



Greater Manchester **LOCAL SKILLS IMPROVEMENT PLAN**



PROGRESS REPORT - 2024



Funded by
UK Government



Greater Manchester
Chamber of Commerce

This progress report has been prepared in accordance with Local Skills Improvement Plans: Stage 2 Guidance (dated November 2023) and is intended to review progress against the Local Skills Improvement Plan published in August 2023. This report was produced in June 2024, but publication was delayed due to the pre-election period.

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Introduction

Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce (GMCC) is the Employer Representative Body responsible for developing and delivering the Greater Manchester Local Skills Improvement Plan (GM LSIP) on behalf of the Department for Education.

Research for the GM LSIP began in October 2022 and included large-scale intelligence gathering and extensive employer engagement. Over 3,600 businesses participated in surveys and one-to-one interviews providing data on skills shortages and labour market issues. From this data, skills priorities were identified for each of the ten Local Authority areas in Greater Manchester and aggregated to form GM-level sector requirements.

Published in August 2023, the [GM LSIP](#) outlined these key skills priorities and set out, through a number of recommendations, how they would be addressed over the coming months and years. Research and intelligence gathering has continued following the publication of the GM LSIP, to ensure that the most up-to-date information is available to guide and inform activities going forward.

This first Annual Progress Report sets out a summary of the GM LSIP and includes relevant new information on key data that has been gathered since the GM LSIP's publication in August 2023. The report also includes an update on the work that has taken place so far to tackle the priorities identified in the GM LSIP and outlines the plans in place for future action. Changes in skills provision can take time to enact and even longer for the intended benefits to manifest themselves. Progress has been made, but more needs to be done.

Aimed at employers, skills and training providers and wider stakeholder groups, this report provides an overview of the critical work taking place that, following May's Mayoral Election, will become a significant element of the GM Mayor's agenda over the next 4-year term, as technical skills take even more prominence in Greater Manchester.

In addition to establishing the requirements for the path ahead, GMCC works collaboratively with the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) and others to ensure that the LSIP is embedded within the new skills and work system and acts as a conduit for the flow of intelligence and analysis to inform GM's skills strategy.



Chris Fletcher
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Manchester Chamber of
Commerce

Introduction

Employers' needs, as evidenced by the LSIP, are at the heart of this new integrated technical skills system and the new governance structure that allows for, and depends on, greater engagement with and contributions from employers. There will be an increased ability to react quickly and flexibly to emerging needs accurately identified through the ongoing work of the LSIP, as part of a new, dynamic way of monitoring GM's skills requirements. The Trailblazer Devolution Deal describes this as: '[Ensuring] the link between the technical education offer within Greater Manchester and real time labour market intelligence about the needs of the Greater Manchester labour market.'

Although this report is designed to provide a progress update to employers, providers and the stakeholders we have worked with already, we hope to engage those who have yet to be involved in the GM LSIP, and who we encourage to get involved with the work after seeing from the evidence gathered that activity has already started to tackle the needs identified.

The LSIP never was and never will be a 'one-time' piece of work, but will constantly evolve to match emerging needs as the skills landscape continues to change over the coming years.



Summary of the GM LSIP

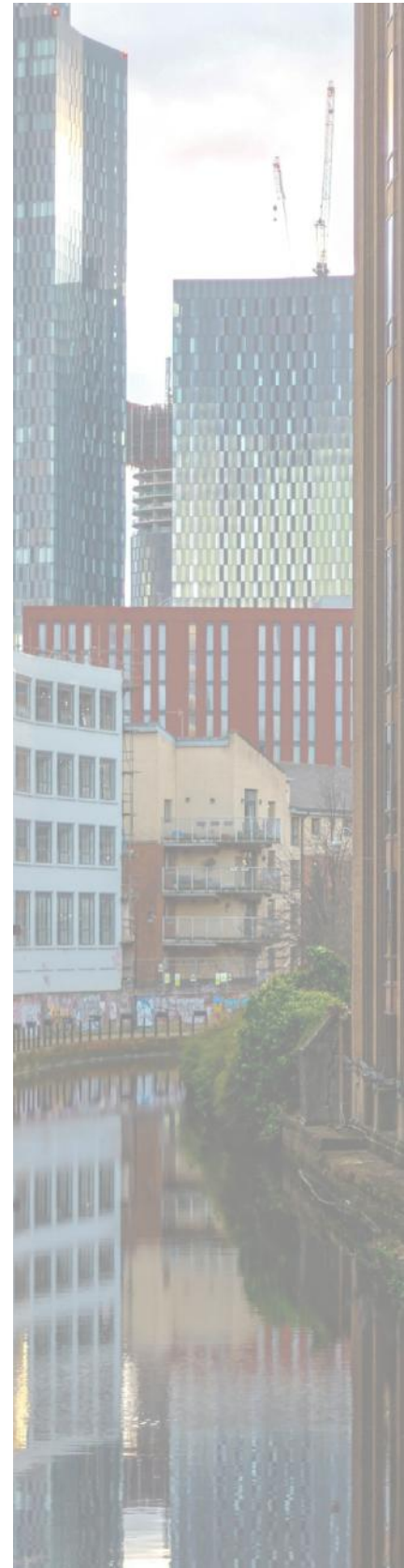
The objective of the Greater Manchester Local Skills Improvement Plan (GM LSIP) is to support the technical and vocational education system in becoming more responsive and innovative, ensuring provision is tailored to the needs of employers based in GM, and better connects residents to the good jobs available in our local labour market.

In August 2023, the Secretary of State for Education approved the [GM LSIP](#), which was a culmination of survey work, interviews and focus groups with employers, and analysis of information gathered from other sources. This plan emphasised the involvement of employers in shaping vocational education provision, and the importance of collaboration between learning providers, employers, employer representative bodies and other key stakeholders, such as Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA), to nurture a workforce that is better prepared to meet the current and future needs of the local economy.

In the GM LSIP, key sectors including construction, digital and technology, engineering and manufacturing, financial, professional and business services, health and social care and logistics were identified for focused skills development. In addition to being significant contributors to the GM economy, these sectors have been prioritised by both GMCA and the Local Authorities in GM as part of their own economic and skills development plans.

The GM LSIP also uncovered: the demand for basic digital skills amongst employers in all sectors; the need for employees to have an awareness of essential net zero and green skills, which was expressed by businesses across several sectors; and the critical requirement for employers themselves to invest in reskilling and upskilling their workforce to mitigate the recruitment difficulties they face.

In delivering the identified priorities, the GM LSIP looks to create a scalable and sustainable model for technical and vocational education that not only meets current employer demands, but also anticipates future skills requirements.





Summary of the LSIP

As part of the future economic development plans for the city region, the development of six growth corridors across Greater Manchester has been proposed. Each growth corridor has its own priorities and sectoral mix. For example, the North East Growth Corridor includes the Atom Valley development and the Advanced Machinery and Productivity Institute with an emphasis on advanced manufacturing, whereas the Airport and Southern Growth Corridor focuses on urban regeneration, logistics and transportation. In developing the GM LSIP, we took into account the workforce and skills needs for the different growth corridors and what targeted skills initiatives can support these critical economic development projects.

The priorities in the GM LSIP, identified through extensive employer engagement and data analysis, are founded on the need to address critical skill shortages and mismatches in the local labour market. They address both technical and broader employability skills and are indicative of acute skills gaps that cause recruitment difficulties and hinder economic growth across key sectors. By combining sector-specific priorities with broader areas for action – for example: leadership and management, essential workplace skills, literacy / numeracy and awareness of sustainability – the GM LSIP outlines a clear set of recommendations, which are crucial for workforce development. These priorities for action are designed to close the gap between the courses that are currently available and the actual needs of the labour market, making further education more relevant and responsive to regional business needs and economic growth plans.

Implementing the LSIP involves translating the recommendations into actions. The GM LSIP outlined a strategic implementation plan focused on collaboration between employers, learning providers and other stakeholders. Critical to the success of the GM LSIP is the continued and proactive participation of local employers in curriculum development and an assessment of training effectiveness. This engagement ensures that the skills being taught are those in demand, thereby enhancing the employability of learners. It is important that the recommendations of the GM LSIP continue to reflect the dynamic labour market; when local needs change, the GM LSIP must immediately capture those changes.

Finally, the GM LSIP laid out an approach for ongoing monitoring to ensure the effectiveness and relevance of skills training initiatives, especially in the context of the changes in employer needs or other initiatives which affect the labour market. Some key actions for implementation include developing sector-specific qualifications, enhancing the provision for digital skills, and setting up an integrated approach to addressing technical skills shortages. To this end, the Mayor of Greater Manchester has clearly set out a vision for the creation of an Integrated Technical Education System (ITES) an integral part in the Trailblazer Devolution Deal, which aims to give equal importance to academic and vocational education. The outcomes of and recommendations from the GM LSIP will be at the heart of the ITES.

There are two main areas to update for the purposes of this report: the first is around the preparation work and subsequent implementation of the new Trailblazer Devolution Deal; the second relates to changes in sectors and needs that we have analysed as part of our ongoing work on the LSIP.

Greater Manchester is currently undergoing a period of substantial change. In March 2023, the GM Trailblazer Devolution Deal was signed with the Department for Levelling Up, Homes and Communities (DLUHC) that paved the way for further devolved powers and the introduction of a new single-settlement funding pot. The deal focuses on the following:

Skills: devolved functions of post-19 education and skills activity; providing greater local oversight of post-16 technical education and skills and careers along with local flexibilities over free courses for jobs and Skills Bootcamps.

