities in Buckinghamshire

The following industry sectors and cross-sector skills themes were identified as priorities for Buckinghamshire:



- **Engineering** – Almost 20% of the Buckinghamshire economy is in engineering. It is a high employment and growth sector but in August 2023 there was almost no further or higher education engineering provision in the county.
- **Construction** – Major infrastructure projects are underway in Buckinghamshire, including HS2 and East-West Rail, causing major skills shortages. There was a lack of full-time courses and apprenticeship provision.
- **Film and TV** – Buckinghamshire is home to Pinewood Studios and other major film and TV production facilities and is close to major developments in neighbouring areas too. The sector has high growth potential but is suffering from a critical shortage of key behind-the-camera technical skills. It also has a large proportion of Buckinghamshire’s self-employed. It needs new provision and clear career paths for new entrants.
- **Health and social care** – The largest employer in the county with acute recruitment and retention difficulties. Whilst there is good provision for clinical roles, the sector needs to attract more people into the 50% of jobs in non-clinical roles. It also needs to upskill the existing workforce especially in digital skills.
- **Digital** – The digital sector has a significant influence in Buckinghamshire with skills shortages across a number of occupations driven by the adoption of new technologies, and the pace of change is not being matched by the uptake of digital skills education. All of Buckinghamshire’s growth sectors require new digital talent.

Cross-sector skills themes:

- **Digital literacy** – Almost all employers are reporting skills needs in basic digital literacy.
- **Green: Net Zero** – It is estimated that a quarter of occupations in Buckinghamshire will be profoundly affected by the drive for net zero delivery – notably roles in construction and engineering.
- **Work-readiness** – Almost all employers responding to our research say education leavers at all levels are not work ready.

Strategic and economic context update

Buckinghamshire's economy is valued at £18.5 billion, with the 11th highest GDP per head among LEP areas in England. The county boasts 281,000 jobs, 31,355 businesses, and 553,300 residents¹. While the economy is strong compared with most areas of England, it has faltered in recent years and is outperformed by neighbouring areas.

Key highlights include:

- **Low unemployment** and higher than average incomes.
- **SME and micro businesses dominate** – 82% employ fewer than five employees.
- **Substantial service sector**, especially in wholesale and warehousing.
- **Entrepreneurial growth sectors**: space technology, precision engineering, film and digital content, med-tech innovations.
- **Labour market**: One of the least self-contained in the UK, with one-third working outside the county.
- **Recent slowdown**: Harder hit by Covid-19 than the national average; skills shortages are a key factor.

Barriers to future growth

- **Housing and business space**: Lack of availability, particularly affordable homes; house prices are 12 times higher than incomes.
- **Digital connectivity**: Poor, especially in rural areas; Gigabit broadband coverage lags behind the England average.
- **Ageing population**: Over 65s rose from 13.3% in 1991 to 19.1% in 2020; forecast to rise to 24.8% by 2043.
- **Areas of deprivation**: Despite affluence, some wards are among the bottom 20% in the UK.
- **High Growth Firms**: The county has a relatively low proportion of high growth firms, which are crucial for local economic growth.

Common skills issues

- **Reduced labour pool** since Covid-19.
- **Skills mismatch**: Between skills sought by employers and those held by residents.
- **Attracting talent**: Challenges due to proximity to London, high housing costs, lack of vibrancy in urban centres, poor public transport to rural areas.
- **Retaining talent**: High proportion of skilled residents leave for university or migrate out for better jobs.
- **Small businesses**: 42% of employees work for companies with fewer than 50 people (compared with 32% nationally).
- **Recruitment difficulties**: 18% of employers had hard-to-fill vacancies (15% nationally).
- **Skills shortage vacancies**: One-third of vacancies are due to skills shortages.
- **Staff proficiency**: 13% of employers had staff not fully proficient (national average 15%).
- **Training issues**: 30% of employers with a skills gap cited lack of appropriate training; 58% funded or arranged training (lower than the national average of 60%).

¹ [Succeeding as a place, succeeding as a country, Buckinghamshire Council 2022](#)

Key changes since the publication of the LSIP

- **Devolution** – Buckinghamshire was offered a pathway to a [level 2 devolution agreement](#) in March 2024 and the new government is progressing plans for Buckinghamshire to be granted foundation strategic authority status subject to statutory tests being met². If this goes ahead, Buckinghamshire Council will have devolved authority for the Adult Skills Fund.
- **Establishment of Buckinghamshire Council’s Skills Strategy Board** – the Skills Strategy Board is a sub-board of the county’s Place Based Growth Board. In January 2024 it published the [Buckinghamshire Skills and Employment Strategy 2024-2029](#) of which the LSIP is a key element. The Skills Strategy Board will take joint responsibility for the LSIP under future ownership arrangements with BBF from October 2025.
- **Changes by government to the UK’s net zero policies**³ on 20th September 2023, which is likely to change the immediate demand for certain occupations in construction and engineering, particularly heat pump installers, EV technicians and skills for retrofit.
- **The emergence of AI as a key skills issue** – the release of ChatGPT in November 2022 and the introduction of Microsoft Co-pilot in February 2023 have already had a profound impact on the way businesses use technology in the workplace. A variety of AI tools are now available for businesses to use to improve productivity. In Buckinghamshire, the predominance of small and micro businesses means there is a particular need to upskill the workforce.

