



Greater Manchester **LOCAL SKILLS IMPROVEMENT PLAN *UPDATE***



A SKILLS PLAN FOR EVERYBODY



Funded by
UK Government



Greater Manchester
Chamber of Commerce

TABLE OF CONTENTS

3

Executive
Summary

5

Introduction

6

Sector
Summaries

10

Sector Update:
Health and Social
Care

14

Sector Update:
Manufacturing and
Engineering

17

Sector Update:
Construction

20

Sector Update:
Digital

24

Implementation

29

Productivity and
Skills

31

Skills for Growth

36

Local Area Vacancy
Update

47

Apprenticeships
Analysis

52

Business
Interviews

58

Business Training
and
Survey Results

63

Solutions

65

Stakeholders

68

Meet the Team

Executive Summary

Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce was designated as the Employer Representative Body tasked with developing the Local Skills Improvement Plan for Greater Manchester (GM LSIP). The Department for Education, which commissioned the development of the GM LSIP, wanted a coherent and representative view of the skills needed by employers in Greater Manchester.

This was done using an intensive research phase involving surveys, employer interviews, analysis of open data from the UK's Office for National Statistics and labour market intelligence sourced from Adzuna. The findings from the research were used to set out actionable priorities and recommendations. Since approval of the GM LSIP in summer 2023, GMCC has been working on the GM LSIP's second phase, the implementation phase, with the aim of embedding the GM LSIP within the local skills system.

This report includes updates on some of the research activities we have undertaken since the approval of the first phase report of the GM LSIP. The report does not propose new priorities. Nor does it recommend a new set of actions for implementation. Instead, it highlights challenges and barriers that need to be overcome to achieve the primary objectives of the GM LSIP. Although research undertaken in the last few months has covered all sectors, we present findings relating to four sectors in which we identified a range of ongoing skills needs. The sectors chosen are also important because of their contribution to the GM economy or because they are 'priority sectors' in all boroughs of GM. Those sectors are health and social care, construction, manufacturing and engineering, and digital. Future reports will cover other sectors.

Data from the 2021 census show that in many boroughs in GM, the number of people aged 65 and over has been steadily growing. This demographic shift has implications for various sectors, but it impacts health and social care more than others. An ageing population often leads to increased demand for healthcare services and providing good quality social care for the elderly (and others who require it), requires more people to join the sector and receive continued training and development. This report shows that there continues to be strong demand for labour in this sector. In addition to our own research findings, the report presents key information from the 2023 Skills for Care report.

All boroughs in GM have a healthy pipeline of construction projects. Across numerous residential developments, new commercial, industrial and warehousing developments, and infrastructure projects, there are many employment opportunities in all construction sub-sectors. The number of vacancies in the sector has been steadily increasing and new skillsets will be required as the sector innovates by adopting new construction techniques, materials, and sustainable practices. The report presents a brief analysis of occupations which are showing the most demand.

Executive Summary

Another sector this update report covers is manufacturing and engineering. The manufacturing and engineering sector is one of the priority sectors in the GM Local Industrial Strategy. In addition to being the home of graphene and other advanced materials, GM has several specialist manufacturers ranging from food and drink to chemicals. The sector offers opportunities at various skills levels but, at the same time, reported the highest number of hard-to-fill vacancies and faces challenges due to an ageing workforce. Technology adoption in the sector is also creating demand for a new set of occupations. To ensure that the sector remains competitive, it must attract more people. Employers in the sector must also address new training needs.

The digital sector is the fourth sector on which this report presents an updated labour needs analysis. Although the digital sector is sometimes treated as a standalone sector, there are digital occupations in every sector. Requirements vary from foundational training for building proficiency in using computers and software applications, to specialist skills in areas such as cyber security and programming. Creating and expanding training provision for occupations in this sector also fuels digitisation and innovation in other sectors.

Employers' skills needs can and do change. As their businesses evolve, or when new projects are taken or new technology adopted, the skills needed to enable the changes to take place do change. Furthermore, new investment and new businesses getting established in a locality could alter the labour and skills needs in that locality. In developing and implementing the GM LSIP, our focus has been clear: the recommendations of the GM LSIP should be reflective of local needs and when local needs change, we should capture those changes. To enable this to happen, we have continued our research via surveys, interviews, and other analyses and this report has a section on skills gaps we have identified via interviews with employers.

Embedding the LSIP requires a collaborative approach to translate the recommendations into initiatives and influence the skills system in Greater Manchester (GM) to deliver the priorities identified by the GM LSIP. In some cases, this could be about creating new training courses. In other cases, it is about raising awareness amongst employers of the training that is already available in GM, and making it easier for them to work with what they perceive as a complicated and fragmented system with a plethora of providers, qualification types, courses and funding streams. It is also about encouraging employers to take up training because upskilling and reskilling the existing workforce is vital to addressing local skills needs. On all of these aspects, progress has been made in GM. The LSIP influenced the Local Skills Improvement Fund (LSIF) bid made by colleges in Greater Manchester. This bid was successful, and colleges are creating new training provision in many of the priorities identified by the LSIP. We worked closely with the GM Institute of Technology on the refresh of their strategic plan, and we continue our communications and engagement functions to widen our outreach to employers and other stakeholders. Close collaboration with stakeholders such as Greater Manchester Combined Authority is even more important as GM continues its efforts to build an Integrated Technical Education System for the city region, which gives equal importance to academic and vocational education. And that Integrated Technical Education System ambition will certainly have the GM LSIP at its heart.

Introduction

It is now just over 12 months since we started work on the Greater Manchester Local Skills Improvement Plan – a plan that would, in the directive from the Department for Education, set out the key priorities and changes needed in a local area to make post-16 technical education or training more responsive and closely aligned to local labour market needs.

In May 2023, we submitted the GM LSIP, that represented the views of over 3,000 businesses in Greater Manchester, gathered via a survey and over 120 employers that we interviewed, all highlighting key skills they needed in their business, but which they were struggling to find. In addition, we worked closely with providers throughout GM, including the FE and Sixth Form Colleges, independent training providers and a range of other organisations, to ensure we got a fully accurate picture of what the local skills landscape looked like.

We identified five strategic priorities - those issues that came up time and time again - as well as geographic priorities for each of the 10 local boroughs in Greater Manchester. We also identified sector specific priorities reflecting current gaps, and looked ahead to where the future demands will come from, i.e. what the skill sets will be for future job roles as we face a number of challenges both economic, technological and ecological.

This report is definitely not GM LSIP v2, but offers an update on what we have been doing since we got approval from the Secretary of State in August 2023, what our plans are to make sure the LSIP is embedded in the local skills system, as well as expanding and exploring sectors in more detail to make sure what we said last May is still valid now. Plus, with a lot of work going on behind the scenes setting up a new skills system in Greater Manchester, reflecting the greater powers, decision making and funding from the new Devolution Deal agreed with government in Spring, we'll be exploring what this could mean for employers and providers as the landscape changes once again.

Finally, thank you if you've been involved with our work up to now. If you haven't, there are still lots of ways to get engaged with the LSIP - read on to find out how.



Chris Fletcher
Policy Director and LSIP
Contract Director, Greater
Manchester Chamber of
Commerce

Health and Social Care

The Health and Social Care sector in Greater Manchester plays a vital role in the local economy and the well-being of Greater Manchester and its residents. Despite a decline in its contribution to the economy from 2019 to 2021, the contribution of the sector remains substantial, accounting for 8.18% of Greater Manchester's GVA. In terms of employment, with 199,000 employee jobs in 2022, the sector is the second-largest employer, witnessing a notable 9.34% growth between 2019 and 2022. The surge in labour demand, marked by a 53% increase in advertised vacancies from 2019 to 2022, underscores the sector's pivotal role in GM.

General Nurses and Social Care Workers constitute over 68% of the roles in demand, alongside an increased need for Supervisors/Managers and Mental Health Nurses. The sector acknowledges the importance of both specialist technical skills and soft skills, as highlighted by the results of the LSIP survey and vacancy data.

The 2023 State of Care report points to national improvements in some of the sector's labour concerns following a steady decrease in staff vacancy rates for care homes, from 11% in January to March 2022 to 7% in April to June 2023. This decline is in line with the general decline in vacancies across most sectors in the UK. International recruitment which increased by 250% in the past year was credited for most of the improvement in staffing issues in the sector. Meanwhile, the story is different in Greater Manchester, with the Adult Social Care vacancy rate increasing slightly from 8.4% to 8.8% in the same period.

Anticipating an increased demand due to GM's ageing population, the sector faces significant challenges in recruitment and retention, exacerbated by issues like low pay and high levels of pressure on the workforce. While workforce projections suggest substantial growth, attracting new talent remains a concern, emphasising the need for collaborative efforts in skills improvement, labour supply, and retention strategies. The sector's pivotal role in addressing the healthcare needs of Greater Manchester underscores its integral position in the region's economy.



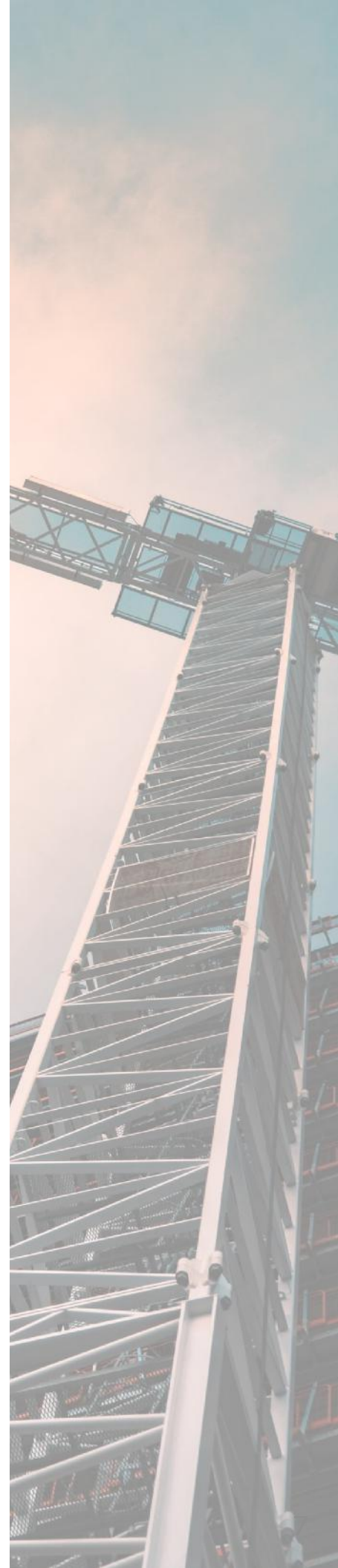
Sector Summaries

Construction

With a GVA of over £4 billion and employing nearly 5% of the workers in Greater Manchester, the construction sector is vital to the city region's economic prosperity.

The sector has grown significantly in the last 10 years with lots of new developments in different parts of GM. Construction, property management and real estate management together make up nearly a fifth of Greater Manchester's economy. With a significant house building pipeline, commercial development in city and town centres, along with infrastructure and industrial developments in boroughs like Bolton and Rochdale, the sector provides employment opportunities for a diverse range of occupations, including skilled trades, surveyors, architects and project managers. There is a plethora of courses and apprenticeships available in GM. And yet, the sector reports labour shortages across various skill levels.

Construction was a priority sector in the GM Local Skills Improvement Plan. The Construction Pipeline Analysis conducted as part of the development of the LSIP showed that there were shortages in trades such as structural trades and steel fixing. Analysis of vacancies information for the sector shows that the overall number of vacancies has increased since the GM LSIP was published in August 2023. Key areas of demand include: residential build, infrastructure development, retrofitting and green construction. These issues have received significance in the implementation of LSIP findings. For example, the number of retrofitting related vacancies increased by over 50% in the three months ending October 2023 relative to the same period in 2022, and indeed, retrofitting was one of the key priorities in the Local Skills Improvement Fund (LSIF) bid submitted by GM-based colleges. The LSIF bid envisages the use of virtual reality facilities for training, which can also address the digital transformation requirements in the sector.



Manufacturing and Engineering

The manufacturing sector accounts for over 10% of the city region's economy and has been a key contributor to local economic growth. The GM Local Industrial Strategy has identified advanced manufacturing as a priority for the city region. By investing in R&D and new product development, manufacturing businesses often lead in innovation, adoption of new technologies and are a catalyst for innovation and technology advancement. The sector also generates export revenue and creates employment opportunities in the supply chain.

The sector provides employment for engineers, technicians, production workers and for workers in other manufacturing trades. Businesses in the sector also reported experiencing labour shortages in a variety of occupations such as production workers and welders. In the last six months, the number of advertised vacancies has gone up. Another challenge in the sector is the increasing number of ageing workers and the lack of enough supply to meet 'replacement demand'. The sector also needs to adopt energy efficiency and lean manufacturing techniques for improving sustainability. Many of these issues are being picked up in the implementation phase of the GM LSIP. For example, the GM LSIP fed into the refresh of the strategic plan for the GM Institute of Technology, which is seeking to create new Higher Technical Qualifications in some of the priority areas.





Sector Summaries

Digital

Digital is another key sector for Greater Manchester. Not only is digital a priority sector in the GM Local Industrial Strategy, but it is also a sector in which multiple boroughs are trying to attract investment. The recent published GM Digital Blueprint estimates that the number of people in digital sector roles will increase to 95,000 in the next two years. For the development of the GM LSIP, we did not treat Digital as just one sector. Since digitalisation permeates all sectors, there will be digital roles in all of them. This also means that there is a requirement for sector-specific digital skills.

Analysis of vacancies data from Adzuna shows that the number of vacancies for digital roles has steadily gone up. Alongside that there has been an increase in the median salary for digital roles, especially those in software development. In the GM LSIP, software development, cybersecurity, etc., were identified as important priorities for GM. Skills bootcamps commissioned by GMCA also cover LSIP priorities such as cloud computing and data analysis.

Another area that employers emphasised was basic digital skills, which are so important in the modern workplace. GM Colleges' LSIF bid recognises these requirements and a lot more effort is required to ensure there is adequate training provision to both ensure that all workers possess minimum levels of IT literacy, and to also meet the need for higher level qualifications for specialist digital roles.

Sector Updates

A lot of the new Technical Skills System is based on the performance and growth expectations across a range of sectors. All the way through the LSIP work, we have been quite clear that in GM the way that we approach this work is by including all sectors - not just those that people perceive as high growth or those that offer ‘flashy’ jobs.

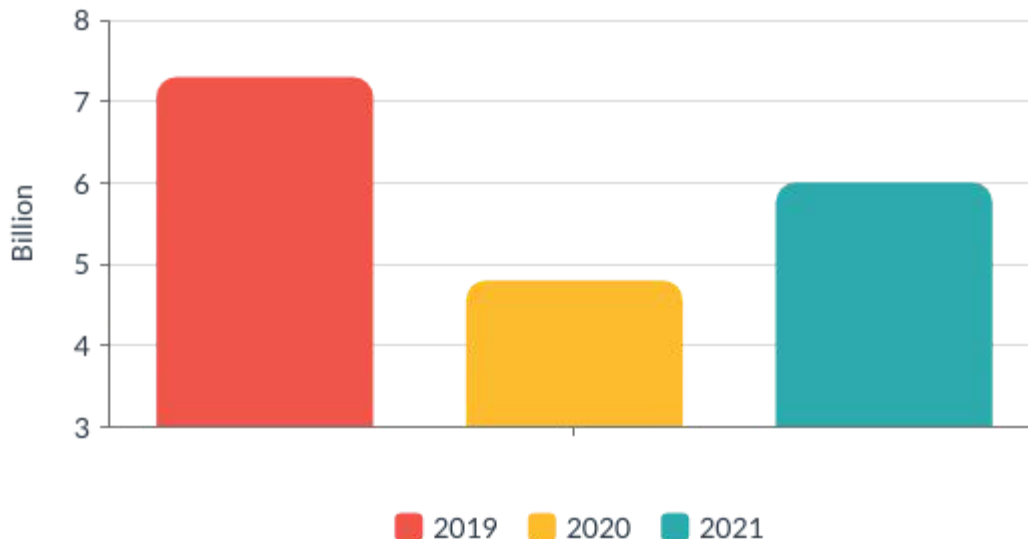
As important as digital, high tech and advanced manufacturing are (and they are) we also have stated that hugely important sectors such as Health and Social Care, Creative Industries and Hospitality and Retail are just as vital for the future growth of the GM economy and the health and wellbeing of its residents.

Whilst we took a holistic view for the LSIP approved in August, we have chosen a handful of sectors since then to examine in more detail, so that we are fully aware of the latest demands of employers and the provision of vital courses and skills in these sectors.

Health and Social Care

The Health and Social Care sector in Greater Manchester plays a pivotal role in the local economy and the region’s wellbeing. The GVA data for 2021 showed that with a real GVA of £6.07 billion, the Health and Social sector accounted for 8.18% of Greater Manchester’s economy. Although the sector’s contribution to the economy has declined over the years, moving from 9.7% in 2019 to 8.18% in 2021, it remained the fourth-highest contributor to GM’s economy in 2021 (ONS).