Housing: £400 million for the Affordable Homes Programme, £150 million for brownfield land funding, and £3.9 million to end the use of bed and breakfasts for homeless families.

Transport: A new rail partnership to support the Bee Network by 2030, including 'pay as you go' ticketing pilots.

Retrofit: Piloting the devolution of net zero funding, including the retrofit of buildings, from 2025 onwards.

This was being discussed when the LSIP was approved in August 2023 but obviously in the following months has been further clarified and elements put into action ahead of 2025. It should be noted that none of this has distracted us from the original purpose of the LSIP: to identify employers' skills needs and ensure that action is taken to resolve them. The focus on housing and retrofit needs to be noted as these are both critical skills issues identified in the LSIP. Skills forms a critical part of the Devolution Deal and within this the LSIP is a fundamental element in helping shape and define a new work and skills strategy.

For the above and the identified Growth Corridors and Investment Zone there is anticipation that there will be a natural influx of new businesses and increase in start-ups, many in new sectors. We will undertake regular re-assessments of these 'new' skills needs to ensure they can be met by provision.



This report comes at an interesting time in this whole process, following May 2024's Mayoral election and in the middle of a series of activities that will bring into being new systems and mechanisms that will help deliver the Trailblazer Devolution Deal.

Greater Manchester Mayor, Andy Burnham, has been elected for a third term and in his pre-election manifesto, skills and technical education was one of his three key priorities. Going forward, the focus on skills, especially technical skills, will increase and the LSIP is recognised as a critical piece of evidence for this, not just identifying employers' needs, but breaking these down on a geographical and sector basis.

A new integrated skills and technical education system is being developed with the LSIP at its heart, supported by a series of thematic and sector panels that will influence and decide what future skills provision post-16 looks like in the city region. Early stages of this new system are already in place and the Chamber is playing an important part in this supplying evidence and analysis, as well as working with other business organisations to engage employers.

Another critical element is the Chamber's work with the Growth Company, Combined Authority and MIDAS (the inward investment agency for GM) on a new-look and new-purpose Labour Market Insights Unit that will use the LSIP and other sources of data, including government statistics, to create and present coherent labour market intelligence, skills and jobs data to inform future activity. This single source of intelligence will play a significant role in the delivery of GM's skills aspirations.

Other new initiatives are being developed which will also require input on skills needs, such as the Investment Zone and key 'Corridor' developments based on the four 'Frontier Sectors': advanced materials and manufacturing; clean growth; digital and creative; and health innovation.

The Investment Zone projects will help to address the need for existing businesses to adopt new technology with translational research programmes, skills programmes to build a pipeline of talent, and prepare employment sites to support growing firms to scale-up. They will also support academics, spinouts, and entrepreneurs to commercialise IP with targeted support and specialist R&D-focused developments. Subsidised finance from GMCA and in-kind support from universities and business experts will help incubate innovative firms to grow within GM, tackling businesses' low R&D.

These Frontier Sectors are the key sectors that will underpin economic growth across GM. Over the coming 12 months more work will be focused on these sectors and important developments such as Atom Valley, started in the north of GM, which will require significant input to ensure their skills needs are met. It is important though that all the focus is not exclusive to the Frontier Sectors; GM has a huge reliance on the foundation economy and the LSIP will maintain its focus on the labour market in these sectors and ensuring employers' needs are addressed, particularly in the current volatile market.

Strategic and economic context

Work is currently increasing on the aforementioned areas and the activity needed to bring together all the necessary governance and operational structures. As such, it is important that we do not lose sight of the important work of the LSIP in engaging with employers and providers and taking action when required, whilst playing an increasingly important role in the future shape of GM. Over the next 12 months this will become much clearer.

Since we started phase one of the GM LSIP, the economic context has also significantly changed. The UK economy was in recovery mode from the impacts of Covid-19 and the number of vacancies were at historic highs. In the three-month period from October to December 2022, the estimated number of vacancies in the UK was at an historically high level of nearly 1.2million (170,000 in Greater Manchester). Although the number of vacancies has now decreased (120,000 in February to April 2024), some employers continue to report difficulties in recruiting the right candidates. The Chamber's Quarterly Economic Survey for Q1 2024 found that 72% of businesses reported recruitment difficulties (77% in Q4 2023). This shows that in a tightening labour market, beneath the overall headline figures for labour shortages, it is the specific mismatch between the skills needed and the available labour that is affecting businesses' ability to recruit.

Another interesting development is how demand in sectors has changed in the last 18 months. The 'Wholesale and retail trade repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles' sector is the largest employer in the Greater Manchester region and has always reported the largest number of vacancies. Relative to Q4 2022, sectors like 'Arts entertainment and recreation' and 'Transportation and storage' now report proportionately more vacancies. In other words, the labour market is dynamic. This highlights the importance of ongoing research with businesses to understand skills needs and engagement with both employers and training providers to shape skills provision and address other recruitment related issues.

The LSIP plays a fundamental role to ensure that changes in local labour market conditions are recorded and analysed and appropriate changes made as regards provision and ongoing planning within the 'new' GM technical skills system. The use of the [January Update Report](#) ensured that these changes were communicated, and feedback we have had illustrates that providers responded to changes in the data.

What has been achieved so far?

GMCC has always recognised that for an economy the size and scale of Greater Manchester, and, coinciding with a time of significant change around the opportunities afforded by the Trailblazer Devolution Deal and a move to a new Integrated Technical Education System, the LSIP would have to deal with a series of issues that other regions may not.

This has not impacted on significant steps taken around provision addressing the priorities identified in the LSIP (as evidenced by the [priorities and actions table on page 24](#)). More needs to be done though and it should be noted that any changes to provision will take time to have impact. The impact of courses introduced now may only become obvious in 12 – 24 months and then purely from a qualification achievement angle. Longer term economic impacts for business and the region's residents may take longer to achieve. However, the guiding principle we have followed, and which other partners and stakeholders have too, is to recognise that the priorities identified in the LSIP are accurate, urgent and need addressing. Rather than delay for the 'right moment', action is being taken.

The following examples are all taken from evidence gathered from providers and other organisations central to the overall delivery of actions identified in the LSIP. The single largest area of impact and investment in response to the LSIP has been the Local Skills Improvement Fund (LSIF). Greater Manchester Colleges (GMC Colleges) is the accountable body for this and has ensured that FE colleges in all 10 local authority areas of GM have benefitted from the funds invested and focused on key priorities that were detailed in the LSIP. The following initiatives and qualifications are amongst those that have been delivered so far - currently the best and most obvious examples of the impact the LSIP has had on provision.

Digital Skills Assessment Tool

Bolton College is working in partnership with Bolton NHS Foundation Trust and The Christie Hospital to assess the digital competencies of nurses and midwives from across the two facilities. A digital skills assessment tool has been created that enables staff to assess the quality of their digital level of confidence and skills in healthcare, tracking progress over time. This data will be used to create personalised learning pathways and recommend targeted training programmes that effectively bridge identified skills gaps that exist amongst staff at the two hospitals. The tool has been designed so that all GM colleges can share the prototype with their local NHS Trusts.



What has been achieved so far?

CISCO partnership

Across GM, investment has been made for 50 Cisco Bundles and 100 laptops for CISCO Academy students to use in labs. Six new Cisco learning facilities have also been created across the project, and three new Cisco Networking Academies. The creation of a community hub approach utilising 'Cisco Skills for All' will help support and inspire those from the most deprived areas into digital employment. This will promote clear pathways to further study and employment, building on the Cisco Network Academy Support Centre to promote careers in the digital sector.



GM English and Maths Curriculum Specialist Board

This Board was established in recognition of the fact that levels of English and maths currently pose significant challenges locally, regionally and nationally. Sitting alongside other curriculum groups, its objectives include sharing knowledge and technical expertise in order to raise standards, and driving and supporting the implementation of curriculum reforms.

Tutor Trust

With the support of GMCA, a small trial involving four GM colleges has taken place to bring the Tutor Trust model into post-16 education. Tutor Trust partners with education providers to deliver high-quality tutoring to young people. The impact will be evaluated at the end of this academic year, with a view to expanding the project with further resources provided by bids from the Education Endowment Foundation.



What has been achieved so far?



Daikin heat pumps

With the recent announcement of the Low Carbon Heating Technician Level 3 Apprenticeship and the drive to collectively upskill and train more heat pump engineers, Daikin partnered with GM Colleges to support and help them fully prepare for the upcoming opportunities. Through the partnership, at least six colleges and approximately 45 staff undertook LCL Level 3 heat pump training to become fully qualified and confident in understanding heat pumps. Each college received a Daikin heat pump and full kit, support with installing the kit, as well as connections with Daikin's main commercial and residential installers in the area to start discussions around the Level 3 Apprenticeship.

Investment from Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ)

Three GM colleges have received support through the NW Net Zero Hub DESNZ funding. The money has enabled new resources to be developed, which will be shared across the GM colleges. This includes the development of resources for retrofit skills in immersive learning suites, training fitters for air source heat pumps in commercial settings (supported by Daikin), and further investment in resources related to electric vehicles.

Electric vehicle investment and short course development

There has been capital investment in electric vehicles and equipment, which includes a block technology electric vehicle trainer rig, a hybrid/electrical vehicle ramp, charging bays and EV training labs. Practical training for engineers and technicians to support the reduction of energy consumption in relation to electric and hybrid vehicles has also been developed. This investment provides the opportunity to explore the technology of EV in a safe virtual learning environment and all delivery partners will use their immersive classroom technology to support the work on lean analysis.



What has been achieved so far?