Table 1. How the Buckinghamshire LSIP aligns with Skills England’s Priority Sectors

Skills England	Buckinghamshire
Advanced manufacturing	Engineering is highlighted in the Buckinghamshire LSIP, this includes advanced manufacturing.
Clean energy industries	Green Skills – this is a combination of green construction, including the retrofitting of green energy solutions for residential properties and the skills needed by businesses to develop their plans for achieving net zero.
Creative industries	Film & TV. Buckinghamshire is the home of Pinewood Studios and the National Film and Television School. Expansion of Pinewood and new film studio developments.
Defence	Not specifically highlighted in the Buckinghamshire LSIP although there are significant defence manufacturers based in Buckinghamshire e.g. Martin-Baker who are involved with our engineering sector initiatives. Cyber security professions, included under digital skills, will also be relevant for the defence sector.
Digital and technologies	Digital is considered in two ways: skills for people in digital professional roles e.g. software engineers, cyber security professionals, data analysts etc. and digital literacy.
Financial services	Not highlighted as a priority sector.
Life sciences	Buckinghamshire has a significant Life Sciences sector but no specific skills shortages or gaps were highlighted in the LSIP research.
Professional and business services	Not highlighted as a priority sector.
Construction	Priority sector due to major infrastructure projects and substantial housebuilding in the county causing substantial skills shortages.
Health and social care	Highlighted as a priority in Buckinghamshire mostly in relation to non-clinical roles – work-readiness of potential new employees and upskilling the workforce for digital transformation.

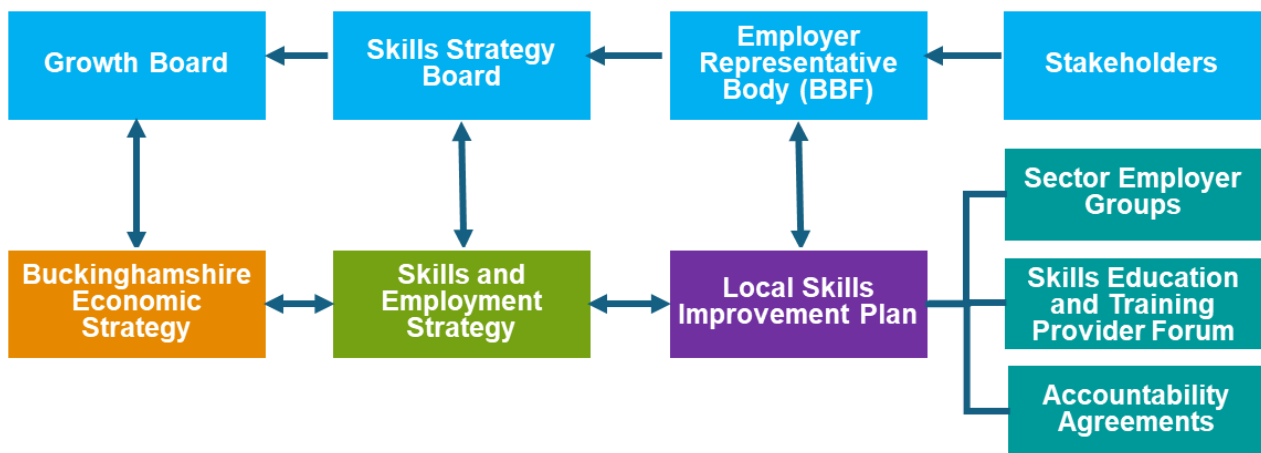
² English Devolution White Paper December 2024

³ GOV.UK [press release](#) 20th September 2023

Governance of the Buckinghamshire LSIP

Buckinghamshire Business First (BBF) is the Employer Representative Body for Buckinghamshire. It is well-placed to perform this role as it has almost 15,000 businesses as members in a county with over 31,000 registered businesses. To develop the LSIP, BBF formed employer sector groups in each priority sector chaired by an employer. The exception was Health & Social Care which already had a skills partnership in place – [Buckinghamshire Health & Social Care Academy](#). The role of advisory board for the LSIP is performed by the Buckinghamshire Skills Strategy Board (SSB) which is part of Buckinghamshire Council’s place-based growth approach, reporting to the [Buckinghamshire Growth Board](#). The SSB is responsible for the [Buckinghamshire Skills & Employment Strategy](#) of which the LSIP forms a key part. The Buckinghamshire Growth Board and the SSB include representatives from BBF and the SSB also includes the chairs of the sector employer groups.

