

West Yorkshire

Local Skills Improvement Plan

June 2026

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

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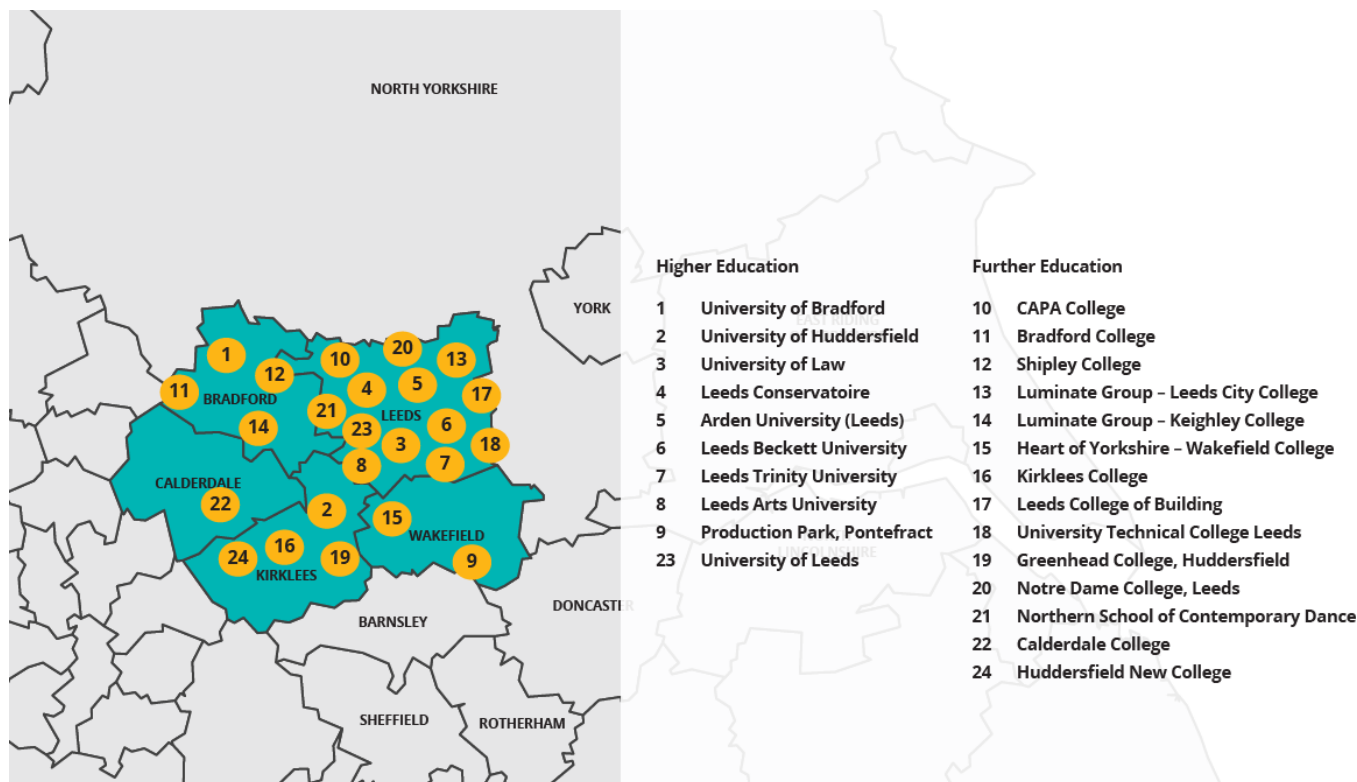
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James Mason - Chief Executive of West and North Yorkshire Chamber of Commerce

“Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs) are a government initiative to better align skills provision with employer need, led by Employer Representative Bodies, in this case, the West and North Yorkshire Chamber of Commerce.

This West Yorkshire LSIP sets out the region’s key skills challenges and how they will be addressed, developed in partnership with learning providers and the West Yorkshire Combined Authority.

It focuses on priority growth sectors: Advanced Manufacturing & Engineering, Construction, Creative & Cultural Industries, Digital & Technology, Financial & Professional Services, Green Economy, and HealthTech & Life Sciences.

We thank all contributors. Ensuring businesses can access the talent they need, and residents can realise their potential, is vital to the region’s future”.

Tracy Brabin – Mayor of West Yorkshire Combined Authority

Since becoming Mayor, I’ve been clear: skills and education are the backbone of West Yorkshire’s growth. This Local Skills Improvement Plan sets out what employers in our region need from the skills system — reflecting the real demands of our economy and our businesses. This sits alongside our Region of Learning and Creativity Strategy, which sets out our ambitions for opportunity, good work and inclusive growth.

Skills are the 'engine' of inclusive growth, driving better jobs, higher wages and greater opportunity for all. This LSIP draws on the voices of employers across West Yorkshire, highlighting the skills challenges and opportunities that matter most to them.

Here in West Yorkshire, we’re proud of our outstanding colleges, universities and training providers, alongside a business community that has helped shape this plan. Together, this ensures employer needs are clearly understood and helps shape how the skills system responds across our region.

By working together — employer-led and locally driven — we’re building the workforce our future economy needs and creating prosperity that’s shared by all our communities.

Introduction

What the LSIP is

The Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) is a statutory, employer-led plan which sets out the key skills priorities for West Yorkshire and identifies the changes required across the post-16 technical education and training system to better meet the needs of the local economy. Established under the *Skills and Post-16 Education Act 2022*, LSIPs provide a mechanism for employers to shape skills provision so that it reflects labour market demand, supports productivity and enables local growth.

In West Yorkshire, the LSIP is a central pillar of the region's Local Growth Plan, supporting the ambition to deliver inclusive and sustainable growth that raises productivity, supports business success, reduces inequality and ensures that all residents can benefit from economic opportunity. The LSIP provides a clear, evidence-based framework for aligning skills provision with the priorities of the West Yorkshire Combined Authority and the needs of employers across Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees, Leeds and Wakefield. The LSIP aims to be realistic in what can be achieved using the existing resources.

The LSIP is developed by the West and North Yorkshire Chamber of Commerce, the Secretary of State designated Employer Representative Body (ERB) for West Yorkshire, working in partnership with the West Yorkshire Combined Authority in its role as Strategic Authority. This joint approach reflects statutory guidance, which emphasises collaboration between ERBs and Strategic Authorities to ensure that employer insight is translated into coordinated action, investment and delivery across the local skills system. The plan is funded by the UK Government and aligns with wider national skills reform.

Who it is for

The LSIP is intended for a wide range of stakeholders who have a role in delivering a responsive and effective skills system. This includes employers of all sizes, further education colleges, sixth-form colleges, independent training providers and higher education institutions, alongside local authorities, Jobcentre Plus, trade unions and other partners. For education and training providers, the LSIP is particularly relevant as it informs the statutory 'local needs duty' and must be taken into account when planning provision and preparing annual accountability statements, ensuring that public investment in skills responds to evidenced employer demand.

How it is created

This LSIP has been informed by extensive employer engagement across West Yorkshire's diverse economy, reflecting both immediate workforce pressures and longer-term structural change driven by innovation, technological advancement and the transition to a low-carbon economy. Employers have articulated current and future skills needs across key sectors, geographies and occupational pathways, ensuring that the plan is grounded in real-world demand and supports business growth, workforce progression and improved labour market outcomes.

Why it is relevant

Development of the LSIP has been undertaken collaboratively with local authorities, education and training providers, higher education institutions, sector bodies, communities and representative organisations. Through this shared ownership, the LSIP provides a coherent, place-based framework for coordinating skills provision, investment and delivery. It sets out clear priorities for action, supporting partners to work together to improve productivity, reduce economic inactivity and ensure that West Yorkshire's skills system enables inclusive growth across all parts of the region.

The role of employers

Employers are central to the success of the local skills system. Their insight into workforce needs, investment in talent development, and provision of workplace learning opportunities are essential to ensuring that skills provision aligns with labour market demand and supports economic growth.

Employers will play a vital role in shaping education provision of high-quality industry placements, including T Level placements and work experience opportunities and curriculum. Ongoing engagement with employers will contribute labour market intelligence, ensure participation in advisory groups, and shape the priorities and delivery of the Local Skills Improvement Plan.

Executive Summary

The West Yorkshire Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) 2026–2029 sets out the priorities and system-level changes required to ensure that the post-16 technical education and training system is aligned with employer demand and supports delivery of the West Yorkshire Local Growth Plan and the Region of Learning and Creativity. Developed under the *Skills and Post16 Education Act 2022*, the LSIP provides an employer-led framework for improving productivity, reducing economic inactivity and enabling inclusive growth across the region.

The Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) is intended for employers, training providers, local authorities and delivery partners who shape and deliver post-16 technical education and skills provision across the area. It sets out employer-led skills priorities and the specific changes needed to ensure training aligns with labour market demand, supports productivity and drives inclusive local economic growth.

Building on the foundations established by the first LSIP (2023–2026), this refreshed plan reflects extensive employer engagement, robust labour market intelligence and close collaboration with education providers, local authorities and delivery partners. It responds to changing economic conditions, rapid technological change and the need to support both immediate workforce pressures and longer-term structural transformation.

Across these sectors, employers consistently report shortages in technical and specialist skills, alongside cross-cutting gaps in digital capability, leadership and management, employability and workforce readiness. These challenges are compounded by difficulties accessing flexible training, and barriers faced by SMEs and under-represented groups.

The LSIP is focused on accelerating growth in West Yorkshire’s high value and high growth sectors, where the region has existing strengths and future opportunity:

- **Advanced Manufacturing & Engineering**
- **Construction**
- **Creative & Cultural Industries**
- **Digital & Technology**
- **Financial & Professional Services**
- **Green Economy**
- **HealthTech & Life Sciences**

The LSIP identifies both immediate skills priorities (next 12–18 months) and medium-term skills shifts (2–3 years). In the short term, the emphasis is on addressing hard-to-fill vacancies through expanded technical provision, short courses and job-ready training. Over the medium term, the focus shifts towards building resilient pipelines into higher-level technical and professional roles, supporting adoption of digital, AI and low-carbon technologies, and strengthening leadership and management capability to drive productivity and business growth.

Within the priority skills sectors the LSIP identifies 6 overarching priorities:

	Overarching LSIP Priority and Description
1	Address critical technical and specialist skills shortages Expand and rebalance technical provision to tackle hard-to-fill vacancies across priority sectors, focusing on job-ready, occupation-specific skills in the short term.
2	Strengthen digital capability, including AI and lowcarbon skills Embed digital, data, AI and lowcarbon skills across sectors to support technological adoption, productivity growth and the transition to a Net Zero economy.
3	Strengthen progression pathways into higher-level skills (Levels 1-8) Improve progression from entry-level and Level 3 provision into higher technical and professional roles, strengthening pipelines that support long-term workforce sustainability. Improve coordination across FE, HE, independent training providers and employment support.

4	Develop leadership, management, soft skills and workforce readiness skills Address cross-cutting gaps in leadership, management, employability and work readiness that limit productivity, progression and business growth.
5	Expand flexible and employer-responsive training Evidence how provider offers have been adapted to remain aligned to current and emerging labour market demand. Including, where possible meet employer needs through flexible delivery, including funded provision and curriculum re-sequencing.
6	Improve inclusion and access to skills for under-represented groups Reduce structural barriers to participation and progression by improving access to skills provision for SMEs, disadvantaged communities and under-represented groups across West Yorkshire.

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

Progress against the LSIP will be tracked through a focused set of KPIs aligned to the six priority themes, providing clear assurance on system responsiveness, employer engagement, participation and progression:

1. Address critical technical and specialist skills shortages

- Increased proportion of skills provision mapped to LSIP priority sectors and occupations.
- Year-on-year shift in learner enrolments towards LSIP priority skills and sectors.

2. Strengthen digital capability, including AI and low carbon skills

- Growth in learner enrolments and completions in digital, AI and low-carbon aligned provision.
- Increased proportion of LSIP priority sector provision that embeds digital and/or sustainability competencies.

3. Strengthen progression pathways into higher-level skills (Levels 1-8)

- Increased enrolments on provision explicitly aligned to LSIP priorities.
- Evidence of improved collaborative working between FE and HE to drive place based LSIP priority pathways
- Growth in higher level (L4–L8) provision aligned to LSIP priorities, supporting graduate retention, productivity and innovation.

4. Develop leadership, management, soft skills and workforce readiness skills

- Increased proportion of LSIP aligned provision that explicitly incorporates leadership, management, soft skills and workforce readiness skills outcomes. Can be through curricular or pastoral delivery. Provide evidence-based case studies.

5. Expand flexible and employer-responsive training

- Evidence how provider offers have been adapted to remain aligned to current and emerging labour market demand. Including, where possible meet employer needs through flexible delivery, including funded provision and curriculum re-sequencing.

6. Improve inclusion and access to skills for under-represented groups

- Increased participation rate of learners from underrepresented groups in LSIP aligned provision, for example, Women into Manufacturing.
- Improved progression of disadvantaged learners within education and training pathways

The LSIP supports West Yorkshire's ambition to be a **Region of Learning and Creativity**, contributing to three interconnected themes:

- **Inspiring Futures** – strengthening employer-led careers pathways, improving transitions for young people and reducing NEET levels.
- **Fulfilling Lives** – enabling adults to upskill, reskill and progress in work through flexible, modular and in-work provision.
- **Employer Excellence** – supporting businesses to adopt good work practices, invest in skills, and build inclusive, productive workplaces.

Strategic and Economic Context

West Yorkshire is a large and diverse economy, with nationally significant strengths in financial and professional services, digital and technology, advanced manufacturing, health and social care, construction, and the green economy. It is an internationally significant area with GVA of around £74 billion, a population of approximately 2.4 million, and a workforce of around 1.3 million people, benefiting from a large and integrated labour market with strong connectivity between its major centres.

West Yorkshire has a large and predominantly SME-led business base, with over 90,000 businesses across the region. The business population is heavily skewed towards smaller employers, with around 88% micro-businesses (0–9 employees) and a further 9% small businesses (10–49 employees), meaning the vast majority employ fewer than 50 people. Medium-sized firms (50–249 employees) account for around 2% of businesses, while large employers (250+ employees) represent fewer than 1%.

By sector, the greatest concentrations of businesses are in Professional, Scientific and Technical Activities, Wholesale and Retail, Construction, Health and Social Care, and Accommodation and Food Services, alongside a diverse long tail of creative, digital, manufacturing, and logistics firms. This size and sectoral profile underpins a labour market characterised by strong SME demand for flexible, job-ready skills, workforce progression pathways, and management capability, alongside persistent recruitment pressures in customer-facing, technical, and caring occupations.

The region hosts the largest cluster of higher education institutions outside London, with seven universities producing around 35,000 skilled graduates each year, and has a fast-growing and diverse population, with 23% of residents from ethnic minority backgrounds, above the national average. West Yorkshire also remains one of the leading UK locations for foreign direct investment, particularly in digital and business services.

Despite these strengths, West Yorkshire continues to face persistent labour market and skills challenges, including productivity gaps, skills shortages, economic inactivity, and inequalities between places and communities. These pressures are reflected in headline labour market indicators, including median full-time pay of £715 per week (93% of the UK average), skills-shortage vacancies affecting 34% of employers (compared with 27% nationally), and 14% of employers reporting skills gaps, above the UK average. While higher apprenticeships grew by 9% in 2024/25, skills shortages and recruitment difficulties remain a constraint on business growth and inclusive economic development. Addressing these challenges requires a post-16 skills system that is more employer-led, responsive, and aligned to long-term economic ambition, as set out in the Post-16 Education and Skills White Paper, and reinforced through targeted, locally driven skills interventions.

West Yorkshire combines a diverse and high-value economic base with continued employment growth but faces persistent labour market and skills challenges that risk constraining productivity, business expansion and inclusive growth if not addressed through targeted, employer-led skills interventions.

Strengths:

- Significant engineering and manufacturing base employing around 115,000 people (well above the national average), representing one of the largest manufacturing bases in the UK and generating around £7 billion a year, or around 9% of the region's economic output.
- A leading hub for financial, professional and businesses services contributing over £20 billion GVA and employing around 300,000 people. UK's second centre for banking, with over 40,000 employed in major banks and building societies.
- From 2019 to 2024, jobs increased by around 5% across Yorkshire and the Humber, from approximately 1.06 million to around 1.12 million. Growth in West Yorkshire has followed a similar trajectory, with total employment exceeding 1.2 million jobs.

Challenges:

- Large number of vacancies across West Yorkshire. Job postings in 2025 remain significantly above pre-pandemic levels (around 50–60% higher than 2020), although down from their peak in 2022–2023.
- In West Yorkshire a higher number of people claiming out-of-work benefits than the national average – 5% versus 4% nationally.
- West Yorkshire has higher than average number of economically inactive people – 24.2% compared to 21% nationally.

- In West Yorkshire, only 40.5% of the working-age population possess qualifications at level 4 or above, as compared to the national average of 47.2%.
- Skills shortages reported by many sectors and businesses across the region, particularly in relation to high-level skilled jobs.
- According to the West Yorkshire Business Survey 2024, “availability of skilled labour” was identified as the second barrier to growth in the next three years, with around 14% of businesses reporting this issue.

Sources:

- *West Yorkshire Combined Authority (sector profiles and Growth Hub data)*
- *West Yorkshire Labour Market Report (2024)*
- *Office for National Statistics (regional labour market statistics; GVA datasets)*
- *ICAEW regional analysis of financial and professional services*
- *West Yorkshire Combined Authority (Economic Evidence & Insights; State of the Region; labour market analysis)*
- *Lightcast job postings data (via WYCA analysis)*
- *Office for National Statistics (Nomis; Annual Population Survey; Claimant Count)*

Alignment with National, Regional and Local Priorities – Evidence Summary

This section sets out how the West Yorkshire Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) aligns with national industrial strategy priorities, regional growth objectives and local labour market conditions. The LSIP focuses on sectors where there is clear evidence of existing scale, structural skills shortages, replacement demand and anticipated growth, and where employer-led intervention can add value.