CAVE investment

Six GM colleges have invested in a CAVE (Cave Automatic Virtual Environment). This is a virtual reality environment consisting of a cube-shaped VR room, or a room-scale area, in which the walls, floors and ceilings are projection screens. This provides colleges with new technologies needed to deliver the curriculum and improve the learner experience through augmented reality. Alongside this investment, colleges are developing software and teaching and learning resources for utilisation in CAVEs, and upskilling the workforce to deliver new content and use the latest technology.

GM Digital Innovation in Education Conference

In January 2024 the Greater Manchester Digital Innovation in Education conference took place, which brought together representation from the LSIF's collaborative partners, including senior leaders and innovators, to explore the latest trends and advancements in technology and how these could be used to address key challenges identified in the LSIP. Following the event, Teachermatic was implemented across GM Colleges, which is an AI platform designed to bring the benefits of using generative AI to all managers and teachers in Further Education, and an AI workshop was organised for senior leaders.

Centre for Digital Innovation

GM Colleges has partnered with four universities on the Innovate UK-funded Centre for Digital Innovation. This project allows the colleges to showcase latest technologies, including AI, and the opportunities they provide to local businesses. To date, four roadshows have been delivered, held on college premises. In addition to this, and as part of the project, Manchester Metropolitan University has developed *Know Digital* which provides free learning opportunities for people who want to improve their basic digital skills.



What has been achieved so far?

Anatomage tables

GMColleges has installed state-of-the-art Anatomage tables in each of its facilities. These virtual dissection tables will provide students with the ability to visualise and simulate 3D anatomy and physiology, providing a more immersive learning experience for students and a wider range of CPD opportunities for existing NHS staff. GM now forms the greatest concentration of Anatomage tables in Europe and has the ambition to become a centre of excellence. Through the LSIF, Bolton College has led on the development of Level 3 content, producing 10 pre-sets on anatomy and physiology, which can be embedded into T Level curriculum and accessed by all GM colleges.

GMColleges' partnership with Supply Chain Sustainability School

Responding to sustainability competence needs in the workforce and in supply chains, a partnership with the Supply Chain Sustainability School has been established. GMColleges is now able to upskill students and colleagues across the business areas with accredited CPD; upskill, manage and report on supply chains; and participate in the Future Workforce Leadership Group alongside industry leaders to identify and respond to gaps in training needs. Collective action is underway to embed the School across Greater Manchester linked to Green Week. Colleges are creating learning pathways for staff groups, students and employers, providing an opportunity to upskill the whole sector.

Digital short course development

To meet the growing demand for high skilled workers, digital short courses are being developed, designed and delivered alongside industry experts, further developing existing partnerships with the Greater Manchester Digital Security Hub (DiSH) and CISCO, amongst others. These short courses will underpin the eventual attainment of HTQs as the parent qualification, supporting the currency of skills for those in industry to meet the ever-changing technological developments. Work with Microsoft to embed basic digital skills within courses and in addition to existing courses has also taken place, alongside research into a Microsoft accreditation and its impact on employability. Manchester Digital has been commissioned to provide a package of staff support and business engagement opportunities with their 300+ membership of digital sector employers, to develop college staff, skills and awareness of opportunities in the digital sector.

What has been achieved so far?

Construction Employer Engagement Round Table Event

Led by Oldham College, this event brought together construction employers to review the current qualification offer, understand which parts could be further developed and discuss areas that need to be prioritised in terms of short- and long-term workforce challenges, with a particular focus on digital skills.

Leading for the Future: Be Greater

Leading for the Future is a leadership development programme delivered through the LSIF, which brought together four groups of delegates, representing each of the nine GM colleges, to develop a response to some of the key challenges the FE sector is facing. One of the groups was responding to the challenge around improving the personal and work-readiness skills of young people so that they can gain sustainable employment leading to successful careers. This group developed the 'Be Greater' initiative which consisted of a GM-wide bronze/silver/gold badged programme focusing on a range of areas including digital skills.

Course development – Construction

Key skills priorities identified in the LSIP relating to the digitalisation of construction, the net-zero agenda and leadership and management are being tackled through the LSIF to upskill the construction workforce and attract new people to the sector. New micro courses to enhance the curriculum offer for 16-19 learners are being developed, which are linked to pathways to level 3, 4 and 5 courses, including HNC/Ds and HTQs, resulting in further job opportunities. Additional micro courses with a focus on sustainability, retrofit, and process and planning will also be developed, with the aim of making courses or modules geographically accessible across GM to enable local people and businesses to easily access learning. All delivery partners will be involved in the development of the short courses and resources for the CAVE (Cave Automatic Virtual Environment), plus the wider programme of CPD.

As part of the LSIF, Greater Manchester Learning Provider Network, on behalf of GM Colleges, is developing interactive progression pathway tools to highlight courses and apprenticeships in the construction, digital and electric vehicle sectors.

Metaverse Learning

In partnership with Metaverse Learning, immersive learning programmes covering heat pumps, cyber security and electric vehicles have been implemented into the curriculum across GM. As part of the relationship, colleges have joined the Advanced Manufacturing and Cyber Security consortia to work with industry partners to co-create sector-specific immersive learning programmes using virtual reality, virtual environments and augmented reality.

What has been achieved so far?

The following are examples of how Greater Manchester Learning Provider Network and its members have been responding to the LSIP priorities to meet local skills needs:

Apprenticeship Support Knowledge (ASK) for Schools Programme

Greater Manchester Learning Provider Network (GMLPN) is delivering the Apprenticeship Support Knowledge (ASK) for Schools Programme in Greater Manchester. Throughout 2023/24 the team has promoted apprenticeships impartially and engaged with approximately 135 schools, colleges and other educational establishments, 22,000 students and over 2,000 parents. There are now over 2,800 young people registered on the Find an Apprenticeship website.

GMLPN is promoting local employers to students and parents during the engagement sessions, highlighting large GM employers who recruit apprentices on an annual basis. In addition to this, a selection of live apprenticeship vacancies are shared during these sessions that are all within 10 miles of the school/college location. GMLPN also shares live apprenticeship vacancies, apprenticeship open events and work experience opportunities with contacts in over 200 schools, colleges and educational establishments across GM in a monthly bulletin. The impact of this is that there is an increased talent pool for businesses in GM that recruit apprentices, due to the awareness-raising activities of the ASK Programme.

SME Apprenticeships Brokerage

GMLPN and GMCC are delivering the DfE-funded SME Apprenticeships Brokerage programme in GM, which aims to raise awareness of the opportunities that apprenticeships can offer to an SME. The team provides key information around apprenticeship funding, incentives and using the apprenticeship service and, where relevant, provides bespoke information to enable SMEs to select appropriate apprenticeship standards and training providers. The programme targets three sectors - construction, adult care and manufacturing - and focuses on digital apprenticeships across all sectors. The team works across 7 out of 10 GM boroughs, excluding Bury, Stockport and Trafford.



What has been achieved so far?

There has been a high level of initial interest from SMEs, but very few of them have accessed the bespoke support to take on an apprentice. One of the barriers has been the cost of recruiting an apprentice. GMLPN has also engaged with Skills for Care as a representative body of health care employers, who have promoted apprenticeships directly to employers in this sector.

Autism Support Project

GMLPN has been working in partnership with NCFE to support autistic individuals into apprenticeships and other vocational pathways through their Inclusive Pathways: Autism Support Project. The project has created an online CPD module aimed at training provider staff to enable them to support businesses when employing an autistic individual.

Manchester Metropolitan University

Manchester Metropolitan University has been working with NHS Trusts and Local Authorities across Greater Manchester to provide approximately 600 Level 6-7 Apprenticeships in the health and social care sector, meeting the following local skills needs: leadership and management, advanced clinical practice, digital skills and healthcare science.

Elevated Knowledge

This independent training provider is supporting manufacturing and engineering employers in Manchester, Oldham, Rochdale, Tameside and Stockport with Level 2 and Level 3 apprenticeships (approx. 180), meeting the following local skills needs: welding, electrical, machining, maintenance, mechanical, electronica and lift engineering.

What has been achieved so far?

In addition to the response by GM Colleges as part of the LSIF, each college has reflected the LSIP priorities in their Accountability Agreements with DfE, and, following their first issue in 2023, the Agreements for 2024 are more thorough in responding to LSIP needs and reflect a broader spread of qualifications and training.

This has resulted in a broad range of provision being delivered covering a wide range of priorities matching employer needs in local areas. For example, in one area there has been a rapid rise in demand for warehousing and logistics skills, and local colleges have entered subcontracting agreements with independent training providers. In a similar way, provision around specific construction skill sets, e.g., highway construction, has been commissioned in response to LSIP evidence and local demand.

Independent training providers have also responded to the LSIP priorities, and we have a number of examples where new provision has been put in place directly as a result of evidence from employers. These new courses range from personal skills such as leadership and management through to specific technical skill courses such as welding and construction trades. Whilst much of the provision and activity is relatively new and some will only start in the academic year 2024/25, we are currently establishing mechanisms to monitor and track delivery and success.

Alongside the response for provision, local authorities are using the LSIP and supporting evidence to help refresh and refocus their local skills and employment strategies. GMCC staff are working closely with these organisations ensuring the voices of business are represented and recognised. This further embeds the principle underpinning the LSIP of producing local authority level information first for local use, then aggregating this up to GM level.