Fig.1 Skills Landscape in Buckinghamshire



About Buckinghamshire Business First

Buckinghamshire Business First (BBF) is a business-led, business-focused community for new, established and growing businesses across Buckinghamshire. It is the authoritative voice of the local business community, providing support and advice to the county’s 31,000 registered businesses. Its membership of almost 15,000 businesses collectively employ approximately 70% of the local workforce.

BBF uniquely serves as Buckinghamshire’s Growth Hub, offering diverse business support activities such as growth programmes, grant funding, leadership and management initiatives, and comprehensive business advice. Additionally, BBF holds the contract with the Careers and Enterprise Company to deliver Careers Hub activities in schools. As the ERB for Buckinghamshire, this combination enables BBF to provide a seamless service to help businesses grow, upskill their workforce, and secure future talent.

More information on the Careers Hub can be found here: [Buckinghamshire Skills Hub](#). The Buckinghamshire Skills Hub:

- Manages the Buckinghamshire Enterprise Adviser Network and Careers Hub (which seeks to improve careers advice in schools, and links local businesses with schools to inspire young people about careers). All 50 schools and SEND schools in Buckinghamshire are members of the Careers Hub which is one of the most successful in England.
- Runs the annual [Bucks Skills Show](#) and [Confident Futures Show](#) (aimed and people with SEND) which are career inspiration events for students and career seekers and an important way for BBF to engage employers, parents and students with the LSIP.

What has been achieved so far?

Good progress is being made in almost all aspects of the LSIP. The action plan identifies 73 actions across the priority sectors and cross-sector themes and progress is being made in 71 of them with 9 actions completed. The remainder are long term plans, most of which are on track with a few where due to funding or awaiting a funding opportunity. The initial focus was on ensuring learning pathways and appropriate facilities were in place to address the skill needs of the priority sectors and cross-sector skills themes. The current focus is on encouraging more people to undertake these programmes and enter employment, as well as overcome barriers, such as a lack of public transport to help learners get to educational establishments and work. The full action plan can be found at Annex A.

Assessing the impact of the LSIP

The LSIP has provided a mechanism for employers, learning providers and other key stakeholders to come together and collaborate to identify and address the skills needs of priority sectors and cross-sector skills themes across Buckinghamshire.

During the development of the LSIP, sector employer groups were established for employers to come together to review the evidence, share their skill needs and identify priorities. 128 employers routinely attend these groups and they have continued to meet during the development of the LSIP to monitor its progress, and also to help take forward specific actions. Often learning providers attend these meetings to review progress and seek help from employers in shaping provision. A separate Skills Education and Training Provider Forum has been established to encourage collaboration between learning providers and to identify collective barriers.

There has been notable progress made in the following areas:

- **Articulating engineering pathways** – Engineering, and in particular advanced engineering, is a critical sector for Buckinghamshire. Whilst there are manufacturing and engineering businesses across the county, there are two critical hubs of businesses at Silverstone in the north and Westcott, near Aylesbury. Yet despite its importance, before the LSIP there was no further education provision in the county and limited apprenticeship provision. This lack of provision undermined progression into higher education, which was limited in scope.

The LSIP has started to put in place clear pathways through further and higher education, as well as expanded apprenticeship opportunities to increase the number of people entering engineering professions. This has been made possible owing to significant investment through the Local Skills Improvement Fund (LSIF) in facilities at Buckinghamshire College Group (BCG). This will result in new facilities at the college's High Wycombe campus, which will complement state of the art construction and engineering facilities which have been newly opened at Buckinghamshire New University's (BNU) campus in High Wycombe. Sector employers have worked with both BCG and BNU to articulate the types of equipment and the types of provision required as part of the development of new facilities.

At an early stage of the LSIP, BCG and BNU organised a workshop with their curriculum leaders and BBF to review the LSIP's priorities and the implications on their current provision. This articulated clear progression from further to higher education and helped employers to understand the connectivity between key occupations and how the new provision addresses their skills needs.

Higher level provision has been expanded to address specific skills needs. This has meant the introduction of the BSc in Civil Engineering by BNU in September 2024 as a full-time and part-time programme.

From September 2025, BNU is introducing:	Followed in September 2026 by:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MSc in Engineering Management • MSc in Sustainable Electrical Power Engineering • BSc in Mechanical Engineering • MSc in Construction Project Management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BSc in Quantity Survey Undergraduate • Engineering Robotics and Automation (title to be confirmed)

The delay in the opening of BCG’s High Wycombe campus has meant that BCG is working with employers to look at how practical delivery could take place at Westcott Venture Park. If a solution can be found, full-time provision could start in 2025. This would include T Levels in Design and Development for Engineering and Manufacturing and new level 2 provision.