Health and Social Care GVA - Source: ONS

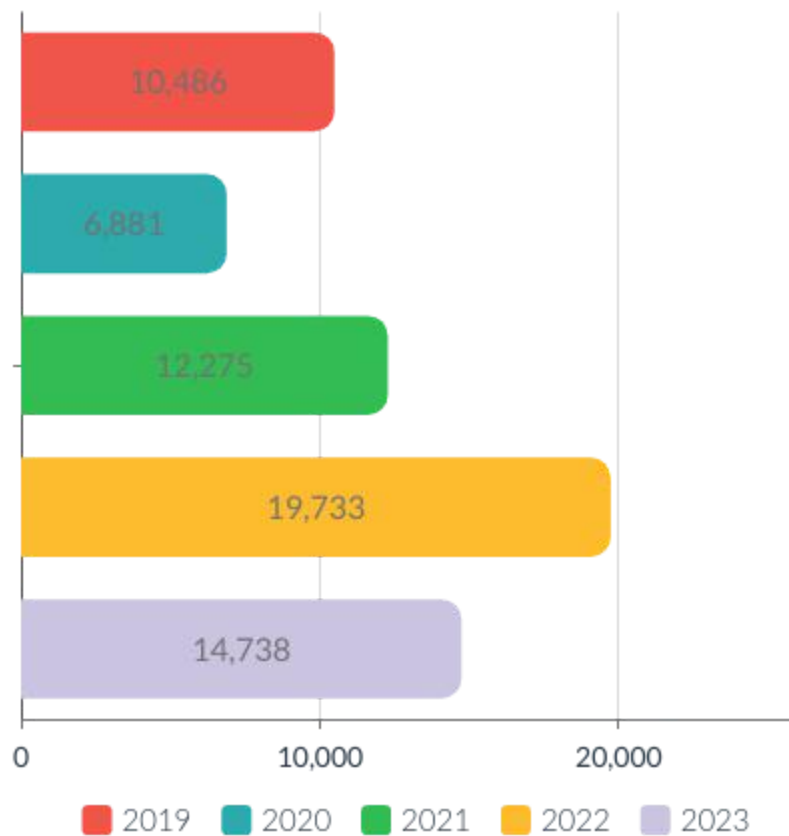


Health and Social Care

In terms of employment, the sector had 199,000 employee jobs in 2022 (ONS). This accounted for approximately 14% of the employee jobs in Greater Manchester, making it the second largest employer. The sector's role as a leading employer in the region has continued to grow over the years, with the number of jobs it accounted for growing by 9.34% between 2019 and 2022. Manchester is the area with the largest number of staff in this sector. However, as a share of the local labour market, the sector accounts for the largest proportions in Bury and Oldham - 18.8% of all employment in Oldham and 16.8% in Bury (GMCA, 2017).

Labour demand in the sector has also increased over the years with data on vacancies indicating an increase in the number of advertised vacancies by approximately 53% between 2019 and 2022. The high vacancies in this sector are backed by the results of the LSIP survey, where 65% of respondents in the sector indicated that they faced recruitment difficulties.

Health and Social Care Sector Labour Demand - Jan-Oct Vacancies



Source: Adzuna (Unique Job Postings)

Health and Social Care

Analysis of vacancies information from labour market intelligence platform, Adzuna, shows that vacancy numbers in 2023 declined compared to similar periods in 2022. This could be because of the unprecedented demand required to address post-COVID needs in 2022 and now that it has been addressed, demand has dropped. Yet, labour demand in the sector is still significantly higher than 2019 levels. Since the publication of the LSIP in August 2023, the sector's vacancy level has maintained an upward trend, growing by an average of 8.8% month on month between August and October 2023.

General Nurses and Social Care Workers are the roles most in demand in the sector, with these two roles accounting for over 67% of the vacancies in the sector in 2023. These roles were also amongst the top roles most in demand in the sector between 2019 and 2022. Alongside these roles, the sector has witnessed an increased demand for Supervisors/ Managers and Mental Health Nurses. The demand for managerial roles is in line with the LSIP survey results that showed that professional/leadership roles ranked equally as hard to fill as skilled roles in the sector.

The LSIP survey results emphasised the importance of specialist skills and knowledge in the sector as this was the most difficult to obtain. This is backed by data reflecting rising demand for specialist nursing skills in general and mental health nursing. Similarly, there is a growing demand for soft skills in the sector with the demand for wellbeing skills ranked the highest in-demand skill in the sector in the past year. This is in line with the survey results where a significant number of respondents recognised skills such as the ability to manage one's feelings and the feelings of others, time management, and customer handling skills, among others, as difficult to obtain among current candidates. About a quarter of respondents from the survey representing the sector agreed that they need training in soft skills.

It is expected that there will be increased demand for the services of the health and social care sector given the ageing population of Greater Manchester. Reports from the NHS also indicate that GM's population experiences poor health outcomes, lower life expectancy, and high levels of unemployment and deprivation compared to other parts of the country. The workforce in this sector is key to addressing these issues, making skills improvement and increased labour supply within the sector imperative.





Health and Social Care

Workforce projections indicate that the sector would account for over 200,000 jobs in GM by 2035. These forecasts suggest that the sector needs about 17,000 people a year largely driven by the replacement of staff rather than the expansion of the sector. The 2022/2023 Skills for Care report suggests that an additional 13,500 roles would be needed in the Adult Social Care sector in Greater Manchester by 2035. However, not enough people are willing to work in the health and care sector to meet demand both now and in the future. Evidence suggests that most recruitment is being filled from within the sector rather than through attracting new people.

Aside from recruitment challenges, retention is a major challenge in the sector, particularly within adult social care. The 2023 Skills for Care report stated that nationally, 390,000 individuals departed from their positions between April 2022 to March 2023, with nearly one-third of them choosing to leave the sector permanently. Surveyed employers cited low pay, high pressure, and staff burnout as key reasons for care workers leaving the sector for jobs in other sectors, which may be better paid and have less pressure. However, national reports reveal some improvement in workforce capacity in the sector. National vacancy and turnover rates declined slightly for NHS services and Adult Social Care. They recognised that these improvements are largely driven by heightened international recruitment efforts, leading to increased job placements, reduced vacancy rates, and diminished turnover within adult social care nationally. According to the report, there were an estimated 70,000 people recruited into direct care roles in 2022/2023, representing a 250% increase compared to the previous period.

Addressing current challenges and preparing for future demand requires a strategic approach to skills improvement, labour supply, and retention strategies. Collaborative efforts from stakeholders across education, government, and the industry are essential to ensure the sector meets the evolving needs of the region.

Manufacturing and Engineering

Historically, the manufacturing and engineering sector has played a significant role in the economy of Greater Manchester and retains this pivotal role in today's economy. With a real GVA of £8.2 billion, the sector accounted for 11% of Greater Manchester's economy in 2021. The sector's GVA and economic contribution have maintained an upward trend since a slight decline that occurred in 2019. In terms of employment, with a total of 99,000 employee jobs in 2022, the sector accounted for 7% of all employee jobs. The number and proportion of jobs it accounts for has declined over the years, largely due to increased automation in the sector. Bolton and Wigan are the areas with the most jobs in this sector in Greater Manchester.

Manufacturing and Engineering sector employee jobs in Greater Manchester

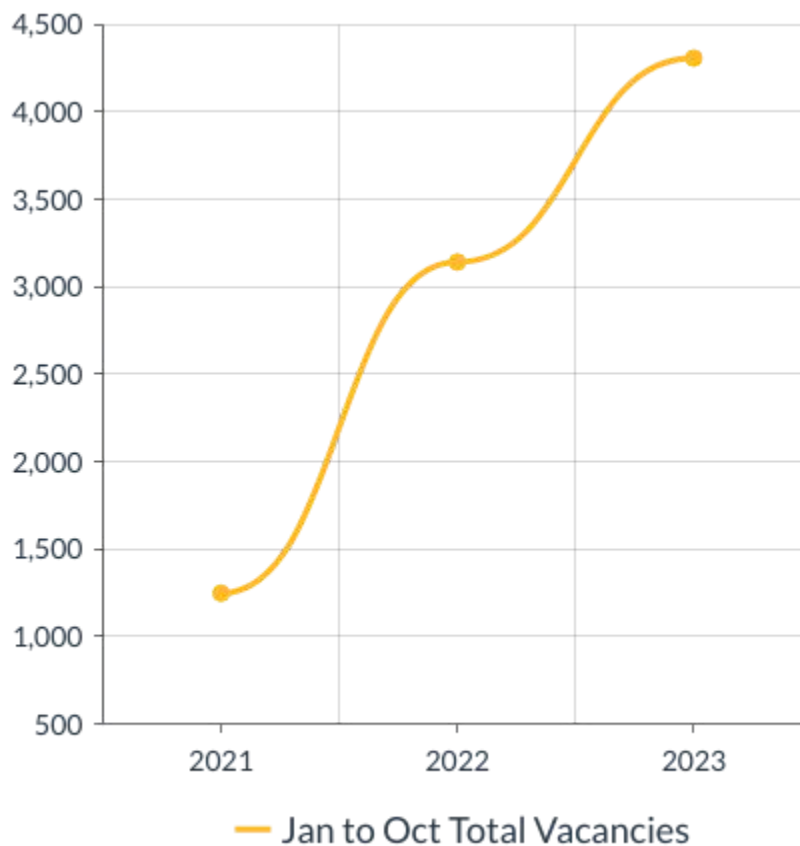


Source: NOMIS

Manufacturing and Engineering

Meanwhile, labour demand within the sector has been on the rise with vacancy data showing a rapid increase in the number of advertised vacancies in the sector in 2022 and 2023 (Adzuna). The LSIP survey results showed that the sector had the highest proportion of respondents who indicated that they experienced recruitment difficulties. Reports suggest that this shortage is not specific to GM, but the sector is facing a nationwide labour shortage and the largest shortage of skilled workers in 30 years. This is also evidenced in the LSIP survey findings for GM, where compared to all other sectors, the manufacturing sector had the highest proportion of respondents who had experienced recruitment difficulties (78.6%). This skills shortage has been attributed to the rapidly changing skills requirements in the sector, exacerbated by industrial digitalisation and rapid technological change in the sector. These changes are driving demand for new skills, as well as the need for higher-level technical skills to harness more complex and changing technologies.

Manufacturing and Engineering Sector Labour Demand



Source: Adzuna (Unique Job Postings)

Manufacturing and Engineering

The roles that are in high demand in this sector within Greater Manchester reflect this shift in the type of roles in demand across the country. Software Developer, which is not a traditional manufacturing role, was the most sought-after role in the sector in 2021 and 2022. The sector also has a high demand for Managers, Engineers, Project Managers and Technician/ Operators. Interviewees in the sector also indicated that there was difficulty in recruiting electricians with the right set of skills and experience working in the Manufacturing sector.

Getting people with the right set of skills appears to be a bottleneck in the sector. Aside from having the highest proportion of respondents with hard-to-fill roles, the sector also had the highest proportion of respondents who recognised the lack of candidates with the right set of skills as the reason for hard-to-fill vacancies. A recent national survey conducted by Make UK revealed a significant shift in the manufacturing landscape, with nearly half (45%) of businesses incorporating new digital tools and manufacturing infrastructure. This transformation is generating a heightened demand for advanced skills, as evidenced by 49% of employers expressing the need for a more highly skilled workforce and 40% indicating a requirement for increased mid-level skills. The survey also underscored the strategic emphasis on digital skills within the manufacturing sector. Specific areas identified include IT and software management, cyber security, and data analysis. Projections extending to 2030 indicate a surge in demand for skills in these areas. Within Greater Manchester, vacancy data also shows demand for management skills and soft skills such as communication skills in the sector.

The sector is also challenged by the fact that experienced workers are retiring faster than new workers are entering the industry. Manufacturing still appears to be low on the list of career options young people want to pursue. This is in part due to an outdated perception of the industry, which is often seen as old-fashioned, monotonous, and low-paid. Interviewees from the sector in Greater Manchester expressed concerns relating to this and how these skills can be replaced and new graduates trained with such a high exit rate. This problem makes it imperative that more young people are encouraged to pursue careers in the sector.

In conclusion, the rising demand for advanced skills, particularly in digital technologies, emphasises the need for continuous upskilling in the sector. The shift in demand towards roles like Software Developers underscores the industry's evolution. However, the sector grapples with the pressing need for candidates possessing the right set of skills, exacerbated by a retiring workforce and a lack of appeal to younger generations.



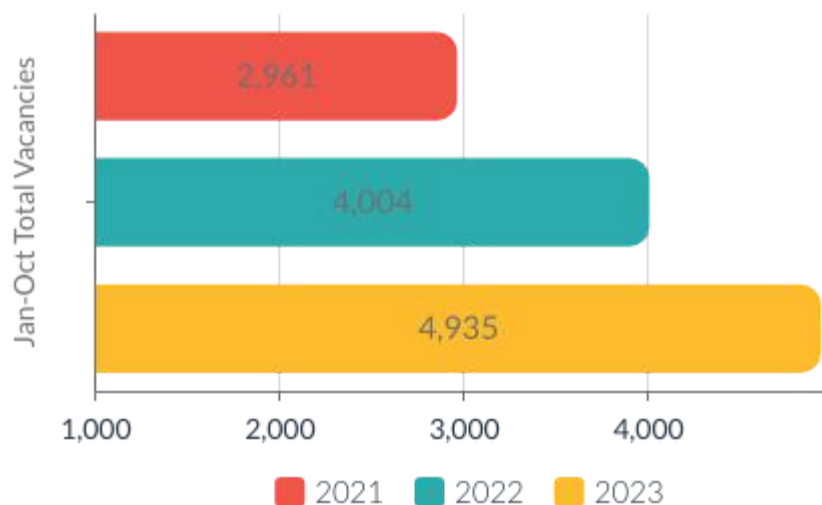
Construction

Greater Manchester stands as a pivotal nexus for the construction sector in the North West, attracting significant investments, particularly within its bustling city centre. Regionally, the North West claims the second-highest position in construction output nationwide, trailing only behind London and the South East. This underscores the importance of the construction sector for both the broader North West region and specifically Greater Manchester.

In 2021, the sector had recorded a real GVA of £4.45 billion, representing approximately 6% of the Greater Manchester economy. The sector plays a slightly more significant role in terms of employment, accounting for 4.8% of employee jobs in Greater Manchester in 2022 with a total of 69,000 jobs (ONS). However, these employee jobs exclude the self-employed, who are estimated to account for 35% of the construction sector workforce in Greater Manchester. Forecasts estimate that the sector had 102,700 people in total employment in 2022, accounting for 6.6 % of Greater Manchester's total employment. Most of these jobs were based in Manchester, Salford, Trafford and Wigan. It is projected that employment in the sector will grow by an average of 0.9% annually between 2022 and 2027, implying that the sector will need an additional 5,000 employees by 2027.

Labour demand data for GM reveals rising vacancy levels in the sector. Between 2021 and 2022, the number of advertised vacancies in the sector increased by 25.7%. Similarly, there has been a 28.5% increase in vacancies between August 2023, when the initial LSIP report was published, and October 2023. According to a recent report by the Construction Industry Training Board, private housing, infrastructure, and repair and maintenance were the areas of construction facing the most recruitment challenges in the UK. From the results of the GM LSIP survey, the sector had the second-highest proportion of respondents who had experienced recruitment difficulties and the roles that were most difficult to fill were professional and managerial roles. In the same vein, vacancy data reveals that managers, project managers, engineers, consultants and quantity surveyors were the top five most demanded occupations in the sector.

Construction Sector Labour Demand



Source: Adzuna (Unique Job Postings)

Construction



The construction sector is often cited as seeing the worst skills and labour gaps when compared with other industries. These gaps are often attributed to the nature and makeup of work in the sector that does not foster investment in skills development within the sector.

Even as the construction sector exhibits acute and immediate skills needs in several areas, it is undergoing several changes. Digital transformation across the sector has increased the demand for a wide range of digital skills like the use of Building Information Modelling and Geographical Information Systems. The shift of government and company priorities towards green ambitions is also introducing new considerations and skills requirements to many projects. This has increased “retrofit” skills needs – skills supporting the installation of systems like heat pumps, external wall insulation, and photovoltaic solar panels. More contentious than the shift to net zero is the increasing use of premanufactured materials through Modern Methods of Construction (MMC). Although the primary concern is that the widespread adoption of MMC would both reduce the number of jobs in the sector and change the area where the workforce is employed, it would come with an increase in manufacturing and engineering professionals to work in the off-site production facilities.

The GM Construction Pipeline analysis that fed into the research for the GM LSIP, offers further insight into the sector's labour requirements. The Mechanical & Electrical occupation was expected to have the highest proportional increase in demand in the assessed period. This supports the idea that increased electrification and changes to heating and air conditioning trades driven by low-carbon ambitions are creating further demand in the sector for these occupations. The huge pipeline of construction projects in GM explains why structural and building trades like steel fabrication skills were expected to be in high demand. There was also a significant increase in the professional occupational cluster – project management skills, process managers, architects, and surveyors. All of these skill areas were identified as areas of high priority in the GM LSIP, and more recent vacancy data reveals the continued demand for these skills in GM.