At GM level, the GMCA has been an intrinsic part of the LSIP, responding to the analysis and data collected. This has been critical with the Trailblazer Devolution Deal and the significant focus on skills, in particular. Since the release of the LSIP, it has been used as a central part of GMCA's evidence base for commissioning in several areas. Providers have been asked to use insights and learnings from the LSIP in the design of Skills Bootcamps, Multiply and UKSPF programmes, ensuring they are responding to the needs employers identified as part of the LSIP research. Commissioning for GM's Adult Education Budget (AEB) providers that has taken place since the LSIP was published has required that any new provision proposed for in-work learners should respond to GM priorities and include reference to LSIP conclusions.



What has been achieved so far?

As GMCA begins to receive further flexibilities and freedoms under the deeper devolution arrangements, and as the Mayoral ambitions for a 'whole system' approach to integrated technical education, skills and work continue to evolve, the evidence base and a consistent picture of the work and skills landscape will be vital.

As part of a wider integrated education, skills and work system as outlined in the Devolution Deal signed with DLUHC, a new local skills system has been developed including the Employer Integration Board, co-chaired by the GMCC Chief Executive, and which includes employers from the sectors that are expected to contribute to future growth in GM. The LSIP is an intrinsic part of this work and as devolution and the single settlement rolls out over the coming years, the ability to influence provision more effectively in response to employers' needs will increase dramatically.

This fulfils the prime directive of LSIP Stage 2 – embedding the LSIP in the local skills system.

The LSIP has also played a key role influencing economic and employment strategies across all 10 Local Authorities in GM.

Examples of this work are:

- The LSIP has helped shape the refresh of local authority economic strategies and employment and skills plans with a focus on specific sectors and priorities and technical pathways.
- The LSIP has helped local authorities create and plan provision for young people and adults linked to local level labour market data around vacancies and growth projections.
- The LSIP is used as the de facto source of employer needs in local areas and linked to a range of other data available to build up a robust plan for future development linking local areas with GM.
- The LSIP has been used to link up existing employer groups in local areas to ensure there is a two-way flow of information and intelligence keeping the LSIP up to date and able to identify the necessary changes.

In January 2024, recognising that it had been over 12 months since work started on the LSIP, we produced an Update Report to ensure sector priorities recognised any recent changes. The report was well received by employers, providers and stakeholders and was very useful in feeding into Accountability Agreements and helping plan provision. [The report can be accessed here.](#)

In addition to the work outlined above Chamber staff have been working closely with key local organisations. The GMCC Chief Executive co-chairs the Employer Integration Board and plays a significant role in the overall skills structure and governance model. Staff are members of various employment and economic Boards across several local authority areas and a member of the team is a non-executive director at Greater Manchester Learning Provider Network.

What still needs to be achieved?

Actioning the priorities from the LSIP forms three strands of work. The first strand involves tackling the immediate actions that address short-term skills requirements and ensuring that the LSIP plays a fundamental role in driving and supporting the future skills structure in GM with technical skills at its heart.

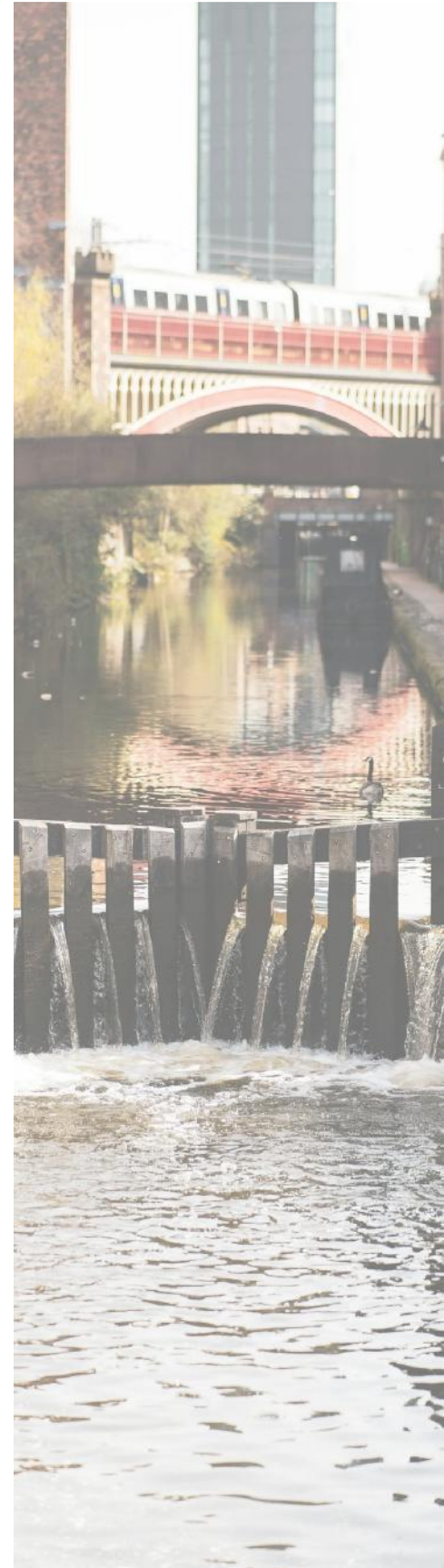
As has been outlined previously, the Trailblazer Devolution Deal formally establishes the LSIP as the key foundation of the new technical skills system in GM, and, from conversations with the Mayor's office and GMCA, the need for the LSIP to continue beyond the current timescales of March 2025 is unambiguous.

Following May 2024's mayoral election, the preparations for the new skills system are proceeding at full speed and will build on the start made in the Employer Integration Board (co-chaired by the Chamber) and will eventually encompass the other panels and groups that make up the Integrated Technical Education System (ITES) governance structure. Greater Manchester Chamber, and hence the LSIP, will increasingly become a natural component and continue to play a lead role in identifying skills priorities and checking on progress and delivery against these priorities.

The second major strand of work involves the conversion of priorities into action, beginning with the process of setting up provision to address employers' needs and the priorities identified in the LSIP.

To enable both of these strands to be successful, it is vital that we continually gather employer intelligence. The Chamber's successful survey and interview work with employers has continued since the LSIP went live in August 2023 and has helped ensure that the data, analysis and priorities remain relevant and can accurately support activity. We anticipate that under the new skills ambition this will become critical for the city region.

The newly formed Labour Market Insights Unit pulls together all the relevant data from the Chamber, GMCA, The Growth Company and MIDAS to deliver the most accurate and up to date labour market intelligence available, mixing national level data with local intelligence and analysis, will help to clearly set out the direction of skills development and inform decision making about priority provision.





What still needs to be achieved?

Measuring the time taken for provision to begin to meet employers' skills requirements will need to be the focus over the next 12 months of what is a long-term ambition to establish the ITES. Initially, progress will be measured in numbers of learners completing training and skills programmes, but as time progresses, this will start to impact on employers' needs, and ultimately, over a number of years, will impact on the city region's longer term economic performance. To achieve this will rely on the Chamber using the strong relationships and operational partnerships that have been built up with GM Colleges, GM Learner Provider Network and, where appropriate, supported by GMCA.

The actions outlined in the second strand of work are not short-term fixes and it has been acknowledged locally that it will take time to effectively and accurately measure and allow new provision and systems to 'bed in'.

The final strand of work, and building on the above 'real time, all the time' approach to data gathering and analysis, is the monitoring of new priorities. This will, primarily, be part of the newly reformed Labour Market Insights Unit as well as ongoing activity managed by the Chamber to ensure there is a high level of employer engagement on skills issues. This is a critical and indeed complex challenge but one that all parties engaged in this work have identified as being important for not only ensuring priorities and needs remain relevant, but also so that the provision, delivery and impact of courses, qualifications and training meets employers' expectations and needs.

Since the publication of the GM LSIP in August 2023, our work with employers and our further 'deeper dive' research activity has identified the following three issues that have become better defined and which warrant specific action: manufacturing project management, carbon accounting and business training. These are all highlighted in blue in the priorities and actions roadmap on page 21. Of these, the issue around businesses stepping up their investment in training and development is the most widespread and critical. This has been a significant downward trend for many years which must be addressed, and business must take greater responsibility itself to deliver the skills it requires. This is a critical barrier that needs overcoming, and we are starting work with a range of stakeholders to address this.

To help support this and other activity we will be setting up an online training course 'hub' so that employers can view and access training opportunities we are aware of. A more structured system is in development across GM, but we consider this to be urgent enough to deliver an interim solution. We have discussed these with providers and will draw up appropriate activity to address them. We will continue to do further deeper dives into these and the other priorities to better identify the core issues and appropriate activity required.

What still needs to be achieved?

We will deliver another standalone update document, similar to the one produced in January 2024, at the end of the calendar year to ensure that the LSIP is on track and all opportunities are being maximised to shape a skills system fit for purpose and which tackles longstanding labour market issues.

Whilst the Chamber is seen as the lead for much of this work primarily through its role within the LSIP, these actions cannot be done in isolation, and all rely on developing the relationships built up over the last few years with the key organisations and groups in GM.

The LSIP is already embedded within the new skills structure being created in GM reflecting the focus from the Mayor on technical skills, however some of this has taken a little longer than anticipated. In such a complex and large economy as GM, it is inevitable that such a significant step change would encounter some issues. However, the main input from the LSIP is in the system, the LSIP is recognised where it needs to be as a primary source of local labour market information and the Chamber is engaged where it needs to be, and with whom it needs to be, to make sure the LSIP delivers on its ambitions.

Priorities and actions

The following is a list of activities currently being undertaken in response to the LSIP priorities and consists of a mix of providers and funding schemes.