The LSIP supports the UK government’s Post16 white paper targets for education, training and employment in England. Including two-thirds (66.7%) of young people to participate in higher-level learning (university, technical qualifications or apprenticeships) by age 25, and a sub-target of at-least 10% of young people entering Level 4-5 study, including higher apprenticeships, by 2040.

The current UK Government has defined a set of **priority economic sectors** that it sees as central to long-term growth, productivity, resilience and strategic advantage. A key reference for this is the **Industrial Strategy (2025)**, which identifies eight priority sectors.

All apart from Defence are covered in the West Yorkshire LSIP. Defence is addressed as part of Advanced Manufacturing.

UK Government Priority Sectors (Industrial Strategy)

1. **Advanced Manufacturing** – High-value and technology-driven manufacturing.
2. **Clean Energy Industries** – Net-zero and decarbonisation-related energy sectors.
3. **Creative Industries** – Cultural, digital and creative production and services.
4. **Defence** – Defence manufacturing and technologies with economic spillovers. (included within Manufacturing)
5. **Digital and Technologies** – Including AI, cyber-security, quantum, semiconductors and digital services.
6. **Financial Services** – Banking, insurance, capital markets and related services.
7. **Life Sciences** – Pharmaceuticals, biotech, medical research and health innovation.
8. **Professional and Business Services** – Consultancy, legal, accounting, engineering and related services.

These sectors are considered strategic for economic growth to 2035, with bespoke government and industry plans being developed for each.

In addition to the Industrial Strategy sectors above, Government has identified the following two sectors as supporting national economic growth:

9. **Construction**
10. **Adult Social Care**

Health and Social Care is important; however, it is not a key driver of economic growth and is not included in the West Yorkshire Local Growth Plan, therefore it is not included in the LSIP but is addressed elsewhere in the skills system.

Priority Sectors – Evidence-Led Rationale

The LSIP focuses on the priority and competitive advantage sectors identified through the Local Growth Plan and employer evidence:

- Advanced Manufacturing & Engineering
- Creative & Cultural Industries
- Digital & Technology
- Financial & Professional Services
- Green Economy
- HealthTech & Life Sciences

In addition, the LSIP supports Construction due to its central role in housing delivery, infrastructure investment, retrofit and Net Zero ambitions, alongside persistent and well evidenced skills shortages.

Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering

Advanced manufacturing and engineering represents a strategically important sector for West Yorkshire, contributing significant employment and economic output. The sector employs approximately 111,000 people across around 6,000 businesses and generates an estimated £7.7 billion in gross value added (GVA), equivalent to around 11.5% of regional GVA. Employer evidence and labour market data indicate structural skills shortages driven primarily by replacement demand associated with an ageing workforce, alongside declining employment levels since 2018. Skills needs are most acute at Levels 3–5 in engineering, maintenance, machining and technical roles, limiting productivity and progression.

Construction

Construction is a nationally designated priority sector and a critical delivery partner for housing, infrastructure and net zero ambitions. Evidence from the Construction Skills Network indicates that Yorkshire and the Humber will require an additional 17,800 construction workers by 2027 to meet forecast demand, with annual employment growth of around 1.7% required, with West Yorkshire accounting for its equal proportion of these. Demand is driven primarily by infrastructure, housing and public non-housing projects, with replacement demand exceeding new entrant supply. Skills shortages are most acute in skilled trades, site supervision and technical construction roles.

Creative and Cultural Industries

The creative and cultural industries are a major employer in West Yorkshire, characterised by a high proportion of micro-businesses, SMEs and freelance workers. The sector supports around 50,000 jobs across approximately 9,000 businesses and contributes around £2 billion GVA. Recent labour market signals show strong employment growth, with a significant increase in advertised roles year-on-year. Skills pressures are driven by portfolio careers, rapid technological change and limited progression routes, particularly into higher-level technical and commercial roles.

Digital and Technology

Digital and technology functions as both a standalone growth sector and a cross-cutting enabler across the wider economy. West Yorkshire has one of the largest concentrations of digital employment outside London, with sustained demand for software engineering, data, cloud and cyber security roles. Vacancy data indicates persistent excess demand, signaling both expansion demand and difficulty filling specialist roles. Employers report shortages across the full skills pipeline, from entry-level digital capability to higher-level technical and professional skills at Levels 4–6, reinforcing the need for progression pathways and higher technical provision.

Financial and Professional Services

Financial and professional services remain one of the largest employment sectors in West Yorkshire, underpinning productivity across the wider economy. The sector is characterised by high replacement demand and progression needs, particularly in finance, legal, accountancy and consultancy roles. Employers report skills pressures at technician and professional levels, with clear demand for higher-level technical, digital and management capability to support business growth.

Green Economy and Net Zero

The Green Economy is an emerging growth sector aligned to national net zero objectives and regional decarbonisation priorities. Low carbon and environmental goods and services employ over 53,000 people in

West Yorkshire, contributing approximately £8.1 billion GVA. Forecasts indicate growth of around 37% by 2026, driven by demand in building technologies, renewable energy and alternative fuel vehicles. Skills demand spans construction related retrofit skills, technical engineering roles and professional services linked to sustainability and environmental management, with both expansion and replacement demand evident.

HealthTech and Life Sciences

HealthTech and Life Sciences is a high value priority sector for West Yorkshire, aligned with national objectives for health innovation, productivity growth and improved workforce participation. The region benefits from established strengths, including major universities, NHS and integrated care assets, and a growing cluster of HealthTech, medical technology, diagnostics, data and research led firms. Labour market evidence and employer consultation demonstrate persistent structural skills shortages, driven by a combination of expansion demand linked to rapid technological innovation and commercial growth, and replacement demand associated with an ageing specialist workforce and constrained entry routes. Recruitment challenges are most acute in specialist STEM, digital, regulatory and clinical-adjacent roles, particularly at Levels 4–6 and above, where employers require high level technical, analytical and professional capability. The LSIP prioritises HealthTech and Life Sciences because the sector shows clear existing scale and strategic importance, ongoing employer verified recruitment pressures, and strong potential for targeted skills investment to support higher value job creation, progression, productivity and inclusive growth across the wider health and care economy.

Regional and Local Alignment

The LSIP acts as a core delivery mechanism for the West Yorkshire Local Growth Plan and the Region of Learning and Creativity Strategy, translating economic and sector ambitions into workforce capability. It is aligned with the Get West Yorkshire Working Plan and wider local strategies, including cluster action plans and the Adult Skills Plan, ensuring a joined-up approach to skills, employment and economic development.

West Yorkshire has a large and diverse business base dominated by SMEs and micro-businesses, alongside globally significant employers in manufacturing, financial and professional services, health innovation and digital. Priority sectors reflect where skills constraints pose the greatest risk to growth, including one of the UK's largest manufacturing bases (around 115,000 jobs, generating approximately £7 billion annually), a nationally significant financial and professional services sector (employing around 300,000 people and contributing over £20 billion GVA), and a growing HealthTech, digital and low-carbon economy supported by innovation clusters and major infrastructure investment.

The LSIP supports delivery of the Get West Yorkshire Working Plan by setting out the employer-led skills priorities required to reduce economic inactivity and improve access to good work. While wider programmes address broader participation barriers, the LSIP ensures that post-16 technical education and training is aligned to sectors offering sustained employment and progression opportunities.

By strengthening job-ready provision, clearer progression pathways and flexible adult learning—particularly in growth sectors and cross-cutting areas such as digital, Net Zero, leadership and transferable skills—the LSIP supports entry into sustained employment, progression into higher-value roles, and improved access to skills for residents across West Yorkshire. This, in turn, enables the region's business base to access the skilled workforce required to deliver local and national economic objectives.

The LSIP has been developed through a joint working model between the Employer Representative Body and the West Yorkshire Combined Authority, ensuring alignment between employer need, sector and cluster plans, spatial investment and devolved funding decisions.

Supporting Progression Across Levels 1–8

An effective skills system must support progression at all levels, from entry-level provision through to advanced technical and professional skills. Evidence shows that workforce challenges are not only about entry into work, but about sustaining progression, retention and movement into higher-value roles over time.

The LSIP therefore places equal weight on:

- strengthening foundational and job ready skills at Levels 1–3
- improving transitions into higher technical skills at Levels 4–5
- aligning Level 6–8 provision to longer-term growth, innovation and productivity needs.

By focusing on clear and inclusive progression pathways between further education, independent training providers, higher education and employment, the LSIP supports workforce entry, career progression and

reskilling. This whole pipeline approach ensures that immediate workforce shortages are addressed while also building long-term capability, higher-level skills and workforce resilience.

PART 1: LOCAL SKILLS NEEDS

This section sets out the key current and medium-term (three-year) skills needs for West Yorkshire. It sets out how the evidence, data and insights gathered have informed these.

The priority sectors represent where West Yorkshire has existing strengths, demonstrable skills shortages and the greatest opportunity for productivity-led growth. Prioritising these sectors ensures that skills investment is aligned with employer demand, Local Growth Plan delivery and national policy objectives, including Net Zero and higher-level technical skills.

Evidence, Data and Insights

The West Yorkshire Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) is underpinned by a robust evidence base that brings together employer insight, labour market intelligence and alignment with local, regional and national strategies. This approach ensures that priorities are firmly rooted in business need while addressing both immediate workforce challenges and longer-term skills requirements linked to productivity, inclusion and economic growth.

Sector insights

Sector insights have been delivered through:

- **Labour market intelligence** including the latest West Yorkshire Labour Market Intelligence Report and West Yorkshire Cluster Plans.
- **Employer interviews** with 180 interviews carried out evenly spread across all priority sectors for West Yorkshire. The Chamber has engaged extensively with businesses of all sizes across all local authority areas in West Yorkshire, including both members and non-members, to ensure that the LSIP reflects the full breadth of employer demand.
- **Skills Round Tables** with over 100 business participants and at least one employer event per priority sector and with additional input from other relevant cluster groups and partners, including the Financial and Professional Services Skills Commission, West Yorkshire Manufacturing Alliance, Yorkshire Training Providers, CITB, Leeds College of Building, Yorkshire Universities, Luminate Education Group, Bradford College, Shipley College, Calderdale College, West Yorkshire Consortium of Colleges, Skills for Care, Insider Media, Local Authorities and West Yorkshire Combined Authority.

Employer Evidence

The LSIP draws on extensive employer engagement, including surveys, interviews, sector research and roundtables delivered through established business networks. Employer evidence consistently highlights persistent and cross-cutting skills challenges, including shortages in technical and trade skills, digital and data capability, leadership and management, and employability and work readiness. Employers also report difficulties navigating the skills system, limited flexibility of provision and weak progression into higher-level technical roles. These issues are structural rather than short-term, reinforcing the need for a more responsive, employer-led skills system.

Employer feedback has directly shaped LSIP priorities and the changes proposed, including better alignment to priority sectors, stronger Level 4–5 progression pathways, expanded work-based learning, more flexible delivery models and clearer skills navigation.

A detailed report of the employer interviews carried out is found [here](#). Write ups of the Employer Round tables are also available via the LSIP website.

Employer Feedback on local provision

Summary of Skills Data for West Yorkshire (Employer Survey Evidence)

This summary draws on findings from the [West and North Yorkshire Chamber skills survey](#) (180 respondents), a piece of work commissioned by West and North Yorkshire Chamber of Commerce as part of the evidence base underpinning the West Yorkshire Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP).

Employers were surveyed across priority sectors:

Sector	Number of businesses surveyed	Proportion of total
Advanced manufacturing	49	27.2%
Construction	28	15.6%
Creative industries	22	12.2%
Digital & tech	29	16.1%
Financial & Professional	28	15.6%
Green Economy	9	5.0%
HealthTech and Life Sciences	15	8.3%
Total	180	100%

The survey provides employer-led insight into current skills capacity, recruitment challenges and future workforce needs across the regional business base.

Findings from employer surveys are included by sector, and a general overview of findings is given below:

- **Overall Skills Position**

Half of responding businesses report that their current skills needs are fully met, while a significant proportion indicate that needs are only partially met and that they experience skills gaps or difficulty accessing suitably skilled people or relevant training. A smaller number highlight succession planning challenges linked to an ageing workforce. This reflects a mixed picture across the economy, with many firms operating effectively alongside a substantial group for whom skills constraints limit growth and productivity.

- **Future Skills Intentions and Investment**

Looking ahead to the next 12 months, most businesses expect to increase the range or level of skills within their workforce, and a strong majority indicate that they are likely to invest in reskilling or upskilling employees. Only a very small minority anticipates reducing skills or roles. This demonstrates clear employer appetite for workforce development, provided that provision is accessible, relevant and responsive to business need.

- **New and Emerging Skills Needs**

Employers identify technical and trade specific skills as the most pressing future requirement, followed closely by digital, data and automation skills. Sustainability and green business practices, alongside communication and collaboration skills, are also highlighted as increasingly important over the next three to five years. This evidence aligns strongly with LSIP priority sectors and crosscutting themes linked to digitalisation, technological adoption and the transition to Net Zero.

- **Recruitment Challenges and Confidence**

The most common recruitment challenge cited by employers is a lack of applicants with the right skills, qualifications or experience. Other barriers include salary expectations, limited time or resources to recruit and train effectively, and wider economic uncertainty. Confidence about future recruitment is mixed: while many employers feel confident or somewhat confident in their ability to recruit required skills over the next three to five years, a notable proportion are not confident or have no plans to recruit, reinforcing the importance of strengthening skills pipelines.

- **Access to Training and Skills Support**

Most businesses report that they know where to access advice or support for staff training and workforce development. Training is most commonly sourced through local training providers or professional organisations, online providers and, to a lesser extent, colleges and universities. Employers show a clear preference for flexible delivery models, particularly blended learning that combines online and in-person elements, alongside on-the-job training.

- **Employer Engagement and Benefits of Skills Development**

While a significant number of businesses do not currently contribute directly to the regional skills agenda, those that do are most commonly involved through apprenticeships, work experience, student placements and careers activities. Employers associate improvements in employee skills with tangible business benefits, particularly increased productivity, improved quality, higher sales and profitability, stronger organisational reputation, and improved recruitment and retention.

- **Overall Implications for the LSIP**

Taken together, the survey evidence highlights persistent skills mismatches, strong demand for digital, technical and green skills, and a clear employer willingness to invest in workforce development. The findings reinforce the need for an employer-led, flexible and responsive post-16 skills system, aligned with the

West Yorkshire Local Growth Plan and priority sectors, to address immediate workforce pressures while supporting longer-term productivity, inclusion and economic resilience.

Summary of Skills Needs from Skills Roundtables – West Yorkshire

Skills roundtables consistently identified persistent workforce shortages across priority sectors, with demand driven by replacement need, growth and rapid technological change.

In manufacturing, employers emphasised shortages in higher-level technical roles and highlighted underrepresentation of women as a missed skills opportunity. Improving awareness, addressing outdated perceptions, and embedding inclusive recruitment and leadership practices were seen as critical, alongside growing demand for digital, automation and problem-solving skills.

Across digital, construction and manufacturing, employers reported skills gaps in job-ready technical skills, digital capability and softer skills such as communication and client facing behaviours. The pace of technological change, particularly around digital, data and AI, was identified as driving the need for continuous upskilling of the existing workforce.

Overall, employers called for flexible, work-embedded training, stronger links with providers, clearer progression pathways into higher-level skills, and greater employer involvement in shaping provision to ensure skills supply keeps pace with sector demand.

Skills Provider Evidence

Further education, higher education and independent training providers were actively involved in developing the LSIP through surveys, interviews, conferences and joint skills roundtables. Providers consistently identify digital skills as the dominant cross-cutting gap, alongside ongoing challenges in employability and leadership skills that constrain progression and productivity even where technical training exists.

There is strong consensus among providers on what works: employer-informed, vacancy-linked provision; flexible and modular delivery; and greater emphasis on work-based learning, including apprenticeships, placements and support with student talks, projects and curriculum co-design. Providers also stress the importance of upskilling the existing workforce through CPD and modular routes and call for clearer alignment between LSIP priorities, funding decisions and impact measurement.

Labour Market Evidence

Employer and provider insight is reinforced by labour market analysis, which identifies skills mismatches, under-utilisation of high-level skills, recruitment difficulties in priority occupations and persistent inequalities between places and communities. Despite a large and diverse working-age population, West Yorkshire continues to face low productivity, uneven qualification levels and health-related economic inactivity, alongside shortages in professional, technical and skilled trade roles critical to growth.

The LSIP evidence base is explicitly aligned with the West Yorkshire Local Growth Plan, Employment and Skills priorities, Adult Skills Plan and the Region of Learning and Creativity, as well as national policy. including the Post-16 Education and Skills White Paper. Together, this evidence confirms the case for coordinated, employer-informed action to strengthen technical pathways, improve system responsiveness and support progression into good jobs.

Sector Skills Needs and desired changes

(Short to Medium Term, including SIC and SOC Codes)

Skills development is critical to driving innovation, productivity and competitiveness across West Yorkshire. This section sets out the short- and medium-term skills needs identified through labour market evidence and employer engagement, alongside the agreed changes required in the post-16 skills system.

Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) and Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) codes are used throughout to provide a consistent, nationally recognised framework for defining priority sectors, occupations and skills.