- **Articulating and strengthening construction pathways** – Whilst there were construction pathways in place in further and higher education, the LSIP has provided an opportunity for construction employers to review the provision, support the introduction of new programmes, enrich courses and help promote and encourage more people to undertake specific pathways.

Flannery Plant Hire has successfully run five Skills Bootcamps for plant operatives and plan to deliver 15 more in Wave 6. Construction sector employers have collaborated to promote construction careers at the Bucks Skills Show. Individual construction employers have also been supporting schools to promote careers and increase young peoples’ understanding of sector career opportunities.

There is currently a focus on increasing the number of apprenticeships, particularly in trade occupations and continuing to attract more learners onto full-time courses.

- **Development of Screen Bucks** – The LSIP identified that traditional career pathways in the film and TV sector did not work as effectively as in other sectors given the nature of production and the reliance on freelancers. It also identified the need for greater support for the existing workforce to upskill, in particular in areas where technology was making significant changes to key processes, such as in post-production.

The LSIP identified the need for a skills hub and BBF was tasked to undertake a scoping review of how it could work and how similar interventions were working in other geographic areas. This was supported and informed by the Creative, Film and TV Sector Employer Group.

The review concluded that there was a need for a skills hub that was part of wider co-ordination of support for the film and TV sector in the county. The recommendation was for “Screen Bucks” to be established to undertake similar roles to those of Screen Cornwall, Screen Yorkshire and Screen Berkshire.

This would mean that Screen Bucks would provide a single brand across Buckinghamshire that brings together all film and TV-related activities to make Buckinghamshire the go-to destination for crew and facilities, with skills development being a key factor in driving this. Screen Bucks will make it easier for talent to find employment, those seeking talent to find talent and will ensure that the current and future workforce within the county have the skills sought by the film and TV sector.

To achieve this, Screen Bucks will have the following objectives:

1. Increase the connectivity and communication between those seeking talent, talent, skills providers and local partners
2. Increase the ease in which the existing workforce can find relevant, cost-effective training and development

3. Increase the pool of talent entering the sector in Buckinghamshire with the skills sought by employers

The objectives will be met by taking forward seven services, which will be gradually introduced:

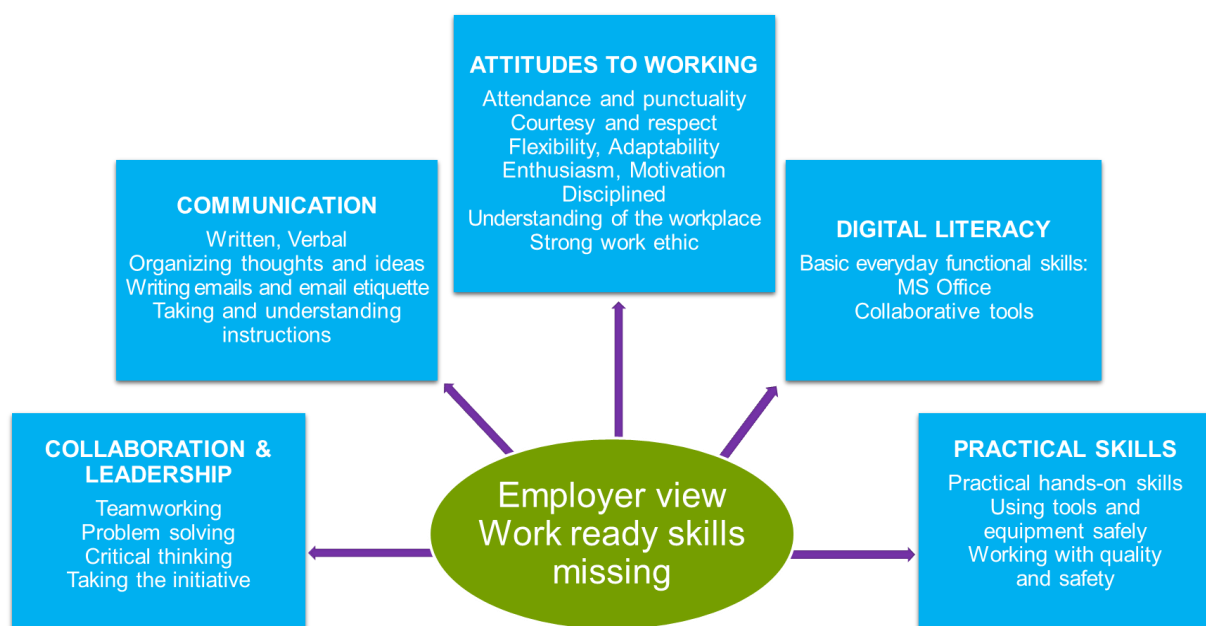
1. Connect talent - those seeking talent, learning providers and local partners
2. Crew directory for all local talent seeking work, making it easier for productions to source crew
3. Assessment tool to help identify potential skill gaps against a competency framework
4. Provision of short/modular courses to address skill gaps and shortages and support CPD
5. Training space(s) to deliver short courses with the technical specifications required
6. Collaboration with FE and HE to provide better pathways into the sector
7. Careers activities to stimulate interest in the sector and demonstrate wide range of options