PRIORITY	ACTION	PARTNERS INVOLVED	TIMESCALES	IMPLEMENTATION AND EXPECTED OUTCOMES
DIGITAL AND TECHNOLOGY				
Cloud Computing	Cloud computing bootcamps (AWS, Azure)	GMCA funded bootcamps delivered by multiple providers	Currently being delivered in GM	AEB funded initiative to address identified employer demand
	Cisco networking learning facilities	FE colleges in GM	Ongoing	LSIF initiative. Learners will have access to new learning facilities
Cybersecurity	Cybersecurity bootcamps	GMCA funded bootcamps delivered by UA92	Currently being delivered in GM	AEB funded initiative to address identified employer demand
	Metaverse learning delivery on cybersecurity	FE colleges in GM	Ongoing	LSIF initiative. Learners to access new learning facilities and new courses
	Centre for Digital Innovation (CDI) skills offer includes essential cybersecurity training for businesses	FE Colleges in GM, Lancaster University, Manchester Metropolitan University, University of Manchester, University of Salford	Available for businesses in GM	Innovation Accelerator funded initiative to help

Priorities and actions

PRIORITY	ACTION	PARTNERS INVOLVED	TIMESCALES	IMPLEMENTATION AND EXPECTED OUTCOMES
DIGITAL AND TECHNOLOGY CONTINUED...				
Data Analytics	Data analytics bootcamps	GMCA funded bootcamps delivered by multiple providers	Currently being delivered in GM	AEB funded initiative to address identified employer demand
	HTQs in Data analytics	FE colleges in GM	Currently being delivered in GM	Providers learners with qualifications in an area of identified employer demand
Emerging technologies	Centre for Digital Innovation (CDI) skills offer includes essential AI awareness training for businesses	FE Colleges in GM, Lancaster University, Manchester Metropolitan University, University of Manchester, University of Salford	Available for businesses in GM	Innovation Accelerator funded initiative to help businesses with innovation, technology adoption and upskilling of employees
	Investment in CAVEs	FE colleges in GM	Ongoing	LSIF initiative. All learners will have access to new digital resources, virtual learning resources and receive enhanced digital skills training.
	AI-led software development bootcamp	GMCA (funder) Skillscity (provider)	Currently being delivered in GM	AEB funded initiative to address identified employer demand

Priorities and actions

PRIORITY	ACTION	PARTNERS INVOLVED	TIMESCALES	IMPLEMENTATION AND EXPECTED OUTCOMES
DIGITAL AND TECHNOLOGY CONTINUED...				
Essential ICT skills	Digital Skills Assessment Tool	FE colleges in GM	Ongoing	LSIF initiative. All learners will have access to new digital resources, virtual learning resources and receive enhanced digital skills training. In addition, there are events to bring employers and learning providers together to influence curriculum development.
	Microsoft Essentials			
	GM Digital Innovation in Education Conference			
	LSIF Digital Innovation Event			
	Essential ICT skills are available as part of courses in colleges			
Software development	Software development bootcamps	GMCA (funder) Manchester Growth Company, Skillscity, UA92, We are Group (providers)	Currently available in GM	AEB funded initiative to address identified employer demand
	All colleges continue to offer software development in the curriculum. Many ITPs offer similar courses.	FE colleges in GM. ITPs.	Currently available in GM	Regular FE provision and bootcamps can collectively enable more people to acquire essential coding and software development skills.

Priorities and actions

PRIORITY	ACTION	PARTNERS INVOLVED	TIMESCALES	IMPLEMENTATION AND EXPECTED OUTCOMES
FINANCIAL, BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONAL SERVICES				
Accountancy & Finance	FE colleges and ITPs continue to offer courses in Accountancy & Finance. The course provision must be maintained.	FE colleges in GM. Multiple ITPs.	Currently available in GM	Regular FE provision. Working with GM Colleges to map courses to employer needs and maintaining provision.
Sales & Business Development	Further engagement is needed to improve course provision and embed these skills into other courses	FE colleges in GM. Multiple ITPs.	Some courses are available, but more provision is needed. Further engagement to be planned.	Regular FE provision. ITPs could offer courses in this area.
Law	FE colleges continue to offer level 3 courses in law under the 'Access to HE' pathway. The course provision must be maintained	FE colleges in GM.	Currently available in GM	Regular FE provision. Working with GM Colleges to map courses to employer needs and maintaining provision.

Priorities and actions

PRIORITY	ACTION	PARTNERS INVOLVED	TIMESCALES	IMPLEMENTATION AND EXPECTED OUTCOMES
HEALTH & SOCIAL CARE				
Nursing	Anatontage tables	FE colleges in GM	Ongoing	LSIF initiative. Learners will have access to a digitally interactive learning environment
	Some FE colleges offer T-levels in nursing. Ongoing campaign to raise awareness of career opportunities in nursing and allied roles.	GMCA, NHS Greater Manchester, FE colleges in GM	Currently being planned.	Regular FE provision. Working with stakeholders and partners to map courses to employer needs and maintaining provision.
Social care	FE colleges have courses but there is both the need to increase provision and attract more people to the sector.	FE colleges in GM, GMCA, Greater Manchester Social Care Academy.	To be planned	Regular FE provision. Working with stakeholders and partners to map courses to employer needs and maintaining provision.
CONSTRUCTION				
Core construction skills	All colleges continue to offer courses in construction trades	FE colleges in GM	Currently available in GM	Regular FE provision
	Construction skills bootcamps	GMCA funded bootcamps delivered by SB Skills		

Priorities and actions

PRIORITY	ACTION	PARTNERS INVOLVED	TIMESCALES	IMPLEMENTATION AND EXPECTED OUTCOMES
CONSTRUCTION CONTINUED...				
Building envelope design, steel erection and structural fabrication	Further engagement is needed to improve course provision and embed these skills into other courses	FE colleges in GM. Relevant ITPs.	To be planned.	Regular FE provision and HTQs
Construction process management, project management, site engineering	Although there are some courses currently available in construction and built environment, further engagement is needed to improve course provision and embed these skills into other courses.	FE colleges in GM. Investigate potential for HTQs and/or bootcamps in these areas for professionals already working in the sector.	Some courses are available, but more provision is needed. Further engagement to be planned.	Regular FE provision
				There is scope for AEB funded provision
Retrofit	Retrofit bootcamps	GMCA funded bootcamp delivered by Groundwork	Bootcamps are currently being delivered	AEB funded initiative to address identified employer demand
	Metaverse learning set up	FE colleges in GM	Ongoing	LSIF initiative.
Electrical trades	All colleges continue to offer courses in electrical trades.	FE colleges in GM	Currently available in GM	Regular FE provision. Working with stakeholders and partners to map courses to employer needs and maintaining provision

Priorities and actions

PRIORITY	ACTION	PARTNERS INVOLVED	TIMESCALES	IMPLEMENTATION AND EXPECTED OUTCOMES
CONSTRUCTION CONTINUED...				
Digitalisation	Construction Employer Engagement Round Table Event	FE colleges in GM	Roundtable conducted	LSIF initiative
	Some of the courses emphasise digitalisation		To be planned	Regular FE provision and HTQs
Quantity surveying	There are some courses currently available in this area. Further engagement is needed to expand course provision and provide a progression route to Level 6 Quantity Surveying qualifications.	FE colleges in GM	To be planned	Regular FE provision and HTQs
ENGINEERING & MANUFACTURING				
Welding	Welding bootcamps	GMCA funded bootcamp delivered by Rochdale Training	Both bootcamps and other courses are currently being delivered in GM.	AEB funded initiative to address identified employer demand
	Two independent providers have, in direct response to the GM LSIP, started new courses in welding. They are also expanding apprenticeship provision in welding.	Oldham Training Centre, Alliance Learning		Commercial training available to businesses.

Priorities and actions

PRIORITY	ACTION	PARTNERS INVOLVED	TIMESCALES	IMPLEMENTATION AND EXPECTED OUTCOMES
ENGINEERING & MANUFACTURING CONTINUED...				
Green skills	Engagement is needed to improve course provision and embed these skills into other courses	FE colleges in GM	To be planned	Regular FE provision. Working with stakeholders and partners to map courses to employer needs and creating specific required provision.
CAD / CAM & digitalisation	FE colleges continue to offer courses in CAD / CAM	FE colleges in GM	Currently being delivered in GM.	Regular FE provision
Robotics & automation	Acquisition of Leo Rover robots for training	FE colleges in GM	Ongoing	LSIF initiative. Learners will have access to new learning facilities and new courses
Traditional manufacturing trades	Colleges continue to offer courses in traditional manufacturing trades.	FE colleges in GM	Currently being delivered in GM.	Regular FE provision
Manufacturing project management	New priority based on recent LSIP research.	FE colleges in GM	To be planned	Regular FE provision
		Bootcamps and HTQs		There is scope for AEB funded provision

Priorities and actions

PRIORITY	ACTION	PARTNERS INVOLVED	TIMESCALES	IMPLEMENTATION AND EXPECTED OUTCOMES
HOSPITALITY & RETAIL				
Customer facing skills	Some FE courses contain modules in customer facing skills.	FE colleges in GM	Currently being delivered in GM	Regular FE provision
Floor / shop managers	This requires engagement with providers to explore how best to include sector specific leadership and managerial skills within existing courses	FE colleges in GM	To be planned	Regular FE provision
Chefs and professional cooks	Many FE colleges in GM continue to offer courses in professional cookery but there is sustained demand, which requires provision to be expanded.	FE colleges in GM	Currently being delivered in GM	Regular FE provision
GREEN SKILLS				
Net zero skills	Sector specific net zero skills to be included within existing provision. Some courses are already available and further engagement is needed to improve course provision and embed these skills into other courses	FE colleges in GM. ITPs.	Some courses are currently being delivered in GM but further engagement to be planned.	Regular FE & ITP provision