Part 1 summarises sector-specific skills needs

Part 2 sets out the agreed actions, system changes and measures of progress

These changes are intended to inform skills commissioning and provider accountability, with detailed delivery activities set out in Annex B

Part 1: Advanced Manufacturing & Engineering skills needs

Complements the [Advancing Manufacturing and Engineering Cluster Action Plan](#)

Strategic Importance and Growth Context

Advanced Manufacturing & Engineering is one of West Yorkshire's most significant economic sectors, contributing around £7.7 billion in GVA and employing over 110,000 people across more than 5,500 businesses. The sector spans precision engineering, digital manufacturing, robotics, low-carbon technologies and materials innovation, and is central to productivity, innovation and supply chain resilience. Employment is expected to remain broadly stable overall, but the workforce is undergoing structural transformation, with demand shifting from routine roles towards higher-level technical, digital and engineering occupations. Without targeted skills intervention, shortages risk constraining productivity, investment and long-term resilience.

Sector Scope and Demand

The sector covers manufacturing activities across C10–C33, including fabricated metal products (C25), electrical equipment (C27), machinery and equipment (C28), and transport equipment (C29–30). Demand is being driven by advanced production systems, defence and infrastructure supply chains, digital production technologies, and the transition to low-carbon manufacturing. Labour market evidence indicates strong ongoing demand across core engineering trades and emerging technical roles, with the most acute pressures at Levels 3–5 in engineering, maintenance, machining and related technical occupations.

Priority occupations include:

Mechanical Engineers (SOC 2122)
Electrical Engineers (SOC 2123)
Engineering Technicians (SOC 3113)
Production Managers (SOC 1121)

Skills Needs (Current → Medium-term)

Current (immediate priorities) include:

- Core engineering and trade skills such as welding, machining and fabrication
- Machine operation, maintenance, CAD and technical design
- Basic skills, early-career development and workforce readiness
- First-line leadership and supervision
- Environmental awareness and compliance skills

Medium-term (system priorities) include:

- Automation, robotics and advanced manufacturing systems
- Industry 4.0, AI, analytics and wider digital production capability
- Cyber security and data-enabled manufacturing systems
- Green manufacturing, low-carbon engineering and sustainability skills
- Systems engineering, precision manufacturing and integrated production skills

Key Skills Gaps and Workforce Pressures

The sector faces persistent shortages across engineering, technician and skilled trade roles, alongside recruitment difficulties linked to an ageing workforce, strong competition for STEM talent, and

underrepresentation of women and other underrepresented groups. The evidence also points to declining demand for lower-skilled routine roles, offset by increased demand for technician, maintenance, design and engineering roles. These pressures are limiting productivity, progression and workforce renewal.

Current Provision and System Capacity

West Yorkshire benefits from a strong skills infrastructure for the sector, including 227 apprenticeship standards across Levels 2–6, a new T Level in Manufacturing at Leeds City College from 2025, dedicated manufacturing and Industry 4.0 hubs at Kirklees College and Calderdale College, university-led engineering provision, and adult upskilling through Skills Bootcamps and Skills Connect. Provision covers both traditional engineering disciplines and emerging digital and green technologies. However, capacity constraints and tutor shortages continue to limit system responsiveness.

Barriers to Skills Development

Key barriers include:

- An ageing and insufficiently diverse workforce
- Negative perceptions of the sector, particularly among young people, women and ethnic minorities
- SME difficulty engaging with traditional training
- Limited flexibility in delivery models
- Need for stronger employer–provider collaboration
- Capacity constraints within provision, including specialist tutor shortages

Existing Strengths and Market Opportunity

West Yorkshire has a strong regional engineering base, established centres of excellence, academic partnerships, and a growing focus on digital and sustainable manufacturing. These strengths create a major opportunity to strengthen talent pipelines, improve productivity and innovation, and support inclusive, high-value growth through better alignment between provision and employer demand.

Future Skills Needs and System Priorities

Over the medium term, the sector will require stronger pipelines into advanced technical and engineering roles, alongside broader adoption of digital, software-enabled and low-carbon capabilities. Future priorities include expanding systems engineering, robotics, automation, precision manufacturing, industrial digitalisation and sustainability-related skills, while supporting continuous upskilling as the sector evolves. Progression into higher-level learning and more flexible technical pathways will be increasingly important.

Part 2: Advanced Manufacturing & Engineering agreed changes

Short-term (Years 1–2)

- Boost supply of core engineering skills, particularly at Levels 3–5
- Expand short, modular upskilling provision for SMEs
- Improve careers awareness and sector attractiveness
- Strengthen employer engagement in curriculum design

Medium-term (Years 2–3)

- Transition provision towards automation, robotics and digital manufacturing
- Embed low-carbon and sustainability skills across programmes
- Improve diversity and inclusion across the workforce
- Scale flexible pathways that support progression into higher-level roles

System / provision change required

- Stronger employer–provider partnerships and curriculum co-design
- Expansion of flexible and modular delivery models
- Continued development of specialist technical facilities and equipment
- More coherent progression routes across FE, HE and adult skills pathways

Outcomes and Success Measures (Year 3)

Expected outcomes include:

- Increased numbers achieving Level 3–5 engineering and technical qualifications
- Improved employer satisfaction with the alignment of provision to sector need
- Greater uptake of short and flexible training, particularly among SMEs
- Measurable progress in workforce renewal and diversity
- Stronger progression into high-value technical and engineering roles

Triggers for Intervention

- Significant shortages across engineering, technical and skilled trade roles
- An ageing workforce and persistent diversity
- A growing mismatch between current provision and emerging digital and low-carbon skills needs

Part 1: Construction skills needs

Complements the [CITB Regional Report](#)

Strategic Importance and Growth Context

Construction is a national priority sector and a critical enabler of housing, infrastructure and net zero delivery. It contributes significantly to economic output and is forecast to grow in West Yorkshire faster than the UK average over the medium term.

Growth is driven by major national and regional commitments, including large-scale housing delivery, retrofit programmes and infrastructure investment (such as Mass Transit), creating sustained demand for a skilled workforce. This demand is driven by both expansion and high replacement need, reflecting an ageing workforce and ongoing project pipelines.

Sector Scope and Demand

The sector covers SIC codes F41–F43 (construction of buildings, civil engineering and specialised activities) and comprises a large, SME-dominated supply chain.

Demand spans:

- Housing and regeneration
- Infrastructure and civil engineering projects
- Public non-housing developments
- Retrofit and low-carbon construction

Workforce demand is driven by both growth and replacement pressures, with significant recruitment required to meet delivery pipelines and workforce turnover.

Priority occupations include:

Construction & Building Trades (SOC 531)

Electricians (SOC 5241)

Civil Engineers (SOC 2121)

Quantity Surveyors (SOC 2453)

Demand spans skilled trades, technical roles and supervisory occupations across the sector.

Skills Needs (Current → Medium-term)

Current (immediate priorities):

- Core construction trades and technical skills
- Site supervision, health and safety compliance
- Employability skills and workforce readiness
- Energy efficiency and retrofit basics
- Environmental and sustainability awareness

Medium-term (system priorities) include:

- Net zero and retrofit specialisms
- Modern Methods of Construction (MMC) and off-site delivery
- Digital construction (design, modelling and integration)
- Sustainable building compliance and regulation
- Clear progression pathways into technical and supervisory roles

Key Skills Gaps and Workforce Pressures

The sector faces persistent shortages across:

- Skilled trades (e.g. carpenters, electricians, plumbers)
- Technical and professional roles (e.g. engineers, project managers)
- Retrofit roles (installers, assessors, coordinators)

Workforce pressures include:

- Ageing workforce and high replacement demand
- Low diversity (circa 15% women; limited ethnic minority representation)

- Strong regional shortages in key trades
- Skills mismatch between current capability and net zero / retrofit requirements

These constraints are impacting recruitment, productivity and project delivery capacity.

Current Provision and System Capacity

Provision includes a mix of FE, HE and employer-led delivery, with:

- Apprenticeships as the core training route
- Specialist provision (e.g. Leeds College of Building, including CTEC status from 2025–26)
- Short courses and bootcamps in retrofit, heat pumps, solar PV and EV infrastructure

Provision spans both traditional trades and emerging green skills. However, system responsiveness is constrained by:

- Tutor shortages
- Declining intermediate apprenticeship participation
- Variable employer engagement, particularly among SMEs

Barriers to Skills Development

Key barriers include:

- Low apprenticeship achievement rates and declining participation at Levels 2–3
- SME constraints (cost, complexity and short-term contracts)
- Shortage of qualified construction tutors
- Limited flexibility in traditional training models
- Weak employer engagement in structured workforce development
- Ongoing diversity and perception challenges

Existing Strengths and Market Opportunity

West Yorkshire benefits from:

- A large and established construction base
- Strong SME participation across supply chains
- Specialist FE provision and training infrastructure
- A significant pipeline of housing, infrastructure and retrofit activity

Opportunity:

Better alignment of provision with employer demand—particularly through modular delivery, SME engagement and retrofit pathways—can improve productivity, reduce delivery risks and support regional growth.

Future Skills Needs and System Priorities

Demand will continue for skilled trades and technical roles, particularly electricians, retrofit occupations and site supervisors.

Increasing importance of:

- Low-carbon construction and energy efficiency
- Modern Methods of Construction (MMC)
- Digital construction, design and off-site manufacturing
- Regulatory compliance and sustainability standards

Ongoing priorities include addressing replacement demand, strengthening entry routes, and improving progression into higher-value technical and supervisory roles.

Part 2: Construction skills agreed changes

Short-term

- Core trade and technical skills (priority gap)
- Site supervision and compliance capability
- Workforce readiness and employability skills
- Retrofit and energy efficiency basics
- Environmental and sustainability awareness

Medium-term (Years 2–3)

- Develop capability in net zero construction and retrofit specialisms
- Build skills in MMC, digital construction and off-site methods
- Strengthen supervisory and technical progression pathways

- Improve workforce diversity and long-term workforce planning

System / provision change required

- Shift toward flexible, modular and on-site training delivery
- Align curriculum with modern construction methods and net zero requirements
- Strengthen employer-provider partnerships and co-design
- Ensure sufficient training capacity and specialist tutor workforce
- Improve progression routes across FE, HE and adult learning

Outcomes and Success Measures (Year 3)

Expected outcomes include:

- Increased numbers entering and completing construction trade pathways
- Improved employer satisfaction with workforce readiness
- Growth in participation in retrofit and low-carbon training
- Increased progression into supervisory and technical roles
- Improved workforce diversity and sustainability of labour supply

Triggers for Intervention

- Persistent shortages in skilled trades, technical roles and site supervisors
- Insufficient new entrants relative to replacement demand
- Tutor and capacity constraints limiting delivery
- Growing mismatch between workforce skills and net zero requirements
- Low employer engagement in training, particularly among SMEs

Part 1: Creative & Cultural Industries skills needs

Complements the [Creative Industries Cluster Action Plan](#)

Strategic Importance and Growth Context

West Yorkshire has one of the fastest-growing creative economies in the UK and is a nationally recognised Creative Industries Priority Place. The sector delivers high-value, high-productivity employment, with strong growth across screen, music, games, fashion and digital content.

Despite this strong growth, declining participation in creative education and emerging skills gaps risk constraining future talent pipelines, limiting access to creative careers and restricting sector growth without targeted intervention.

Sector Scope and Demand

The sector spans SIC codes R90, J59, J60, M73 and M74, covering creative, arts, media, broadcasting, advertising, design and related activities.

It is highly skilled and productivity-intensive, with a workforce significantly more likely to be degree-qualified and operating at higher productivity levels than the wider economy. Demand is driven by:

- Expansion of digital and creative content industries
- Growth of hybrid 'createch' roles combining creativity and technology
- Increasing prevalence of freelance, portfolio and SME-led employment models

Priority occupations include:

Programmers & Software Developers (SOC 2136)

Web & Multimedia Designers (SOC 2137)

Content Creators and Artists (SOC 3411)

Creative Technologists (SOC 2136 / 2137)

Demand is increasingly focused on digital, hybrid and technology-enabled creative roles.

Skills Needs (Current → Medium-term)

Current (immediate priorities):

- Creative production and digital tools
- Project coordination and work-readiness skills

- Commercial awareness, financial literacy and IP management
- Freelance and business skills (including self-employment capability)
- Communication, collaboration and reliability

Medium-term (system priorities) include:

- Createch and fusion skills (AI-enabled creativity, XR, virtual production)
- Advanced digital production across screen, games, music and design
- Data-enabled content creation and digital platform capability
- Leadership and management capability within SMEs
- Commercial sustainability and entrepreneurship for freelance careers

Key Skills Gaps and Workforce Pressures

The sector faces shortages in:

- Digital design, games, virtual production and content creation
- Project management and production roles
- Commercial, financial and IP management skills

Workforce pressures include:

- Freelance-dominated workforce limiting access to structured training
- Reliance on informal networks, restricting access for new entrants
- Declining participation in creative education pathways
- Limited labour market intelligence for rapidly evolving roles

These factors combine to constrain workforce development, progression and inclusion.

Current Provision and System Capacity

West Yorkshire has a strong creative education ecosystem, including:

- Specialist universities and FE colleges across key sub-sectors
- Provision spanning screen, music, games, fashion, textiles and creative enterprise
- Vocational routes, T Levels, adult learning and specialist hubs
- Dedicated facilities and industry-linked centres of excellence

However, alignment with fast-moving industry needs varies, and access remains uneven—particularly for freelancers and SME-led businesses.

Barriers to Skills Development

Key barriers include:

- Declining participation in arts and creative education
- Low apprenticeship participation in creative sectors
- Financial barriers for freelancers (cost and loss of income during training)
- Perception of creative careers as unstable
- Limited visibility and accessibility of pathways
- Employer reluctance to provide paid training opportunities
- Limited availability of flexible, modular training

Existing Strengths and Market Opportunity

West Yorkshire benefits from:

- Strong specialisms across screen, music, games, fashion and cultural production
- National recognition as a Creative Industries Priority Place
- Strong links with digital and technology sectors
- Established FE and HE provision and creative clusters

Opportunity:

Expanding flexible, modular and freelancer-friendly provision, improving careers visibility, and strengthening employer–provider collaboration can support inclusive growth, talent retention and long-term sector resilience.

Future Skills Needs and System Priorities

Future demand will increasingly focus on:

- Createch and AI-enabled production skills
- Advanced digital production and platform capability
- Entrepreneurship, freelance sustainability and business skills
- Leadership and management capability within SMEs

- Responsible AI use and intellectual property management
- Stronger progression pathways, mentoring and talent retention strategies
- Digital capability within cultural organisations

Priority focus is on building a flexible, inclusive skills system that supports freelance careers and aligns with evolving technologies.

Part 2: Creative & Cultural Industries agreed changes

Short -term

- Strengthen job-ready creative and digital production skills
- Improve project delivery and workforce readiness
- Build commercial and business skills – Finance and IP
- Expand training in self-employment, freelancing and business development
- Strengthen communication and collaboration skills

Medium-term (Years 2–3)

- Transition towards createch and AI-enabled production capability
- Strengthen career sustainability and progression pathways
- Build leadership and commercial capability within SMEs
- Improve access and inclusion across the creative workforce

System / provision change required

- Expansion of flexible, modular and project-based training delivery
- Stronger employer-informed curriculum design
- Improved alignment between provision and rapidly evolving industry needs
- Increased accessibility for freelancers, SMEs and underrepresented groups
- Stronger coordination between education providers and industry

Outcomes and Success Measures (Year 3)

Expected outcomes include:

- Increased participation in creative and digital skills provision
- Improved alignment between training and employer demand
- Increased uptake of freelancer and SME-focused training
- Stronger progression into higher-value creative and digital roles
- Improved diversity and accessibility of creative career pathways

Triggers for Intervention

- Mismatch between creative skills supply and employer demand, particularly in digital and commercial capability
- Continued decline in participation in creative education pathways
- Limited access to structured training for freelance and SME workforce
- Insufficient development of skills required for AI-enabled and digital production environments

Part 1: Digital & Technology skills needs

Complements the [Digital and Tech Cluster Action Plan](#)

Strategic Importance and Growth Context

Digital and technology is a foundational sector for West Yorkshire and a key enabler of growth, productivity and innovation across the wider economy. It is identified as a priority sector within the LSIP and wider regional plans, with employer evidence highlighting persistent shortages in technical and specialist skills alongside wider gaps in leadership, employability and workforce readiness.

West Yorkshire has an established digital and technology base, with recognised strengths in data, AI and cyber security, and a strong concentration of digital businesses and employment. Demand is being shaped by rapid technological change, particularly automation and AI, which is increasing the need for both immediate recruitment responses and longer-term workforce transformation.

Sector Scope and Demand

The sector employs around 50,000 people across approximately 9,700 digital and technology businesses in West Yorkshire. Employer demand remains strong for software, data, cyber and IT roles, with digital capability also increasingly required across non-digital sectors as adoption accelerates.

Employment is expected to grow moderately overall, with substantial net growth in key digital roles. At the same time, AI and automation are likely to reshape occupational demand, increasing the need for higher-level, applied and adaptable skills.

Priority occupations include:

Programmers & Software Development Professionals (SOC 2134)

IT Business Analysts / Systems Designers (SOC 2133)

Cyber Security Professionals (SOC 2135)

IT Network Professionals (SOC 2137)

IT User Support Technicians (SOC 3132)

Skills Needs (Current → Medium-term)

Current demand is concentrated in software development, coding, data and analytics, cyber security fundamentals, and wider digital transformation capability, particularly for SMEs. Employers also report immediate capability gaps in leadership, project management, sales and marketing alongside specialist technical shortages.

These pressures are compounded by high-skill recruitment difficulties and the pace of technological change, particularly in AI-related roles. Persistent shortages in software, data, cyber and IT roles mean that demand continues to outstrip supply, especially at higher skill levels.

Medium-term (system priorities) include:

- AI-enabled software development
- Advanced data and AI literacy
- Automation and systems integration
- Advanced digital and data skills
- Emerging technologies and applied digital capability
- Communication, adaptability and other soft skills alongside technical capability

Key Skills Gaps and Workforce Pressures

The main skills pressures relate to shortages in software development, data, cyber and AI-related roles, alongside limited leadership capability to manage digital transformation and AI adoption. Employers also identify cross-cutting gaps in communication, problem solving and adaptability.

