

ANNEX C

BACKGROUND AND METHOD



LSIP BERKSHIRE
SHAPING THE FUTURE WORKFORCE

This annex summarises how the Thames Valley Berkshire LSIP was developed in line with statutory guidance.

Our work was also guided by a set of values and behaviours that were approved by our employer-led Panel.



1. Outline of the Evidence Base

The Berkshire LSIP draws on a combination of employer insight, labour market data, national policy analysis and regional economic strategies. The approach reflects the principle that LSIPs should be employer led while grounded in robust labour market intelligence.

The Berkshire LSIP draws on four main evidence streams:

- Employer engagement insight
- Labour market data and economic analysis
- National and regional strategies and policy frameworks
- Intelligence from partners across the skills system

Employer insights were captured using the Oxfordshire and Berkshire Insights from Employers (OBIE) system.

Employer insights were triangulated with labour market information and regional and national economic strategies to identify the key skills priorities for the LSIP. This combined approach ensures that the plan reflects both real employer experience and wider labour market trends.

A list of associated data, strategies, documents and data sources are listed at the end of Annex C.

2. Demonstrating Alignment with LSIP Guidance

Employer Engagement Approach

Employer evidence forms the central component of the analysis. Insight was gathered through structured employer consultations, surveys, workshops, roundtables and sector discussions facilitated through business networks and WDPs. Engagement included employers of different sizes and sectors across the Berkshire economy, with a strong emphasis on small and medium sized enterprises, which represent the majority of the regional business base.

We have recorded two categories of engagement: reach, and active engagement.

Definition of Reach

Employers engaging with electronic communication- open rate.

Definition of Employer Engagement

Engagements were counted when employers undertook one or more of the following activities:

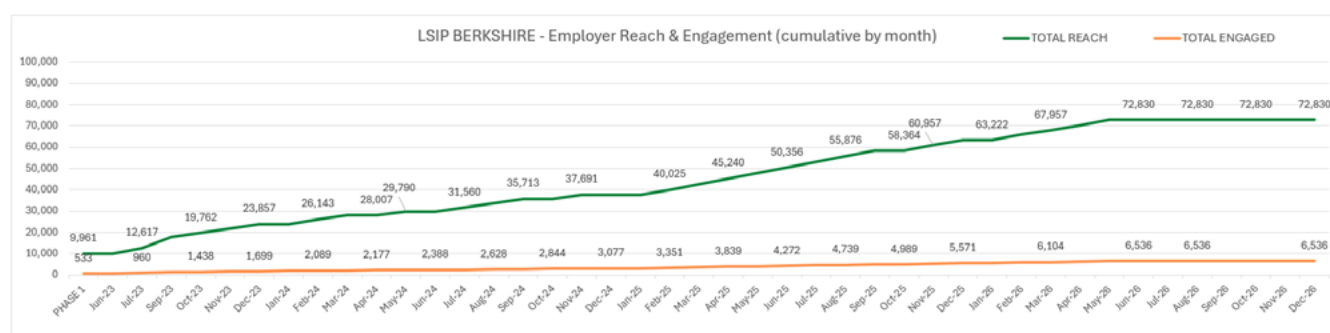
- Used information provided by the LSIP team about skills solutions

- Provided feedback on workforce development needs within their organisation or sector
- Provided feedback on the suitability of education and skills provision across Berkshire and suggested improvements
- Made a commitment of time or resources to support workforce development activity

Examples include contacting providers via LSIP information, participation in WDPs, engagement with training providers on curriculum design, offering apprenticeships or work placements, or contributing to LSIP consultations and discussions.

Active engagement was designed to create ongoing dialogue between employers, providers and stakeholders and to capture headline intelligence about recruitment difficulties, skills shortages and barriers to training. This approach provides the breadth of employer insight required to understand labour market conditions across the region.

The OBIE chart below shows the 'reach' and the 'engagement' since 2022.



From September 2025 to March 2026

During September 2025 to March 2026, engagement was designed to gain employer feedback and insights for the new LSIP.

We interviewed employers one to one, employers contributed to round table events and focus groups and contributed their views in pulse surveys at networking events.

Engagement September 2025-March 2026

Reach	Engagement *	*Of Which Non-Chamber Members
12,081 Open Rate	1,365	65%

We held specific cross sector events to elicit feedback on key emerging themes:

- [Thames Valley Talent Pipeline and Essential Skills Forum](#)
- [Thames Valley AI Skills and Workforce Forum](#)
- [Thames Valley Leadership & Management Forum](#)

A full list of LSIP events is at the end of Annex C. We also attended partner events and gathered feedback.

Data was collected through structured Dot Digital and Mentimeter formats, as well as qualitative insights via notes gathered by our research team. All this feedback was structured and coded into OBIE to ensure comparability. These were highly successful events, with the exchange of ideas across sectors generating insights that may not have emerged in one-to-one interviews.