The review was submitted in March 2024 and was formally approved by the Creative Film and TV Sector Group in May 2024. A steering committee is being established to oversee its development and as part of the planning, Buckinghamshire Council's Film Office is purchasing and building a talent database. A series of Skills Bootcamps have been delivered to address specific skill shortages. These include Production Manager, Third Assistant Director, VFX Production Manager, Location Manager and Production Co-ordinator. These have proved popular.

As Screen Bucks becomes established, the LSIP will focus specifically on working with learning providers to ensure existing pathways are effective and that the emerging skills needs for the workforce are being met. BCG and BNU have strong links with the sector and this complements delivery at the National Film and Television School.

- **Articulating, recognizing and developing employability skills** – During the development of the LSIP, employers highlighted that applicants often lacked the requisite work-readiness skills that they were seeking in their business. To articulate what was meant by work-readiness skills, BBF developed a model that emphasised five critical aspects of work-readiness. These are outlined in figure 2 below.

Figure 2: Work-readiness model for Buckinghamshire based on employer feedback



The aim was to embed the model in different aspects of the LSIP, including full-time delivery, work-based learning, apprenticeships and the Volunteering Skills Record pilot being undertaken in the health and social care sector.

Of these aspects, the most impactful, has been how BCG has used the work-readiness model to help the performance improvement of students and in particular to use the same language as employers. They moved from a behavioural management policy for students to a performance improvement plan, that is linked to the work-readiness model. Following sessions with Careers Leaders, the model is now also being adopted by schools.

The model is used to measure the students against the five areas of work-readiness. In their first term the students will undertake a self-assessment and they are measured periodically by teaching staff as they advance through their studies and develop in all five areas.

When a placement is secured, the College communicates with employers to outline the work-readiness skills of the students and to emphasize the specific skills that the students want to develop during their placement. At the end of the placement, the employers provide feedback.

The introduction of this new approach to work-readiness skills has been a culture change for many students who may not have seen the importance of work-readiness skills compared with the technical skills for which they joined the course. However, the College's emphasis on the model and, for example, underlining the importance of punctuality in getting a job, has helped demonstrate the value of the approach to students.

Employers working with the College have embraced the approach and one major plant hire company in the county is working with BCG to develop a careers map, where the work-readiness skills are embedded in the occupational profiles. The College plans to expand this to produce similar career maps with other employers.

The model has also been integral to a volunteering pilot in the health and social care sector, as well being introduced in a number of schools following BBF's Career Leaders sessions.

Moving forward, there are discussions as to how the model could be expanded into schools and how effective assessments could be developed to measure students against aspects of the model.

- **Digital skills at higher levels** – BNU has built up a successful delivery of higher-level digital apprenticeships and currently have approximately 60 learners on the programme.

Through the LSIP, BNU identified that while there was a demand for higher level provision, employers were not prepared to fund employees to complete a full master's degree. In response, BNU started to introduce greater modular delivery to allow learners to undertake one module or a series of modules. This allows for greater flexibility with employers and learners being able to fund specific modules and provide opportunities for the learners to complete their full master's degree.

This provides opportunities for BNU to respond to wider needs and in particular the growing demand for AI.

BNU in association with BBF ran a "Focus on Artificial Intelligence" event in October 2023 for businesses to explore some of the issues. Over 100 businesses attended. 83% of participants thought AI would enable them to automate routine tasks and processes; 78% anticipated costs saving from using the technology and 61% felt it would help them enhance the customer experience. However, 61% saw a lack of in-house skills as a critical barrier to the adoption of AI technology.

Similarly, the University of Buckingham ran a workshop in November 2024, in conjunction with BBF to help employers to understand the emerging AI trends and to consider how they could maximise AI. They are also working with employers to design higher level digital provision.

- **Green skills and retrofit⁴ provision** – In Spring 2024, BBF undertook a review of the retrofit skills needs in Buckinghamshire on behalf of the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero in conjunction with the Greater South East Net Zero Hub. This aimed to understand better the extent of the skills gaps and shortages highlighted in the LSIP.

The review found that whilst the current skills shortage for trade occupations identified in the LSIP were not directly linked to retrofit skills, it was critically important that the pathways in place to develop the skills of new entrants included retrofit skills, as the demand for these skills will continue to become more important.

The study identified a number of different employment projections. Whilst they used different scenarios, they all suggest that in the medium-to-long-term there would be a need for more people to enter the workforce in the trade occupations, such as plumbers, electricians, carpenters, heating engineers and bricklayers with the requisite skills to undertake retrofit services.