Despite relatively strong digital participation and qualification levels, significant numbers of residents still lack essential digital capability. At the same time, rapid technological change is increasing the need for continuous reskilling and making labour market intelligence more quickly outdated.

Current Provision and System Capacity

West Yorkshire has a strong education and training infrastructure supporting digital skills, including extensive higher education provision, around 11,000 students studying related subjects, full regional delivery of digital T Levels, growing digital apprenticeships, and a wider mix of FE provision, Skills Bootcamps and online learning.

Provision spans entry-level to advanced pathways, but higher education remains the primary route into specialist digital and AI roles. Providers face ongoing pressure to refresh curriculum, update technology and maintain staff expertise in response to fast-moving employer demand.

Barriers to Skills Development

Barriers include reliance on higher education pathways, less flexible alternative routes into advanced roles, and ongoing challenges in keeping provision aligned with rapidly evolving industry needs. Employers, particularly SMEs, can also find it difficult to access or engage with training.

Additional challenges include underrepresentation in the workforce, particularly for women and people with disabilities, and the pressure on providers to recruit and retain sufficiently experienced teaching staff.

Existing Strengths and Market Opportunity

West Yorkshire has a well-established and growing digital sector, supported by recognised strengths in data and AI, a strong higher education and research base, and a range of regional innovation assets. These strengths provide a strong platform for continued growth and for wider digital adoption across other sectors.

There is a significant opportunity to strengthen talent pipelines, widen participation and improve productivity through more responsive provision, particularly where technical, digital and leadership skills are brought together.

Future Skills Needs and System Priorities

Future demand is expected to shift towards higher-level and applied digital skills, including cyber security, systems integration, data management and AI-enabled service design. There will also be increasing need for digital capability embedded across non-digital sectors, supporting productivity, automation and service innovation.

System priorities therefore include expanding flexible and employer-led provision, increasing participation in digital apprenticeships, strengthening FE–HE–employer collaboration, and combining technical skills with leadership and communication capability to support workforce adaptability.

Part 2: Digital & Technology skills agreed changes

Agreed Changes (LSIP Delivery Alignment)

The agreed direction of change is to shift the workforce towards more advanced digital, AI and automation capability, while ensuring provision remains responsive to immediate shortages and better supports SME access, progression and inclusion.

Short-term

- Increase supply of core digital technical skills
- Improve digital capability for business adoption (especially SMEs)
- Expand flexible and short-course provision
- Integrate digital capability into non-digital courses and sectors
- Strengthen leadership and project delivery skills

Medium-term (Years 2–3)

- Shift workforce capability towards advanced digital, AI and automation skills
- Increase progression into higher-level qualifications and pathways (Levels 4–7)
- Embed AI, data and automation capability across sectors
- Strengthen the integration of technical and soft skills, including leadership and communication

System / provision change required

- Faster curriculum refresh cycles aligned to emerging technologies
- Expansion of modular and flexible provision
- Stronger FE–HE–employer collaboration and progression pathways
- Greater teaching workforce capacity, including industry-experienced tutors
- Sufficient course availability aligned to employer demand

Outcomes and Success Measures (Year 3)

Expected outcomes include:

- Increased numbers entering key digital occupations, including software, data, cyber and IT support roles
- Improved employer ability to recruit for digital, data and cyber roles
- Growth in Level 4–7 participation and progression in digital pathways
- Greater SME engagement in digital upskilling and training
- Improved alignment between provision and emerging technology needs
- Enhanced workforce capability in AI, data and automation across sectors

Triggers for Intervention

- Persistent vacancy rates and recruitment difficulties in high-skill digital roles
- Employer-reported shortages in software, data, cyber and AI capability
- Evidence of demand outstripping supply, particularly at higher levels
- Rapid skills obsolescence driven by AI and technological change
- Limited accessibility of training for SMEs and underrepresented groups

Part 1: Financial & Professional Services skills needs

Complements the [Financial and Professional Services Cluster Action Plan](#)

Strategic Importance and Growth Context

West Yorkshire is England's second-largest Financial & Professional Services (FPS) centre outside London, employing around 290,000 people across more than 27,000 firms. The sector makes a major contribution to regional GVA and includes nationally significant institutions such as the Bank of England and the Financial Conduct Authority.

The sector is central to delivery of the Local Growth Plan, with sustained demand for higher-level professional, digital and leadership skills. Employer evidence highlights immediate workforce pressures and ongoing transformation driven by AI, automation and digitalisation, creating risks to productivity and competitiveness if not addressed.

Sector Scope and Demand

The sector spans SIC codes K64–66 and M69–74, covering financial services, insurance, accounting, legal and wider professional services. It contributes approximately £6.8bn in financial services and £2.1bn in accounting and legal services.

While overall employment growth is expected to be limited, demand is shifting significantly toward higher-value roles. Routine and transactional functions are declining, while demand for analytical, advisory and regulatory roles is increasing.

Priority occupations include:

- Finance Professionals (SOC 242)
- Legal Professionals (SOC 241)
- Business Associate Professionals (SOC 354)
- HR & Training Associate Professionals (SOC 357)

These roles reflect the sector's increasing focus on higher-level professional capability and interdisciplinary skills.

Skills Needs (Current → Medium-term)

Current demand centres on finance, accounting and compliance skills, alongside project and change management, digital literacy in professional services, and leadership and people management capability. Employers also highlight gaps in sales, marketing and client relationship skills.

Current skills position:

Automation and AI are increasing skills pressure across the sector, with persistent shortages in digital, analytical, compliance and leadership capability.

Medium-term (system priorities) include:

- AI-supported legal and financial services
- Advanced governance, compliance and risk capability
- Leadership and strategic management
- Digital and data skills embedded across professional roles
- Customer service excellence and client experience

Demand is shifting toward higher-level analytical, advisory and judgement-based roles, with increasing integration of digital and AI capability across all functions.

Key Skills Gaps and Workforce Pressures

The sector faces shortages in higher-skilled professionals, particularly in digital, compliance and advisory roles, alongside rising demand for data, AI and analytical capability.

Workforce pressures include:

- Immediate gaps in leadership, people management and client-facing skills
- Graduate retention challenges and underutilisation of local talent
- Rapid skills transformation driven by automation and AI
- Persistent mismatches between workforce capability and employer demand

These challenges require continuous upskilling and adaptation to maintain productivity and competitiveness.

Current Provision and System Capacity

The region benefits from a strong skills base, including:

- Over 280 FE and HE courses
- Around 7,000 finance students and 1,500 law students
- Extensive apprenticeships, Skills Bootcamps and employer-designed provision
- Strong coordination through regional partnerships and sector bodies

Provision supports progression into professional roles but requires greater flexibility and responsiveness to evolving employer demand, particularly at higher levels.

Barriers to Skills Development

Key barriers include:

- Graduate retention challenges and limited early-career engagement
- SME challenges accessing training and apprenticeships
- Limited modular and flexible provision
- Fragmentation between employer needs and training supply
- Workforce diversity and inclusion challenges

These barriers limit access, progression and alignment between provision and labour market demand.

Existing Strengths and Market Opportunity

West Yorkshire has a nationally significant FPS cluster, supported by:

- The UK's largest regional finance centre outside London
- Strong presence of global firms, regulators and anchor institutions
- Specialisms in retail banking, insurance, credit, green finance and RegTech
- Strong HE and research capability in fintech and data

Opportunity:

Better alignment of provision with employer demand, expanded flexible training, and stronger collaboration across employers and providers can strengthen talent pipelines, improve productivity and support high-value economic growth.

Future Skills Needs and System Priorities

Future demand will increasingly focus on:

- Higher-level analytical, advisory and judgement-based roles
- Data literacy, digital confidence and AI capability across all occupations
- Regulatory, compliance, risk and ethical assurance expertise
- Strong client-facing, communication and problem-solving skills

System priorities include strengthening progression into higher-level skills, expanding flexible training, improving alignment with emerging technologies, and increasing SME engagement.

Part 2: Financial & Professional Services skills agreed changes

Agreed Changes (LSIP Delivery Alignment)

The agreed direction of change is to strengthen workforce capability in digital, data, leadership and compliance skills, while improving progression and accessibility across the system.

Short-term

- Strengthen core professional skills provision
- Improve digital capability across roles
- Develop project and change management capacity
- Build leadership and management capability
- Strengthen client-facing and business development skills

Medium-term (Years 2–3)

- Transition toward AI-enabled service delivery across finance and professional services
- Strengthen strategic leadership, governance and risk capability
- Embed digital, data and AI skills across all professional roles
- Develop advanced advisory and client-facing capability

System / provision change required

- Closer employer co-design of provision
- Expansion of modular, flexible and higher-level training pathways
- Improved alignment between provision and emerging digital and AI needs
- Scalable delivery models to support both SMEs and large employers
- Stronger integration between FE, HE and industry pathways

Outcomes and Success Measures (Year 3)

Expected outcomes include:

- Increased numbers progressing into key FPS occupations (SOC 241, 242, 354, 357)
- Improved employer ability to recruit for higher-level, digital and compliance roles
- Growth in Level 4–7 participation and progression
- Increased SME engagement in training and apprenticeships
- Improved workforce capability in digital, data and AI-enabled service delivery
- Strengthened leadership and management capability across the sector

Triggers for Intervention

- Persistent shortages in higher-level professional, digital and compliance roles
- Evidence of demand outstripping supply in key occupations
- Skills mismatches driven by automation and AI adoption
- Low SME engagement in training and workforce development
- Graduate retention challenges and underutilisation of local talent

Part 1: Green Economy skills needs

Complements the [Green Economy Cluster Action Plan](#) and the [Clean Energy Jobs Plan](#)

Strategic Importance and Growth Context

The Green Economy is a priority growth sector within the Local Growth Plan, underpinning delivery of Net Zero, clean energy and decarbonisation ambitions. It is central to regional and national commitments on energy transition, retrofit and low-carbon development.

Employer evidence highlights rapidly increasing demand for green, sustainability and retrofit skills, alongside significant challenges in accessing job-ready workers at pace. Skills needs are cross-cutting, requiring integration across sectors including construction, manufacturing, digital and professional services.

Sector Scope and Demand

The Green Economy in West Yorkshire is valued at approximately £8.1 billion and employs over 53,000 people, spanning clean energy, circular economy, green construction, climate technology and green finance. Strong and sustained growth is expected, driven by net zero commitments, environmental regulation and decarbonisation programmes. Demand is particularly high in retrofit, renewable energy, electrification and low-carbon infrastructure, with substantial workforce expansion required.

Priority occupations include:

- Electricians (low-carbon / solar) (SOC 5241)
- Plumbers & Heating Engineers (heat pumps) (SOC 5314)
- Retrofit Coordinators (SOC 2431)

These roles are critical to delivery of retrofit, energy systems and decarbonisation programmes.

Skills Needs (Current → Medium-term)

Current (immediate priorities):

- Solar PV installation
- Low-carbon heating systems (e.g. heat pumps)
- Environmental compliance and sustainability skills
- Basic and technical green skills for entry into low-carbon roles

Current skills position:

Demand for green skills is growing rapidly, but pathways remain unclear and supply is not keeping pace—particularly for job-ready technical roles in retrofit, renewables and compliance.

Medium-term (system priorities) include:

- Scaling retrofit delivery at pace
- Whole-house retrofit competence and systems-based approaches
- Advanced and specialist sustainability and net zero capability

Demand will shift toward integrated, higher-level skills, with sustainability embedded across occupations and sectors.

Key Skills Gaps and Workforce Pressures

Key challenges include:

- High proportion of vacancies difficult to fill due to lack of job-ready skills
- Shortages in skilled trades (retrofit, electrification, heat pumps) and STEM capability

- Increasing demand for digital, data and AI skills within green roles
- Underrepresentation of women and minority groups in technical and leadership roles

As an emerging and cross-cutting sector, employers face difficulty accessing workers with the right mix of technical, digital and sector-specific skills. Rapid technological change and evolving regulation are intensifying these mismatches.

Current Provision and System Capacity

Provision includes:

- Over 200 apprenticeship standards, including 59 directly supporting green skills
- Delivery across multiple FE providers, including specialist institutions such as Leeds College of Building
- Increasing coordination through the Green Economy Cluster Action Plan and LSIP delivery

This includes employer-led training, innovation support and collaboration between FE, HE and industry to build skills pathways. However, system capacity is constrained by tutor availability and uneven uptake.

Barriers to Skills Development

Key barriers include:

- Weak talent pipeline and low visibility of green careers
- Apprenticeship challenges (low retention and completion rates)
- Constraints affecting SME participation and workforce development
- Shortage of specialist tutors and delivery capacity
- Fragmented pathways and limited progression clarity

These barriers limit the scale and speed at which provision can respond to demand.

Existing Strengths and Market Opportunity

West Yorkshire benefits from:

- Strong alignment with net zero and clean energy strategies
- Universities, innovation assets and anchor institutions supporting green technologies
- Cross-sector integration of green skills across construction, energy, manufacturing and finance

Opportunity:

Improving alignment between provision and demand, expanding modular and technical training, and strengthening pathways can support inclusive growth, innovation and supply chain resilience.

Future Skills Needs and System Priorities

Future demand will focus on:

- Specialist technical skills in renewable energy, retrofit and low-carbon systems
- Coordination, compliance and quality assurance (e.g. retrofit standards)
- Digital and data capability for smart systems and performance monitoring
- Large-scale upskilling and reskilling of the existing workforce

System priorities include embedding sustainability skills across sectors, expanding flexible delivery models, and strengthening progression into higher-level roles.

Part 2: Green Economy agreed changes

Agreed Changes (LSIP Delivery Alignment)

The agreed direction of change is to scale green skills provision, strengthen pathways and support workforce transition to low-carbon delivery models.

Short-term

- Expand job-ready green technical skills
- Embed green skills across existing provision
- Strengthen entry routes into green jobs
- Increase short-course and modular training offer

Medium-term (Years 2–3)

- Mainstream sustainability and green skills across all sectors
- Build advanced system capability (e.g. whole-house retrofit, integrated energy systems)
- Strengthen higher-level technical and coordination roles
- Support workforce transition into low-carbon occupations

System / provision change required

- Clear, coherent green skills pathways across FE, HE and adult learning
- Expansion of modular, flexible and technical provision
- Stronger employer co-design aligned to industry standards
- Increased capacity of specialist tutors and facilities
- Integration of green skills across construction, engineering and professional pathways

Outcomes and Success Measures (Year 3)

Expected outcomes include:

- Increased numbers entering key green occupations (e.g. retrofit, electrification roles)
- Improved employer ability to recruit for green and low-carbon roles
- Growth in participation in green skills training and apprenticeships
- Improved workforce capability in sustainability, compliance and low-carbon delivery
- Stronger progression pathways into higher-level green careers

Triggers for Intervention

- High proportion of hard-to-fill vacancies in green and retrofit roles
- Employer-reported shortages in environmental, renewables and compliance skills
- Lack of clarity and accessibility of green career pathways
- Insufficient training capacity or specialist tutor availability
- Evidence of skills shortages constraining delivery of net zero and decarbonisation programmes

Part 1: Health & Life Sciences (incl. HealthTech) skills needs

Complements the [HealthTech Cluster Action Plan](#)

Strategic Importance and Growth Context

West Yorkshire is a nationally recognised HealthTech and life sciences hub, anchored by world-class universities, NHS assets and a dedicated HealthTech Investment Zone. The sector is a key driver of innovation-led growth, with strong alignment to the Local Growth Plan and cluster-based economic priorities.

Employer evidence highlights high demand for specialist STEM, digital and regulatory skills, alongside persistent recruitment challenges driven by rapid technological change and global competition for talent. This makes HealthTech a critical priority for skills development and workforce planning.

Sector Scope and Demand

The sector spans SIC codes M72, C21, C26 and J62–63, covering scientific research, pharmaceuticals, medical technologies and digital health services.

West Yorkshire hosts over 300 firms, generating around £3 billion in revenue and employing more than 16,000 people. Growth is expected to continue, supported by a strong innovation ecosystem, increasing healthcare demand and expanding global HealthTech markets. Demand is focused on high-skill, research-intensive and technology-enabled roles.

Priority occupations include:

- Biological Scientists (SOC 2112)
- Biochemists & Biomedical Scientists (SOC 2113)
- Laboratory Technicians (SOC 3111)
- Programmers & Software Developers (SOC 2134)

These roles reflect the sector's integration of STEM, digital and clinical expertise.

Skills Needs (Current → Medium-term)

Current (immediate priorities):

- Laboratory and research skills
- Clinical and scientific data analysis
- Digital health and HealthTech capability
- Addressing high-skill recruitment challenges

Current skills position:

There are acute shortages in specialist STEM and digital roles, driven by innovation, rapid technological change and strong competition for highly qualified talent.

Medium-term (system priorities) include:

- AI-enabled research and diagnostics
- Advanced data science and bioinformatics
- Digital clinical systems integration
- Advanced technical and digital capability
- Interdisciplinary working and communication

Demand is shifting toward integrated, higher-level skillsets that combine scientific, digital and analytical expertise.

Key Skills Gaps and Workforce Pressures

The sector faces shortages in specialist STEM, technical and regulatory roles, alongside increasing demand for digital, data and AI capability. Employers also report the need for “T-shaped” skills—deep technical expertise combined with broader operational understanding.

Workforce pressures include:

- Low proportion of younger entrants, limiting future pipeline sustainability
- Rapid skills transformation driven by automation and AI
- Strong international competition for talent
- Skills obsolescence risks due to the pace of innovation

These factors are contributing to persistent mismatches between workforce capability and employer demand.