We also gained valuable insights from WDPs. For example most recently our WDP members for [health and life sciences](#) (60+ attendees) and [defence and security](#) (40+ attendees), joined the wider business-led curated industry networks at two working group meetings held in February 2026.

To enhance data collection and deepen insights, deep dive one to one interviews and small group meetings were conducted by the LSIP's in house research team.

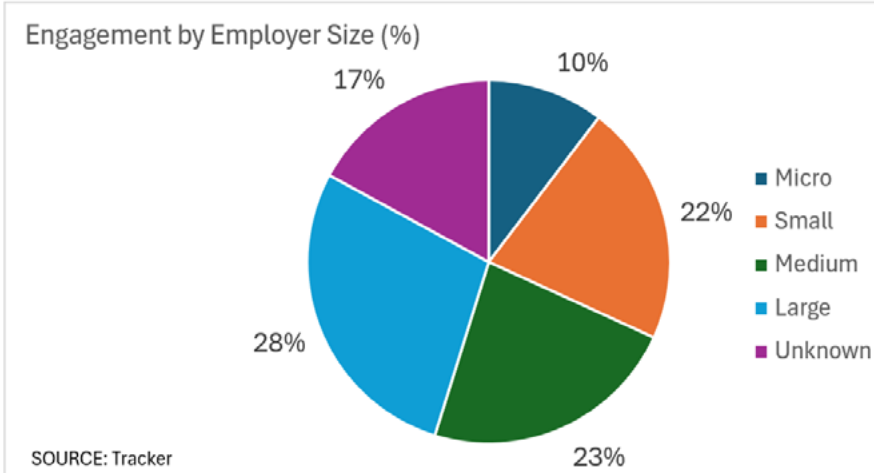
441 employers attended these meetings (1-1, Forums and other meetings) from September 2025-March 2026.

Researchers were trained in the structured interview methodology and in the consistent application of a standardised interview guide designed to explore workforce structure, recruitment challenges, skills gaps, training practices and anticipated future changes in occupational demand.

The use of a structured interview framework ensured comparability across sectors while allowing interviewers to probe responses in depth and capture detailed descriptions of job roles, required competencies and operational challenges.

Representation by Business Size (Active Engagement Sep 25-March 26)

To ensure that the employer evidence base was systematic and representative, the LSIP research programme used a comprehensive commercial dataset containing all registered enterprises operating within Berkshire. This dataset provided a structured sampling frame covering the full local business population.



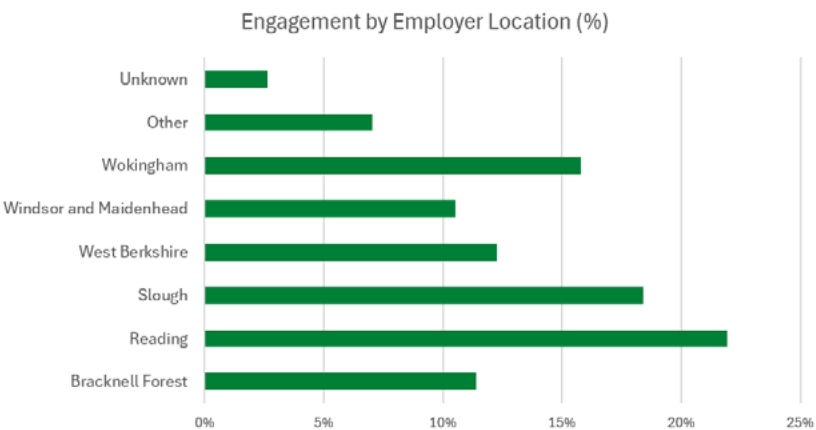
From this frame, employers were purposively sampled to ensure representation across the LSIP’s priority sectors and a strong emphasis on small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs), which constitute the majority of the regional business base.

The Thames Valley Berkshire business base is dominated by micro enterprises. According to

Office for National Statistics UK Business Counts (IDBR, 2023), analysis at local authority level (Reading, Slough, Wokingham, Bracknell Forest, West Berkshire, and Windsor and Maidenhead) shows that approximately 87–89% of enterprises employ fewer than 10 people, around 9–11% employ between 10 and 49 people, and around 1–2% are medium-sized. Large businesses account for around 1% or less of the total. Overall, SMEs represent over 99% of the business population. As can be seen from the chart below, the engagement from September 2025- March 2026 strived to reflect this regional position, with approximately 77% of active engagement undertaken with SMEs.