It found that there were skills gaps within the current workforce in relation to retrofit skills and knowledge. This included a general lack of awareness of the range of retrofit services that could be carried out, current targets and the role of BS PAS 2035. There were also specific occupational skills gaps related to functional areas that will need to be addressed. The challenge for the county is that these skills gaps are largely latent in nature. Employers are currently busy and do not see the need to re-skill their workforce in relation to retrofit skills. Similarly, while consumers are seeking LED lighting and solar panels, they are not looking for broader retrofit skills, such as heat pumps. This therefore requires a significant national and local level campaign to change the perceptions of consumers, as well as suppliers.

A review of current provision found that there was a broad range of courses available in Buckinghamshire or in the proximity of the county that reflects the breadth of retrofit skills. However, as demand for retrofit courses increases, this provision will not be sufficient, and it will be important to increase the breadth of provision across the county.

The LSIF has provided capital funding to support the development of the Green Energy Hub facilities at BCG's Aylesbury campus. The facilities include live working bays, student installation bays and fault-finding bays all filled with heat pumps, EV Chargers, solar and battery storage.

BCG held a launch event at their Aylesbury Campus on 21 May 2024. The event was jointly organised with BBF and provided an opportunity to launch the new facilities, present the findings from the Retrofit Skills Research and to galvanize employers to offer retrofit services and gain access to training support. The event was well attended by over 200 building contractors, retrofit advisers and suppliers. The evening was structured around a series of presentations from the College, Buckinghamshire Council, BBF, a business providing retrofit services and the main social housing provider in the county. There were also tours around the new facilities.

The event helped reinforce the importance of retrofit skills and to emphasize both the opportunities for businesses to provide retrofit services and the range of support available by Buckinghamshire College Group, which is the sole college group in the county. It provided a solid foundation on which to build and the Buckinghamshire Retrofit Skills Plan outlines a series of targeted events to further engage those attending and to help further expand training capacity across Buckinghamshire.

⁴ "Retrofit" is used here to refer to the retrofitting of low energy solutions for domestic and commercial properties.

Changing employer perceptions of the skills system

The LSIP has provided employers with an opportunity to identify their skills needs and inform the skills system. As part of this process, the employers have had to develop a better understanding of the types of qualifications on offer and some of the constraints and challenges faced by learning providers. As such, for many employers, the LSIP process has increased their awareness of the skills system and how they can better engage with it and support it.

The skills system in Buckinghamshire is relatively straightforward compared with other geographic areas. Buckinghamshire has one local authority, one further education college group and two universities, and all these stakeholders have been fully engaged in the process and responsive to the LSIP. This has provided employers with an opportunity to engage with them during and between the meetings of the Sector Employer Groups for each priority sector.

The process has provided employers with a better understanding of the constraints and challenges facing learning providers and learners. Some of the areas of discussion have including funding, the introduction of new T levels, the availability of suitable qualifications as well as county-specific challenges, such as the lack of public transport in many areas of Buckinghamshire and the high cost of living for apprentices and new entrants.

The employers have a better understanding as to how they can support learning providers, such as how they can help co-design and co-deliver specific courses. This has been the case at BCG, BNU and the University of Buckingham, but also in terms of offering apprenticeships, career activities and other ways to stimulate more people to consider careers in their sector.

Employer engagement with the skills system

The LSIP has increased employers' awareness of the skills system better to understand where and how they can support it for the mutual benefit of themselves, learners and learning providers.

As a result, more employers are engaging with different aspects of the skills system including:

- **Curriculum development:** Employers have supported BCG, BNU and the University of Buckinghamshire in indicating demand for specific courses, but also in terms of co-designing the way in which they are delivered. A number of keystone employers have been critical to the way in which BCG in particular, has introduced new courses and these employers have been pivotal in giving up time to work with the College to design and support new courses.
- **Student engagement:** Many employers from priority sectors have gone into educational institutions to provide talks, undertake mock interviews and co-delivering programmes.
- **Offering placements:** A challenge for all learning institutions is generating sufficient placement opportunities for students. This is a particular problem for the T-levels where many businesses are reticent to offer placements for under 18s and in Buckinghamshire in general, where the majority of businesses are small and micro-operators.
- **Offering apprenticeships:** Stimulating more employers to offer apprenticeships is a current focus of the LSIP. It is a challenging area given the proportion of small and micro businesses in the county, but it is critical to address current and emerging skill needs. BBF has established an Apprenticeship Providers Working Group that have been working collectively on a strategy to increase the number of employers offering apprenticeships in priority sectors. An event was held on 14 May 2025 aimed at employers to hear existing businesses employing apprentices talk about their experiences and to meet existing providers. It was an opportunity to overcome misconceptions and for employers to find learning providers that could offer flexible delivery methods and support.