Current Provision and System Capacity

West Yorkshire has a strong skills base, including:

- Extensive STEM provision across universities (e.g. biomedical science, engineering, clinical technology)
- Apprenticeships, T Levels, diplomas and higher education pathways
- University-led research centres, innovation zones and NHS partnerships
- Higher education remains the primary entry route into the sector. While relevant apprenticeship standards exist, local delivery is limited, and alternative training routes such as modular or short programmes are not yet fully aligned to sector needs.

Barriers to Skills Development

Key barriers include:

- Strong global competition for highly skilled STEM talent
- Limited local delivery of specialist and higher-level apprenticeships
- T Levels not fully aligned to employment entry routes
- Need for greater leadership and entrepreneurship capability
- Fragmentation between education pathways and employer requirements
- Limited availability of flexible, modular training

These barriers reduce accessibility, responsiveness and alignment of provision.

Existing Strengths and Market Opportunity

West Yorkshire benefits from:

- A strong cluster across digital health, medical devices and diagnostics
- World-class universities and research capability
- A dedicated HealthTech Investment Zone and innovation ecosystem
- Established collaboration between academia, industry and the NHS

Opportunity:

Strengthening skills pipelines in advanced STEM, digital and interdisciplinary roles can support innovation-led growth, improve talent retention and enhance the region’s international competitiveness.

Future Skills Needs and System Priorities

Future demand will increasingly focus on:

- Advanced digital and technical skills (AI, data science, bioinformatics, cybersecurity)
- Interdisciplinary capability across scientific, clinical and digital domains
- Regulatory, quality, compliance and clinical governance expertise
- Leadership, entrepreneurship and commercialisation capability
- Strong communication and collaboration across multidisciplinary teams

System priorities include expanding higher-level provision, strengthening apprenticeship delivery, improving responsiveness to emerging technologies, and supporting workforce adaptability.

Part 2: Health & Life Sciences (incl. HealthTech) skills agreed changes

Agreed Changes (LSIP Delivery Alignment)

The agreed direction of change is to strengthen workforce capability in advanced technical, digital and interdisciplinary skills, while improving progression and aligning provision to sector demand.

Short-term

- Strengthen core STEM and technical skills supply, Increase provision in laboratory, scientific and technical skills
- Expand digital and health technology capability
- Address high-skill recruitment challenges
- Strengthen progression into specialist roles

Medium-term (Years 2–3)

- Build advanced capability in data science, AI and bioinformatics
- Strengthen interdisciplinary collaboration across scientific, clinical and commercial teams
- Develop leadership and innovation capability
- Support transition to AI-enabled research and diagnostics environments

System / provision change required

- Better alignment between employers, FE and HE provision
- Development of stackable, modular learning routes (including CPD)
- Expansion of higher-level technical and specialist pathways
- Integration of digital and data skills within life sciences provision
- Increased collaboration between academia, NHS and industry

Outcomes and Success Measures (Year 3)

Expected outcomes include:

- Increased numbers entering key HealthTech and life sciences occupations (SOC 2112, 2113, 3111, 2134)
- Improved employer ability to recruit for specialist STEM and digital roles
- Growth in participation in Level 4–7 STEM and digital pathways
- Increased uptake of modular and CPD-based provision
- Improved workforce capability in AI, data and digital health
- Stronger interdisciplinary workforce supporting innovation

Triggers for Intervention

- Persistent shortages in specialist STEM, digital and regulatory roles
- Evidence of demand outstripping supply in high-skill occupations
- Rapid technological change leading to skills obsolescence
- Limited local availability of specialist training provision

Ongoing challenges in attracting and retaining highly skilled talent

Analysis employers short and medium-term skills needs, including sector-specific skills has informed the six overarching LSIP priorities, with the following section outlining how these will be addressed. The six priorities are:

1	Address critical technical and specialist skills shortages
2	Strengthen digital capability, including AI and low-carbon skills.
3	Strengthen progression pathways including into higher-level skills (Levels 1-8)
4	Develop leadership, management, soft skills and workforce readiness skills

5	Expand flexible, short-course, CPD, modular and employer-responsive training
6	Improve inclusion and access to skills for under-represented groups

PART 2: The Six West Yorkshire Skills Priorities – Expected Outcomes, Impacts and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

Evidence set out in Part 1 demonstrates that skills needs across West Yorkshire’s priority sectors are **persistent, interrelated and systemic**, rather than isolated to individual industries or occupations. Employers consistently report:

- Critical shortages in technical and specialist skills
- Growing demand for digital, AI and low carbon capability across all sectors
- Weak progression into higher-level skills (Levels 4–5 and above)
- Gaps in leadership, workforce readiness and employability
- Limited access to flexible, modular and employer-relevant training, particularly for SMEs

These challenges are reinforced by rapid technological change, including automation and AI, alongside the transition to a low-carbon economy. As a result, skills demand is evolving faster than the system can currently respond, creating persistent mismatches between employer need and workforce capability.

The six LSIP priorities therefore focus on delivering system-wide change to:

- Address immediate recruitment pressures and hard-to-fill vacancies
- Strengthen progression pathways into higher-level skills
- Embed digital, AI and green skills across sectors
- Improve workforce adaptability, leadership and productivity
- Increase employer engagement and access to training, particularly for SMEs

The expected outcomes, impacts and associated Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for each priority are set out below, with detailed activities, delivery mechanisms and timelines provided in the Roadmap (Annex B).

Annex B provides the operational framework for delivery, including:

- Specific actions aligned to each priority
- Lead organisations and delivery partners
- Timescales across the three-year LSIP period
- Measurable outputs to support monitoring and evaluation

Together, Part 2 and Annex B provide a clear line of sight between evidence → priorities → actions → outcomes, ensuring a coordinated, employer-led approach to skills system reform across West Yorkshire.

The shared challenges point to the need for coordinated, system-level change. Part 2 therefore focuses on six overarching skills priorities that translate the sector-specific evidence in Part 1 into a set of cross-cutting interventions, expected outcomes and measurable KPIs. Together, these priorities define the changes required to stabilise workforce supply, strengthen progression pathways and deliver a more responsive, employer-led and inclusive post-16 skills system.

Priority 1: Address critical technical and specialist skills shortages

Building on the evidence in Part 1, the LSIP prioritises action to address persistent technical and specialist skills shortages that continue to constrain productivity, delivery and growth across West Yorkshire’s priority sectors. In the short term (12–18 months), skills provision will be more closely aligned to employer demand, strengthened employer co-design, and clearer provider accountability to LSIP priorities. This will support faster recruitment into hard to fill roles and improve workforce readiness.

Over the medium term (2–3 years), these actions are expected to reduce vacancy pressures, improve productivity and competitiveness, and increase employer confidence in the local skills system, creating a stronger foundation for progression, innovation and inclusive economic growth across the region.

Sector relevance

Applies across all priority sectors, with acute shortages identified in engineering and technical roles, construction trades, digital specialists, HealthTech STEM roles, and professional services occupations.

Expected outcomes

- Short-term (12–18 months): Skills provision more tightly aligned to employer demand, improved employer co-design, and clearer provider accountability.
- Medium-term (2–3 years): More reliable pipelines into hard-to-fill roles across priority sectors.

Impact

- Reduced recruitment delays and vacancy pressures.
- Improved workforce readiness and productivity.
- Increased employer confidence in the local skills system.

KPIs / Measures

- Increased proportion of skills provision mapped to LSIP priority sectors and occupations.
Measure: Provider curriculum mapping used in LSIP monitoring and accountability statements, **6 monthly review.**
- Year-on-year shift in learner enrolments towards LSIP priority skills and sectors.
Measure: track learner enrolments with providers, **6 monthly review.**

Priority 2: Strengthen digital capability, including AI and low-carbon skills

Providers respond to rapid technological and environmental change by strengthening digital provision, including AI and low-carbon skills, across all priority sectors. In the short term, digital confidence, sustainability and low-carbon awareness will be embedded within technical provision, supported by targeted expansion of green, retrofit and emerging digital skills training. Over the medium term, this will increase employer and workforce resilience to automation and the net-zero transition, supporting innovation, adaptation and long-term competitiveness while contributing to regional decarbonisation objectives.

Sector relevance

Cross-cutting priority supporting Digital & Technology, Construction, Advanced Manufacturing, Green Economy, Financial & Professional Services, Creative Industries and HealthTech.

Expected outcomes

- Short-term: Digital confidence, AI awareness and low-carbon skills embedded within existing technical provision; targeted expansion of green, retrofit and emerging digital training.
- Medium-term: Workforce and employer resilience to automation, digitalisation and the net-zero transition.

Impact

- Improved adaptability of the workforce to rapid technological and environmental change.
- Stronger innovation, competitiveness and sustainability performance across sectors.
- Contribution to regional decarbonisation objectives.

KPIs / Measures

- Growth in learner enrolments and completions in digital, AI and low-carbon aligned provision.
Measure: Provider curriculum reviews and LSIP aligned provision mapping, **6 monthly review.**
- Increased proportion of LSIP priority sector provision that embeds digital and/or sustainability competencies.
Measure: Provider performance data and learner completion records, **6 monthly review.**

Priority 3: Strengthen progression pathways, including into higher-level skills (Levels 1–8)

Improve progression pathways across the full skills system, from entry-level (Levels 1–3) through to higher-level technical and professional roles (Levels 4–8). This includes strengthening early-stage routes into employment, supporting progression within work, and enabling clearer transitions into advanced skills.

At Levels 1–3, the focus is on improving access, attainment and progression from foundational and intermediate skills, including:

- Strengthening entry routes into priority sectors through FE, apprenticeships and adult learning
- Improving alignment between Level 2–3 provision and employer demand
- Supporting progression from education and training into sustained employment
- Enhancing careers information, advice and guidance to improve awareness of pathways

At higher levels (Levels 4–8), the priority is to expand access to higher technical qualifications and professional pathways, ensuring that individuals can progress into advanced roles in growth sectors.

Improved coordination across FE, HE, independent training providers and employment support services will ensure the system operates as a coherent pathway, rather than fragmented routes. This includes:

- Strengthening and better communicating FE–HE progression routes
- Expanding higher technical qualifications and apprenticeships
- Increasing access to Level 4–8 provision, particularly for local residents and SMEs

Together, these actions will support clearer, more accessible career pathways, enabling individuals to progress from entry-level learning through to high-skill employment, and supporting employers to access talent at all levels.

Over the medium term, this priority is expected to deliver:

- Increased progression from Levels 1–3 into Level 4+ pathways
- Higher participation in technical and professional education across all levels
- Improved transitions into skilled employment and career progression
- Enhanced earnings and job quality
- A stronger, more inclusive pipeline of skills to support productivity, innovation and regional growth

Sector relevance

Critical for Advanced Manufacturing & Engineering, Digital & Technology, Financial & Professional Services, Health & Life Sciences and Creative Industries, where progression bottlenecks are most evident.

Expected outcomes

- Short-term: Improved coordination across FE, HE, independent training providers and employment support; clearer communication of FE–HE progression routes.
- Medium-term: Increased access to Level 4–8 provision, including higher technical qualifications.

Impact

- Faster progression into higher-skilled technical and professional roles.
- Improved earnings, job quality and retention of skilled graduates.
- Stronger higher-level skills pipeline supporting innovation and regional growth.

KPIs / Measures

- Increased enrolments on provision explicitly aligned to LSIP priorities.
Measure: Provider enrolment data (e.g. FESIT / ILR), Provider accountability statements and LSIP monitoring returns **6 monthly review.**
- Evidence of improved collaborative working between FE and HE to drive place based LSIP priority pathways. Create a coherent, end-to-end progression system enabling movement from entry (Levels 1–2) → technical competence (Levels 3–5) → advanced and professional skills (Levels 6–8), supported by flexible, modular routes and clear careers pathways.
Measure: Validated case studies **6 monthly review.**
- Develop greater skills provision at all levels aligned to LSIP Priorities, including higher-level skills provision (Level 4+) and at L7-L8 to help support graduate retention in the region and drive productivity and innovation.
Measure: Increased number of validated examples given, **6 monthly review.**

Priority 4. Develop leadership, management, soft skills and workforce readiness

The Plan places strong emphasis on improving soft skills, workforce readiness, leadership and management capability, responding to employer-identified gaps in communication, critical thinking, employability, digital confidence and supervisory skills. In the short term, transferable, leadership and digital skills will be embedded across technical provision, alongside expanded work-based learning and meaningful employer placements. Over the medium term, this will support stronger talent retention, improved productivity and more effective business leadership, particularly within SMEs and growth sectors.

Sector relevance

Particularly important for SME-dominated sectors including Construction, Creative Industries, Advanced Manufacturing and Green Economy, but relevant across all priority sectors.

Expected outcomes

- Short-term: Employability, leadership, supervisory and digital skills embedded across technical provision; expanded work-based learning and employer placements.
- Medium-term: Improved people management capability and workforce effectiveness.

Impact

- Better job-readiness of new entrants.
- Stronger recruitment and retention, productivity and business performance.
- More resilient leadership capacity within SMEs and growth sectors.
- Greater succession planning.

KPIs / Measures

- Increased proportion of LSIP aligned provision that explicitly incorporates leadership, management, soft skills and workforce readiness skills outcomes. Can be through curricular or pastoral delivery. **Measure:** Provide evidence-based case studies **6 monthly review**.

Priority 5. Expand flexible and employer-responsive training

To better meet the needs of adults, SMEs and those already in work, providers to prioritise flexibility and responsiveness in delivery. In the short term, this will include expanding short-course CPD, modular, blended and bite-sized provision and improving local accessibility to training, supporting faster transitions into employment and improved participation. Over the medium term, this approach will enable upskilling and reskilling at pace and contribute to a more agile, employer-informed skills system that responds more effectively to changing demand. Clear communications should be supported through the LSIP to help employers and employees to engage with the Lifelong Learning Entitlement and the Growth and Skills Levy.

Sector relevance

Supports adults, SMEs and in-work progression across all sectors, particularly Construction, Green Economy, Advanced Manufacturing and Professional Services.

Expected outcomes

- Short-term: Expansion of short-course CPD, modular, blended and bite-sized provision; improved local access to training.
- Medium-term: Faster upskilling and reskilling responses to changing employer demand.

Impact

- Increased participation of adults already in work.
- More agile, employer-informed skills system.
- Improved responsiveness to economic and technological change.

KPIs / Measures

Evidence how provider offers have been adapted to remain aligned to current and emerging labour market demand. Including, where possible meet employer needs through flexible delivery, including funded provision and curriculum re-sequencing.

Measure: Provide evidence-based case studies **6 monthly review**.

6. Improve inclusion and access to skills for underrepresented groups

Improving inclusion and widening access to opportunity is central to the long-term impact of the LSIP. In the short term, targeted outreach will increase participation from under-represented groups and disadvantaged communities, supported by clearer and more navigable progression routes. Over the medium term, these measures will reduce skills-related inequalities between people and places, improve access to higher-value employment, and ensure the benefits of skills investment are shared across all West Yorkshire communities.

Sector relevance

Cross-cutting priority addressing participation and progression gaps evident across all sectors, particularly Construction, Creative Industries, Digital and STEM-intensive sectors.

Expected outcomes

- Short-term: Encourage greater engagement and participation in LSIP priority skills from underrepresented groups and disadvantaged communities; clearer and more navigable pathways into priority sectors.
- Medium-term: Improved progression into sustained employment and higher-value roles.

Impact

- Reduced skills-related inequalities between people and places.
- Broader access to opportunity and higher-quality employment.
- More inclusive and resilient regional workforce.

KPIs / Measures

- Increased participation rate of learners from underrepresented groups in LSIP aligned provision, for example, Women into Manufacturing.
Measure: Evidence in provider EDI strategies, curriculum plans or accountability statements that LSIP priorities are being used to target under-represented groups **Annual review**
- Improved progression of disadvantaged learners within education and training pathways
Measure: Provider-reported improvements in retention and successful completion for disadvantaged learners within education and training pathways **6 monthly review**

Conclusion

The success of the LSIP and the achievement of the agreed KPIs depend on strong employer engagement, effective communication and sufficient system capacity. Employers play a central role in deliverability by providing jobs, apprenticeships, placements and meaningful work-based learning opportunities, and by contributing directly to curriculum co-design and skills planning. Strengthening employer participation—particularly among SMEs—will be critical to improving workforce readiness, enabling progression into sustained employment and ensuring provision remains aligned with labour market demand.

Clear, timely and coordinated communication will underpin this engagement and support shared ownership of the LSIP across the skills system. The communications plan will ensure employers, providers, local authorities and partners understand priority skills needs, expected actions and progress against KPIs, using existing West Yorkshire business, skills and governance networks to maximise reach, transparency and consistency while avoiding duplication.

Ultimately, LSIP delivery is contingent on system capacity and realism. Sustained and coordinated action across employers, government and delivery partners will be required to maintain sufficient adult skills provision and expand delivery in priority and shortage areas. In parallel, employer commitment to offering employment and work-based learning opportunities is essential to translating skills development into tangible outcomes. These dependencies will be actively managed through joint governance and annual review, ensuring actions remain deliverable, aligned to system capacity and capable of being implemented at pace throughout the 2026–2029 LSIP cycle.

PART 3: DELIVERING THE LSIP PRIORITIES

ANNEX A: FURTHER INFORMATION ON SKILLS NEEDS (SIC/SOC)

ANNEX B: ROADMAP OF ACTIVITIES

ANNEX C: BACKGROUND AND METHOD

PART 3: DELIVERING THE LSIP PRIORITIES

ANNEX A: FURTHER INFORMATION ON SKILLS NEEDS (SIC/SOC)

This annex defines the key industries and occupations that are being targeted, maps them to the most relevant SIC and SOC codes and reflects those already stated in part 1 of the report. SOC codes remain essential for consistent analysis across areas but may not capture the full breadth of emerging or highly specialised roles.