Representation by Local Authority (Active Engagement Sep 25-March 26)

Geographical coverage was ensured through close working with partner organisations across Reading, Slough, Wokingham, Bracknell Forest, West Berkshire and Windsor and Maidenhead, enabling access to employers across all six local authority areas of Berkshire. The distribution of registered enterprises across Berkshire is relatively evenly spread, with Reading accounting for approximately 18–19% of enterprises, Windsor and Maidenhead and Wokingham each around 17–18%, West Berkshire around 15–16%, Slough around 14–15%, and Bracknell Forest around 11–12%. This distribution was considered in the sampling approach to ensure that employer engagement reflected the underlying structure of the local economy, while maintaining appropriate geographical coverage across all six local authority areas. As can be seen below, the sampling was broadly in line with the Office for National Statistics UK Business Counts (2023) data.



Representation by Sector (Active Engagement Sep 25-March 26)

The approach was structured on a sector-by-sector basis, using SIC classifications to ensure systematic coverage. Employer recruitment for deep dive interviews and events was undertaken iteratively within

each priority sector, with targeted sampling to reflect both the scale and strategic importance of sectors locally. This ensured that sectors such as Creative, IT Construction, Life Sciences were proportionately represented, while also capturing insight from supporting and cross-cutting sectors including transport, retail and administrative services, as shown in the chart. (NB sector classifications set before priorities were finalised).

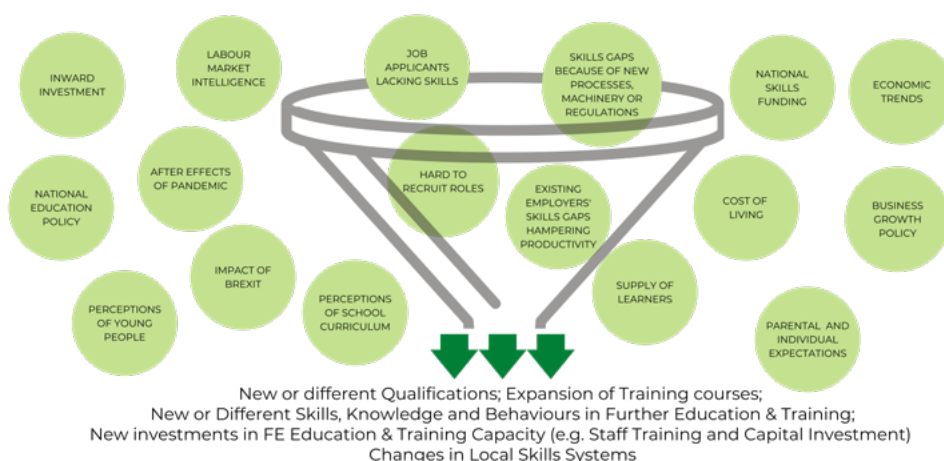


Eliciting Useful Information

Learnings from the previous LSIP round has deepened the team's expertise in eliciting the 'right' information from employers that is useful to the LSIP purpose. We refer to this as the LSIP 'Hopper'.

For this round of LSIP research, a series of structured tools were designed to guide interactions and structure the record of one-to-one interviews, focus groups, events and other data gathering exercises. All of these were detailed consultations designed to generate granular qualitative evidence about occupations, workforce needs and the changing nature of work.

ARTICULATING EMPLOYERS' SKILLS NEEDS



They focus on:

- Specific job roles and occupational demand
- Recruitment difficulties and hard-to-fill vacancies
- Skills shortages and workforce capability gaps
- Training and workforce development needs
- Emerging technological, regulatory or market changes.

The insights generated through deep dives are

coded and mapped to SOC and SIC classifications, enabling employer insight to be analysed alongside labour market data and occupational frameworks.

We developed a template to guide all our interactions, learning from feedback from our ongoing work.

Template

Conversations followed a structured framework to ensure consistency in the information collected and to enable systematic analysis.

Business Overview

Employers were asked to describe their organisation, its core activities and the sectors in which it operates.

Typical questions included:

- Can you describe what your business does in a few sentences?
- What products or services do you provide?
- Who are your main customers or clients?
- How many people do you employ and in which departments?

Job Roles and Tasks

Employers were asked to identify the key roles within their organisation and describe the tasks involved in those roles.

Typical questions included:

- What are the main job roles within your organisation?
- What are the key responsibilities and tasks associated with those roles?
- Are these roles specific to your organisation or common across your industry?

Recruitment Challenges

Employers were asked to identify recruitment difficulties and hard-to-fill vacancies.

Typical questions included:

- Which roles have been hardest to recruit for over the past year?
- Why are these roles difficult to fill?
- Is the challenge related to skills, experience, qualifications or other factors?
- Where do you usually recruit from?

Skills and Training Needs

Employers were asked about skills shortages and workforce development needs.