Priorities and actions

PRIORITY	ACTION	PARTNERS INVOLVED	TIMESCALES	IMPLEMENTATION AND EXPECTED OUTCOMES
GREEN SKILLS CONTINUED...				
Net zero skills	The Greater Manchester Five-Year Environment Plan, which is due to be refreshed in 2024, will have strong skills focus	GMCA	Ongoing	To be embedded into regular FE, ITP and university provision
Carbon literacy	There is continued demand for carbon literacy and green skills awareness courses.	FE colleges in GM. ITPs. Universities.	Some courses are available, but more provision is needed. Further engagement to be planned.	Regular FE & ITP provision
		There is scope for commercial training courses in this area		
Carbon accounting	New priority. Recent research conducted by the LSIP team shows that businesses would like specific knowledge on how to quantify their carbon emissions	FE colleges in GM. ITPs.	To be planned	Regular FE & ITP provision
		There is scope for commercial training courses in this area		

Priorities and actions

PRIORITY	ACTION	PARTNERS INVOLVED	TIMESCALES	IMPLEMENTATION AND EXPECTED OUTCOMES
STRATEGIC PRIORITIES				
IT skills	Covered previously			
Literacy & Numeracy	Ongoing initiatives in GM such as the English and maths curriculum specialist group and the Tutor Trust	FE colleges in GM	Currently being delivered in GM	Regular FE provision
Leadership & Management	Two independent providers and a college have, in direct response to the LSIP, started new short courses in leadership & management	Oldham Training Centre (provider), Standguide (provider)	Courses available but inadequate take up.	Commercial training available to businesses.
	GMCA have commissioned a new Leadership Support Programme	GMCA (commissioner, funder) Instep (provider)	Commissioned. Delivery to begin in 2024.	AEB funded initiative to address identified employer demand
Soft skills essential for the workplace	Colleges and ITPs are incorporating soft skills training into the curriculum	FE colleges in GM. ITPs.	Ongoing	Regular FE provision / ITP courses.

Priorities and actions

PRIORITY	ACTION	PARTNERS INVOLVED	TIMESCALES	IMPLEMENTATION AND EXPECTED OUTCOMES
STRATEGIC PRIORITIES CONTINUED...				
Net zero & sustainability skills	Covered previously			
Enhance adoption of business training	New priority. Recent research conducted by the LSIP team shows that adoption of training amongst businesses should increase.	GMCC, GMCA, GMLPN, FE colleges in GM, ITPs for a joint campaign to raise awareness of the importance of training in businesses.	To be planned	FE, ITP and commercial training targeted at businesses



Business Training Survey Results

The survey work for the GM LSIP enabled us to produce a comprehensive assessment of the skills needed by GM-based employers, based on which strategic and sector-specific skills priorities were set. However, for skills gaps to be addressed, employers must adopt and expand staff training.

When employers provide training to staff, it benefits both the individual and the organisation. Role-specific training for staff improves job performance in addition to boosting employee morale and engagement. Importantly, training reduces skill gaps by identifying and addressing areas where employees need improvement or where new skills are required. Against that context, the results of this survey add an important dimension to the GM LSIP. The results are essential for understanding how businesses in GM are investing in workforce development.

The main findings from the survey include:

- An overwhelming 87% of businesses reported that they had provided training to their employees over the last three months, indicating a strong commitment to workforce engagement and development.
- Most employers focus on job-specific and induction training. The results show that 78% of respondents provided job-specific training, while 67% provided essential induction training.
- In-person training remains the most popular method, used by 79% of businesses, but other forms of blended learning approaches, which combine in-person and online modules, are also popular.
- In terms of skills areas that are covered by training, business leadership and management is the most targeted skills area followed by soft skills.

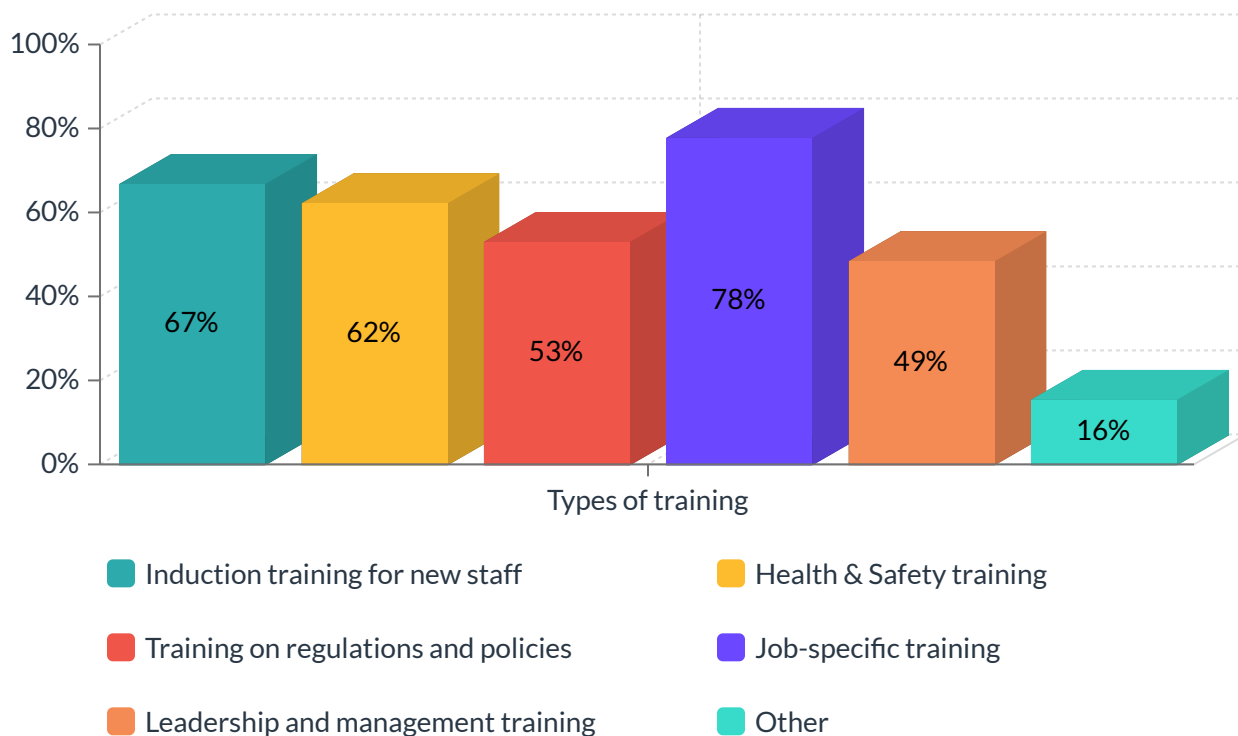
The following sections present the survey results.

Staff Training Provision

The majority of businesses (86.9%) indicated that they provided training to their employees in the last three months. Only 13.1% reported not providing any training during this period. The types of training provided varied across businesses, with the most common being job-specific training, reported by 77.9%. Induction training for new staff was also prevalent, mentioned by 66.9%, followed closely by health and safety training at 62.4%. Training on regulations and policies was provided by 53.2%, while leadership and management training was offered by 48.6%. Around one-eighth of the respondents stated that they also provided training in a diverse range of areas including sales and business development, safeguarding and compliance and wellbeing. Overall, the results indicate that employers are aware of the importance of staff training and development.

Asked about how much employers spend on staff training, the amount varied from £30 to £300,000 showing large variability in training spend based on the size of the business and number of employees put through training, the type of training, the provider and mode of delivery. The average (mean) spend was £10,200 while the median was £2,500 showing that more businesses spend lower rather than larger amounts. In terms of the number of employees trained, the responses varied from just one employee trained to every employee having undertaken training.