Construction

OCCUPATION CLUSTER	% CHANGE IN LABOUR FORCE 2017/2018 AND 2021/2022
Structural and Building Envelope Trades	13.1%
Interior Trades	12.7%
Exterior Trades	11.0%
Mechanical and Electrical	23.9%
Supervisors, Operatives and Labourers	7.9%
Professional (Ancillary Support)	18.2%

Source: Industry Labour Market and Skills Intelligence Report -
Construction and Infrastructure (2021)

SKILLS	2022-2023 YoY % DEMAND CHANGE (AUGUST TO OCTOBER)
Retrofitting	55.0%
Quantity Surveying	59.8%
Steel Fabrication/Welding	3.1%
Electrical Trades	7.7%
BIM/CAD/CAM	8.1%

Source: Adzuna

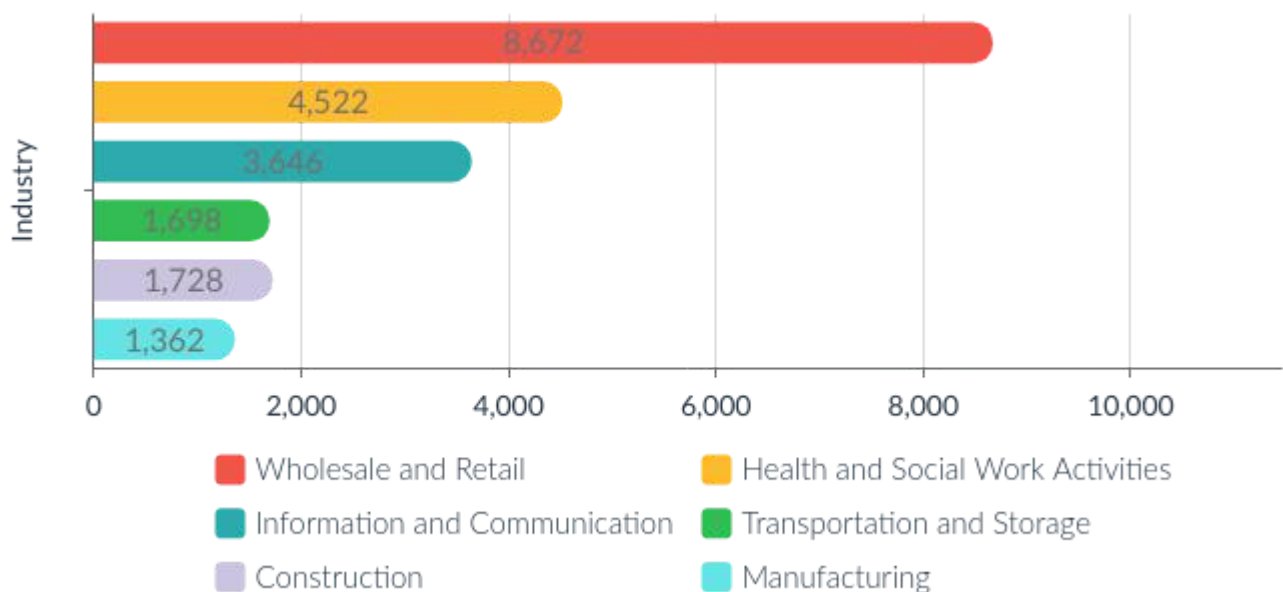
Digital

An analysis of the digital sector is not straightforward because it is often argued that there is no one digital (ICT) sector because “digital” is an integral part of all sectors. As such, mapping it into a particular industry may only provide a best-fit estimate. For this report, we have used the SIC2007 Information and Communication sector. This encompasses most of the organisations and occupations that would be considered “digital”, and such provides the best estimate.

The information and communication industry in Greater Manchester is estimated to have generated a real GVA of £4.5 billion in 2021, accounting for 5.74% of the economy. The industry’s GVA has grown consistently over the years with average growth of 6% between 2017 and 2021. A specific estimate of the digital and creative industries by Oxford Economics projected that the sector accounted for over 7% of GM’s GVA in 2022. In terms of employment, the information and communication industry accounted for 63,000 employee jobs in 2022 (ONS). This figure for total employment for the digital and creative industries is estimated to be 95,000 in the same period, accounting for approximately 6% of the jobs in Greater Manchester.

Labour demand in the sector remains high compared to key sectors like construction, manufacturing, or logistics. However, vacancy data reveals that the number of advertised vacancies has declined since 2022. Despite the projections that the sector GVA would grow by an average of 2.2% per year (between 2023 and 2030), it is projected that total employment in the sector would decline slightly by 0.07% annually in the same period (Oxford Economics).

Sector Labour Demand Comparison (August - October 2023)



Source: Adzuna

Digital

The top occupations in this sector, according to Adzuna, are presented in the table below. The sector has a high demand for high-skilled, high-paying occupations. These occupations in high demand can generally be grouped into occupations such as software developers and engineers, project managers and data engineers and scientists, which are still in line with the initial findings presented in the GM LSIP report.

OCCUPATION	MEDIAN SALARY	2022-2023 (UNIQUE POSTINGS)
Software Developer	£54,326	20,260
Project Manager	£50,008	12,394
Engineer	£41,670	10,884
Consultant	£45,949	9,736
Business Analyst	£44,467	4,673
NET Developer	£57,422	4,054
DevOps Engineer	£67,680	3,767
Java Developer	£62,785	3,763
Data Engineer	£59,842	3,590
Front End Developer	£53,132	3,279

Source: Adzuna (IT jobs)

These roles often require technical and highly specialised skills. An analysis of responses from employers in this sector in Greater Manchester showed that the skills contained in the table below were in high demand in GM. More recent labour demand data reinforces there is still demand for these skills in the sector. However, across roles, there has been a significant decline in demand compared to similar periods last year. Interestingly, this decline in the sector’s vacancies is not unique to GM alone, but the same applies to the entire country.

According to the ONS, the number of vacancies in this sector is falling at a faster rate than any other sector. Some reports suggest that the drop in the number of job postings is due to the slowdown of the effects of the pandemic. It could also be that supply has slowly caught up with the massive surge in demand for tech skills since the pandemic, or that employers are tightening their wallets when it comes to spending on recruitment.

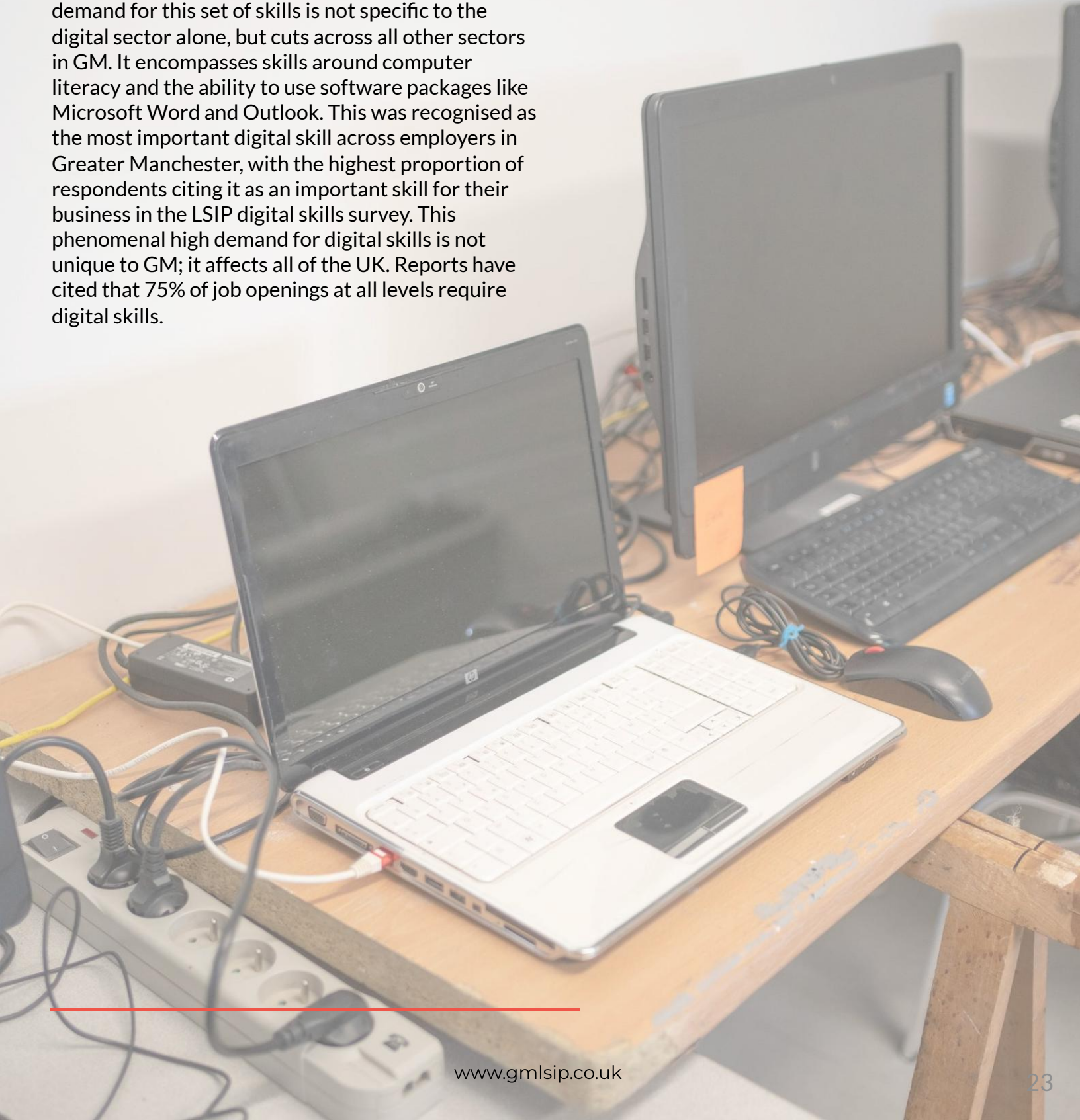
Despite this, vacancy levels in the sector are still significantly higher than pre-pandemic levels across the country. In the case of GM, vacancy levels are 40.5% higher than pre-pandemic levels in 2019. Also, the sector is still expanding with significant growth prospects for employment. Total employment is still projected to increase in the coming years due to the replacement of the existing workforce and sector expansion (State of the Tech Workforce UK, 2023).

SKILLS	DEMAND (AUGUST TIO OCTOBER 2023)	2022 – 2023 YoY % DEMAND CHANGE (AUGUST TO OCTOBER)
Software Development	3,174	31.3%
Data Analytics/ Science/Mining	290	14.2%
Cybersecurity	1,477	31.3%
Cloud Computing	3,500	53.7%
AI/ML/IOT	2,167	33.4%

Source: Adzuna

Digital

Aside from these highly technical areas, there is also a high demand for essential digital skills in GM. The demand for this set of skills is not specific to the digital sector alone, but cuts across all other sectors in GM. It encompasses skills around computer literacy and the ability to use software packages like Microsoft Word and Outlook. This was recognised as the most important digital skill across employers in Greater Manchester, with the highest proportion of respondents citing it as an important skill for their business in the LSIP digital skills survey. This phenomenal high demand for digital skills is not unique to GM; it affects all of the UK. Reports have cited that 75% of job openings at all levels require digital skills.





Implementation

On 11th August 2023, Gillian Keegan, the Education Secretary, approved the GM LSIP and also the plan for Stage 2 of the LSIP – looking at embedding the findings into the local skills system.

Prior to approval, the LSIP had already been used by local colleges to outline their priorities, plan their curriculum and form an essential part of their Accountability Agreements - a vital component for their funding from government.

Since then we have continued our work making sure that it accurately reflects the views of local employers and others around what training and courses are needed, to ensure that new entrants to the workforce have the required skills, and existing employees are skilled up so that they keep pace with new demands and changes.

In addition to keeping track of current workforce and labour market data, we have also been making sure that we have fed in the priorities identified in the LSIP where required.

One such piece of work was the Local Skills Improvement Fund (LSIF), a DfE-funded bid led by the Greater Manchester Colleges Group, focusing on the priorities identified in the LSIP. The projects proposed for inclusion in the LSIF, in response to the LSIP, focus on the construction, digital, health, manufacturing, and education sectors. A summary of the proposals is as follows:

Construction

- Development of a series of micro-courses on retrofitting and sustainability, and leadership and management in levels 4 and 5. This proposal is largely linked to the LSIP findings, which identified retrofitting and construction project management as urgent and high priority areas to create additional provision. Likewise, the LSIP recommended the creation of micro-courses in retrofitting to upskill tradespeople.



...we have continued our work making sure that it accurately reflects the views of local employers.



Implementation - LSIF

Digital

- Development of short courses on artificial intelligence, cybersecurity and virtual reality and new pathways to progress into higher technical qualifications in levels 4 and 5. This proposal reflects the findings of the LSIP, which identified artificial intelligence and cybersecurity as high priority areas to create additional provision.
- Alliance with CISCO Networking Academy, so that colleges could include CISCO courses in their qualifications.
- Work with Microsoft to update the curriculum of existing courses and create new provision in terms of basic digital skills. The LSIP identified essential digital skills as a key training area in GM.
- Commission Manchester Digital to provide a package of staff support

Health

- Development of an assessment tool to identify digital skills gaps and needs in the NHS. The findings will be used to develop short courses and to update the curriculum of current qualifications. The digitisation of hospitals is a current priority of the NHS.
- Investment in CAVE technology and Anatomage tables for the delivery of courses.

Engineering and Manufacturing

- Development of courses on lean manufacturing, electrical / hybrid vehicles and energy efficiency in levels 3, 4 and 5. This proposal responds to the LSIP findings, which identified lean manufacturing and sustainability a high priority area to create additional provision.
- Utilisation of CAVE technology for the delivery of courses.

Education

- Development of a skills hub for FE teachers and learners. This will have the support of the Supply Chain Sustainability School.
- Launch a programme alongside higher education institutions to hire PHD students as teachers to alleviate staff shortages.





The The LSIF goes a long way to addressing many of the sector priorities in the LSIP. However, within the timeframe of the fund and the mechanism used to allocate this, with the majority of funding used for capital purposes, there are other LSIP priorities that could be considered as the fund progresses if time and finances allow. They are:

Construction

There is a need to increase training provision in Building Information Modelling (BIM), both by creating short courses to upskill the digital skills of people already working in the industry, and by including BIM modules in current construction qualifications. It was also recommended that level 4 (or higher) provision in quantity surveying be increased.

Engineering and Manufacturing

The plan covers areas that have been identified as high to urgent priority areas within the LSIP. However, key high-priority areas, like the need for more training courses for industrial electricians and welders, have not been covered.

There is also a need for more modular courses in CAD and CAM software and CNC machining. It was also recommended that the plan addresses training gaps in robotics and automation, an emerging topic in this field.

Digital

While many LSIF components match the LSIP findings, it was recommended that new courses in areas such as cloud computing, data analysis and software development, which were identified as high priorities in the LSIP, are also considered.

When building cybersecurity and AI pathways too, it will be important to have modules that teach topics like programming languages and basics of cloud computing, as they are becoming increasingly relevant to this sector.

Health and Social Care

The plan for capital investments in technology would definitively improve the courses currently available, as well as future course provisions. However, the current gap in the provision of social care workers, nursing apprenticeships and nursing associate qualifications was not mentioned. This is an area of urgent priority, and such provisions offer a pathway into nursing careers.

Implementation

This fund will run concurrent with the LSIP to June 2025 to make sure that whatever skills needs are identified, there's a way to ensure that they can be met.

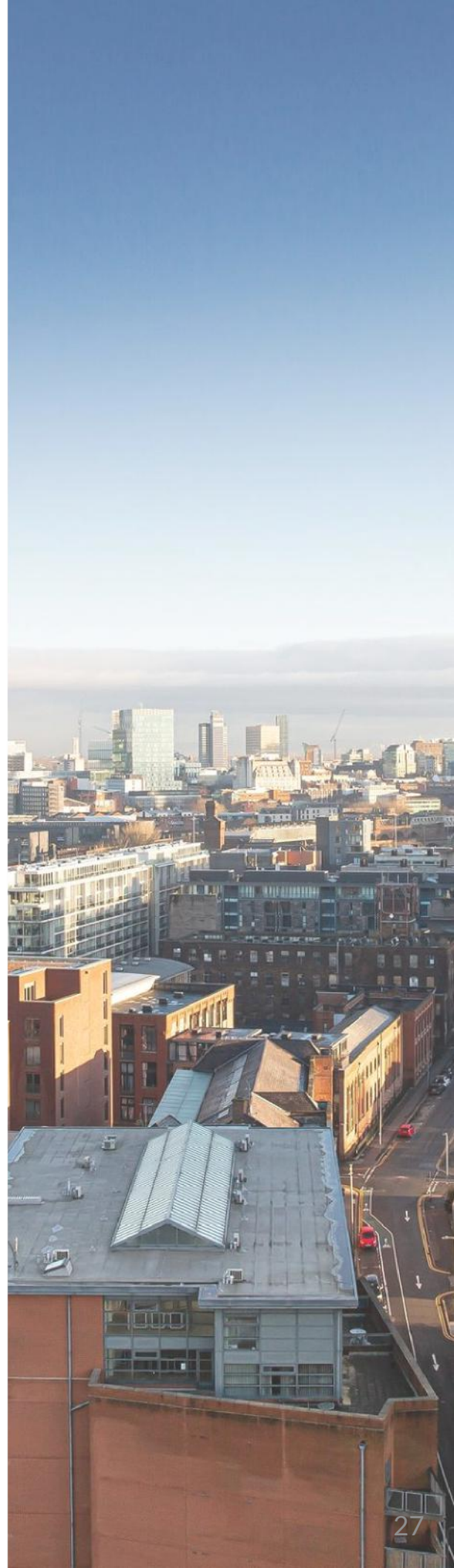
As well as the LSIF, we have been involved with a number of Local Authorities as they update and rewrite their local skills and employment plans with the LSIP at the heart of the data and research informing them. The LSIP has also been used with the GM Institute of Technology to make sure that the demands and needs of employers for higher technical qualifications beyond Level 2 and Level 3 are being picked up.

Most recently the LSIP has played a part in the Further Education Innovation Fund (FEIF) helping promote innovation in local colleges and delivering new methods, ideas and processes designed to get more businesses, especially SMEs, aware of what innovation can do for them and to help attract more young people into key growth sectors that will underpin the GM economy in years to come.

We have also been at the forefront of work exploring how the new Trailblazer Devolution Deal, signed with Government in Spring 2023, tackles skills in GM and what changes to the existing structures are needed to ensure that the greater local decision making powers and funding can be deployed successfully in the city region.

It's true that Mayor Andy Burnham's desire for a new M Bacc qualification that reflects a greater emphasis on technical qualifications for young people below the age of 16 has captured the headlines recently. Whilst this is an ambitious objective with plenty support, the immediate focus has to be on ensuring the existing skills system can better reflect and deliver on employers' needs.

Once we start to get this working effectively we can then look at getting the longer term ambitions in place. Far too often changes to the skills system have been short term, limited by governments' time in office and divorced from the real world. What is, potentially, on offer in GM is different, it's never been tried before and is the best chance yet for creating an effective solution to employers' skills needs.



Implementation

The LSIP is threaded throughout the Trailblazer Deeper Devolution Deal section on skills and is a critical and fundamental part of the new skills structure being set up in GM - known as the Integrated Technical Education System.