Typical questions included:

- Which skills are most often missing among applicants for difficult-to-fill roles?
- Which parts of your current workforce most urgently require training or upskilling?
- How does your organisation currently provide training for employees?

Future Workforce Needs

Employers were asked about expected changes to workforce demand.

Typical questions included:

- Which roles or skills will become more important over the next three years?
- What business changes are driving these needs?
- Are any tasks likely to become automated or replaced by technology?

Barriers to Training

Employers were asked about barriers that limit their ability to invest in skills.

Typical questions included:

- What prevents your business from investing more in workforce training?
- Have you worked with colleges or training providers previously?
- What changes to local training provision would benefit your business most?

These structured interviews provided detailed qualitative evidence about occupational demand, skills gaps and workforce change.

Capturing Employer Insights

Employer insights were captured using the Oxfordshire and Berkshire Insights from Employers (OBIE) system. This database tool enabled structured collection and analysis of employer feedback, allowing qualitative evidence to be coded thematically and mapped to industry and occupational classifications as well as useful comparisons with skills needs linked to Skills England Routes.

The platform supports thematic analysis and allows evidence to be interrogated across sectors and occupations. Employer insights were assessed iteratively until data saturation was reached, ensuring that key themes were consistently reflected across multiple businesses rather than relying on isolated examples.

Following data collection, the research team applied a systematic coding and analysis framework. Evidence from interviews was coded both thematically and by type of workforce need, allowing the analysis to distinguish between different categories of skills demand such as recruitment shortages, workforce upskilling requirements, emerging skills linked to technological change, and barriers to training investment.

Job roles and tasks described by employers were also mapped, where appropriate, to Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) codes, while businesses were categorised using Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) codes. This structured coding ensured that qualitative employer insights could be analysed consistently and aligned with recognised labour market frameworks.

Triangulation with Data

Triangulation of evidence and identification of priorities followed a structured, iterative process combining governance input, employer engagement and analytical testing.

As a non-devolved area, a number of stakeholders, across the six local authorities, were involved in identifying and testing the focus of the LSIP.

Initial sector mapping established a comprehensive longlist by aligning Berkshire's identified priority sectors and economic strengths with national and sub-regional policy frameworks. This included the UK Industrial Strategy and Skills England priorities at national level, alongside the Thames Valley Berkshire Economic Strategy locally. This ensured that the initial scope reflected both the sectoral composition of the Berkshire economy and the wider direction of travel for economic growth, productivity and labour market development.

The Thames Valley Berkshire Economic Strategy places particular emphasis on productivity-led growth, innovation and the continued development of high-value sector clusters, including digital and technology, life sciences, and advanced manufacturing. It also highlights the importance of skills development, business competitiveness and infrastructure as enabling conditions for sustained economic performance, alongside closer alignment between employment and skills systems to support inclusive growth across the sub-region.

This longlist was then tested through a consistent set of analytical lenses to determine where LSIP intervention would deliver the greatest value. These lenses assessed the extent to which sectors contribute to productivity, gross value added, exports and innovation. They also examined the persistence and scale of labour and skills pressures, including vacancy intensity, recruitment difficulty and workforce shortages, as well as the degree to which sectors offer accessible entry points, progression pathways and opportunities for inclusion. Ongoing discussions at the Thames Valley Skills Unit weekly meetings (internal), alongside feedback from partners, helped to refine where the LSIP should focus.

Between September and October 2025, the early phase involved sense-checking emerging sector areas against live employer feedback. In November, a set of draft priority areas was formally agreed with the LSIP Employer Panel, an LSIP Local Authority Panel (with representatives from all 6 local authorities) and an LSIP Provider Panel (with representatives from all FE colleges, over 20 ITPs, and Universities). The Employer and Provider Panels were pan Berkshire and Oxfordshire.

Further consideration was given to sectors that underpin economic resilience and essential services, particularly where workforce sustainability is critical. Additional weighting was applied to sectors central to the transition to net zero, those with strong research and innovation intensity, and those that build on distinctive local assets such as innovation campuses, anchor institutions and established cluster strengths. Consideration was also given to the likelihood of future disruption, including the anticipated impacts of artificial intelligence, automation and wider economic change, recognising that these factors will reshape skills demand over the medium to long term.

Employer insight informed the process throughout but did not determine priorities in isolation. Instead, a structured triangulation process was applied. Emerging themes from employer engagement were identified through systematic coding of feedback and wider engagement activity. These themes were then tested against labour market demand indicators, including online vacancy analysis over the previous three months and employment data from the Office for National Statistics Business Register and Employment Survey, to confirm whether reported shortages reflected wider demand. Skills supply data was subsequently reviewed, drawing on Department for Education further education statistics and the Local Skills Dashboard, to assess whether provision aligned with or diverged from employer need.