Types of training arranged for employees over the last three months

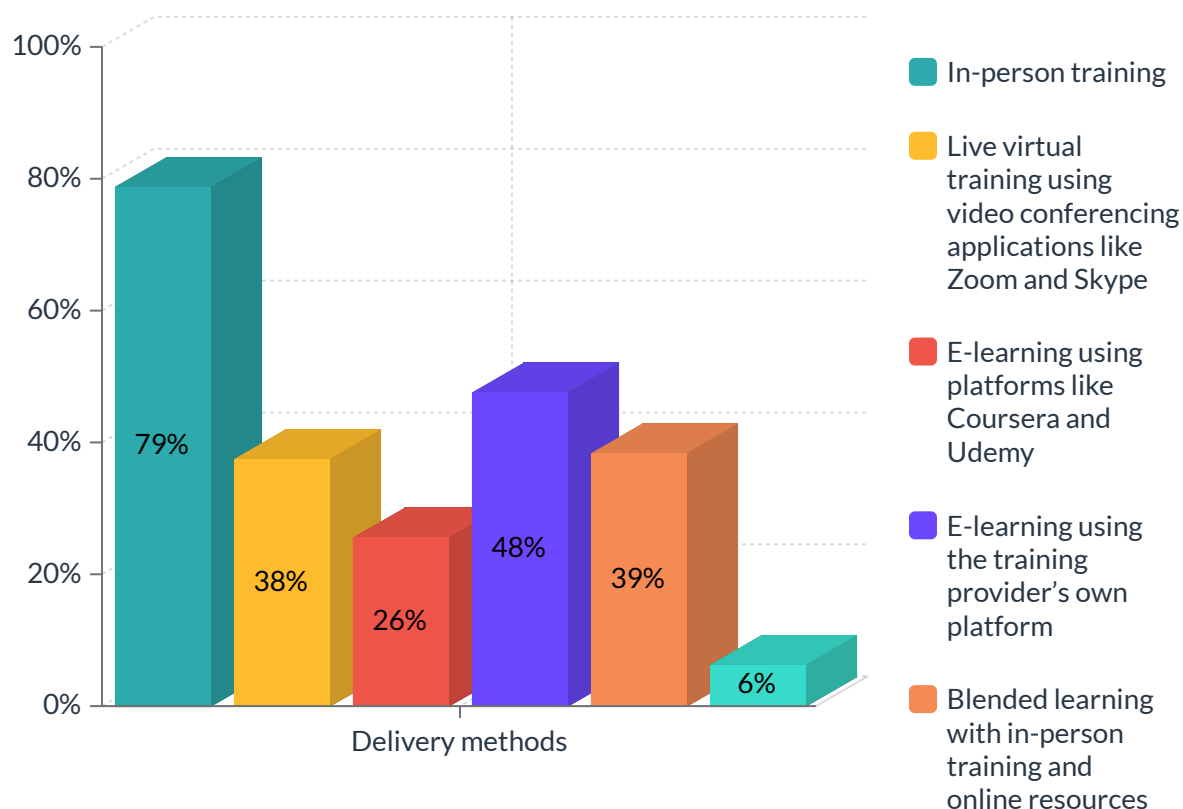


Delivery methods

Despite the growing popularity of online training, in-person training remains the most preferred method. Almost four out of five employers chose this option. Even when training is delivered online, employers prefer it to be live virtual training using the training provider's own e-learning platform (47.7%) or via video conferencing tools such as Zoom (37.6%). Blended learning, combining in-person and online modules, was preferred by 38.5% of employers. E-learning platforms like Coursera and UdeMy were employed by just over a quarter of the respondents (25.7%), while a much smaller proportion, 6.4% reported using other methods such as free webinars.

Research conducted during the first phase of the GM LSIP found that employers face barriers such as high cost and inability to release staff time for training. Blended learning approaches can mitigate some of these barriers by allowing employees to access training materials at convenience, making it easier to balance training with work responsibilities. Since blended learning reinforces in-person training with online resources, it could lead to better training outcomes. Moreover, it reduces the costs associated with fully in-person training, while still providing the benefits of face-to-face interaction. Greater adoption of blended learning might help employers overcome some of the barriers they face.

How training was delivered to employees over the last three months

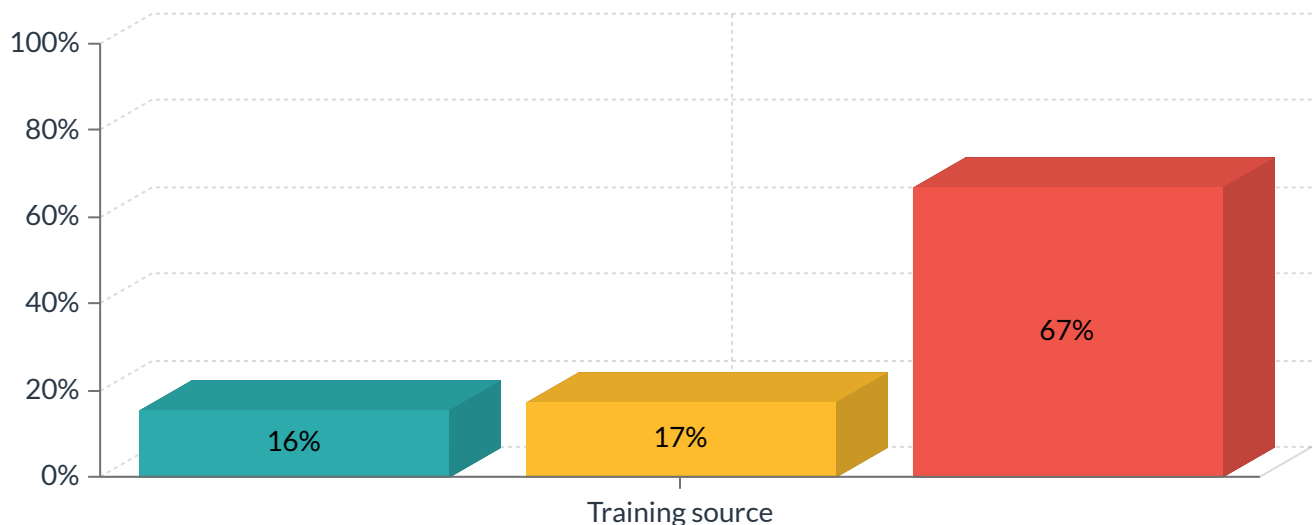


Sources of training

Nearly two-thirds of the respondents use both internal and external sources for their training programmes. This is a significant proportion especially when compared to the much smaller number of employers who use exclusively internal sources (15.6%) or exclusively external providers (17.4%) for training. Amongst the external sources of training, independent/private training providers were highly favoured, with 81.1% using them. Further education colleges and universities were less preferred sources of external training with 20% and 17.8% of respondents preferring to use them. Suppliers of equipment and new technology tend to offer adoption training, and this was utilised by 41.1% of the respondents. Government agencies like NHS and ACAS were used by a fifth of the respondents. Lastly, 13.33% utilised other sources for training, which included unions, chambers of commerce and bootcamp providers.

There is a degree of overlap between the options chosen by employers. For example, many bootcamps providers are private training companies. Nonetheless, the results show that many employers recognise the importance of using specialist training agencies who possess the expertise to provide quality assurance and ensure that the training content is both up-to-date, and in line with industry standards.

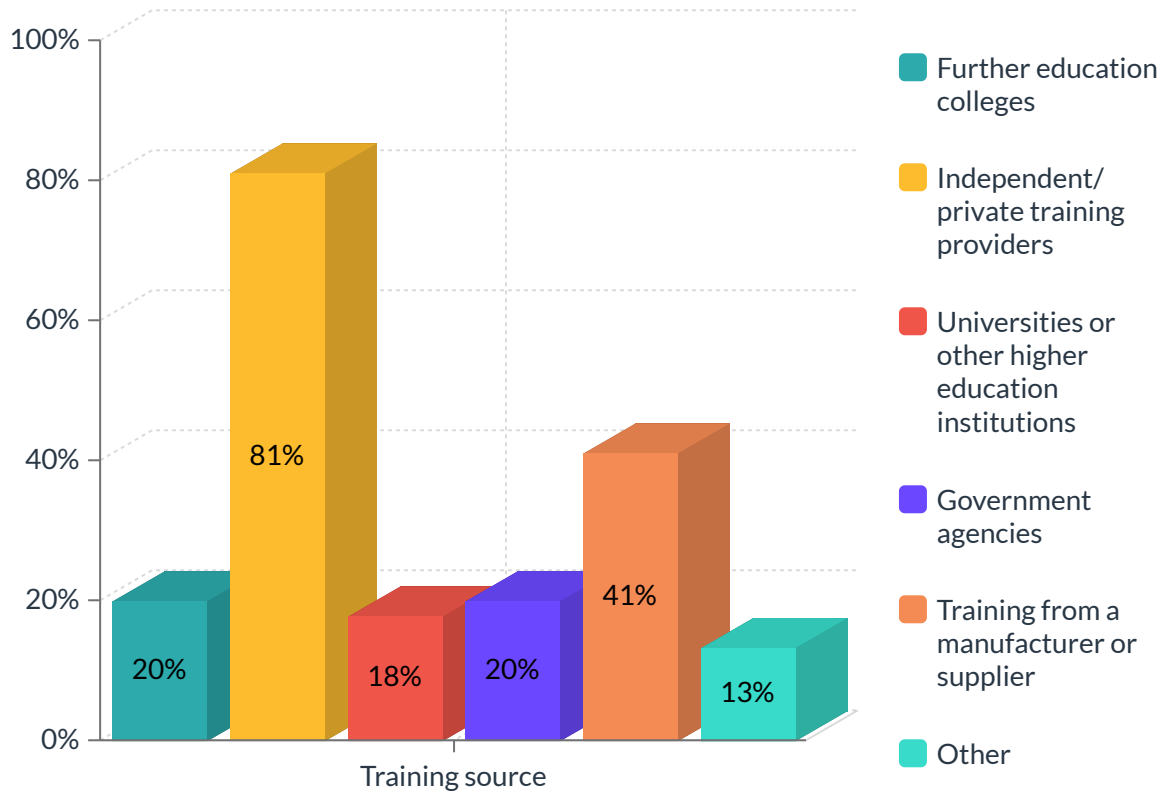
Sources of training used by businesses over the last three months



- Internal sources with own staff delivering the training
- External sources, with external trainers delivering the training either at the business' facilities or at the training provider's facilities
- Both internal and external sources