This new structure isn't just moving the furniture around, it is designed to put key parts of the GM skills system in direct contact with Government departments to show how local funds can best be used to tackle skills issues.

With evidence drawn from the LSIP and from a new Employer Board made up of representatives from several key sectors, the new system will have access to up to date data and evidence of what needs doing. It will have access to providers to quickly act on demand and will be constantly reviewed and updated.

This is a major task which has never been done before, but it can work if everyone plays their part - from employers taking part in evidence gathering, surveys and interviews, through to providers and others taking an active role in the whole system.

Something this complex doesn't happen overnight and whilst other LSIP areas have moved on with their work, in GM we are doing it differently. The end result will allow us to make more local decisions and tackle local issues in the best way possible; it may be taking a little longer but we believe this is time well spent.

In the meantime, our evidence, data gathering and analysis continues to ensure the information we share with colleagues across GM is correct and reflects current need, so we can make sure those issues that have been raised with us can start to be tackled.





Productivity and Skills

Labour productivity is seen as a contributor to [economic growth](#) and understanding its drivers has long been the focus of [empirical research](#).

[Coyle and Mei](#), for instance, explored the slowdown of labour productivity growth in the UK through sectoral decomposition. They found that manufacturing and ICT were the main sources of the within-industry slowdown.

In the UK, specifically, there has been an increased interest in exploring productivity from a skills perspective. The UK attributes one-fifth of its productivity gap to the relative deficiency in skills compared to its overseas counterparts, making it essential to understand the causal relationship between the two ([HM Treasury, 2021](#)).

[McCann](#) found that the UK, compared to other advanced economies, had “exceptionally large and persistent variations in productivity.”

Initiatives such as the Skills and Productivity Board, set up to deliver evidence-based insights on the contribution of skills to productivity, prioritised the issue of skills mismatches and saw how the skills system can promote productivity growth in the UK economy.

Research undertaken as part of the development of the GM LSIP shed light on the implications of job polarisation and automation on the demand for skills in various industries. It corroborated existing theories on job polarisation, which state that certain job roles are experiencing growth while others face declining prospects. For example, in the Financial, Business and Professional Services sector, the incidence of employers saying they faced recruitment difficulties in the roles of Managers and Administrators was higher than Clerical roles. Similarly, roles related to engineering were cited more often than roles relating to machine setters in the Manufacturing sector.



The UK attributes one-fifth of its productivity gap to the relative deficiency in skills compared to its overseas counterparts.



Productivity and Skills

Automation affects healthcare, construction, and logistics as well. An interviewee from a warehousing company confirmed this: *“There is an increase in mechanisation...particularly in warehouses, whereby there's an opportunity for first line responders in warehouses. For example, your conveyor belt engine's broken down. There's loads of mechanisation in there.”* They also suggest a need for essential engineering skills to repair and maintain machines, as repair work would still need human intervention. Using an example, they mention that *“if you want to repair something in the middle of the night, you need someone that can get on the line to a central control point somewhere and be talked through how to repair that particular piece of kit. So, there will increasingly be a need for low level engineers in similar highly mechanised centres.”*

Respondents to the LSIP survey perceived that recruitment problems were primarily linked to skills shortages within the labour market. The most cited reason for recruitment difficulties was “low number of applicants with the required skills”, with 47.6 % of the businesses saying they faced this issue. The lack of aptitude, proficiency, and qualifications, according to the respondents, also contributed to recruitment difficulties. Two in five of the respondents identified “low number of applicants with the required aptitude” (39.5%) and another 30% cited “low number of applicants with the required qualifications” as obstacles to recruitment. This shows that employers do not always recognise skills deficits amongst their existing workforce and are consequently less likely to provide job-specific training. At the same time, the adoption of technology and automation requires workers to be upskilled.

The above findings from the GM LSIP underscore the impact of automation on skills needs across various industries and highlight the importance of adopting a comprehensive and localised approach to address productivity challenges. The analysis revealed that there is a skills mismatch in GM i.e. a gap between what employers need now and in the future, and the skills the current workforce possesses. Therefore, attention must be paid to bridging the skills gap and promoting efficient reallocation of labour, both of which require targeted training programmes that consider transferability of skills as well as sector-specific needs. Training programmes that are tailored to individual organisational needs can be effective in overcoming the skills mismatch and promoting business efficiency and performance, ultimately leading to a more productive local economy.





Skills for Growth

Skills for Growth was a three-year programme aimed at delivering training courses and providing advice to Greater Manchester SMEs on training needs.

The Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) commissioned The Growth Company Business Growth Hub and Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce to deliver the Skills for Growth (SfG) programme, with funds from the European Social Fund.

The SfG programme provided SMEs with expert advice on training needs in order to enrol them in training courses. The courses offered through the SfG programme were mainly on sales, marketing, administrative support and leadership and management. The programme was launched in October 2020 and came to an end in September 2023. Approximately, 50 training providers and nearly 3,000 businesses participated in it. As part of the programme, data on GM businesses' skills needs and skills gaps was collected. Here we present the main findings of the SfG data analysis, making a comparison across sectors.

As part of their enrolment in the SfG programme, employers were asked to complete a survey about recruitment difficulties, skills gaps within their workforce and future skills needs. 2,865 employers across GM filled out the survey. 26.8% of the respondents were from Manchester, 11 % from Salford and 10.8% from Trafford. These three Local Authority areas accounted for 48.6% of the sample. The top three sectors with the most respondents were the Professional, Scientific and Technical sectors, Manufacturing, and Wholesale and Retail, constituting 17.5%, 14% and 13.2% of the sample, respectively. These sectors comprised 44.7% of the sample.

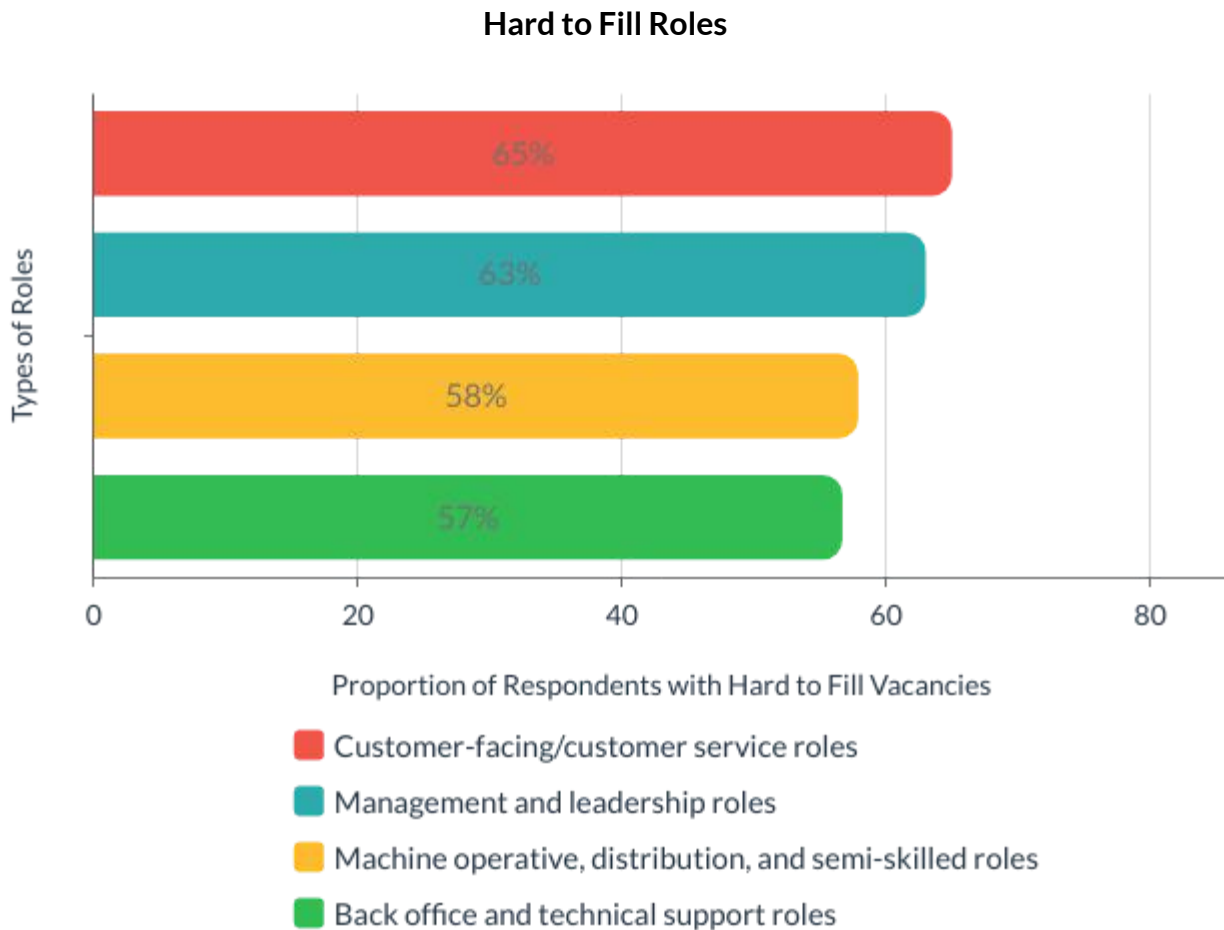


Amongst the possible causes of hard-to-fill vacancies, the lack of people with the required skills was the most cited cause amongst employers.



Skills for Growth

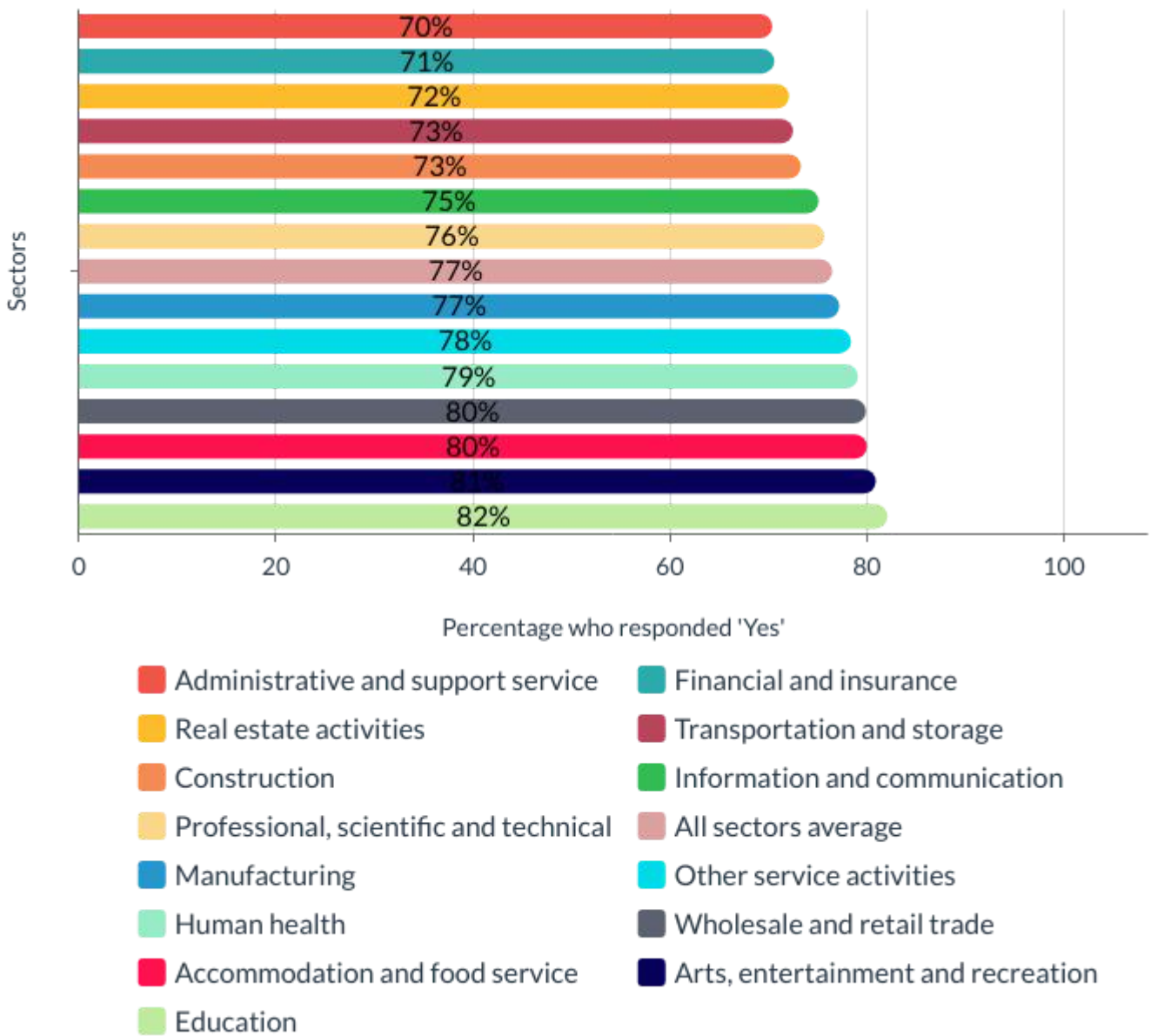
Results from the analysis revealed that a significant proportion of employers in GM had experienced recruitment difficulties. In particular, 33% of employers had vacancies that were classed as “Hard to fill”. Amongst the possible causes of these hard-to-fill vacancies, the lack of people with the required skills was the most cited cause amongst employers, reinforcing the existence of a skills gap in Greater Manchester’s workforce.



Skills for Growth

The majority of employers identified skills gaps in their workforce. Employers were asked, "Do any parts of your workforce not have the skills required to meet the objectives of your business?" 76.5% (2,169) of respondents replied that they experienced this. The proportion of employers who identified skills gaps in their workforce was the highest in the education (82.1%), arts, entertainment & recreation (80.9%) and accommodation and food services (80%) sectors.

Do any parts of your workforce not have the skills required to meet the objectives of your business?

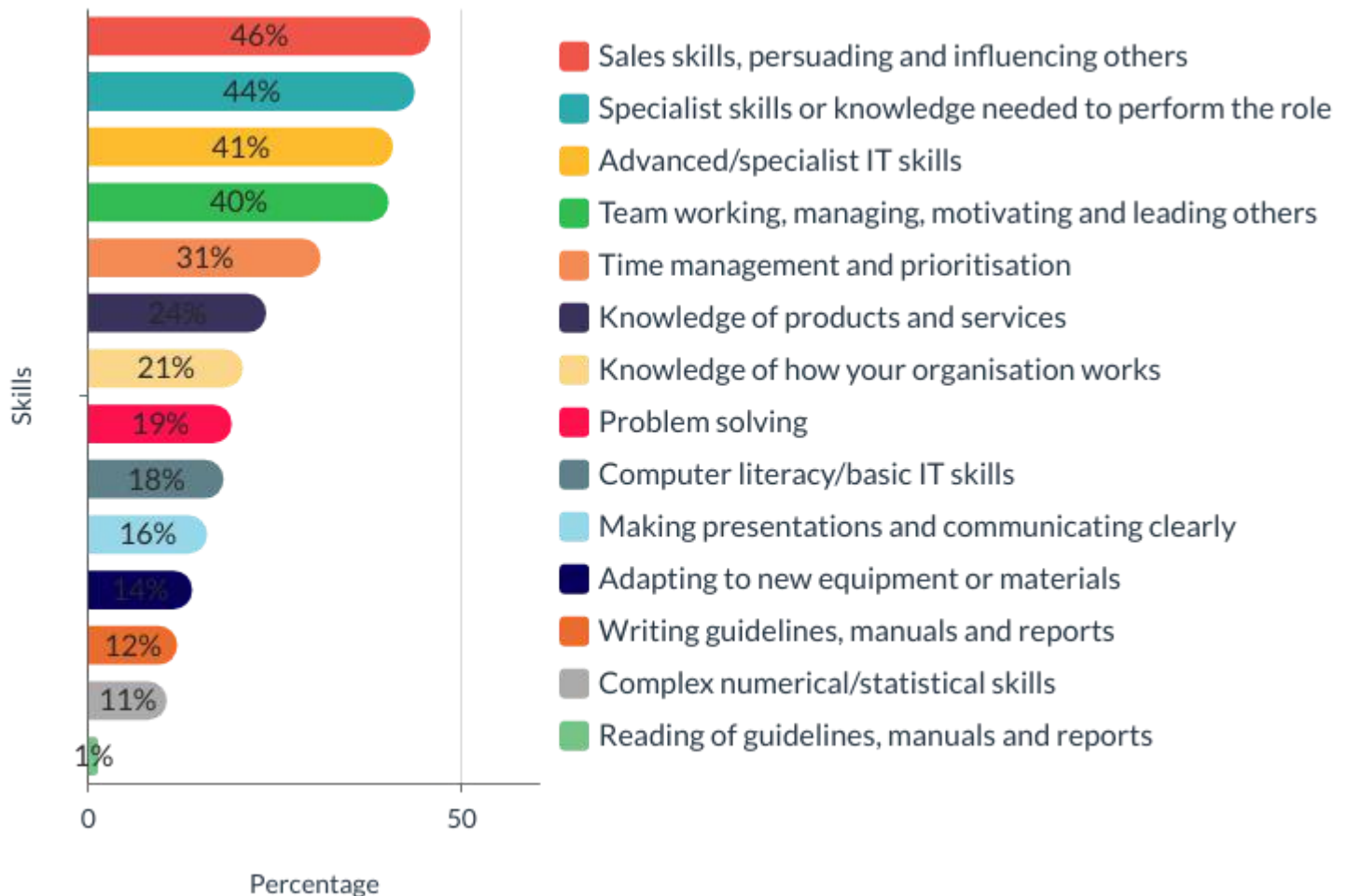


Skills for Growth

The largest skills gap was in management and leadership roles. Employers were asked if they had skills gaps in four types of roles. 55.1% of respondents (1,563) stated that they observed skills gaps in "leadership and management roles", 33.3% observed skills gaps in "back office and technical support roles", 31.8% in "customer service and skilled trade roles", and only 8.7% in "machine operative, distribution and semi-skilled roles". In these questions, the picture across sectors was very similar to that of Greater Manchester. In all sectors, the biggest gap was in leadership and management roles while the smallest gap was in machine operative, distribution and semi-skilled roles.