Long-term employment projections to 2035 were used to identify sectors expected to support significant job growth across Berkshire. Findings were then cross-referenced against the Berkshire Economic Strategy and the Get Berkshire Working Plan (the latter was approved in December 2025), the UK Industrial Strategy and Skills England priorities to ensure alignment with strategic economic direction. Sector-specific intelligence was incorporated where available, including evidence from

partners such the Electrical Contractor Training Alliance, CITB, Screen Berkshire, individual local authority skills plans.

Four key evidence streams informed the analysis throughout:

- Labour market data and economic analysis
- National and regional strategies and policy frameworks
- Employer engagement insight, including both wide engagement and deep dives
- Intelligence from partners across the skills system

Where evidence converged across these sources, priorities were confirmed. Where evidence diverged, further interrogation was undertaken with employers and partners before inclusion.

Priorities were finalised through a structured governance process, with the Panels (Employer, Provider and Local Authority) reconvening in February 2026 to review and agree priorities.

Draft priorities and emerging findings were then shared widely with partners in February 2026 to ensure transparency and collective input. This included circulation to further education colleges, higher education institutions, independent training providers, local authorities, employer groups, sector bodies, careers services and Jobcentre Plus.

A full draft of the LSIP was subsequently reissued in March 2026 for further consultation. Feedback from all stakeholders was gathered and analysed systematically, with changes incorporated where appropriate. This iterative approach ensured that priorities were not only evidence-based but also tested and validated across the wider system.

As a result, the final LSIP reflects a shared and agreed position across employers, providers and strategic partners, ensuring that priorities are credible, deliverable and aligned with both employer demand and Berkshire's economic ambitions. The table below summarises this:

Priority Area	Why Prioritised
Digital (Data and Technology Enabled Services)	Major economic driver in Berkshire with persistent employer shortages in software, data, cyber and AI roles. Strong vacancy demand for professional and technical occupations.
Creative Industries (Screen, Gaming, Digital Production and Content)	Growing intersection between creative production and digital technologies with strong employer demand for hybrid creative technical skills.
Life Sciences (Pharmaceuticals, Agrifood and Health Technology)	Knowledge intensive cluster with demand for laboratory technicians, process engineers and regulatory specialists.
Defence and Advanced Manufacturing (including supply chains)	Strategic technical sector linked to defence and engineering assets with shortages in specialist engineering and technician roles.
Critical Services (Health, Care, Visitor Economy, Food and Farming, Logistics)	Large foundational workforce with persistent recruitment and retention pressures.
Construction, Retrofit, Electrification and Green Infrastructure	High demand for skilled trades and growing need for retrofit capability linked to decarbonisation and infrastructure delivery.

The second table below sets out the triangulation and rationale in more detail.

Priority	Headline employer insight	Labour demand (vacancies and projections)	Skills supply implications	Economic evidence
Digital (Data and Technology-Enabled Services)	Employers consistently report shortages in applied digital skills including software development, cloud platforms, data engineering, cyber security and AI-enabled services. The most acute shortages arise in mid-career technical roles where deep technical knowledge must be combined with commercial application.	Online vacancy analysis shows strong demand for science, research, engineering and technology professionals and business, media and public service professionals, reflecting the region's concentration of digital and knowledge-intensive roles.	Provision needs to strengthen pathways into software, data, cyber and AI-enabled occupations while supporting workforce upskilling in digital capability across sectors.	The Berkshire Economic Strategy identifies the ICT sector as one of the county's strongest economic advantages, with over 6,000 ICT businesses contributing around 29% of Berkshire's economic output and 14% of employment, and highlights opportunities in AI, cyber security and digital technologies.