- **Upskilling:** More businesses have been offering training for their staff through modular training and Skills Bootcamps. However, given the identified skills gaps, this remains an area of focus of the LSIP to make it easier for employers to identify and gain access to relevant training.
- **Careers engagement:** Employers have been contributing to careers materials, including career maps, giving career talks to students in schools and college and giving opportunities for students to visit their businesses to gain a better understanding of their work.

While more employers are engaging in the skills system, this remains an area of focus for the LSIP and it will continue to be the case over the coming months now that career pathways are being introduced. Those sectors such as construction which have been collaborating longer as a sector are more engaged in the skills system and the focus is on supporting other sectors to get the most out of their engagement with the skills system. Providing more opportunities for peer-to-peer advocacy is seen as an important way to persuade employers to engage with the system and to continue to simplify and demonstrate the flexibility of the skills system.

Monitoring the LSIP

The implementation of the process has been continuously monitored and progress reported to the quarterly meetings of the Sector Employer Groups. Each action has been RAG rated and discussed with the members of each group. This has helped galvanize action where necessary and provided support to specific stakeholders who are taking forward specific actions.

Each action has a set of measures to help assess the approach, partnership arrangements and outputs. A logic chain has been drawn up to help position individual actions against a set of impact measures. As far as possible the measures relate to existing data which are available. In those cases where available data are not available then primary research is planned.

The monitoring of the LSIP is aligned to the Buckinghamshire Skills and Employment Strategy which is being taken forward by Buckinghamshire Council. The strategy is broader than the LSIP, but protocols have been agreed to avoid duplication of effort. ILR data has only recently been made available, but this now allows the LSIP to set baseline figures from which to measure impact and measure the uptake of learners on specific programmes.

Barriers to implementation

The LSIP is currently facing a number of barriers which partners are in the process of addressing:

Table 2. Barriers to implementation

Current barrier	Planned mitigation
Delay with the opening of BCG's new High Wycombe campus	Engagement is underway with employers at Westcott to find appropriate facilities to undertake practical skills training outside of the classroom. This would allow courses and apprenticeships to start before the new campus opens in 2026.
Volunteering Skills Record scheme pilot has not fulfilled its initial objectives	A Volunteering Skills Record scheme pilot is being undertaken in the health and social care sector. Whilst the scheme has not met its original objectives, the interest from students does show a demand for such a scheme. A new approach is being discussed which will allow students to undertake volunteer work, but through a more flexible approach, whilst still maintaining the underpinning of the work-readiness model.

Current barrier	Planned mitigation
Lack of funding to test innovation days and mobility scheme	<p>The innovation days are seen as a critical intervention to provide young people with an opportunity to see and understand the range of occupations in a sector. A lack of funding has prevented this from taking place to date, but other funding sources are being explored, as well as ways in which it can be piloted with minimum resources.</p> <p>Similarly, the mobility scheme pilot is an attempt to overcome the lack of public transport in many areas of the county to help young people get to apprenticeship places or work and to undertake work placements. The mobility scheme is currently being reviewed by Buckinghamshire Council.</p>

What still needs to be achieved?

A number of activities are due to start in the coming months, some of which build on the preliminary work that has been completed.

- **Work-readiness and the Volunteering Skills Record Scheme** – Subject to a positive evaluation and the availability of funding the wider roll out of the scheme may commence.
- **Taking forward Screen Bucks** – An exciting prospect for the Film & TV sector in the county, the focus will be on securing the commitment of all partners to introduce the key functions of Screen Buckinghamshire as outlined in the feasibility study.
- **Retrofit skills** – The retrofit skills study highlighted the extent of the retrofit skills need in Buckinghamshire. There is a clear need to increase training capacity to encourage and enable more people to enter the sector. However, this needs to be part of a funded campaign aimed at consumers to stimulate demand, which is currently low despite the significant need.

Across other activities the plan needs to continue to generate greater employer awareness and commitment in readiness for their launch.

- **Galvanizing employer support for the new provision** – The new campus in High Wycombe and facilities at Westcott Venture Park will expand the range of full-time and apprenticeship provision in the engineering and construction sectors. It is now critical that we raise awareness of the new programmes and increase employer commitment for their launch in 2025/26.
- **Stimulating demand for apprenticeships** – The new apprenticeship plan will need to stimulate greater demand from employers and learners. This will require peer-to-peer advocacy to encourage employers to offer them and careers activities to promote opportunities to young people. This should build on the brokerage that was put in place through the LSIF.
- **Hospitality and tourism sector** – Over the past 12 months the hospitality and tourism sector has developed significant skills needs and should be considered for inclusion in the next round of LSIP development as a priority sector alongside the existing five sectors. This reflects growing reported skill shortages, particularly for chefs.
- **Cross ERB collaboration** – The current LSIP has necessarily sought to understand and articulate skills issues in Buckinghamshire. Through discussion and collaboration activities

with other ERBs BBF has understood many ERBs are seeking solutions to the same problems. We will seek to work with other ERBs, particularly our neighbours on areas of mutual concern.