The top skills needed in the future would be sales, specialist skills and advanced IT skills. When respondents were asked, "What are the main areas of skills that your organisation will need in the future?", 45.8% said "sales skills", 43.7% said "specialist skills", 40.8% said "advanced IT skills", 40.2% said "team working, managing, motivating & leading others" and 31.1% said "time management and prioritisation". These were the top five skills that were most voted for out of 15. There were not considerable differences across sectors in this regard. In nearly all sectors, the most relevant skills for the future were the same as the ones mentioned above. The only exception was in the Transportation & Storage sector, where "problem solving" appeared to be important for respondents.

What are the main skills that your organisation will need in the future?



Skills for Growth

Several employers had plans to develop new products and services, as well as adopting new technologies and working practices, which would require employee upskilling. Respondents were asked, “Over the next 12 months do you expect that any of your employees will need to acquire new skills due to the following?”, and 24.8% stated “the development of new products and services”, 15.7% said “the introduction of new working practices”, and 14.4% said “the introduction of new technology”. By contrast, just a few employers (6%) were worried about “new legislative or regulatory requirements” affecting skills needs. These expectations were largely similar across sectors.

The largest skills gap was within leadership and management roles (55.1%), which was higher than back office and technical support roles (33.3%), customer facing/skilled trade roles (31.5%) and routine machine operative/semi-skilled roles (8.7%). This skills gap was by far the highest across each sector and local authority. It is surprising that these results were obtained even in sectors like manufacturing and construction, where shortages of skilled tradespeople and machine operatives are well known. It is possible that employers experiencing gaps in managerial roles are more likely to enrol in SfG programmes, causing an overrepresentation of employers actually experiencing this issue. At the same time, it is likely that employers experiencing gaps in trade roles and production operatives do not enrol in SfG training often, causing an underrepresentation of employers facing this issue.

SfG showed that there were major gaps and huge interest in sales skills across local authority areas and sectors. Sales skills were not identified to be as relevant in the LSIP research. It is possible that employers who enrolled in SfG had a greater interest in sales, leading to an overrepresentation of the employers who are actually interested in sales. Another plausible explanation could be that the interest in sales courses increased during the pandemic as businesses were trying out new business development and selling strategies.

The SfG survey showed that skills gaps and employers’ preferences were very similar across sectors. That there are no differences across sectors is slightly unexpected since different sectors have different activities, different occupations and hence, different skills needs. It is likely that the employers who signed up to SfG programmes had similar skills needs in terms of sales, leadership and management and soft skills regardless of the sector, while those who had specific sectoral needs signed up for training elsewhere.

The latter was not to say that skills gaps in leadership and management and sales are not relevant. Large gaps in these areas definitely exist in GM, however they might not be as huge in the GM business population as they are in the SfG sample. These results do not completely reflect GM reality; instead, they reflect the preferences of the SfG respondents. The relevance of these two skills gaps should not be overstated.

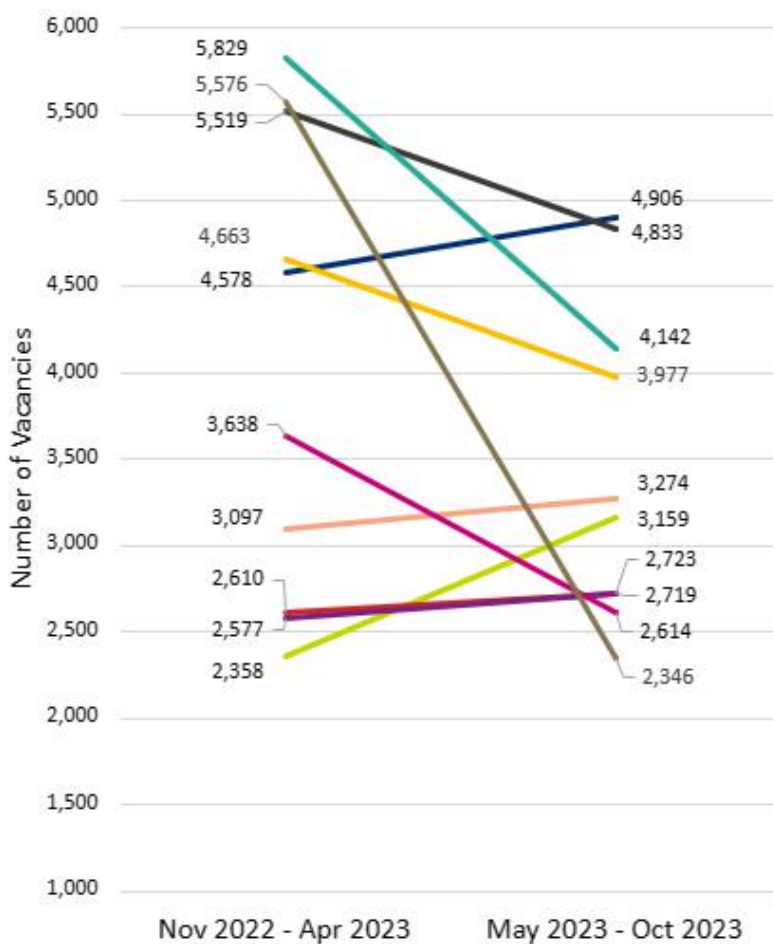




Local Area Vacancy Update

The data within this section is taken from Adzuna, which is a search engine for job advertisements.

10 most in-demand jobs in Greater Manchester



- Teaching Assistant
- Recruitment Consultant
- Project Manager
- Engineer
- Customer Service Adviser
- Manager
- Software Developer
- General Nurse
- Consultant
- Social Care Worker

Greater Manchester

From May 2023-October 2023, there were 371,540 vacancies in Greater Manchester. There were 1.5% fewer vacancies in this period compared to the previous period (November 2022-April 2023), when there were 377,347 vacancies.

The median salary in May 2023-October 2023 was £31,599, up from £31,310 in November 2022-April 2023. This represents an increase of 0.9%.

The jobs with highest demand were a mix from different sectors. The eight job titles with more vacancies were teaching assistant (4,906), manager (4,833) (predominantly retail managers), recruitment consultant (4,142), software developer (3,977), project manager (3,274), general nurse (3,159), engineer (2,723) and consultant (2,719). From one period to the next, teaching assistant and general nurse roles increased moderately while the number of social care worker and recruitment consultant roles fell considerably.

Local Area Vacancy Update

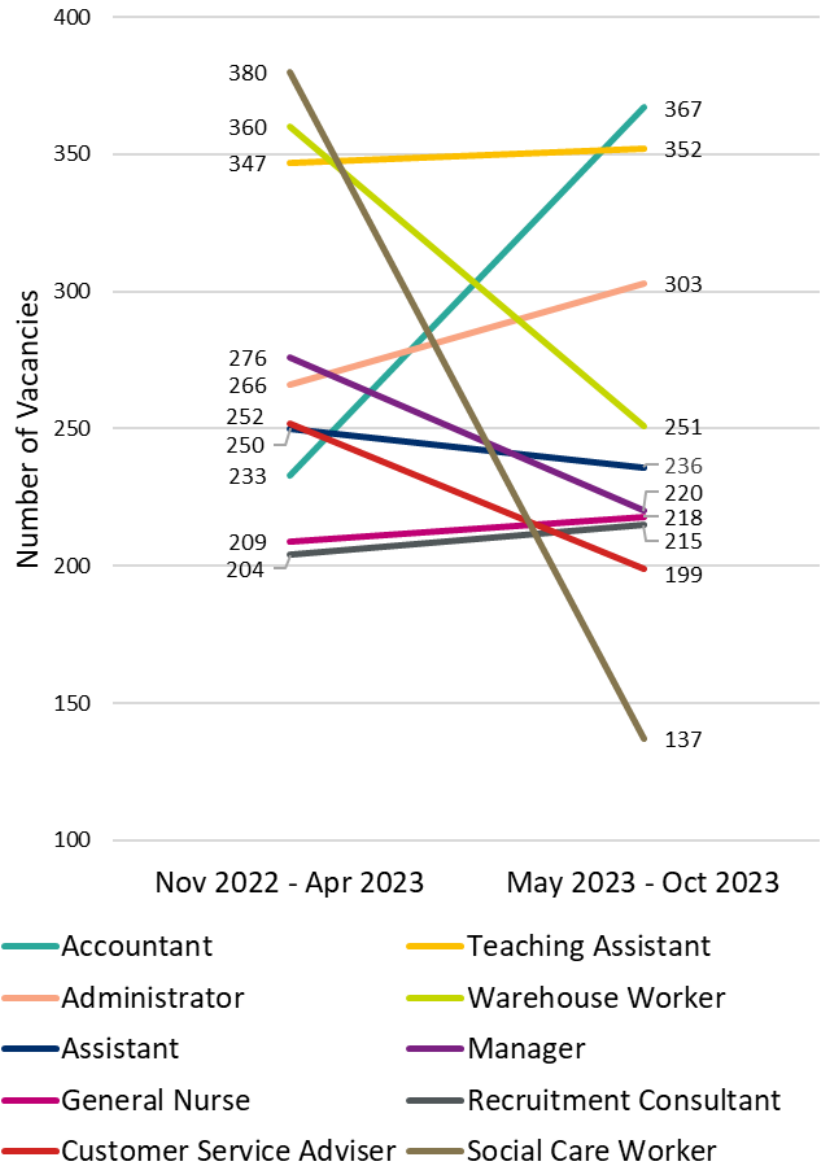
Bolton

There were 24,747 job vacancies in Bolton in the period from May 2023-October 2023. This figure rose by 1.50% compared to the previous period (November 2022-April 2023), when 24,381 vacancies were recorded.

The median salary rose by 2.4% from period to period, increasing from £28,909 to £29,617. Bolton saw a larger increase in median salary compared to Greater Manchester as a whole.

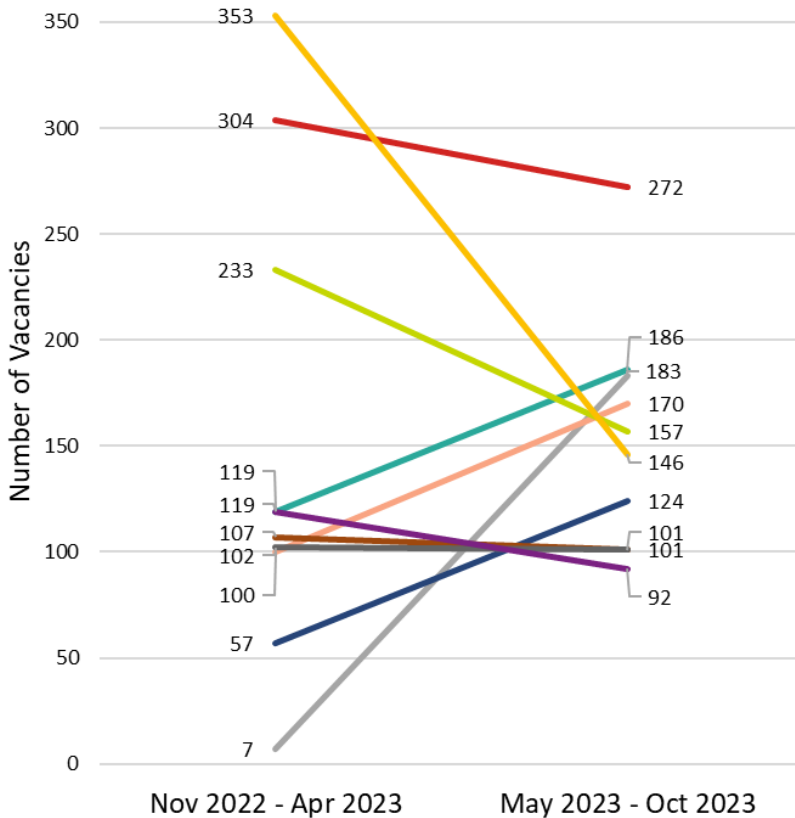
The job titles with the largest number of postings were accountant (367), teaching assistant (352), administrator (303), warehouse worker (251), assistant (236), manager (220), general nurse (218) and recruitment consultant (215). The number of vacancies for social care workers decreased substantially from period to period, while it went up for accountant and administrator.

10 most in-demand jobs in Bolton



Local Area Vacancy Update

10 most in-demand jobs in Bury



Bury

Over the period from May-October 2023, the number of job postings in Bury was 12,081. This was an increase of 10.7% compared to the previous period, November 2022-April 2023, when 10,916 vacancies were recorded. The increase in vacancies in Bury was quite large compared to that of Greater Manchester.

Bury saw an increase in median salary of 9.20%. It went up from £27,046 in May-October 2023 to £29,533 in November 2022-April 2023. The increase in salary was also notable compared to that of Greater Manchester.

Teaching and social care roles were the roles in highest demand in Bury. The job titles with the largest number of vacancies were teaching assistant (272), childcare social worker (186), healthcare support worker (183), general nurse (170), SEN assistant (157), social care worker (146), accountant (124), manager (101), administrator (101) and primary school teacher (92). Between November 2022-April 2023 and May-October 2023, the demand for healthcare support workers and accountants increased considerably while the demand for social care workers and SEN assistants decreased the most.

Local Area Vacancy Update

Manchester

The number of vacancies in Manchester decreased by 2.2% in the period May 2023-October 2023 compared to the previous period, November 2022-April 2023, decreasing from 202,491 to 197,993. This decline contributed significantly to the decrease in vacancies in Greater Manchester. The median salary in Manchester decreased as well, decreasing from £34,831 in November 2022-May 2023 to £34,513 in April-October 2023. This represents a decline of 0.9%.

The most in-demand jobs in Manchester were a mix of IT, professional and financial roles. The job titles with the highest number of vacancies were software developer (3,313), manager (3,232) (mostly in the finance sector), recruitment consultant (3,128), project manager (2,513), consultant (2,304), teaching assistant (1,686), business development manager (1,655), engineer (1,647), specialist (1,613) and sales executive (1,378). The demand for recruitment consultants and sales executives fell significantly from one period to another.

10 most in-demand jobs in Manchester



Local Area Vacancy Update

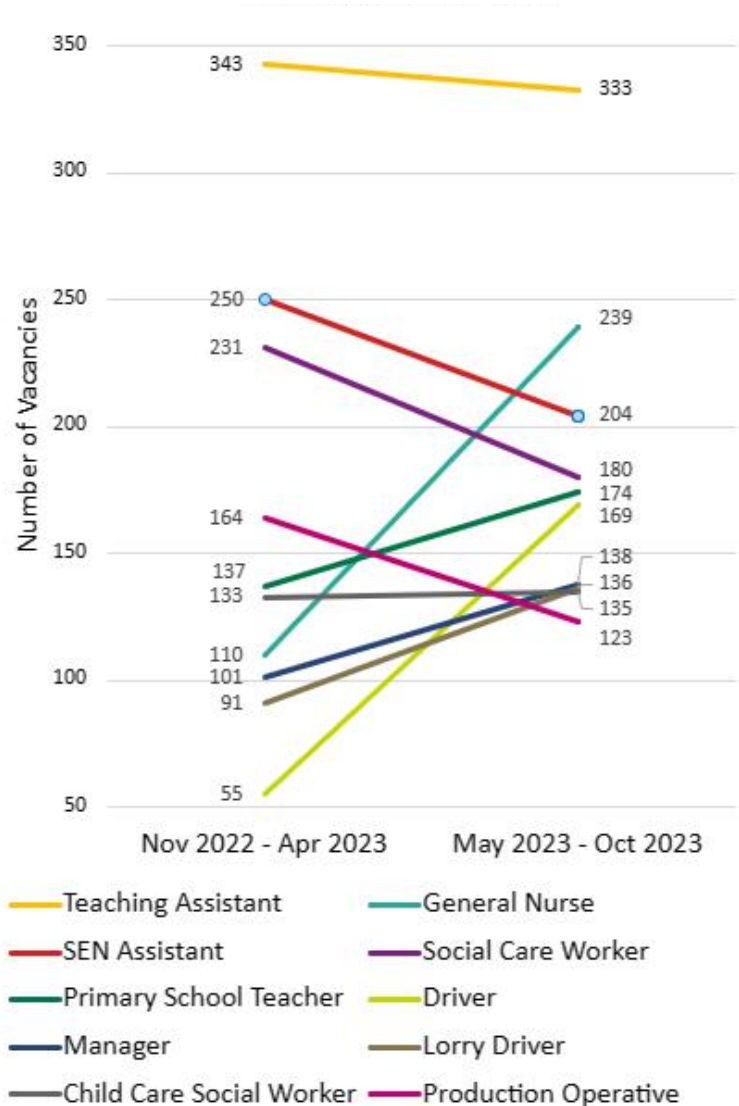
Oldham

The number of vacancies in Oldham went up from 15,080 in November 2022-April 2023 to 17,284 in May 2023-October 2023, marking an increase of 14.6% over that time. The rise in vacancies in Oldham was notably higher than that of Greater Manchester.

The median salary for May 2023-October 2023 was £30,922 - 8.7% higher than that of the previous period (£28,453). Oldham experienced a significant increase in the median salary compared to other local authority areas.