Priority	Headline employer insight	Labour demand (vacancies and projections)	Skills supply implications	Economic evidence
Creative Industries (Screen, Gaming, Digital Production and Content)	Employers report growing demand for hybrid creative and technical skills, particularly where creative production intersects with real-time rendering, immersive media, gaming and AI-assisted content workflows.	Vacancy demand for business, media and public service professionals indicates continued demand for digital media, design and creative production occupations.	Provision needs to support technical creative pathways, including industry placements, portfolio-based learning and stronger collaboration between creative employers and providers.	The Berkshire Economic Strategy identifies media, publishing, digital creative and screen sectors as part of Berkshire's innovation-driven economy and an important contributor to knowledge-intensive employment.
Life Sciences (Pharmaceuticals, Agrifood and Health Technology)	Employers report shortages in laboratory technicians, process engineers and regulatory specialists, alongside growing demand for digital and automation skills within regulated research and production environments.	Vacancy demand remains strong for science, research and engineering professionals and associate professionals, reflecting the continued expansion of life science and health technology roles.	Provision needs to strengthen laboratory technician pathways, regulatory knowledge and digital capability in scientific roles, alongside progression routes into specialist and supervisory positions.	The Berkshire Economic Strategy identifies life sciences, biopharmaceuticals and medical technology as key knowledge-intensive sectors contributing to Berkshire's high-value economy.
Defence and Advanced Manufacturing (including Supply Chains)	Employers report shortages in engineering technicians, systems engineers and specialist manufacturing roles linked to defence supply chains and secure production environments.	Vacancy data highlights demand for science, engineering and technology professionals and skilled metal, electrical and electronic trades, reflecting demand for advanced technical capability.	Provision must support entry into engineering trades and higher technical roles while strengthening progression into specialist engineering and supervisory positions.	Berkshire benefits from proximity to major defence and advanced manufacturing assets, including AWE and regional aerospace and engineering supply chains, which support high-value technical employment across the Thames Valley corridor.
Critical Services (Health, Care, Visitor Economy, Food and Farming, Logistics)	Employers report persistent recruitment and retention pressures across operational roles, particularly those requiring customer service capability, regulatory awareness and digital systems use.	Vacancy data shows strong demand for caring personal service occupations, customer service occupations and administrative roles, reflecting the scale of employment in foundational sectors. Growth projections also indicate strong expansion in skilled agricultural and related trades (21%) and customer service occupations (15%).	Provision needs to strengthen entry pipelines, improve work readiness and support progression into supervisory and technical roles within these sectors.	The Berkshire Economic Strategy highlights the importance of foundational sectors in supporting Berkshire's wider economy, including its role within the western growth corridor and proximity to Heathrow, which drives demand across logistics, visitor economy and service sectors.
Construction, Retrofit, Electrification and Green Infrastructure	Employers report shortages in skilled trades including electrical installation, groundworks, surveying and retrofit roles. Employers also highlight the importance of site readiness and practical competence for new entrants.	Vacancy demand includes skilled metal, electrical and electronic trades, reflecting strong demand for electrical and building services skills.	Provision must strengthen the pipeline of skilled trades while embedding retrofit capability, building safety knowledge and practical site readiness.	The Berkshire Economic Strategy links economic growth to housing delivery, infrastructure development and decarbonisation, including opportunities in carbon-neutral construction and SME decarbonisation.
Cross-cutting theme: Recruitment Pressure in Specialist Roles	Employers report the greatest recruitment pressure in mid-career technical and specialist roles requiring both experience and applied technical competence.	Vacancy demand across professional occupations reflects sustained demand for higher-level technical and managerial roles.	Skills provision needs to strengthen technician and higher technical pathways and support workforce progression.	Berkshire's knowledge-intensive economy relies heavily on specialist technical capability across multiple sectors.

Priority	Headline employer insight	Labour demand (vacancies and projections)	Skills supply implications	Economic evidence
Cross-cutting theme: Upskilling to Improve Productivity	Employers emphasised the importance of developing the existing workforce, particularly in digital capability, compliance knowledge and operational management.	Vacancy demand for professional and managerial roles indicates increasing demand for higher-level skills across sectors.	Provision should support modular workforce development, higher technical education and professional training for existing employees.	The Berkshire Economic Strategy emphasises productivity growth as a central economic objective, highlighting the role of skills development in supporting economic performance.
Cross-cutting theme: Building Management Strength in SMEs	Many SMEs report promoting staff into supervisory roles without structured leadership training.	Labour market projections indicate growth in managerial occupations, including other managers and proprietors (18%).	Provision should expand leadership and management development, particularly accessible programmes for SMEs.	Berkshire has a dynamic SME economy with strong business formation rates, particularly in Reading and Slough.
Cross-cutting theme: Removing Barriers to Training	Employers report that time constraints, cost and inflexible delivery models limit participation in training.	Labour demand for workforce development is often constrained by structural barriers rather than lack of employer demand.	Provision must become more flexible through modular delivery, short courses and employer-aligned training programmes.	Improving SME access to workforce development is identified as important for supporting productivity and innovation in Berkshire's business base.
Cross-cutting theme: Preparing for Net Zero and Emerging Technologies including AI	Employers consistently reported that technological change, AI adoption and regulatory requirements are reshaping job roles across sectors.	Demand is increasing for occupations requiring digital, data and regulatory capability across multiple sectors.	Skills provision must embed digital literacy, AI awareness and sustainability knowledge across occupational pathways.	The Berkshire Economic Strategy identifies technological change and climate change as major structural challenges, highlighting the importance of AI, big data and green technologies.
Cross-cutting theme: Improving Work-Readiness and Real-World Skills	Employers reported that some young people and graduates lack practical workplace experience, sector awareness and understanding of professional expectations.	Recruitment challenges are particularly visible in entry-level roles across service and operational occupations.	Provision must strengthen employer engagement, placements and work-based learning across further and higher education.	Improving transitions from education into employment supports inclusive growth and strengthens Berkshire's future workforce pipeline.