Sector	Standard Occupational Classification (SOC)	Standard Industrial Classification (SIC)	Current needs	Emerging / Future needs
Advanced Manufacturing & Engineering	• Mechanical Engineers (2122) • Electrical Engineers (2123) • Production and Process Engineers (2125) • Engineering Technicians (311) • Production Managers (1121) • Plant and Machine Operatives (811–813)	Advanced manufacturing (C25–30)	Overall employment expected to remain flat for advance / productive manufacturing activities but with moderate decline for remaining activities.	Stable employment levels with structural change; declining demand for routine roles offset by increased need for advanced technical, automation and systems-based skills. Employment levels expected to remain broadly stable, with significant workforce transformation rather than overall growth, particularly in high-value manufacturing and defence supply chains. Rising demand for advanced technical and engineering skills, including systems engineering, precision manufacturing, automation, robotics and digital production technologies. Increasing importance of digital, data and software-enabled skills, including industrial digitalisation, cyber security and integration of advanced manufacturing systems. Defence-related manufacturing driving demand for specialist skills, including quality assurance, safety-critical systems, regulatory compliance and secure production processes. Declining demand for routine and lower-skilled operative roles, offset by growth in technician, maintenance, design and engineering roles requiring higher-level qualifications and continuous upskilling.
Construction	• Construction and Building Trades (531) • Electricians and Electrical Fitters (5241) • Building Finishing Trades (532) • Construction Operatives	Construction and infrastructure (F41–43)	Moderate growth projected, but this could be boosted by labour requirements arising out of mass transit and housebuilding	Moderate growth with potential upside from infrastructure and housing investment; growing skills needs linked to sustainability standards, modern methods of construction and digital design. Moderate employment growth with potential upside, driven by housing delivery, regeneration, mass transit and major infrastructure investment across West Yorkshire.

	(815) • Civil Engineers (2121) • Quantity Surveyors (2453)			Increasing demand for skilled trades and technical roles, particularly electricians, retrofit-related occupations, civil engineering and construction supervision. Growing skills needs linked to sustainability and net zero, including low-carbon construction methods, energy efficiency, retrofit and regulatory compliance. Rising importance of modern methods of construction (MMC), digital design and off-site techniques, requiring new skills in digital modelling, quality control and integration. Ongoing replacement demand and workforce ageing, increasing the need for entry routes, upskilling and progression into higher-value technical and supervisory roles.
Creative and Cultural Industries	Programmers & Software Development Professionals (2136) Web & Multimedia Designers (2137) Creative Technologists / Createch Specialists (2136 / 2137) Artists and Creative Practitioners / Content Creators (3411) Photographers, Audio-visual & Broadcasting Equipment Operators (3417) Producers, Arts Officers & Creative Directors (3416) Authors, Writers & Content Creators (3412) Actors, Entertainers & Presenters (3413)		Immediate need for digital and creative production skills, cultural roles also require baseline digital capability. Commercial skills needed for freelance, self-employment and portfolio careers. Immediate need for improved work-readiness, IP understanding and project coordination skills.	The creative and cultural industries as a long-term growth sector. West Yorkshire has been named a national “priority place” for creative industries. Continuing demand for creative, digital and hybrid roles. Cultural and creative activity is already growing faster in West Yorkshire than in most regions outside London, supported by anchor institutions (e.g. screen, music, games, culture), major cultural investments and strong links to digital and technology sectors. Createch and fusion skills combining creativity with advanced technology, particularly AI, immersive media (XR), virtual production, creative software and data-enabled content creation. Advanced digital production skills across screen, games, music, live events, digital design and cultural programming, including the use of emerging tools and platforms. Higher-level commercial and entrepreneurial capability to support sustainable freelance, portfolio and SME careers, including income diversification, audience development and investment readiness. Skills for managing and applying AI responsibly, including creative oversight, ethical use, IP protection, validation and quality control rather than routine production tasks.

				Leadership, production and coordination skills to manage increasingly complex, collaborative and technology-enabled creative and cultural projects. Digital and data capability within cultural organisations, supporting engagement, fundraising, evaluation, accessibility and hybrid (physical/digital) delivery models. Progression and workforce development skills, including mentoring, talent retention and inclusive pathways, to support growth beyond entry level and retain skills within the region.
Digital and Technology	• Programmers and Software Development Professionals (2134) • IT Business Analysts, Architects and Systems Designers (2133) • Database Administrators and Web Content Technicians (3133) • IT Network Professionals (2137) • Cyber Security Professionals (2135) • IT Operations Technicians (3131) • IT User Support Technicians (3132)	Information and communication (J62–63)	Moderate growth forecast in the medium term (2030), slowing from recent years. Substantial net growth in absolute terms for programmers / developers, IT business analysts across a range of sectors.	Moderate employment growth with increasing skills intensity; workforce needs shifting towards applied digital skills, cyber security, systems integration and AI-enabled service design. Overall projected employment growth is expected to be moderate into medium term (2030), representing a slowdown from strong growth in recent years Substantial net forecast growth in absolute terms for programmers / developers, IT business analysts across a range of sectors However, coding roles heavily exposed to AI – likely to be transformed in medium term and could disrupt projected growth trends. Continued demand for digital and technology skills across all sectors, though overall employment growth is expected to moderate. Strong transformation of roles due to AI and automation, particularly in software development, coding and routine IT functions. Rising importance of higher-level and applied skills, including systems integration, solution architecture, cyber security, data management and AI governance. Increased need for digital skills deployed in non-digital sectors, supporting productivity, automation and service innovation. Greater emphasis on problem-solving, adaptability and continuous upskilling, reflecting the pace of technological change.

Financial and Professional Services	• Sales, Marketing and Related Associate Professionals (355) • Elementary Cleaning Occupations (922) • Finance Professionals (242) • Administrative Occupations: Finance (412) • Legal Professionals (241) • Secretarial and Related Occupations (421) • Business Associate Professionals (354) • Business, Research and Administrative Professionals (243) • Finance Associate Professionals (353) • HR, Training and Vocational Guidance Professionals (357) -Architects, Chartered Architectural Technologists, Planning Officers, Surveyors and Construction Professionals (245)	Financial and professional services (K64–66, M69–75)	Overall projected employment growth for sector is expected to be low into medium term (2030) at <5% Range of roles strongly exposed to AI including administrative, legal, financial and consultancy – likely to be transformed in medium term	Employment growth expected to be limited, with significant skills transformation driven by digitalisation and AI; increasing emphasis on higher-level analytical, advisory and regulatory capabilities. Significant skills transformation rather than employment growth, with many roles reshaped by automation, AI and digital tools. Reduced demand for routine administrative and transactional tasks, alongside increasing need for higher-level judgement, analysis and advisory skills. Rising importance of data literacy, digital confidence and AI oversight across finance, legal, HR and consultancy roles. Growing demand for regulatory, compliance, risk and ethical assurance skills, particularly in financial services and professional advisory functions. Stronger emphasis on client-facing, problem-solving and communication skills
Green Economy	• Electricians and Electrical Fitters (5241) • Plumbers, Heating and Ventilating Engineers (5315) • Carpenters and Joiners (5316) • Retrofit Coordinators	Green economy and retrofit (D35, F41–43)	Strong growth forecast	Strong growth is forecast in the Green Economy, driven by net zero delivery and decarbonisation priorities. Substantial increases in employment for Green professional and research services, Power and Homes and buildings (including retrofit) and industrial decarbonisation Strong and sustained growth driven by net zero commitments, decarbonisation and environmental regulation, particularly across energy, retrofit and low-carbon infrastructure. Rising demand for specialist technical skills in renewable energy, retrofit, heat networks, electrification and low-carbon building systems. Increasing need for coordination, compliance and quality-assurance skills, including retrofit coordination, whole-building approaches and adherence to emerging standards.

				Growing importance of digital and data skills to support smart energy systems, monitoring, performance optimisation and reporting. Significant upskilling and reskilling requirements for the existing workforce, as traditional construction, engineering and energy roles adapt to low-carbon delivery models.
Life Sciences and HealthTech	• Biochemists and Biomedical Scientists (2113) • Biological Scientists (2112) • Laboratory Technicians (3111) • R&D Managers (2161) • Data Analysts (3544) • Programmers and Software Developers (2134)	Life sciences and health technology (M72, Q86, C21)	Strong growth expected into medium term	Sustained employment growth underpinned by innovation, health technology and data-led research; increasing need for interdisciplinary scientific, digital and regulatory skills. Digital roles exposed to AI as noted above. Strong and sustained growth driven by innovation, health technologies and ageing population needs. Increasing demand for interdisciplinary skills, combining biological and biomedical expertise with digital, data and analytical capability. Growing importance of data-enabled research, diagnostics and personalised health technologies, including bioinformatics and health data analysis. Rising need for regulatory, quality, compliance and clinical governance skills alongside scientific and technical roles. Digital roles increasingly shaped by AI and automation, requiring skills in digital oversight, validation and ethical application rather than routine technical tasks.

ANNEX B: ROADMAP OF ACTIVITIES

Abbreviations

CBI – Confederation of British Industry

ERB – Employer Representative Body

FE – Further Education Colleges

FSB – Federation of Small Businesses

HE – Higher Education

ITP – Independent Training Providers

JCP – Job Centre Plus

WNYCC – West and North Yorkshire Chamber of Commerce

WYCA – West Yorkshire Combined Authority

WYCC – West Yorkshire Consortium of Colleges

YLP – Yorkshire Learning Providers

YU – Yorkshire Universities

LAs – Local Authorities

West Yorkshire LSIP 2026–2029 – Activity Planning Table

We confirm that specific lead organisation(s) will be agreed and assigned for each activity as the LSIP moves into the delivery phase and to this end engagement with the providers has already commenced.

	Recommended change	Activity required	Named delivery lead(s)	Supporting partners	Timescales	Expected outcomes	Monitoring and measurement
1	Priority 1: Address critical technical and specialist skills shortages Increased proportion of skills provision mapped to LSIP priority sectors and skills requirements. Year on year shift in learner enrolments towards LSIP priority skills and sectors.	Rebalance and expand job-ready, occupation-specific provision aligned to priority sectors; strengthen employer co-design and provider accountability. Ensure effective Careers Advice and Guidance. Clear communications should be supported through the LSIP to help employers and employees to engage with the Lifelong Learning Entitlement and the Growth and Skills Levy. Continue to address enabling factors such as tutor shortages.	WNYCC (ERB) / WYCA	FE coordinated by WYCC; HE coordinated by YU; ITPs coordinated by YLP; LAs and WYCA employer networks and sector bodies; Sixth Form Colleges. Supported through FE & HE Compact.	Short term: Skills provision more tightly aligned to employer demand, improved employer co design, and clearer provider accountability. Improved local access to flexible employer-led training. Medium: More reliable pipelines into hard to fill roles across priority sectors. Upskilling and reskilling responses to changing employer demand.	Reduced recruitment delays and vacancy pressures; Improved workforce readiness and productivity; Increased employer confidence in the local skills system.	Provider curriculum mapping used in LSIP monitoring and accountability statements. Track learner enrolments with providers. (6 monthly review)
2	Priority 2: Strengthen digital capability, including AI and low-carbon skills, including: -Cross-sector digital and AI capabilities, -Cross-sector green and sustainability skills, and -Sector-specific retrofit skills (e.g. construction) Growth in learner enrolments and completions in digital, AI	Embed digital, data, AI and low-carbon competencies across provision; ensure green, retrofit and emerging digital skills priorities are embedded throughout existing training.	WNYCC (ERB) / WYCA	FE coordinated by WYCC; HE coordinated by YU; ITPs coordinated by YLP; LAs and WYCA employers; digital and green economy partnerships; Sixth Form Colleges;	Short-term: Digital confidence, AI awareness and low-carbon skills embedded within existing technical provision; targeted expansion of green, retrofit and emerging digital training. Medium-term: Workforce and	Improved adaptability of the workforce to rapid technological and environmental change; Stronger innovation, competitiveness and sustainability performance across sectors; Contribution to	Provider curriculum reviews and LSIP aligned provision mapping. Provider performance data and learner completion records. (6 monthly review)

	and low-carbon aligned provision. Increased proportion of LSIP priority sector provision that embeds digital and/or sustainability competencies.			DfE	employer resilience to automation, digitalisation and the net-zero transition.	regional decarbonisation objectives.	
3	Priority 3: Strengthen progression pathways, including into higher-level skills (Levels 1-8) Increased enrolments on provision explicitly aligned to LSIP priorities, and accounting for national skills reforms. Evidence of improved collaborative working between FE and HE to drive place based LSIP priority pathways. Create a coherent, end-to-end progression system enabling movement from entry (Levels 1–2) → technical competence (Levels 3–5) → advanced and professional skills (Levels 6–8), supported by flexible, modular routes and clear careers pathways. Develop greater skills provision at all levels aligned to LSIP Priorities, including higher-level skills provision (Level 4+) and at L7-L8 to help support graduate retention in the region and drive	LSIP priorities are embedded into system governance, provider planning, funding decisions and Careers Advice and Guidance, supported by strengthened collaboration across FE and HE. Providers work together to design place-based progression pathways aligned to LSIP priorities, linking Levels 3–5–6+ and shaping higher-level provision around regional employment opportunities to support graduate retention. This includes the development of Level 1-3 and level 4+ provision, including Levels 7–8, such as industry-linked student projects, Knowledge Transfer Partnerships and doctorates. LSIP related communications to encourage employers to invest in skills.	WNYCC (ERB) / WYCA	FE coordinated by WYCC; HE coordinated by YU; ITPs coordinated by YLP; employers; LAs and WYCA; Sixth Form Colleges	Short term: Improved coordination across FE, HE, independent training providers and employment support; clearer communication of FE–HE progression routes. Medium term: Increased access to Level 4–8 provision, including higher technical qualifications.	Faster progression into higher skilled technical and professional roles; Improved earnings, job quality and retention of skilled graduates; Stronger higher level skills pipeline supporting innovation and regional growth.	Increased enrolments on provision explicitly aligned to LSIP priorities. Evidence of improved collaborative working between FE and HE to drive place based LSIP priority pathways Develop greater higher-level skills provision (Level 4+) aligned to LSIP Priorities, including at L7-L8 to help support graduate retention in the region and drive productivity and innovation. (6 monthly review)

	productivity and innovation. Sector approach to be supported through cluster groups and live sector skills plans, aligned to needs identified in the LSIP.						
4	Priority 4: Develop leadership, management, soft skills and workforce readiness skills Increased focus on embedding leadership, management, soft skills and workforce readiness skills outcomes within existing provision. Maximising opportunities for alignment across existing skills provision. Can be through curricular or pastoral delivery.	Embed employability, leadership, soft skills and employment readiness skills across technical provision; expand work-based learning and placements.	WYCA; Providers (delivery); Employers (work-based learning)	FE coordinated by WYCC; HE coordinated by YU; ITPs coordinated by YLP; Las; WYCA; business support organisations; Sixth Form Colleges	In the short term, transferable, leadership and digital skills will be embedded across technical provision, alongside expanded work-based learning and meaningful employer placements. Over the medium term, this will support stronger talent retention, improved productivity and more effective business leadership, particularly within SMEs and growth sectors.	Improved job readiness; stronger leadership; increased productivity and retention	Provide evidence-based case studies (6 monthly review).
5	Priority 5: Expand flexible and employer-responsive training Evidence how provider offers have been adapted to remain aligned to current and emerging labour market demand. Including, where possible meet employer needs through flexible delivery, including funded provision and curriculum re-sequencing.	Increase the number of existing courses that are employer informed and align to labour market needs. Clear communications should be supported through the LSIP to help employers and employees to engage with the Lifelong Learning Entitlement and the Growth and Skills Levy.	WYCA and LAs; FE coordinated by WYCC; HE coordinated by YU; ITPs coordinated by YLP;	Employers; LAs and WYCA	Short-term: Expansion of short-course CPD, modular, blended and bite-sized provision; improved local access to training. Medium-term: Faster upskilling and reskilling responses to changing employer demand.	Increased participation of adults already in work; More agile, employer informed skills system; Improved responsiveness to economic and technological change.	Provide evidence-based case studies (6 monthly review)