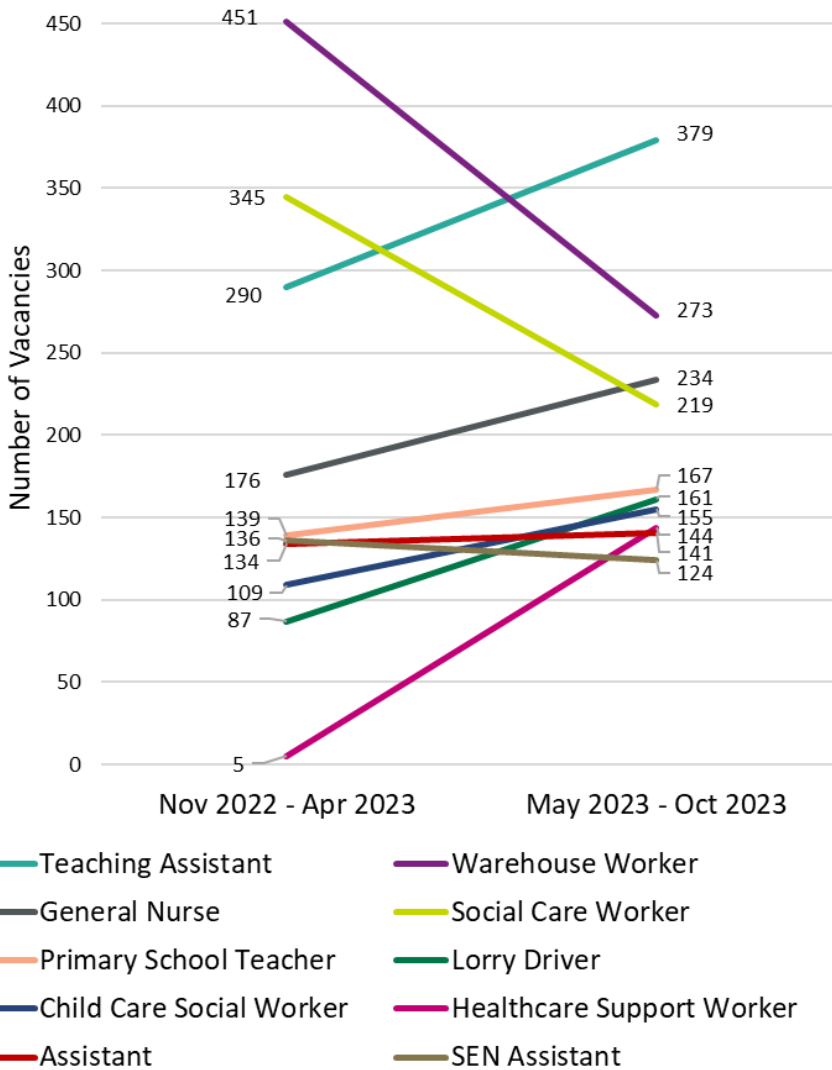
Between May 2023-October 2023, health, social care and education jobs were the most in-demand in Oldham. The top sought-after job titles were teaching assistant (333), general nurse (239), SEN assistant (204), social care worker (180), primary school teacher (174), driver (169), manager (138), lorry driver (136), childcare social worker (135) and production operative (123). There was an important increase in general nurse and driver jobs between each period, while social care worker and production operative jobs decreased in the same period.

10 most in-demand jobs in Oldham



Local Area Vacancy Update

10 most in-demand jobs in Rochdale



Rochdale

Job vacancies in Rochdale increased by 12.1% between November 2022-April 2023 and May-October 2023. They increased from 15,894 to 17,813. The increase in vacancies was larger than that of Greater Manchester and most of the other local authority areas.

The median salary in Rochdale rose by 3.1%, as it increased from £27,587 in November 2022-April 2023 to £28,451 in May-October 2023. The increase in salary in Rochdale was also greater than that in most of the other local authority areas.

The most in-demand jobs in Rochdale were a mix of teaching, health, social care and logistics roles. The job titles with the highest number of job postings were teaching assistant (379), warehouse worker (273), general nurse (234), social care worker (219), primary school teacher (167), lorry driver (161), childcare social worker (155), healthcare support worker (144), assistant (141) and SEN assistant (124). Despite being in the top five of most sought-after jobs, the number of vacancies for warehouse workers and social care workers fell significantly. Meanwhile, the number of job postings for teaching assistants and healthcare support workers grew the fastest.

Local Area Vacancy Update

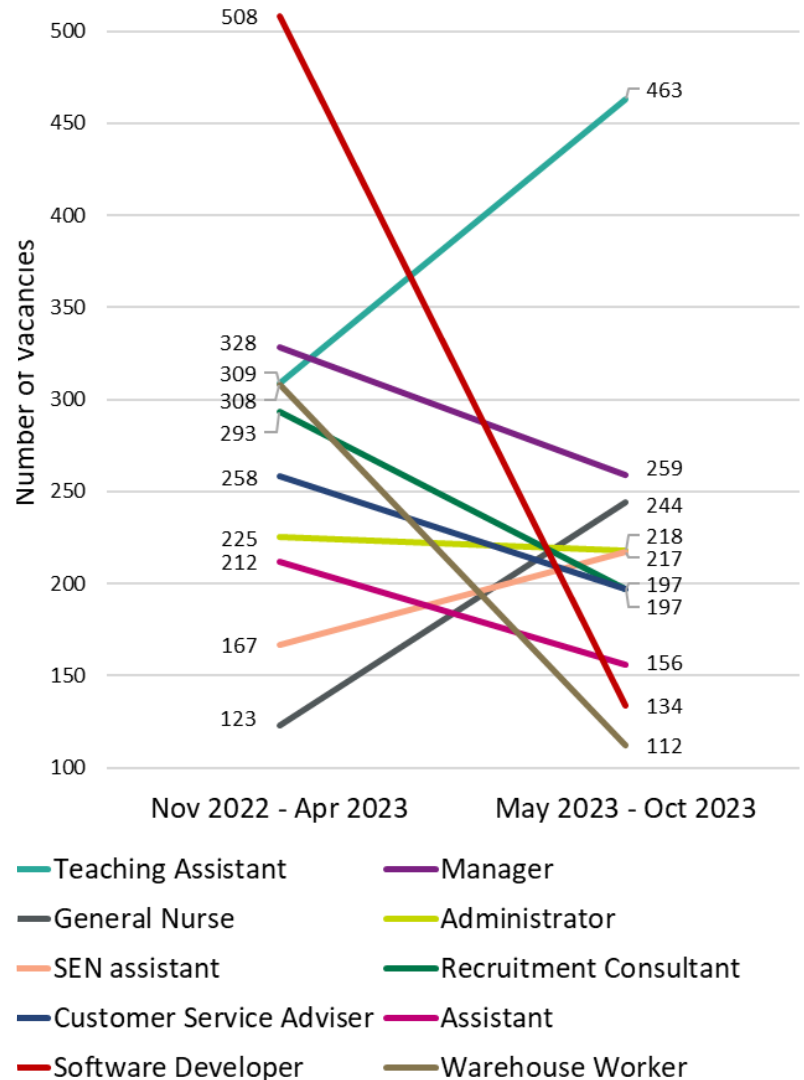
Salford

There were 20,214 job vacancies in Salford from May 2023-October 2023. The number of vacancies was 10.1% lower than the previous period (November 2022-April 2023), when 22,477 vacancies were recorded. Salford experienced the largest decrease in vacancies out of all of the Local Authority areas.

The median salary decreased minimally (0.1%) from period to period, decreasing from £28,702 in November 2022-April 2023 to £28,670 in May 2023-October 2023.

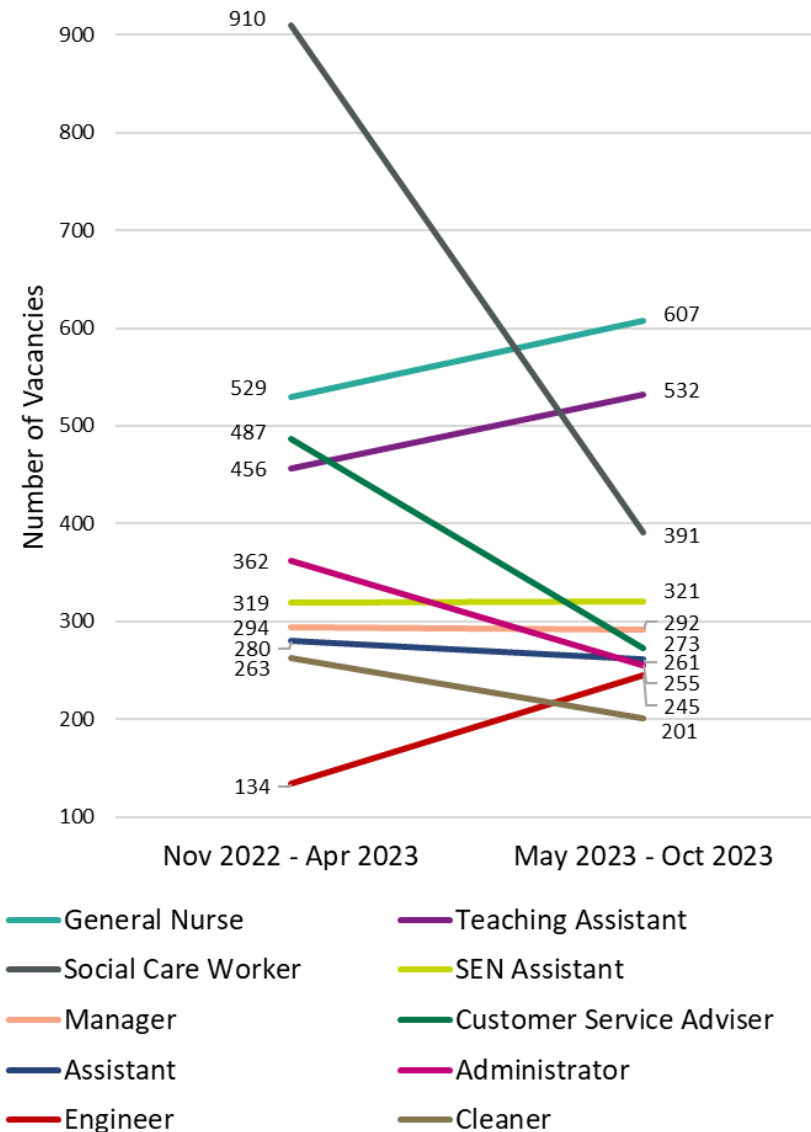
The most in-demand roles in Salford were from a variety of sectors. The job titles with the highest number of vacancies were teaching assistant (463), manager (259), general nurse (244), administrator (218), SEN assistant (217), recruitment consultant (197), customer service adviser (197), assistant (156), software developer (134) and warehouse worker (112). The demand for teaching assistants and general nurses grew the fastest, while that of software developers and warehouse workers decreased significantly.

10 most in-demand jobs in Salford



Local Area Vacancy Update

10 most in-demand jobs in Stockport



Stockport

Stockport saw an increase in vacancies of 5.7%, as job vacancies went from 30,348 in November 2022-April 2023 to 32,069 in May 2023-October 2023.

The median salary in Stockport rose by 2.37%, increasing from £28,227 in November 2022-April 2023 to £28,895 in May 2023-October 2023. The uptick in vacancies and median salary was not a large increase compared to other Local Authority areas.

Teaching, health, social care and retail roles were the most sought-after jobs in Stockport. The job titles with the highest volume of vacancies were general nurse (607), teaching assistant (532), social care worker (391), SEN assistant (321), manager (predominantly retail managers) (292), customer service adviser (273), assistant (mainly in retail) (261), administrator (255), engineer (245) and cleaner (201). The number of job vacancies for social care workers and customer service advisers declined substantially from one period to another. By contrast, the number of vacancies for engineers and teaching assistants rose considerably.

Local Area Vacancy Update

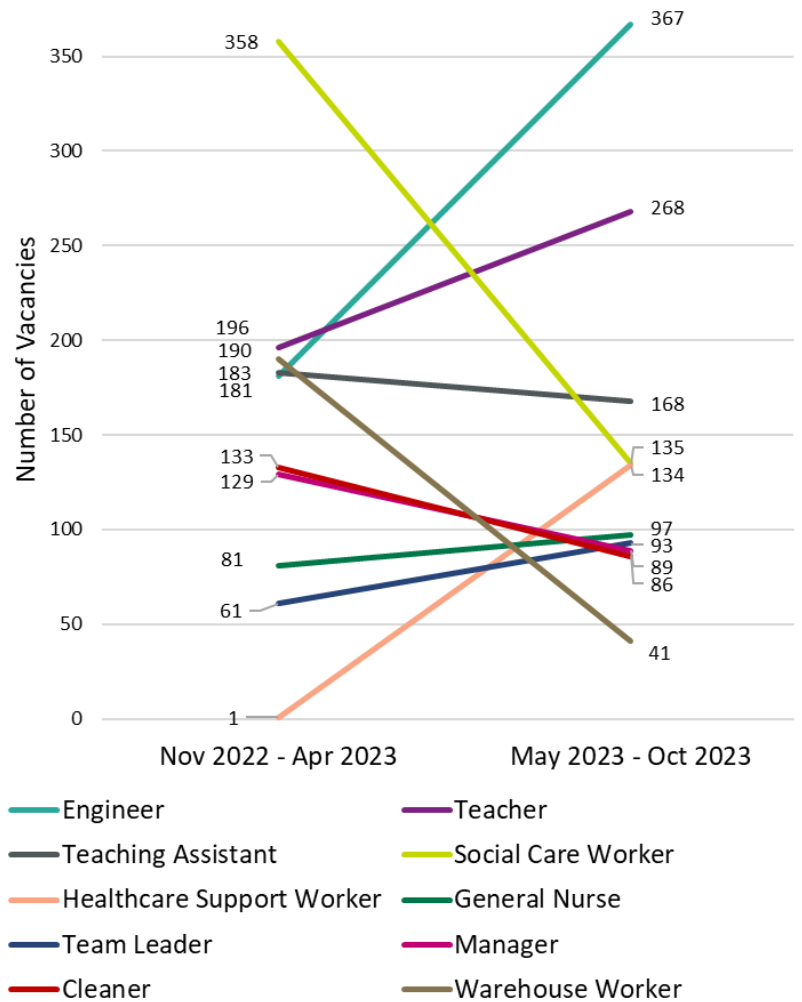
Tameside

Tameside recorded a growth in vacancies of 10.5%. The number of vacancies increased from 11,030 in November 2022-April 2023 to 12,190 in May 2023-October 2023. The rise in vacancies was significantly higher than that of Greater Manchester.

The median salary increased by 2.1%, rising from £26,620 to £26,812. The increase in salary in Tameside was average compared to the other Local Authority areas.

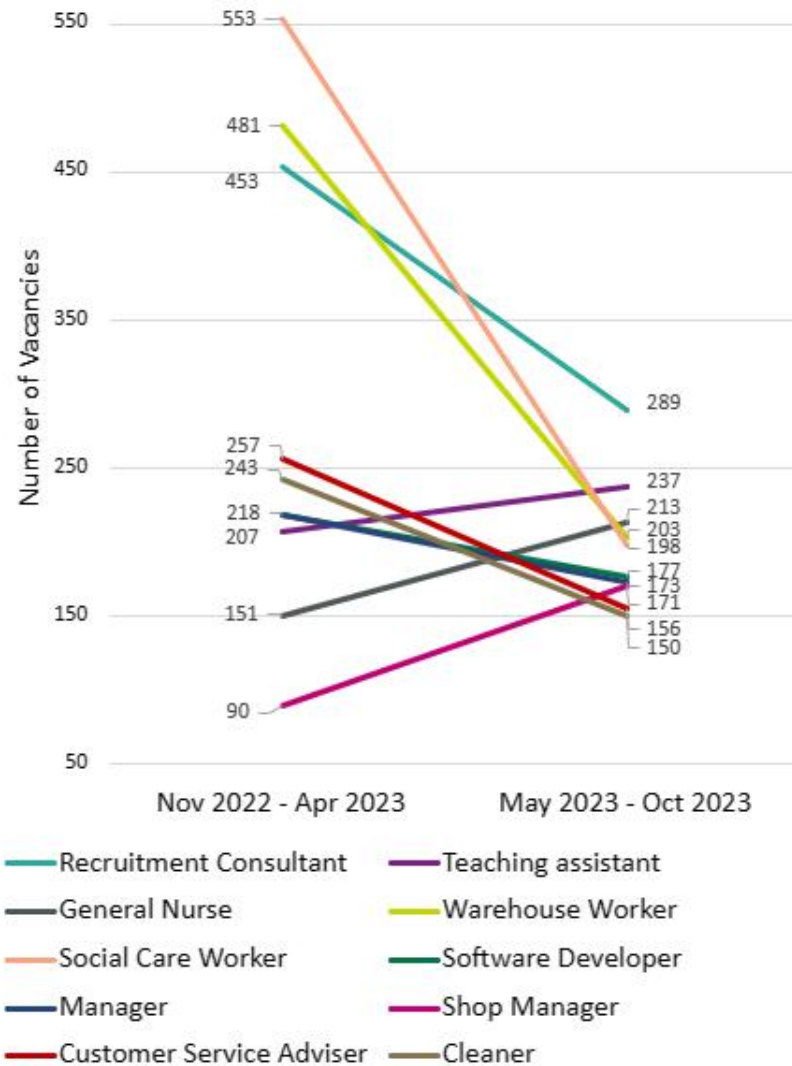
The top jobs in demand were a combination of teaching, social care, health and manufacturing roles. The job titles with the highest number of job postings were engineer (mainly from the manufacturing sector) (367), teacher (268), teaching assistant (168), social care worker (135), healthcare support worker (134), general nurse (97), team leader (93), manager (89), cleaner (86) and warehouse worker (41). Between November 2022-April 2023 and May 2023-October 2023, the number of vacancies for engineers and healthcare support workers rose importantly, while the figure dropped for social care workers and warehouse workers.

10 most in-demand jobs in Tameside



Local Area Vacancy Update

10 most in-demand jobs in Trafford



Trafford

The number of vacancies in Trafford decreased from 23,054 to 22,080 between November 2022-April 2023 and May 2023-October 2023. This represents a 4.2% decline in job vacancies. This contributed significantly to the decrease in vacancies in the Greater Manchester region.

The median salary in Trafford remained virtually unchanged, as it only increased from £27,857 to £27,887. This represents a minimal increase of 0.1%.