Sources of training

External sources of training used over the last three months



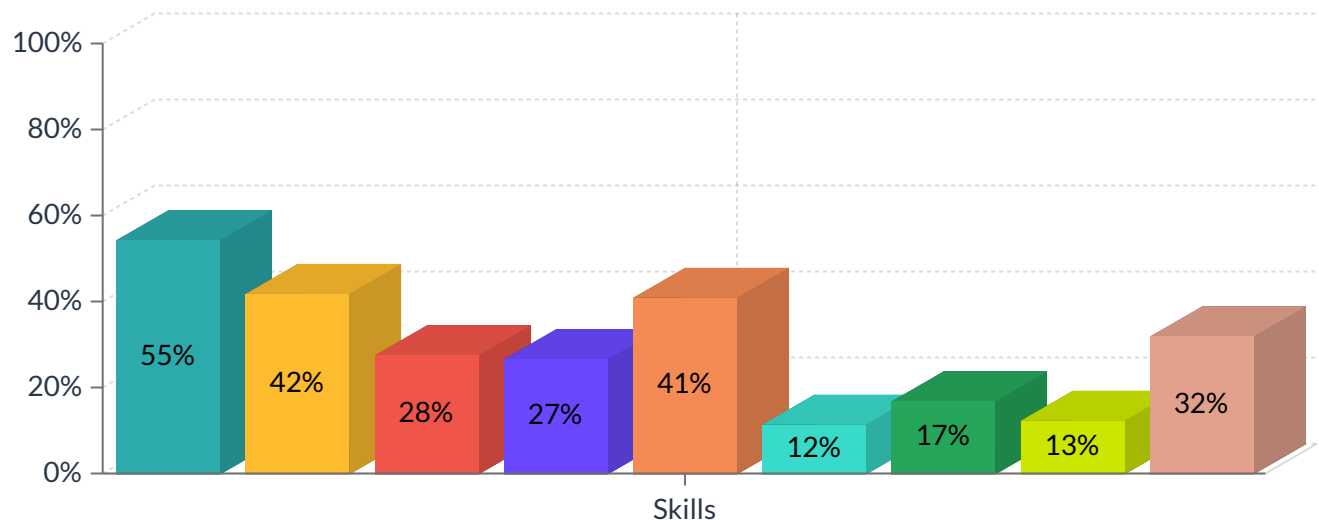
The training programmes required by employers cover a range of skills, with business leadership and management being the most common focus, addressed by 54.5%. Soft skills, such as time management and team-working, were demanded by 42%. The need for essential numerical skills and its application via tools such as Microsoft Excel came out in the survey with over a quarter of employers (27.7%) requiring training in this area. Alongside numeracy, work-related literacy was also a training priority for employers: reading skills were mentioned by 11.6% and writing skills by 17%. Employers also require IT and digital skills. While 26.8% of employers said that training in basic IT skills would benefit their business, a much higher proportion (41.1%) cited the need for training in advanced IT skills. Nearly a third of the respondents cited other skills areas ranging from social media marketing and electronic assembly to welding.

Training needs can vary significantly depending on which sector the employer operated in. It is encouraging that all of the above training needs expressed by employers match the GM LSIP priorities. The GM LSIP identified the need for developing leadership and management and soft skills amongst businesses in all sectors while there were sector specific training requirements for other skills areas.

Training requirements

Areas of training that would most benefit businesses

- Business leadership and management
- Soft skills e.g., time management, team-working and problem solving
- Numerical skills e.g., using formulas in Excel and understanding data trends
- Basic IT skills e.g., using word processing/presentation applications like Word and Powerpoint and video conferencing applications like Zoom and Teams
- Advanced IT skills e.g., advanced Excel courses and training in computer programming
- Reading skills e.g., understanding instructions, guidelines, manuals or reports
- Writing skills e.g., drafting instructions, guidelines, manuals or reports
- Administrative and clerical skills e.g., organising records and filing paperwork
- Other



The results offer evidence for further increasing the uptake of job-specific and productivity enhancing training. While induction and health and safety training are essential for onboarding and ensuring a safe work environment, skills-enhancing training is critical for continuous improvement and long-term success. The results also show the need for structured assessment of skills and training needs, which can provide a structured approach to workforce development and preparing employees for future challenges.



Interviews

The interview programme with businesses continued throughout stage two of the LSIP project. Participants were asked about their skills and labour market issues, how they managed skills gaps, and what their training preferences are. Below is a summary of the information gathered, segmented by sector.

Digital and technology

- There is a high demand for programmers and developers, particularly in UX design, cybersecurity and business intelligence, but the local talent pool is limited.
- Employers value demonstrable skills more than academic qualifications and look for people who can solve IT-related problems and apply knowledge in different contexts.
- Candidates' salary expectations are often too high and do not match their experience, making recruitment difficult and costly.
- Soft skills, such as problem solving, critical thinking, creativity, teamwork and sales, are becoming more important as technology advances and many coding and programming tasks are automated.
- AI will have a significant impact on the sector, but the skills needed to manage it are still unclear and poorly understood.

Finance, business & professional services

- Employers in the finance, business and professional services sector identified skills gaps in accounting, insurance, procurement, report writing, research and numeracy.
- The most important soft skill in the sector was building client relationships, followed by professionalism in the workplace.
- The main cause of recruitment difficulties was the mismatch between salary expectations and offers, especially for small firms.
- The future skills that will be in demand are critical thinking and the ability to interpret results from AI tools.

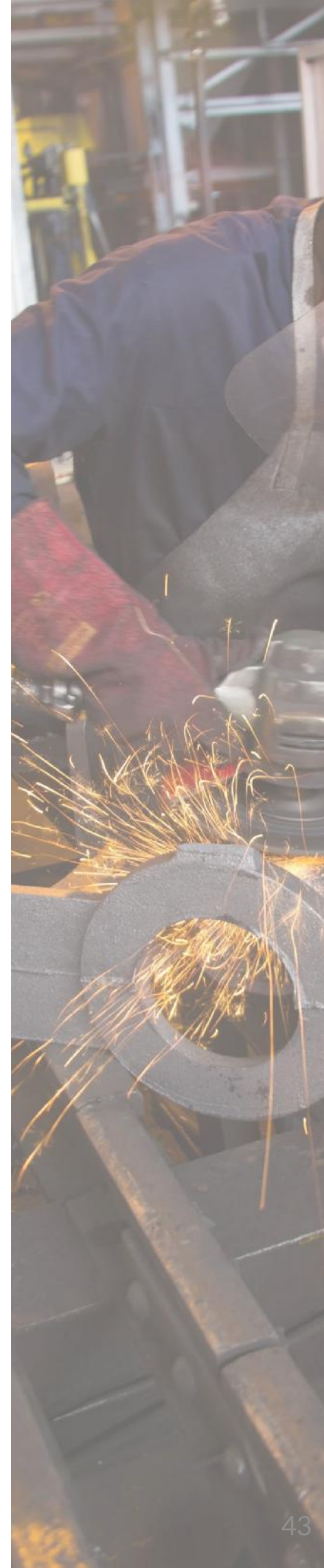
Interviews

Manufacturing and engineering

- The sector faces a general shortage of engineers, especially in manufacturing, process engineering and chemical engineering.
- Skilled technicians such as fitters, electrotechnical technicians, machinists and welders are also in short supply.
- Other roles that are hard to recruit are data scientists and project managers.
- Recruitment difficulties are due to a lack of applicants, a lack of experienced candidates, and a low attractiveness of the sector.
- Technical skills gaps include CAD skills and electrical/mechanical engineering skills for high voltage systems.
- Non-engineering skills gaps include project management, communication, and social interaction.
- Skills related to sustainability, such as carbon accounting and hydrogen processing, are also scarce.
- Most employers expect the skills needs and gaps to remain similar or worsen in the next five years.
- Some employers anticipate a growing demand for automation and robotics engineers.

Creative and cultural

- The media and entertainment industry faces a shortage of technicians, managers, and digital marketers, especially in SEO, PPC, social media marketing and digital storytelling.
- The industry also needs more workers who are skilled in VR and AR, as it shifts from physical to virtual sets.



Interviews

Education

- There is a shortage of construction and engineering tutors for colleges and training providers.
- Tutors can earn more money working in the industry than teaching, which makes teaching less attractive.
- Small providers struggle more to pay competitive salaries to tutors.
- It is hard to find candidates with both teaching/assessment qualifications and trade or subject qualifications, which training providers said are the ideal skills for tutors.

Wholesale and retail

- Employers in the sector reported that managerial roles in front of house positions are hard to fill due to low supply and high mobility.
- Commercial finance, supply chain and marketing roles in back-office management are difficult to fill.
- Business sales roles in wholesale require soft skills, which are lacking in candidates.
- Digital skills gaps are impacting the sector.
- Employers also report that job seekers often lack the soft skills to manage customers and solve problems.

Next steps

Work on stage two of the GM Local Skills Improvement Plan continues. The Chamber team will continue to further embed the LSIP into the local skills system, working with GM Colleges, providers, GMCA and a range of other stakeholders, monitoring progress and results along the way.

We will continue to collect and collate evidence and data as we resume our research, survey and interview programmes to monitor existing priorities and assess whether there are new skills and labour market needs emerging from Greater Manchester's Local Authority areas and sectors.

Ahead of our next official Progress Report for the Department for Education, the Chamber's LSIP team aims to publish another update report and also a number of stand-alone reports taking a 'deeper dive' into areas such as green skills, business training and apprenticeships.

The active participation of businesses in our data collection activities is invaluable and we would like to thank all those who have contributed so far. For those who have not yet taken part in our surveys or interviews, please look out for ways to have your say through our communications channels, or you can contact the team via gmlsip@gmchamber.co.uk to contribute, enquire about any aspects of the LSIP and our research, or to share your views.



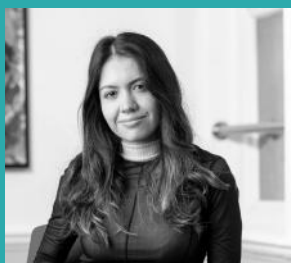
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If you'd like to contact the Chamber's Local Skills Improvement Plan team to provide feedback or get involved in the next stage of our research, email gmlsip@gmchamber.co.uk.