6	Priority 6. Improve inclusion and access to skills for under-represented groups Increased participation rate of learners from underrepresented groups in LSIP aligned provision, for example, Women into Manufacturing. Improved progression of disadvantaged learners within education and training pathways. Alignment to Region of Learning and Creativity strategies ambitions for West Yorkshire.	Reduce barriers to entry and improve visibility of LSIP priority pathways through targeted outreach, employer-led inclusion initiatives and more flexible delivery models. Careers advice and guidance is aligned to LSIP priorities, supported by provider EDI strategies and accountability statements. Progression is strengthened through clearer pathways across FE, ITP and HE, targeted learner support, and ongoing monitoring through LSIP governance to address participation and progression gaps. Ensuring West Yorkshire is offering inclusive pathways to careers and employment for individuals of all backgrounds.	WYCA FE coordinated by WYCC; HE coordinated by YU; ITPs coordinated by YLP; Sixth Form Colleges	Employers; LAs and WYCA; employment services	Short term: Encourage greater engagement and participation in LSIP priority skills from underrepresented groups and disadvantaged communities; clearer and more navigable pathways into priority sectors. Medium term: Improved progression into sustained employment and higher value roles.	Reduced skills related inequalities between people and places; Broader access to opportunity and higher quality employment; More inclusive and resilient regional workforce.	Evidence in provider EDI strategies, curriculum plans or accountability statements that LSIP priorities are being used to target under-represented groups (Annual review) Provider-reported improvements in retention and successful completion for disadvantaged learners within education and training pathways (6 monthly review)
	Other Delivery Activities						
7	Embed LSIP priority sectors, occupations and clear progression pathways into careers guidance across schools, FE and HE, informed by sector skills plans.	Align provision to technical, apprenticeship and higher-level routes, supported by pathway maps and strengthened FE–HE collaboration (including joint planning and credit transfer) through Compact agreements. Engage employers to ensure accurate, joined-up pathways. Reflect transferable skills—including digital, technical, leadership and employability—	WYCA	FE coordinated by WYCC; HE coordinated by YU; ITPs coordinated by YLP; Careers Gateway; ERB; LAs; Sixth Form Colleges; Employers, JCP.	Careers materials reference local growth sectors rather than generic national messaging. Employer engagement activity (talks, encounters, industry weeks) are targeted at LSIP sectors.	Ensuring partners have access to relevant business intelligence through sector skills plans. Learners have clearer, more consistent information on priority skills and career pathways, leading to improved progression, better alignment with	Six-monthly review of provision and progression tracking, including the number of FE–HE careers initiatives linked to LSIP priority sectors, and the proportion of providers referencing priority sectors and pathways within careers strategies, curriculum, prospectus materials

		to support progression and resilience across sectors.				employer needs, and stronger talent pipelines across all skills levels.	and employer encounters.
8	Establish effective LSIP governance, monitoring and review, including robust evidence gathering and alignment on employer skills needs. (methodology given in Annex C) Ensure this is integrated into WYCA governance and working groups.	Establish LSIP Steering Group reporting to the business board; supported by sector skills task and finish groups where needed. Employer intelligence on skills needs is gathered regularly and aligned with skills planning through regular review.	WNYCC (ERB); WYCA	FE represented by WYCC; HE represented by YU; ITPs represented by YLP; Business Chair, A business to represent each sector, LA representative. Wakefield Council representing Local Authorities, Trade Union; Community, CBI, FSB, JCP	Y1 establish; Y2–3 embed Strengthened LSIP governance is intended to create a more coherent, employer-led and accountable local skills system in which public investment, provider decision-making and careers activity are consistently aligned to evidenced employer demand and regional economic priorities.	Steering group established; regular reporting. Employers experience a skills system that is easier to influence, more predictable, and more clearly aligned to their needs.	Quarterly review of activity and annual report
9	Deliver effective LSIP communications plan and activity: ensure clarity, engagement and ownership of the LSIP	Deliver clear, consistent LSIP messaging through targeted briefings, updates and existing stakeholder networks	Employer Representative Body (ERB) / WYCA	WYCA, FE coordinated by WYCC; HE coordinated by YU; ITPs coordinated by YLP; LAs, other ERBs	Short term: Establish comms plan and clear communication channels Medium term: ensure consistent messaging and 2-way communications	Effective stakeholder awareness, engagement and alignment with LSIP priorities	Stakeholder feedback, engagement levels, evidence in provider accountability statements and planning
10	Encourage greater employer engagement in the skills system and investment in skills provision. Use employer leadership through the LSIP to align skills intelligence, provision design, careers guidance and	Regular engagement with employers to promote investment in skills and effective workforce planning, including employer contributions to provider delivery, sector skills task and finish groups, leadership	WNYCC (ERB) / WYCA	FE coordinated by WYCC; HE coordinated by YU; ITPs coordinated by YLP; LAs, other ERB and sector groups, JCP,	Short term: Targeted employer outreach, co-design of provision, curriculum input and in-kind investment Medium term: Greater employer engagement	Greater in work progression and improved productivity and staff retention, increased number of businesses offering good, fair	Annual review, employer feedback and performance against agreed KPIs

	progression routes across the West Yorkshire skills system.	development, strategic workforce planning and related activity.		Community,		employment opportunities and pathways, including via engagement with Fair Work Charter.	
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ANNEX C: BACKGROUND, EVIDENCE AND METHODOLOGY

Purpose of this Annex

This Annex sets out the approach, evidence base, governance and methodology used to develop the West Yorkshire Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP). It demonstrates how the LSIP has been produced in line with statutory guidance, and how employer insight, labour market evidence and strategic alignment have informed the identification of skills priorities, agreed changes and actions.

Background

Alignment of the LSIP with Wider Strategies and Evidence

The secondary evidence base underpinning the West Yorkshire LSIP has been deliberately selected to ensure clear alignment with the West Yorkshire Local Growth Plan, the Get West Yorkshire Working Plan, national industrial strategies and Net Zero commitments.

Labour market intelligence, employer interviews (180 employers) and sector research (all priority sectors) demonstrate that priority sectors identified in the Growth Plan are also those with the most acute skills shortages, replacement demand and growth potential.

The LSIP translates these growth ambitions into workforce-specific demand, focusing on job-ready technical skills, progression into higher-level roles and leadership capability required to unlock productivity and investment.

Evidence such as the Get West Yorkshire Working Plan highlights persistent barriers to labour market participation, including skills mismatch, low progression into Level 4–5 roles, limited access to flexible training for adults in work, and unequal outcomes for disadvantaged and under-represented groups.

The LSIP responds directly by prioritising workforce readiness, flexible and modular provision, and inclusive access to skills that support entry into sustained employment and progression in growth sectors. In doing so, the LSIP acts as the skills delivery mechanism that connects employment, inclusion and economic growth objectives.

Alignment with the Green Economy Cluster Action Plan, the Clean Energy Jobs Plan and West Yorkshire's Net Zero targets is reflected in the LSIP's emphasis on embedding low-carbon, sustainability and retrofit skills across sectors rather than treating green skills in isolation.

The evidence base shows that Net Zero delivery increasingly depends on skills within construction, manufacturing, digital, financial services and professional roles. The LSIP therefore prioritises system-wide integration of green and low-carbon competencies, alongside specialist technical pathways, ensuring the local workforce can support decarbonisation while creating good-quality, future-facing jobs.

Taken together, the secondary evidence base provides a coherent line of sight between economic strategy, labour market need and skills delivery, demonstrating that the LSIP is not a standalone plan, but a coordinated intervention aligned to West Yorkshire's growth, employment, inclusion and Net Zero ambitions.

The LSIP draws on a robust and triangulated evidence base combining quantitative labour market intelligence with extensive qualitative employer and stakeholder insight.

Alignment with the West Yorkshire FE and HE Compacts

The West Yorkshire Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) is closely aligned with the Further Education and West Yorkshire Combined Authority Compact (2025–28) and the Higher Education Compact, which together provide the systemwide framework for collaboration between employers, further education, higher education and the Combined Authority. The Compacts set out shared principles around responsiveness to employer demand, collaboration across institutions, and coherent skills pathways that support economic growth and inclusion. The LSIP translates these shared commitments into employer-led priorities and actions, ensuring that strategic intent is embedded in operational delivery across the post-16 system.

The LSIP should be used by partners as a key employer-evidence baseline for implementing the FE and HE Compacts. For FE providers, this means aligning curriculum planning, capital investment and adult skills provision with the priority sectors, occupations and skills identified through the LSIP. For HE providers, the LSIP provides a clear signal of regional workforce demand that can inform course development, graduate

employability activity, applied research, and employer engagement, in line with commitments within the Higher Education Compact to support skills pipelines, innovation and productivity.

Ensuring delivery, progression and system cohesion

Used together, the LSIP and the FE and HE Compacts create a coherent delivery architecture for skills across all levels. The LSIP articulates what skills employers need and *where* gaps exist; the Compacts define how institutions will work collectively to respond. This enables clearer progression pathways from entry and level 2–3 provision in FE, through higher technical qualifications, apprenticeships and level 4–5 provision, and into degree-level and postgraduate routes where appropriate. It also supports stronger alignment between vocational and academic routes, helping learners progress vertically and laterally within priority sectors.

The Compacts provide the mechanism to ensure synergies in delivery across FE and HE by encouraging joint curriculum planning, shared employer engagement, coordinated capital and revenue investment, and consistent careers messaging.

The LSIP should be referenced explicitly within FE and HE Compact governance, reporting and review processes, so that progress against LSIP priorities informs collective decision-making, reduces duplication, and strengthens accountability. This approach supports a genuinely joined-up skills system, in which learners, employers and providers experience clearer pathways, stronger progression into work and higher-level learning, and more effective use of public investment.

Evidence Base

The LSIP draws on a robust and triangulated evidence base, combining quantitative labour market intelligence with extensive qualitative employer and stakeholder insight. Development of the plan has been undertaken in close collaboration with the West Yorkshire Combined Authority, operating within a shared strategic framework and in line with the emerging joint delivery model set out in national guidance. This collaboration has included the regular sharing of labour market intelligence, employer insight and wider economic data, ensuring a common evidence base to inform priorities, actions and sector focus. Priority sectors for West Yorkshire have been jointly agreed, drawing on employer engagement led by the Chamber alongside the Combined Authority's economic strategy, Local Growth Plan and skills and employment programmes, ensuring alignment between employer-led demand, devolved funding and system delivery.

Secondary Evidence

Secondary evidence sources informing the LSIP include:

- Local and regional labour market intelligence and analysis
- Economic and sectoral assessments produced by the Combined Authority and local authorities
- National datasets and analysis provided through Skills England
- Existing strategies and plans, including the Local Growth Plan, Adult Skills Fund Strategic Skills Plan, and clean energy and net zero frameworks

Primary Employer Research

Primary research has been central to LSIP development and includes:

- Employer roundtables and sector-specific discussions (at least one per priority sector)
- 180 in-depth employer interviews across all priority sectors
- Employer surveys and questionnaires, including the British Chamber of Commerce Quarterly Economic Survey, the largest of its kind in the UK
- Ongoing employer forums and engagement activity, including the Chamber Leadership Groups for Leeds and Bradford
- Discussions with sector bodies such as CITB and The Yorkshire and Humber Financial and Professional Services Skills Commission.
- Discussions with education and training providers

Together, this approach ensures that skills priorities reflect both immediate workforce pressures and medium-term structural change over the LSIP cycle.

Employer Engagement for the West Yorkshire LSIP

Employer engagement has been central to the development of the West Yorkshire Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP), ensuring that skills priorities and recommended actions are firmly grounded in current and future business need. Engagement activity was extended to all businesses, not just Chamber members. It was designed to reach employers across priority sectors, business sizes and geographies, and to combine structured research with ongoing dialogue throughout the LSIP development process.

Skills Roundtables and Sector Discussions

A programme of skills roundtables and sector-specific discussions was delivered across West Yorkshire, bringing together employers, sector bodies and delivery partners. These roundtables provided a forum to:

- Test emerging labour market evidence
- Explore sector-specific skills shortages and gaps
- Identify cross-cutting skills challenges, including digital, leadership, net zero and employability

Roundtables supported in-depth, qualitative discussion and allowed employers to validate and refine the interpretation of skills needs emerging from desk-based analysis.

Employer Surveys and Questionnaires

A structured employer survey formed a core component of the LSIP research campaign. Employers were asked to provide insight on:

- Current recruitment challenges and skills gaps
- Anticipated future skills needs
- Barriers to training, progression and workforce development
- Demand for different levels and types of provision

Survey responses, spread across all priority sectors provided a consistent evidence base across sectors and enabled comparison of priorities between different types and sizes of employers.

Extensive Employer Interviews

The LSIP research programme included extensive one-to-one employer interviews, with 180 responses (approximately 20 employers engaged per priority sector), as reported in the [LSIP Research Campaign](#). Interviews were conducted with employers representing a range of sectors, sizes and locations, including SMEs and larger organisations, this was not limited to Chamber member businesses.

These interviews enabled:

- Detailed exploration of sector-specific skills needs and pressures
- Insight into future workforce plans and anticipated change
- Identification of practical system issues affecting skills delivery, access and responsiveness

Interview findings were used to triangulate survey results and labour market data, ensuring a robust and employer-led evidence base.

Ongoing Employer Dialogue

Employer engagement did not operate as a one-off exercise. The Employer Representative Body maintained **ongoing dialogue with employers** through:

- Regular employer forums and network meetings
- The Quarterly Economic Survey
- Continued sector engagement through the Chamber and partner organisations

This ongoing engagement ensured that the LSIP reflected emerging issues, evolving employer priorities and changes in the labour market as the plan was developed.

Role of Employer Insight in LSIP Development

Employer input directly informed:

- Identification of priority skills needs (current and medium-term)
- Agreement of system-level changes and actions
- Alignment of skills priorities with wider economic and sector strategies

The scale and depth of employer engagement ensure that the West Yorkshire LSIP meets statutory requirements for employer leadership and provides a credible, evidence-based framework for aligning post-16 skills provision with business demand.

Jobcentre Plus

The LSIP works in partnership with Jobcentre Plus to align skills provision with labour market demand and support individuals to progress into sustained employment. Jobcentre Plus provides front-line engagement, job search support and referrals into training, while the LSIP ensures that provision is employer-led and aligned to priority sectors. Through integration with DWP programmes and the Get West Yorkshire Working Plan, this creates a coherent system linking entry-level support, skills development and employment outcomes, enabling individuals to progress from unemployment into sustainable and higher-value roles.

There is regular engagement with Jobcentre Plus and they have been involved in development of the plan via regular meetings and Local Authority Skills Boards.

Involvement of Providers in the Development of the West Yorkshire LSIP

The development of the West Yorkshire Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) has involved all categories of post-16 education and training providers, ensuring that the plan reflects the full breadth of publicly funded, privately funded and employer-led provision across the skills system. Engagement was designed to support statutory requirements while also recognising the important contribution of providers operating outside formal statutory frameworks.

Providers with statutory duties under the Skills and Post-16 Education Act 2022, including Further Education Colleges and designated institutions, have been actively involved throughout LSIP development. Their involvement included:

- Participation in structured engagement activity to test employer-identified skills needs against existing and planned provision
- Input into discussions on delivery feasibility, capacity considerations and progression pathways
- Ongoing dialogue on how accountability statements would demonstrate alignment with LSIP priorities
- Contribution to evidence on current provision, planned changes and system-level enablers and constraints

This engagement ensured that LSIP priorities were realistic, deliverable and capable of being embedded within statutory planning, reporting and accountability processes.

Engagement with Higher Education Providers

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), while not subject to the same statutory duties as Further Education colleges under the Skills and Post-16 Education Act 2022, were actively engaged throughout the development of the LSIP to ensure strong alignment with higher-level skills pathways, innovation priorities and future workforce needs. Engagement with HE focused on aligning LSIP priorities with higher-level technical and academic provision (Levels 4–8), strengthening progression routes from technical education into professional roles and apprenticeships, and ensuring coherence with regional research, innovation and sector growth agendas.

A key element of this engagement was a one-day regional conference led by Yorkshire Universities, which convened Higher Education providers from across West Yorkshire to test emerging skills priorities, explore future demand signals and discuss how HE provision, research and knowledge exchange activity could better support LSIP outcomes. This was complemented by an LSIP webinar delivered jointly with Skills England, which briefed HE providers on changes to LSIP statutory guidance, the role of Skills England, and expectations around system alignment, progression and employer-led skills planning.

Yorkshire Universities (YU) has played an ongoing strategic role through representation on the LSIP Steering Group, supporting dialogue between HE providers, the Employer Representative Body and the West Yorkshire Combined Authority. YU has also provided support with skills mapping activity, helping to align higher-level provision with priority sectors, occupational pathways and emerging skills needs, including digital, AI and green skills. Dedicated meetings are planned as part of LSIP delivery to continue this work, focusing on future skills alignment, progression into Level 4–5 pathways, apprenticeships and interdisciplinary provision linked to growth sectors.

In addition, engagement has been supported through the Chamber's wider business networks, ensuring HEIs are connected to employer demand signals across priority sectors. This includes targeted activity such as a joint AI event with Yorkshire Universities, bringing together employers, HE providers and sector partners to explore AI adoption, skills requirements and workforce implications across priority sectors.

This ongoing dialogue will support better alignment between curriculum, research activity and employer need.

The LSIP also aligns closely with the [West Yorkshire Higher Education Compact](#), which provides a shared framework for collaboration between HEIs and the Combined Authority. The Compact supports joint working on skills, innovation and economic growth, and reinforces the role of Higher Education in delivering higher-level skills, supporting progression, and contributing to inclusive growth. Through the LSIP, this collaboration will be strengthened to ensure HE provision, progression routes and employer engagement are clearly aligned to LSIP priority skills and sectors.

Overall, Higher Education engagement has strengthened the LSIP's focus on pipeline development, progression and long-term workforce sustainability, ensuring that higher-level skills, research and innovation are fully integrated into the employer-led skills system alongside FE, independent training providers and wider partners.

Independent Training Providers and Wider Delivery Partners

Independent Training Providers (ITPs) were engaged as key delivery partners, reflecting their significant role in:

- Apprenticeship delivery
- Adult and employer-responsive training
- Flexible, modular and short-course provision

Their involvement included participation in engagement events, provider discussions and ongoing dialogue on responsiveness, flexibility and employer engagement. This ensured that the LSIP reflects the diversity of delivery models across the provider base, including provision outside traditional college settings.

Providers without Statutory Duties

The LSIP also recognises and has engaged with providers without statutory duties under the Act, including:

- Commercial and employer-led training providers
- Third-sector and community-based organisations
- Sector-specific and specialist providers

These providers contribute insight into hard-to-reach learners, workforce entry routes, progression barriers and specialist skills delivery, ensuring that the LSIP captures provision that operates outside mainstream funding and governance structures but remains critical to workforce development and inclusion.

Ongoing Provider Engagement

Provider engagement has been iterative rather than one-off, with ongoing dialogue maintained throughout LSIP development and continuing into delivery. Providers are engaged through:

- Regular briefings and workshops
- LSIP governance and steering arrangements
- Continued collaboration on delivery planning, monitoring and review, with particular input from sector representatives, including West Yorkshire Consortium of Colleges, Yorkshire Universities and Yorkshire Training Providers, all of whom have played a key role in discussions including co-hosting employer round table discussions

This approach ensures that the LSIP functions as a systemwide framework, shaped collaboratively by employers and providers, and able to adapt as labour market needs evolve.