Teaching, health, social care and retail roles were the most in-demand in Trafford. The job titles with most vacancies were recruitment consultant (289), teaching assistant (237), general nurse (213), warehouse worker (203), social care worker (198), software developer (177), manager (mainly in the retail sector) (173), shop manager (171), customer service adviser (156) and cleaner (150). Despite being the most in-demand jobs, the number of vacancies for most of these jobs decreased. Only the figures for shop managers, general nurses and teaching assistants rose in this period.

Local Area Vacancy Update

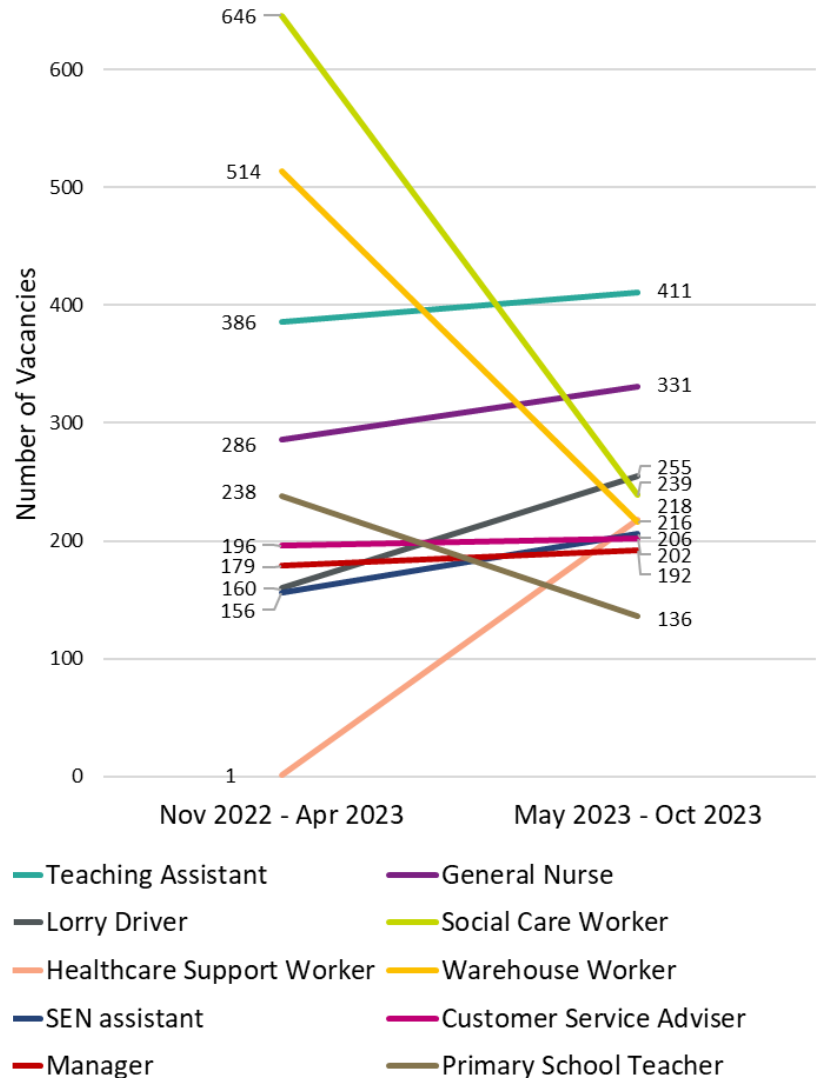
Wigan

There were 20,299 job vacancies in Wigan from May 2023-October 2023. There were 3.9% more vacancies in this period compared to the previous one - November 2022-April 2023 - when 19,531 vacancies were recorded. The rise in vacancies in Wigan was mild compared to that of other Local Authority areas.

Wigan saw a moderate increase in the median salary. It rose from £28,929 in November 2022-April 2023 to £29,399 in May 2023-October 2023, marking a 1.6% increase.

The most in-demand jobs in Wigan were a combination of teaching, health, social care and logistics roles. The job titles with the highest volume of vacancies were teaching assistant (411), general nurse (331), lorry driver (255), social care worker (239), healthcare support worker (218), warehouse worker (216), SEN assistant (206), customer service adviser (202), manager (192) and primary school teacher (136). The number of vacancies for most of these roles rose from one period to the other. However, the number of vacancies decreased for social care workers, warehouse workers and primary school teachers.

10 most in-demand jobs in Wigan



Apprenticeships Analysis

As part of our research activities, an assessment of the apprenticeship provision in Greater Manchester was conducted. The dataset on apprenticeships for the academic year 2022/23 published by the UK government was used for this analysis.

The number of apprenticeship starts was compared with the LSIP key training areas identified in stage one of the project. Key training areas were classified as having 'Insufficient provision', 'Sufficient provision' and 'Good provision', depending on the number of starts in that key area. The number of workers in each occupation was also used to inform this classification. This is to account for the fact that the volume of workers needed varies across occupations and sectors. For example, the number of production operatives needed is much higher than mechanical engineers in a manufacturing set up. Therefore, there should be many more apprentices for production operatives than for engineers. The number of workers per occupation per sector was retrieved from the Annual Population Survey June 2023 via Nomis.

Construction

Highlights:

- Apprenticeship starts on traditional construction trades were the highest in absolute terms. However, due to the high volume of skilled tradespeople needed in the sector, some areas require an increase in apprentices. The areas to be reinforced are structural fabrication (welding), steel erection, plumbing and bricklaying.
- The number of starts of green skills-related apprenticeships was particularly low. A specific retrofit standard has not been developed by the IfATE yet; however, providers could offer other standards with retrofit-related content. An example is the standard BEMS (Building Energy Management Systems) Controls Engineer L4. Moreover, providers could push the take up of the Heat Pump Technician apprenticeship.
- Regarding digital skills, most higher apprenticeship standards included CAD modules, but only some of them BIM modules. It is recommended that higher and degree apprenticeships in Civil Engineering and Construction have both Computer Aided Design (CAD) and Building Information Modelling (BIM) modules. These areas should be given attention.

Apprenticeships Analysis

Construction continued...

- The number of apprenticeship starts related to Construction Management and Quantity Surveying was sufficient. As these roles are often reserved for degree-holders, providers should focus on boosting apprenticeships level 4 and 5.

KEY TRAINING AREAS	APPRENTICESHIP STARTS 2022/23
Steel Trades	Steel Erection - Insufficient
	Structural Fabrication (Welding) - Insufficient
Core Construction Trades	Bricklaying - Sufficient
	Carpentry and Joinery - Good
	Electrical Trades - Good
	Plumbing - Sufficient
Construction Process Management, Project Management and Site Engineering	Sufficient
Digitalisation	Computer Aided Design (CAD) - Good
	Building Information Modelling (BIM) - Sufficient
Quantity Surveying	Sufficient
Civil Engineering Technician	Good
Green Skills	Retrofitting - Insufficient
	Heat Pump Installation - Insufficient

Apprenticeships Analysis

Digital

Highlights:

- Apprenticeships in Data Analytics and Cloud Computing accounted for most of the starts in the digital sector. That said, providers could boost apprenticeship level 4 in Cloud Computing, as the numbers in this specific level were rather low.
- The number of apprenticeship starts for Software Development was sufficient. Providers could push the take up of apprenticeship level 3, as the numbers in this area were especially low.
- The number of apprenticeship starts related to Artificial Intelligence was very small. The only standards in this area developed by the IATE are level 7. This is a challenge to most providers as level 7 qualifications are usually offered by universities only. That said, providers could focus on building pathways to degree-level qualifications in Artificial Intelligence offering higher apprenticeships in Computer Science, Software Development and Data Analytics.
- There was insufficient provision of Cybersecurity apprentices. Although there was a reasonable number of starts in Cybersecurity-related degree apprenticeships, the take up of apprenticeship level 4 was on the lower end. This area should be given greater attention.

KEY TRAINING AREAS	APPRENTICESHIP STARTS 2022/23
Artificial Intelligence	Insufficient
Cloud Computing	Good
Cybersecurity	Insufficient
Data Analytics	Good
Software Development	Sufficient

Apprenticeships Analysis

Health and Social Care

Highlights:

- The number of starts of Care Worker apprenticeships was the highest across sectors. The take up was high across levels 2 to 5, and Care Worker roles (Early Years Care Giver, Adult Care Worker and Healthcare Support Worker).
- The number of starts of Nursing Associate apprenticeships (L5) and Nursing degree apprenticeships was sufficient in Greater Manchester. However, all these apprenticeships were delivered by universities (University of Salford and Manchester Metropolitan University). Colleges and Independent Training Providers could explore the possibility of delivering Nursing Associate apprenticeships.

KEY TRAINING AREAS	APPRENTICESHIP STARTS 2022/23
Care Worker	Good
Nurses and Nursing Associates	Sufficient

Apprenticeships Analysis

Manufacturing

Highlights:

- Apprenticeships related to trades comprised most of the starts in the manufacturing sector. However, due to the high volume of machine operators and skilled tradespeople required in the sector, there is a need to increase Production Operative and Metal Fabrication apprentices.
- There were very few starts for Electrical and Mechanical Engineering apprenticeships. Providers should focus on boosting apprenticeship levels 4 and 5, as well as degree apprenticeships.
- Some engineering apprenticeships included units in CAD, but very few included automation or other emerging technologies. It is recommended that higher engineering apprenticeships increasingly incorporate both. At the same time, providers could boost those standards that deal specifically with automation, such as the Automation and Controls Engineering Technician Apprenticeship Level 4.
- The provision of apprenticeship starts for Lean Manufacturing was sufficient. Apprenticeships in this area should be promoted at all levels (L2 to L6). Lean manufacturing is a set of principles/practices that can be applied across the manufacturing process and thus it can be implemented by workers at all levels.

KEY TRAINING AREAS	APPRENTICESHIP STARTS 2022/23
Manufacturing Trades	Production Operative - Sufficient
	Fitter - Good
	Electrical Trades - Good
	Welding and Metal Fabrication - Sufficient
Electrical/Electronics Engineering Technician	Insufficient
Mechanical Engineering Technician	Insufficient
Digitalisation	Computer Aided Design (CAD) - Sufficient
	Automation Technologies - Insufficient
Lean Manufacturing	Sufficient



Input from Businesses

Ongoing research - interviews

In stage two of the Local Skills Improvement Plan, the business interview programme was continued. This had been conducted very successfully in stage one, and businesses from a wide range of sectors took part in discussions to provide qualitative evidence around their skills and recruitment difficulties, and the impact that these had on their business operations and succession planning.

Between September and December 2023, around 20 more businesses were interviewed with a view to understanding: whether the skills priorities identified in stage one were accurate from their perspective; if there were any further skills shortages that hadn't been identified in stage one; and what their training preferences are.

In talking to businesses about their training preferences, we hope to gain an insight into which delivery methods work best for businesses, whether there are any difficulties in finding the right courses to meet the team's training needs, and what the barriers to training are for businesses e.g., cost, availability, time away from the business, etc.

In addition to speaking to businesses, we also spoke to training providers about the challenges surrounding the delivery of courses, which courses prove popular and which struggle to gain traction, how they engage with businesses/learners, and whether there are any common misapprehensions about Apprenticeships, etc.

Through speaking to both businesses and training providers, and in understanding the barriers for both, we aim to alleviate some of the problems that each group faces so that effective working relationships can be forged and training and skills needs are met.



...Through speaking to businesses and providers, we aim to alleviate some of the problems that each group face so that effective working relationships can be forged.



Business Interviews

The interview programme is ongoing, but below is a summary of some of the main themes that have emerged. This is not an exhaustive list of the issues raised, but provides a snapshot of some of the most popular concerns expressed by interviewees so far:

HIRING CHALLENGES

Reputation of certain industries, particular those perceived as 'dirty', such as engineering and manufacturing.

Lack of awareness amongst younger people about certain industries and the career opportunities available.

Difficulties recruiting individuals with more traditional skills, particularly in engineering, or niche skills specific to the product.

The location of some businesses is off-putting for some candidates, but this can also be an issue if the business is located close to competitors.

Salary can be a barrier for some candidates, particularly if they're located in the South, or if competitors are offering more. Also, some graduates seem to expect higher salaries to compensate for student loans.

Some businesses struggle to recruit younger candidates/Apprentices because they haven't got the right qualifications/level of qualification.

The cost of recruitment agencies is prohibitive to recruiting externally, particularly more senior roles with a higher salary.

Business Interviews - Emerging Themes

SKILLS GAPS

Exhibiting the right behaviours and showing a positive attitude and willingness to learn is more important to some employers than having all the skills needed for a particular role.

Green/sustainability skills are useful in many industries – just knowing the basic principles, rather than a specific qualification.

People management and leadership skills are lacking in almost all industries – very often people are promoted through being proficient in their current role, but don't have the necessary leadership and management skills that are needed when taking a step up.

Automation, robotics and data analysts are in short supply in some industries, particularly engineering.

Fitters, tool makers, and more traditional engineering skills are still required, but lacking in this industry.

Electrical engineering and mechanical design skills missing in some engineering firms.

Lack of communication skills is a big problem for lots of sectors, with many citing this as one of the key issues when it comes to performance, management and productivity.

New recruits, in some cases, are not able to communicate effectively either in writing or in person.

Digital skills, basic data, data literacy and understanding data usage are key skills lacking in some industries.

Business Interviews - Emerging Themes

TRAINING AND UPSKILLING

Courses on net zero and sustainability would be beneficial for everyone to undertake.

Most employers would look to train up existing staff for roles within their organisation, rather than recruiting first.

Some SMEs struggle with navigating which training is available: what they need and where to get it. Many don't have the time to look into what they need to train/upskill staff.

Taking workers out of the organisation for 2-3 days to complete training is a barrier for some businesses, as there isn't the resource to carry on production/services whilst the individuals are away.

Some businesses go into schools to speak to students about the roles available at their organisations, in order to inform students about their industry and to try and encourage a future pipeline of applicants.

Many businesses are open to pupils undertaking work experience, although this can be difficult to manage from a resource perspective.

Most organisations are open to online and classroom-based learning, although the flexibility and timing of courses is sometimes an issue.

Retirement is an issue for some employers as it's no longer predictable – some retire early and some go past retirement age, making planning for future skills gaps difficult.

Business Interviews - Emerging Themes

EDUCATION

The attitude of some new recruits is surprising to some employers – more demanding, less willing to start ‘at the bottom’, requiring more ‘work/life balance’ than is being offered. Different expectations of what a job or career is.

Many employers are proactively working with schools, universities, taking on apprentices and engaging with programmes to encourage young people into their industries.

Some employers believe young people are encouraged to go down the further and higher education routes, as opposed to apprenticeships focusing on specific skills.

Some employers believe Apprenticeships could be more flexible to the needs of the business, to ensure continuity for the learner, rather than being prescriptive on when classroom/learning time needs to take place.

Lots of employers believe career guidance needs to start as young as primary school so that young people can have an awareness of the careers available to them and start thinking about what they want to do and how they can get there.

Business Interviews - Emerging Themes

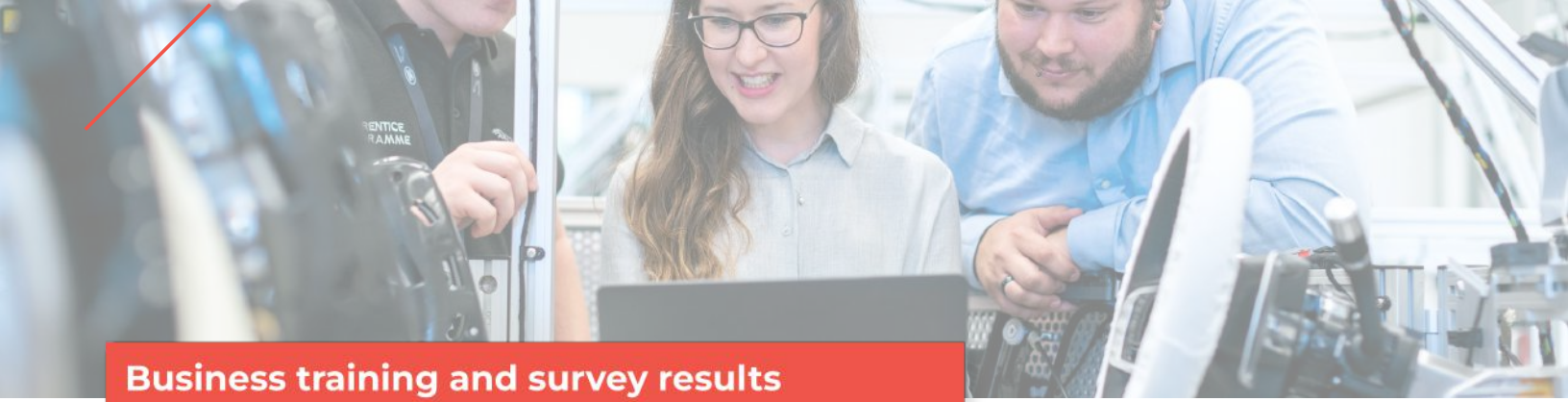
FUTURE SKILLS

Some businesses do plan for the future, looking ahead as far as 10 years to understand the number of orders and what the workforce needs to look like to fulfil them.

Succession planning is a big issue, particularly for SMEs. Some industries have an ageing workforce and don't necessarily have the skills coming through to replace them.

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Recognising neurodiversity and the differing requirements of employees is something that some employers are starting to look at.



Business training and survey results

The way we work is drastically changing and there is a need to develop and refine the skills of the workforce to meet the skills needs resulting from these changes.

What is happening with business training in Greater Manchester?

Employee training and development is a recognised means through which the skills gaps within the current and future workforce can be addressed. However, evidence suggests that the volume of training and employer investment in training has been on the decline in the UK.