Environmental and Net Zero Goals

The transition to Net Zero and the shift towards a more sustainable economy will have important implications for skills demand across Berkshire. National policy frameworks, including the Clean Energy Jobs Plan and wider UK Net Zero commitments, highlight the need to develop new technical capabilities in areas such as low carbon construction, clean energy systems, sustainable infrastructure and environmental management. These changes are expected to affect both specialist green occupations and the wider workforce as businesses adapt to new technologies, regulatory requirements and energy systems.

Employer engagement during development of the LSIP indicates that these changes are already beginning to influence workforce requirements. In construction and the built environment, employers highlighted increasing demand for retrofit skills, energy efficiency installation and low carbon building techniques. In engineering, manufacturing and life sciences, employers reported the need for skills linked to automation, energy efficiency and sustainable production processes. Digital technologies, data systems and process optimisation are also becoming increasingly important in helping businesses reduce energy use and improve environmental performance.

The LSIP therefore supports the development of skills that enable businesses to respond to environmental and Net Zero challenges. This includes strengthening training pathways for retrofit and green construction, supporting the development of new short courses and technical training in emerging green technologies, and embedding environmental awareness and sustainability practices

within broader technical and vocational programmes. Work with employers, training providers and local partners will help ensure that the skills system remains responsive as new technologies and regulatory requirements emerge.

In line with national priorities, the LSIP will continue to monitor emerging demand linked to clean energy, green infrastructure and sustainable technologies. Through the WDPs and ongoing employer engagement, partners will review skills needs regularly and support the development of training provision that prepares the workforce for the environmental transition while supporting productivity and economic growth across Berkshire.

Equality of Opportunity

Ensuring that more residents can access and progress within Berkshire's labour market is a core objective of the LSIP. Evidence from employer engagement and the Get Berkshire Working Plan highlights that while Berkshire has a strong economy, not all residents benefit equally from employment opportunities. Barriers to participation include limited awareness of career pathways, uneven access to training opportunities, practical constraints such as time and cost, and a lack of clear progression routes in some sectors.

The Get Berkshire Working Plan emphasises the importance of improving workforce participation and progression across the county. Many of the sectors identified in the LSIP, particularly health and care, hospitality, logistics and food production, provide important entry points to the labour market for people who may face barriers to employment. These include young people entering the workforce, individuals changing career, and people returning to work after periods of inactivity. However, employers reported that access to information, training and career development opportunities is not always consistent across communities, which can limit participation in these sectors.

Employer feedback also highlighted the importance of improving awareness of career pathways and strengthening progression routes. In some industries, entry-level roles are often perceived as temporary or low skilled, despite offering progression into supervisory and higher-skilled positions. The LSIP therefore includes actions to strengthen careers engagement, including sector-based careers events, improved work placements and clearer progression pathways from Level 2 into Level 3–4 roles. These actions are intended to widen participation and improve retention by making long-term career opportunities more visible.

The LSIP supports equality of opportunity through a set of targeted, practical interventions. These include the expansion of contextualised ESOL provision linked to priority sectors such as care, logistics and the visitor economy, combining language development with vocational skills to support progression into employment. Flexible and modular training delivery is also being expanded, enabling participation from individuals with caring responsibilities or those working in shift-based roles. In addition, improvements to Level 2 pathways and employability provision are intended to strengthen entry routes into the labour market, particularly for those without prior qualifications or established employer networks.

Employers and providers will work together to improve access to work-based learning opportunities, including placements and apprenticeships, ensuring that individuals are able to gain practical experience and progress within sectors. This includes piloting more flexible approaches to industry placements through a T Level placement pilot, designed to support employers who may not currently be able to offer traditional placement models and to widen access to high-quality work experience for learners. Actions to strengthen first-line supervision and progression pathways will also support individuals to move from entry-level roles into more stable and higher-skilled employment over time.

In considering equality of opportunity, the LSIP has taken account of groups who may face additional barriers to accessing skills and employment opportunities. This includes young people without established employer networks, adults returning to the labour market, individuals with caring responsibilities, people from disadvantaged communities, and those with disabilities or long-term health conditions. Evidence from employer engagement and the Get Berkshire Working Plan highlights that barriers such as limited flexibility in training, lack of awareness of opportunities, and restricted access to work experience can affect participation for these groups.

The LSIP therefore promotes a more accessible and inclusive skills system by supporting flexible delivery models, targeted careers information and guidance, ESOL provision, improved access to work placements including a pilot T Level industry placement.

Governance of the LSIP

Governance of the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) is structured to ensure clear employer leadership, robust challenge and effective accountability in line with statutory guidance, while maintaining strong alignment with wider economic governance across Berkshire.