There are a number of areas which are being kept under review and could have implications for the successful implementation of the plan in some sectors.

- **T Level work placements** – SME employers express concerns about providing work placements for T Levels. Perceived obstacles include insurance for under 18s in certain work areas.
- **Simulation in the film and TV sector** – The Creative Film and TV Employer Sector Group is also exploring whether any simulation may be viable to replace work placements in film and TV related T levels.
- **Progress monitoring** – BBF is working with Buckinghamshire Council and other partners to monitor the impact of the LSIP and to ensure that it aligns with the Skills and Employment Strategy. Baseline measures are agreed and work will focus on collecting necessary data.

Changes to the LSIP

The focus of the LSIP and the choice of priority sectors and cross-sector skills currently remains the same. However, there is increasing evidence that there are skills shortages in the hospitality and tourism sector, as well as in the land-based sector that could be addressed through skills interventions. In the next few months, there will continue to be engagement with employers in these sectors and it is envisaged that these sectors will become additional focus in the next phase of the LSIP.

In terms of the current priority sectors, there have been a number of changes to the skill needs in these sectors, which will result in additional activities. These include:

Sector	Changes since the LSIP was first produced
Digital	When the LSIP was developed in 2022, AI skills were not highlighted by digital employers as a key issue. This has now changed and employers are actively assessing ways to use AI in their businesses. As part of this they are reflecting on what skills they need now and in the future. At the same time, there is a need to assess its implications on other sectors to assess their needs the likely impact of AI on skill shortages and gaps.
Engineering	As the engineering sector in Buckinghamshire continues to grow and mature, there is a need to review the skills needs identified in 2022 and to also assess the impact that technology and in particular AI is likely to have on existing and new roles. This would look at the likely effect of automation and augmentation on these roles and help inform ongoing curriculum planning.
Film and TV sector	The film and TV sector has gone through significant changes since 2022. This has included the Writers' Strike in the United States, which halted many productions in the UK. In the UK there have also been significantly fewer TV commissions, resulting in many TV sector professionals have been forced to seek work in other sectors. As a result, it has been a challenging time for the key parts of the workforce. Toward the end of 2024, productions appeared to be increasing. It will be important to review any medium-term impact on the skill needs. At the same time, AI, along with other emerging technologies are radically changing many aspects of the sector, particularly post-production and VFX.

Slippage

The majority of actions are ongoing and are on schedule. However, there are a number of actions that are experiencing delays in getting started or in their completion.

Areas of slippage	Reasons for delays	Implications	Mitigation
Opening of BCG's High Wycombe campus	The complexity of the renovations has meant that the opening of the new campus has been delayed by 18 months	The delay has implications for the delivery of construction and engineering courses and apprenticeships	Examining flexible delivery with employers at Westcott Looking at the extent to which some delivery could be undertaken at the Aylesbury campus
Moped scheme	This has become part of a wider review by Buckinghamshire Council	Continued barriers for young people to reach training and/or employers	Ongoing engagement with the Council
Innovation days	A lack of funding to pilot the innovation days beyond the film and TV sector	Fewer opportunities to showcase priority sectors	Ongoing engagement with employers to trial scaled down approach
Film and TV sector – T level simulation	Awaiting guidance to allow for simulation in the sector	Potential challenges to deliver placement elements of the T level in the sector	Ongoing engagement with employers to look at ways in which placements can be undertaken Ongoing engagement with BFI about policy. Working with Berkshire LSIP on an innovative approach being undertaken there.

Potential action in the future that could encourage greater employer engagement

Throughout the LSIP, partners have worked together to encourage employers to engage with and benefit from the skills system. Now that the provision has been outlined and being put in place, the current focus of the LSIP is on securing greater engagement with the skill system to help attract and support more people to secure employment into priority sectors and to upskill the current workforce in those sectors.

In order to achieve greater employer engagement going forward the LSIP aims to provide a funnel to achieve two objectives:

1. Increase the number of employers engaged in aspects of the LSIP or working with employers
2. Increase the breadth and depth of engagement of those employers engaging with the system.

In order to achieve these objectives, there are discussions as to how in the second phase of the LSIP, partners can work together more closely to target and engage employers.



Visit: www.bbf.uk.com

 www.x.com/bbfuk

 www.instagram.com/bbf_uk/

 [www.facebook.com/](https://www.facebook.com/BuckinghamshireBusinessFirst/)

BuckinghamshireBusinessFirst/

 [www.linkedin.com/company/](https://www.linkedin.com/company/buckinghamshire-business-first)
buckinghamshire-business-first