Estimates show that 40% of employers do not train their staff. According to the Employers Skills Survey, only 60% of employers across the UK arranged or funded training for staff in 2022. Similarly, the LSIP survey showed that 61% of GM employers provided training in 2022. Additionally, both surveys showed that SMEs are lagging in training, as few of them provide training while most large enterprises do. This implies that 4 out of 10 employers are not training their workforce and they are missing out on the advantages and benefits of it.

Multiple indicators were assessed to examine the case in Greater Manchester. Commonly reported statistics on the proportion of employees receiving training suggests that the performance of employers in the region in terms of employee training has been slightly less than the national average in the last decade. However, the trend data reveals that Greater Manchester has been catching up, having experienced two years of consecutive growth in the proportion of people who received training in both 2022 and 2023.

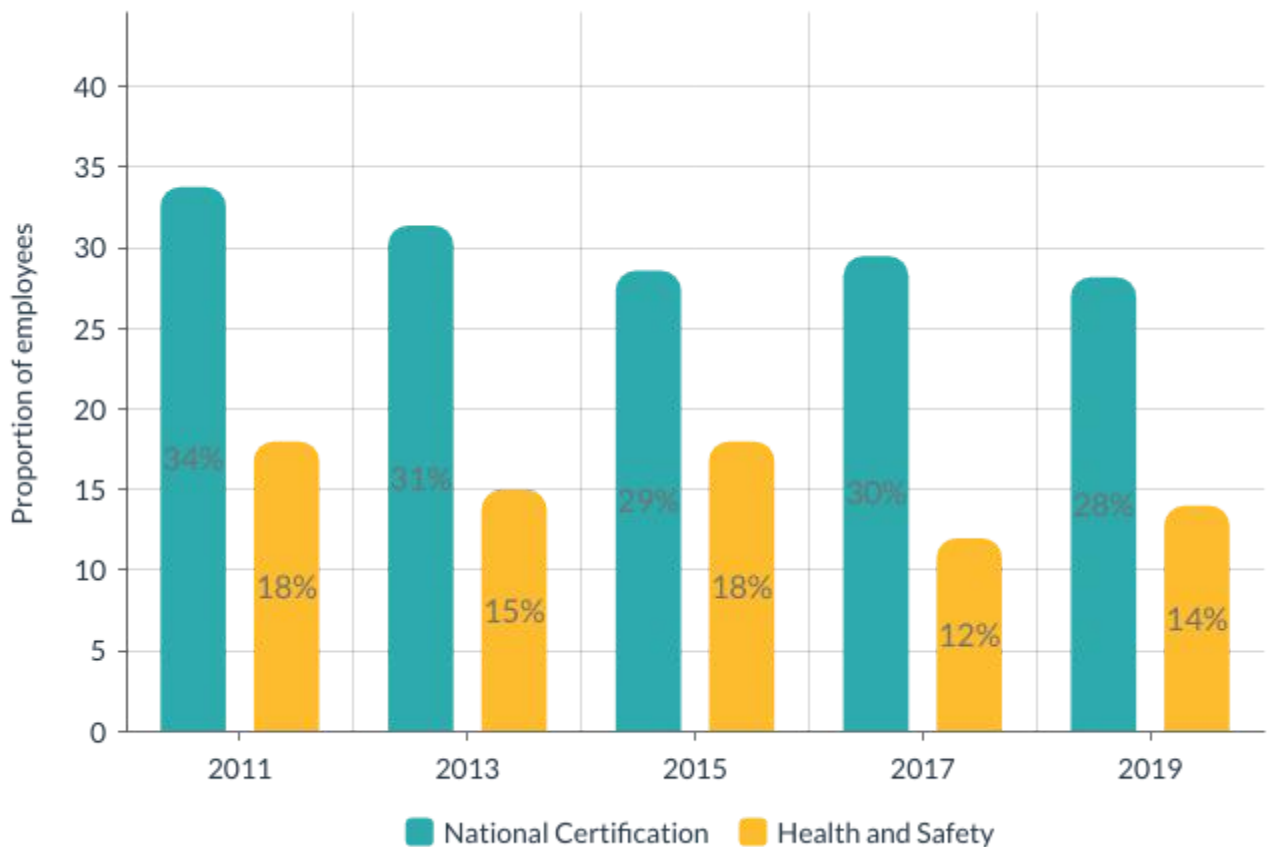
Business training and survey results

Yet, these headline figures appear to be masking a more worrying underlying trend in terms of training quality and training intensity (amount of time spent training). The quality of training that employees receive is a critical concern, as participation in training does not guarantee good-quality training. Additionally, participation in certain types of training, such as employee inductions or health and safety training, may not lead to significant upskilling.

One quantitative indicator of training quality is the proportion of training that is certified. Between 2011 and 2019, the proportion of Greater Manchester employers reporting that employees undertook training that resulted in recognised qualifications declined. The trend of training exclusively focused on health and safety is less clear, but the decline in nationally recognised certification training indicates a decrease in training specifically aimed at upskilling employees, which is essential for fostering innovation and productivity.

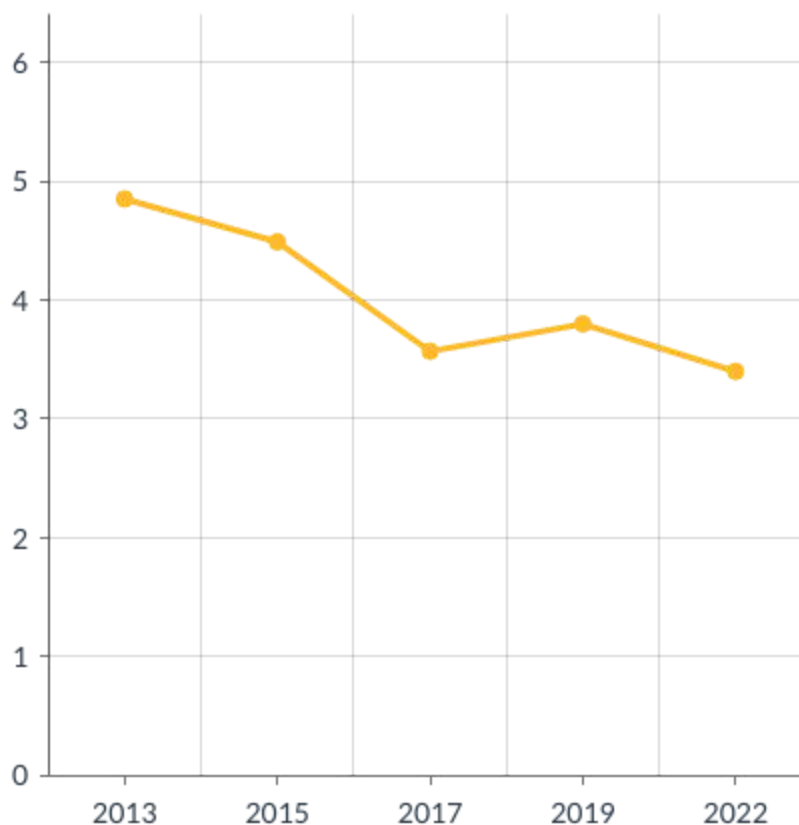
Similarly, the Employer Skills Survey (ESS) shows a fall in the amount of time employees spend in workplace training – with the number of training days per employee falling from 4.8 days per year in 2013 to 3.5 days in 2022.

Quality of Training in Greater Manchester



Business training and survey results

Training Days per Employee in Greater Manchester



Source: Employer Skills Survey (2013-2022)

Another indicator of training performance would involve quantifying how much businesses invest in training their employees. The Employer Skills Survey provides the best estimate for this and recent results indicate that employer investment in training is still broadly flat across England, with the spend per employee increasing by only 1.5% in 2022 compared to 2019.

Similarly, efforts to generate an estimate for Greater Manchester using a unique methodology reveal a consistent decline in the allocation of funds for training within Greater Manchester. It declined from 20% of total business investment in 2011, to 13% of business investment in 2019. This decline can be attributed to the substantial growth in capital investment by businesses during this period, while resources allocated to staff training remained relatively stagnant.

Business training and survey results

The Importance of Business Training Surveys

This section presents a literature review of the benefits of training based on scientific research. In addition to the review of work by other researchers, it includes findings from the LSIP survey and interviews. Most research suggests that training is positively related to business performance, business productivity, employee retention, employee satisfaction and technology adoption. In brief, training improves the majority of indicators of business success. The evidence is especially strong for employee satisfaction, as a great number of studies across countries and industries have shown that having access to training opportunities increases employee satisfaction.

In the main, training increases business productivity (Storey, 2002; Boothby, Dufour and Tang, 2010; Konings and Vanormelingen, 2015). This is mainly because receiving training enables employees to work more efficiently and waste less time and resources. Higuchi, Mhede and Tetsushi (2019) went further and proved that the combination of classroom and on-site training increases productivity and business performance the most. That said, it should be noted that a few studies have found that training has no effect on productivity or that it decreases (London Economics, 2012).

Furthermore, training increases employee retention (Srinivas, 2008; Chen, 2014; Wen, Maani and Dong, 2023). This happens because employees who receive training tend to be committed and feel grateful towards their employer, leading them to stay longer at their organisation. It has been shown that training serves as a motivation to remain in the job even for individuals who originally experienced a skills mismatch (Wen, Maani and Dong, 2023).

Many studies have concluded that training boosts job satisfaction (Kulik, Oldham, & Hackman, 1987; Leppel, Brucker and Cochran, 2012; Tabvuma, Georgellis and Lange, 2015). Among all the training benefits that were presented in this review, this is the one with the strongest and abundant evidence. Training tends to instil a sense of self-worth and accomplishment, while decreasing job anxiety; both factors ultimately lead to greater job satisfaction. It has been demonstrated that this effect holds for workers of all age groups (Leppel, Brucker and Cochran, 2012).

Business training and survey results

Research has shown that providing adequate training eases technology adoption (Mariani, Curcuruto and Gaetini, 2013; Kinkel, Baumgartner, and Cherubini; 2021). Training gives employees the skills they will need to use the new technologies. Introducing technology along with training is associated with higher levels of productivity compared to not providing training (Boothby, Dufour and Tang, 2010). Moreover, receiving appropriate training helps employees feel more confident using newly introduced technology and therefore increases technology acceptance.

Finally, evidence from LSIP research showed that training helps with progression. Training is necessary when individuals are promoted as they might be technically good at their jobs, but they usually lack the managerial skills to take on a leadership role. Additionally, training can motivate individuals to advance their careers within their organisations.

In summary:

- ESS and LSIP estimates show that 4 out of 10 employers do not provide workplace training.
- SMEs are lagging behind, as few of them provide training while most large enterprises do.
- Training increases business productivity as it enables employees to work more efficiently and waste less time and resources.
- Providing adequate training facilitates technology adoption, as it gives employees the skills and confidence to deal with new technologies.
- Training boosts job satisfaction and employee retention as it instils in individuals a sense of self-worth, accomplishment and commitment to the employer. Eventually, this serves as a motivation for individuals to progress their careers within the organisation.

Over the course of the LSIP research, we have discovered that Greater Manchester employers face numerous challenges that prevent them from providing training.

Among them are the lack of funds to pay for training, a lack of time to either organise training or undertake it and the absence of dedicated staff to identify training needs and arrange training accordingly. Other obstacles to training include the lack of easily accessible and updated information about local training provision as well as a lack of awareness of the benefits training might bring to the business. We have observed that Local Skills Improvement Plans in other UK regions also cite these challenges - they are not unique to Greater Manchester.

Flexible Training Provision

There are several ways in which employers can address these challenges. The first one is to encourage training providers to offer a variety of options with regards to how courses are delivered: location, delivery mode, and type of training. In addition to the traditional face-to-face approach, providers could consider virtual classrooms, e-learning and/or blended approaches. Likewise, providers could be more flexible regarding time and place. Some businesses want to save time, but are still interested in formal training. In this case, training could take place at the employers' establishment with tutors on site. Some businesses are impacted by seasonal demand. A solution for them could be to encourage training providers to adjust the time of year when courses are offered to a more convenient time. Training providers should also consider increasing the number of short, specialised courses for those businesses who cannot commit to lengthy qualifications/apprenticeships.

Accessible Information about Training

Another proposal is the creation of a Greater Manchester course directory which would compile all the existing courses and apprenticeships in GM. Ideally, the courses/apprenticeships would be presented in a standardised format to make sure the necessary information is available, and easy to navigate for employers. This directory would be designed with employers' needs in mind so that they understand training routes, available provision, benefits for them, apprenticeship schemes, etc. This proposal includes encouraging colleges to provide complete, accurate and employer-friendly information about the courses on their websites. The directory would be distinct from the Gov UK's Apprenticeship Finder and the National Career Service's Course Finder in that these platforms are designed for people searching for learning opportunities and not for employers.



Solutions

Increase Awareness of the Benefits of Training

Another solution is to launch a campaign to advertise training provision in GM. This campaign would advertise courses by colleges, independent providers, universities, and other organisations. The secondary feature of the campaign would be to raise awareness of the added value of training for employers. The objective would be to improve understanding of the benefits of training and why it is important in order to keep up with the industry. Research shows that employers often do not see the direct link between training and improved performance/productivity, therefore this message would be key in the campaign.

Funds to Pay for Training

To combat the lack of funds for training, government could introduce a Skills Tax Credit or expand the Apprenticeship Levy to other types of training. Through a Skills Tax Credit scheme, employers could get a refund or obtain a tax reduction for spending on training and upskilling/reskilling staff. Furthermore, the expansion of the Apprenticeship Levy would allow employers to use their levy in the type of training that better suits their needs. The implementation of this proposal goes beyond the remit of the LSIP Employer Representation Body; however, it is worth noting that it has potential to alleviate employers' budgetary constraints and therefore incentivise workplace training.

The Co-op currently runs an Apprenticeship Levy Transfer Scheme where large businesses with unspent levy funds can transfer up to 25% of their funds to other businesses. The Co-op scheme is a national programme and unspent funds can currently be transferred to any business. Find out more here: <https://cooplevyshare.co.uk/>

Run by The Growth Company, the GM Levy Matchmaking Service is also available for businesses in Greater Manchester. Click here to register for more information: <https://levymatchfinder.co.uk/>

The viability of each proposal is currently being assessed and an update will be presented in the next LSIP report.





Engagement with stakeholders

Throughout stage one and stage two of the Greater Manchester Local Skills Improvement Plan, the Chamber's LSIP team has engaged with a wide range of businesses, training providers, business groups, organisations and educational establishments.

Below is a list of those who have contributed and assisted with stage two so far:

- Chamber members and members' networks
- GMCG, colleges, universities and independent training providers
- Businesses who contributed to stage one research
- International Trade customers
- Business networks of GMCA, Marketing Manchester, GM Business Board.
- Local Authorities across Greater Manchester
- Greater Manchester Learning Provider Network
- Trade bodies, such as ECA, REC and GAMMA
- Employer Representation Bodies, such as proManchester, BURN, FUBHUB and The Business Network
- Media
- Social media followers via: LinkedIn polls, surveys, discussions, podcasts, blogs, webinars.

Podcasts and Blogs

Podcasts

Since March 2023, a number of podcasts have been produced which feature members of the team (and guests) talking about a variety of different LSIP-related topics. Areas covered include the basics of what the Plan is and what it aims to do, an in-depth look at the variations in skills and recruitment challenges for different sectors, future investment plans in Local Authority areas and how these relate to the LSIP, the results for stage one of the plan and some of the key skills priorities that have emerged, plus the relationship between productivity and training.

Recent topics include the connection between the LSIP and the Local Skills Improvement Fund, plus how providers are already implementing new courses and training programmes based on the LSIP's research findings.

If you would like to get involved in one of the podcasts or have some ideas for future themes, please contact the LSIP team via gmlsip@gmchamber.co.uk.

To listen to all of the podcasts, please visit: <https://www.gmlsip.co.uk/get-involved>



Blogs

Our research team has written numerous blogs offering insight into the results from stage one of the Local Skills Improvement Plan.

The team has also written blogs for external channels, contributing to a range of campaigns.

You can read the blogs produced by our research team here:

<https://www.gmlsip.co.uk/blog>

Engagement Opportunities

Interviews

Over the next few months, the interview programme will continue, adding to the bank of research already collated for stage two of the GM Local Skills Improvement Plan.

We are interviewing businesses from all sectors to find out about their skills and recruitment challenges, sense-check the skills priorities we identified in stage one of the LSIP, and to gather more information about training preferences. This is so that, where businesses do conduct training, we can ascertain which types of training are required, and the best ways to deliver that training.

As well as interviewing businesses, we are also continuing our interviews with training providers. This is so that we can understand the challenges surrounding the delivery of courses – where providers struggle to recruit learners and businesses – and which courses are popular and well-received. Through speaking to training providers, we hope to be able to form a set of recommendations that are achievable and feasible from their perspective, as well as meeting the needs of the Greater Manchester business community.

If you would like to take part in a short interview to contribute to the research for the next phase of the Greater Manchester Local Skills Improvement Plan, please contact the team via gmlsip@gmchamber.co.uk.

Survey

The Business Training survey is currently live and asks about businesses' training needs, the courses they need, and the preferred delivery method.

It takes just a few minutes to complete and can be accessed here: <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/GMLSIPSPPTY>

Questions and feedback

Finally, we're interested in hearing your feedback about the Local Skills Improvement Plan and our research. The Plan is based on the information we gather from businesses, so if there is anything you would like to discuss with the team, or if you have any questions about the Plan, please email gmlsip@gmchamber.co.uk.



The GM LSIP Team



Chris Fletcher
GMCC Policy Director and
Contract Director for the GM LSIP



Subrahmaniam Krishnan-Harihara
Deputy Director of Research and
Information Systems at GMCC



Samantha Lomeli
Research Analyst at GMCC



Joanna Preihs
Communications and Engagement
Manager for the GM LSIP

The Chamber has been fortunate to work with numerous other researchers over the course of the GM LSIP, who have since moved on to other projects. We thank them for their valuable contributions and insights.