Role of FE, HE and ITPs as Strategic Partners in LSIP Development and Delivery

Further Education (FE) colleges, Higher Education (HE) institutions and Independent Training Providers (ITPs) have been engaged as core strategic delivery partners throughout the development of the West Yorkshire LSIP and the associated Roadmap of Activities (Annex B). They have been consulted through regular meetings, key roles in LSIP Board activities, surveys, shared round table discussions, input to report writing, discussions and much more.

Strategic Partnership Role

The LSIP has been developed through a collaborative, system-wide approach, involving FE, HE and ITPs alongside employers, the Combined Authority and wider stakeholders. This partnership ensures that skills priorities and delivery plans are:

- Grounded in employer demand and labour market intelligence
- Aligned to existing provision and delivery capacity
- Structured to support progression pathways from Level 1 through to Level 8

Development of the LSIP explicitly involved collaboration with further education colleges, higher education institutions and independent training providers as part of a broader partnership spanning local authorities, employers and sector bodies.

Partnership Working with the West Yorkshire Combined Authority

The West Yorkshire Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) has been developed through a close, formal partnership with the West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA) to ensure coherence across skills, employment and economic growth activity and to avoid duplication with existing strategies and programmes.

The Combined Authority has been fully engaged throughout the LSIP development process, reflecting statutory guidance which emphasises collaboration between Employer Representative Bodies and Strategic Authorities.

Joint governance and delivery arrangements are in place, with shared representation through the LSIP Steering Group, enabling regular information exchange, alignment of priorities and collective decision-making. These arrangements ensure the LSIP acts as a single, employer-led articulation of skills demand, while the Combined Authority uses this intelligence to inform devolved funding decisions, commissioning and wider system delivery.

Systems and processes were established to draw on shared intelligence, including labour market data, employer insight, sector and cluster plans, and evidence from the Local Growth Plan, Adult Skills Plan and Get West Yorkshire Working Plan. Skills and employment teams worked together to triangulate data and employer feedback, ensuring that priority sectors reflect both economic strategy and live workforce demand, rather than duplicating or competing with existing plans.

This collaborative approach provides a clear line of sight between economic priorities, employment objectives and skills delivery. The LSIP therefore functions as the skills delivery mechanism underpinning the Combined Authority's growth, inclusion and net zero ambitions, while avoiding fragmentation by ensuring that all partners are working from a shared evidence base, agreed priorities and coordinated delivery framework.

Environmental and Net Zero Goals

In line with Section 1(6) of the Skills and Post-16 Education Act 2022, the LSIP gives full consideration to Net Zero and wider environmental objectives. This includes skills required to deliver clean energy, retrofit, climate adaptation and sustainability across all priority sectors.

The LSIP also includes reference to the UK government's Clean Energy Jobs Plan, which aims to create a new generation of good jobs in the clean energy sector. The plan forecasts that employment across clean-energy sectors will rise from around 440,000 in 2023 to 860,000 by the end of the decade. This growth is supported by £50 billion in private investment since July 2024. The plan includes initiatives such as the establishment of five new Technical Excellence Colleges, training for 1.3 million young people, and a Fair Work Charter to ensure clean energy jobs are high-quality, well-paid, and union-supported.

It aligns to the West Yorkshire Green Economy Action Plan, which aims to accelerate West Yorkshire's low-carbon growth, create high-quality jobs, and strengthen the region's position in clean technology and sustainable industries.

Equality of Opportunity

Equality of opportunity is a core consideration throughout the development and delivery of the West Yorkshire LSIP, reflecting the Combined Authority's wider ambitions for inclusive growth and improved labour market participation. The plan is informed by analysis of participation, progression and outcomes by place and group, alongside engagement with organisations supporting disadvantaged and under-represented communities. This evidence shows that skills challenges and barriers to opportunity vary significantly across West Yorkshire and require a place-sensitive, system-wide response.

The LSIP is closely aligned with the Get West Yorkshire Working Plan and the national Get Britain Working agenda, both of which focus on reducing economic inactivity, addressing health-related barriers and improving access to good employment. Within this wider system, the LSIP provides the skills delivery component, ensuring that job-ready, sector-relevant training is aligned to employer demand and supports entry into, progression within, and retention in good quality employment. By prioritising flexible, modular provision, clear progression pathways and employer-responsive delivery, the LSIP complements employment, health, careers and community-based interventions rather than duplicating them.

This integrated approach ensures that activity delivered through employment programmes—such as interventions targeting health-related inactivity or supporting individuals furthest from the labour market—can connect directly to LSIP-aligned skills provision, including apprenticeships, technical training and progression routes into priority sectors. In doing so, the LSIP helps translate participation in employment support into sustained workforce attachment, progression into higher-value roles and improved long-term outcomes.

A place-based understanding of equality challenges is central to delivery. The accompanying table summarises how local demographic context and labour market conditions interact with key barriers to participation, progression and employment outcomes across West Yorkshire’s local authority areas. These barriers include health-related inactivity, transport and access issues, digital exclusion, language barriers, lower qualification levels and limited progression opportunities. While common themes exist across the region, their scale and impact differ by place, reinforcing the need for targeted and proportionate responses.

This evidence directly informs how LSIP priorities are implemented. Areas with higher deprivation or health-related inactivity require stronger alignment between skills provision, employment support and community or health-based interventions. Areas facing transport or access challenges benefit from more locally delivered, flexible provision, while areas with stronger labour markets but persistent inequality require greater focus on progression, in-work upskilling and addressing in-work poverty. This ensures that skills provision supports not only access to employment, but also progression and improved job quality.

These place-based insights are embedded within LSIP governance arrangements to ensure they inform decision-making and delivery.

This broad, system-wide representation ensures that LSIP priorities are employer-led, evidence-based and jointly owned, while enabling coordinated, place-sensitive implementation and avoiding duplication across the regional skills and employment landscape. The governance structure is being refreshed for the 2026–2029 period to strengthen employer representation and maintain alignment with the West Yorkshire Business Board, which provides strategic oversight.

The LSIP is also subject to democratic scrutiny through the West Yorkshire Business Board and the Economy Committee, ensuring that skills priorities are fully integrated into wider economic governance and that delivery supports inclusive growth across the region.

Overall, this approach ensures that skills investment aligned to growth sectors is accessible to a wider range of learners—including adults, career changers, individuals with health conditions and those facing structural barriers—and that the benefits of productivity growth, innovation and the transition to Net Zero are shared across all communities in West Yorkshire.

The table supports commissioners, providers and partners in tailoring LSIP-aligned provision, outreach and employer engagement to local circumstances, ensuring that growth-linked skills investment also delivers inclusive outcomes.

Local Authority	EDI Baseline	Key Barriers
Bradford	Young and diverse population; high deprivation	Health-related inactivity; language and digital barriers
Calderdale	Smaller, dispersed population; ageing workforce	Rurality, transport and access barriers
Kirklees	Diverse population; uneven outcomes	Skills mismatch and health-related inactivity

Leeds	Strong labour market with pockets of inequality	In-work poverty; digital exclusion
Wakefield	Lower qualification levels	Limited progression and health-related inactivity

Careers Advice and Guidance

Careers advice and guidance (CEIAG) will be a core enabler of LSIP delivery, ensuring that individuals and employers can navigate the skills system, understand progression pathways and access opportunities aligned to local labour market demand.

The LSIP will work with existing regional and national careers infrastructure—including Careers Hubs, Jobcentre Plus, local authorities, schools, colleges and provider networks—to ensure that careers information is consistent, up-to-date and aligned to priority sectors and occupations. This reflects the LSIP’s wider role in aligning skills provision with employment opportunities and supporting progression into sustained employment.

Strategic Approach

Careers activity will be delivered through a built-in, system-wide approach, ensuring that guidance is:

- Employer-led and labour market informed, using LSIP evidence and sector insight
- Integrated with education, training and employment support, including the Get West Yorkshire Working Plan
- Accessible across the life course, supporting young people, adults in work, career changers and those furthest from the labour market

The LSIP will strengthen the connection between careers guidance, skills provision and employment outcomes by ensuring that careers messaging reflects real job opportunities, skills pathways and progression routes.

Delivery Mechanisms

This will be delivered through:

1. Integration with Careers Hubs and Schools

- Embed LSIP priorities within local Careers Hub activity and Gatsby benchmarks delivery
- Provide schools and colleges with up-to-date labour market intelligence and sector insights
- Increase employer engagement in schools through talks, placements, site visits and curriculum input
- Improve awareness of technical pathways, apprenticeships and priority sectors

2. Alignment with FE, HE and Training Providers

- Ensure providers incorporate clear progression pathways (Levels 1–8) into careers guidance
- Align CEIAG with course offer and local employment demand
- Support consistent messaging across FE, HE and ITP provision
- Improve signposting to flexible, modular and in-work learning opportunities

3. Integration with Employment and Inclusion Support

- Work alongside Jobcentre Plus, local employment programmes and community organisations
- Ensure individuals accessing employment support are signposted into LSIP-aligned training pathways
- Align careers guidance with Get West Yorkshire Working and wider employment initiatives
- Support individuals facing barriers (e.g. health, digital exclusion) through joined-up support pathways

4. Employer-Led Careers Engagement

- Expand employer involvement in shaping careers advice and information
- Use employer insight to ensure careers guidance reflects current recruitment needs and future skills demand
- Promote priority occupations, local vacancies and progression routes
- Strengthen links between careers activity and real job opportunities

5. Lifelong Careers Support

- Support adults to upskill, reskill and transition between sectors
- Improve awareness of progression routes into higher-level skills (Levels 4–7+)

- Promote careers pathways linked to growth sectors (e.g. digital, green, construction, HealthTech)
- Ensure guidance reflects changing labour market needs and emerging technologies

Outcomes and Impact

This approach will deliver:

- Improved awareness of local careers and progression pathways
- Increased uptake of technical, apprenticeship and higher-level routes
- Stronger alignment between skills provision and labour market demand
- Better transitions into employment and progression within work
- Improved access to careers support for under-represented and disadvantaged groups

Summary

Careers advice and guidance will be fully integrated into LSIP delivery, ensuring that individuals, employers and providers have a shared understanding of opportunities, pathways and skills needs, and that careers support acts as a critical bridge between education, training and employment outcomes across West Yorkshire.

Working with Trade Unions

Trade unions will be engaged as strategic partners in both the governance and delivery of the West Yorkshire LSIP, ensuring that workforce perspectives are embedded alongside employer and provider input. They have contributed to LSIP development through stakeholder engagement and will continue to play an active role within governance structures, including the Board and Steering Group, where they provide insight on workforce participation, progression and inclusion. Through their networks—particularly union learning representatives—they will also support delivery by promoting access to training, engaging under-represented groups and helping align skills provision with real workplace needs, ensuring that LSIP priorities are both employer-led and workforce-informed.

The Governance Structure

LSIP Board and Steering Group – Governance and Representation

Governance of the West Yorkshire Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) is provided through a multi-partner LSIP Board, bringing together organisations with responsibility for employer representation, providers including FE, HE and ITPs responsible for skills delivery, economic growth and local place leadership. This structure ensures that the LSIP is employer-led, evidence-based and embedded within the wider regional economic governance framework.

Review, assurance and democratic oversight

This LSIP has been reviewed by providers, local authorities, employer representative bodies, and the West Yorkshire Business Board and West Yorkshire Combined Authority's Economy Committee to ensure compliance with statutory guidance, governance expectations and regional priorities. Ongoing review arrangements ensure that the LSIP remains employer-led while benefiting from democratic oversight.

The West Yorkshire Local Skills Improvement Plan is formally reviewed through the West Yorkshire Business Board and the Economy Committee, ensuring that LSIP priorities are integrated into the region's wider economic governance, policy development and strategic decision-making, and that delivery remains aligned with employer needs and regional ambitions.

West Yorkshire Business Board

The Business Board provides a strategic business-led forum for considering the LSIP, reflecting its role in:

- Representing employer and sector-wide perspectives across the regional economy
- Ensuring that LSIP priorities align with economic growth, productivity and investment decisions
- Providing challenge and assurance that employer evidence has been accurately reflected and that delivery remains responsive to business need

Review through the Business Board reinforces the employer-led nature of the LSIP, as required by the Skills and Post-16 Education Act 2022, while linking skills priorities directly to business, sector and labour-market dynamics.

The West Yorkshire Business Board is attended by Local Authorities, other employer representative bodies, and chairs of the sector cluster groups.

The Economy Committee

The Economy Committee provides formal political and democratic oversight of the LSIP on behalf of the Combined Authority. Review through the Committee ensures:

- Alignment between the LSIP and the Local Growth Plan, Adult Skills Plan and wider economic strategies
- Transparency and accountability for how skills policy supports inclusive growth, Net Zero transition and labour-market participation
- Appropriate scrutiny of progress, risks and impacts, particularly where LSIP priorities intersect with devolved funding, commissioning and public policy

Why both are necessary

Together, these review arrangements ensure that the LSIP:

- Remains employer-led but system-aligned
- Is embedded within regional economic governance, rather than operating in isolation

Processes for monitoring delivery of the LSIP are outlined below.

Monitoring, Review and Adaptation of LSIP Delivery

Purpose

Monitoring and review arrangements ensure that delivery of the West Yorkshire LSIP remains aligned to employer-led priorities, demonstrates progress against the expected outcomes, impacts and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) set out in Part 2, and adapts in response to labour market change. This approach provides a clear and auditable assurance trail for the Employer Representative Body, the West Yorkshire Combined Authority and national partners, including Skills England, in line with LSIP statutory guidance.

Approach to Monitoring and Review

Progress against LSIP priorities will be monitored through a structured and proportionate review process, led by the Employer Representative Body (ERB) in partnership with the West Yorkshire Combined Authority. Formal annual reviews will assess performance against the KPIs associated with the six overarching priorities in Part 2 and the expected outcomes and milestones set out in the Annex B Roadmap of Activities. Where progress is off-track, these reviews will be used to agree corrective action, adjust delivery activity or recalibrate priorities.

Ongoing monitoring activity will include:

1. Reviewing employer skills needs using labour market intelligence, employer surveys, sector engagement and investment intelligence, ensuring continued alignment with the priority outcomes and KPIs in Part 2 (e.g. reductions in hard-to-fill vacancies, progression to Level 4–5 skills).
2. Collecting provider-level data on participation, progression and destinations to evidence delivery of actions in Annex B, and to track performance against Part 2 KPIs related to access, progression and workforce readiness.
3. Working with providers and delivery partners to implement and monitor specific actions set out in Annex B, share emerging employer intelligence, and gather feedback on delivery feasibility and system constraints.
4. Seeking structured employer feedback on the impact of LSIP-aligned changes, supporting evidence against Part 2 KPIs relating to employer satisfaction, job-readiness and skills utilisation.
5. Reviewing activity to strengthen employer engagement, including apprenticeships, T Level placements, work-based learning, upskilling and reskilling, curricula co-design and industry placements, as set out in Annex B actions linked to workforce readiness and flexible provision priorities.
6. Maintaining ongoing engagement with stakeholders to ensure LSIP delivery remains aligned with related strategies and services, including employment support, Jobcentre Plus and careers guidance, reinforcing the inclusion-related KPIs in Part 2.

7. Submitting monitoring information and updates to Skills England and drafting and publishing an annual LSIP progress report that explicitly reports performance against Part 2 KPIs and progress in delivering Annex B actions.
8. Ensuring regular two-way updates with providers, supporting shared ownership, transparency and continuous improvement against agreed priorities.

Monitoring Framework

Monitoring of the LSIP takes place at three connected levels, so we can clearly see whether priorities are being delivered, actions are working, and outcomes are being achieved.

1. Strategic Oversight (LSIP level – “Are we on track overall?”)

This level looks at the big picture. It checks whether the LSIP is still focused on the right priorities and whether it is having the intended impact.

At this level we:

- Review progress against the outcomes, impacts and KPIs set out in Part 2
- Produce an annual LSIP progress report, clearly showing how delivery activity in Annex B is contributing to those outcomes
- Review provider accountability statements to confirm alignment with LSIP priorities
- Provide oversight through the Employer Representative Body, working jointly with the Combined Authority

This ensures there is clear strategic assurance and accountability.

2. Delivery and System Performance (“Is the system working as intended?”)

This level focuses on whether the skills system is operating effectively and delivering the changes agreed in Annex B.

At this level we:

- Ask providers to self-assess progress against LSIP priorities and agreed delivery actions
- Review changes to curriculum and progression routes, particularly those supporting progression into Levels 4–5 and above
- Use evidence of employer engagement to support priorities on workforce readiness and flexible training
- Monitor participation and progression data by sector, level and place to understand who is benefiting from LSIP-aligned provision

This helps identify delivery barriers early and supports continuous improvement.

3. Labour Market and Impact Monitoring (“Is this making a real difference?”)

This level looks at whether LSIP-aligned activity is resulting in real change in the labour market.

At this level we use:

- Labour market intelligence to track changes in demand, vacancies and skills shortages
- Learner destination and sustained employment data
- Employer feedback on improvements in recruitment, retention, productivity and skills utilisation

This evidence shows whether LSIP actions are delivering the wider outcomes described in Part 2.

A Structured Cycle

Monitoring and review will operate through a structured cycle of quarterly monitoring, annual review and a mid-cycle review at the end of Year 2, ensuring the LSIP remains responsive to labour market change.

Stage	Frequency	Focus
Quarterly monitoring	Quarterly	Delivery progress and emerging issues
Annual review	Annually	Outcomes, impacts and success factors
Mid-cycle review	End of Year 2	Recalibration of priorities

LSIP refresh input	End of cycle	Evidence for LSIP update
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Why this works

This approach ensures a clear line of sight between:

- What we are trying to achieve (Part 2 priorities and KPIs)
- What we are doing (Annex B delivery actions)
- What difference it is making (labour market and employer outcomes)

It ensures the LSIP remains a live, adaptive framework, fully aligned with statutory guidance and Skills England assurance expectations.

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