Employer Representative Body (ERB)

The Employer Representative Body provides overall leadership of the LSIP and is accountable for its development, refresh and implementation.

It ensures that the plan reflects a broad, representative and independent employer voice across the Berkshire economy and that statutory requirements are met. The ERB retains responsibility for sign-off of priorities, oversight of delivery and escalation of systemic risks.

Employer Board

An Employer Board, comprising senior employer representatives from a diverse range of sectors and business sizes, is convened to support the ERB. Membership draws on existing employer engagement alongside new representation to reflect updated priorities. Acting on behalf of the ERB, the Board operates as the primary decision-making and assurance forum. Reflecting functional economic geography, membership spans Berkshire and Oxfordshire. The Board provides structured challenge to the evidence base, validates priorities and monitors progress against agreed outcomes. It plays a formal role in holding partners to account for delivery while ensuring that priorities remain grounded in Berkshire's economic needs.

To support transparency and effective governance, the Employer Board maintains a register of interests for all members, which is reviewed regularly and used to manage any actual or perceived conflicts in line with good governance practice.

WDPs (Workforce Development Partnerships)

WDPs operate as sector-based working groups aligned to priority clusters. Chaired by Thames Valley Skills Champions, they bring together employers, providers and relevant stakeholders to support implementation. Their role is to generate intelligence, undertake occupational reviews and identify skills gaps. WDPs do not have decision-making authority and report into the Employer Board.

Provider and Stakeholder Panels

A cross-area Provider Panel brings together education and training providers from Berkshire and Oxfordshire, reflecting shared travel-to-learn patterns. The panel supports coordinated curriculum planning and delivery responses to LSIP priorities, while maintaining a clear distinction between employer-led priority setting and provider-led implementation.

Local Authority and Strategic Alignment

A formal, non-statutory relationship is maintained with the Berkshire Prosperity Board through its skills and economic workstream, creating a defined dotted reporting line. Regular updates are provided on LSIP progress, emerging skills needs and delivery risks, supporting coordinated action across partners while preserving the employer-led nature of the LSIP.

Wider System Alignment

The ERB is represented on the Get Berkshire Working Strategic Oversight Committee, ensuring direct alignment between LSIP priorities and employment and skills delivery programmes. This provides a mechanism for influencing system-wide interventions and ensuring that employer-identified skills needs are reflected in programme design and delivery, while maintaining the independence of the LSIP. Assurance and Reporting

A clear reporting and assurance cycle is maintained, including an annual LSIP progress report and periodic updates drawing on labour market data, employer insight and WDP reporting. The Employer Board reviews performance and progress, with the ERB retaining overall accountability. Reporting

ERB

EMPLOYER BOARD

WDPs

**LOCAL AUTHORITY AND
PROVIDER PANELS**

through the Prosperity Board workstream forms part of this wider assurance framework, ensuring transparency, alignment and continuous improvement.

National Data and Policy Sources

The LSIP evidence base draws on a wide range of national datasets and policy frameworks, including:

[Office for National Statistics \(ONS\) labour market statistics](#)

[Business Register and Employment Survey \(BRES\)](#)

[Annual Population Survey \(APS\)](#)

[Population estimates - Office for National Statistics](#)

[Labour Force Survey \(LFS\)](#)

[Longitudinal Education Outcomes \(LEO\) data](#)

Individualised Learner Record (ILR) data

[Department for Education further education statistics](#)

Skills England labour market intelligence and skills assessments

[Occupations in demand: 2025 - GOV.UK](#)

[Assessment of priority skills to 2030 - GOV.UK](#)

[AI foundation skills for work - GOV.UK](#)

[Employer skills survey 2024: England results - GOV.UK](#)

[Local Skills Dashboard](#)

[The Skills Imperative 2035 - NFER](#)

[UK Industrial Strategy](#) and related workforce plans

national sector workforce strategies.

[Get Britain Working White Paper - GOV.UK](#)

[Clean Energy Jobs Plan: Creating a new generation of good jobs to deliver energy security](#)

[NHS England » NHS Long Term Workforce Plan](#)

Local Authority Plans

Although Berkshire is not currently a devolved area, local economic strategies have been reviewed to ensure alignment. This includes:

[Berkshire Economic Strategy](#)

[Get Berkshire Working Plan](#)

Local Authority Plans:

[Council Plan 2023 to 2027 | Bracknell Forest Council](#)

[Council Strategy 2023-2027 - West Berkshire Council](#)

[Council Plan- 2025 to 2028 - Reading Borough Council](#)

[Corporate plan – Slough Borough Council](#)

RBWM [Council Plan 2024-2028](#)

Wokingham [Our Ambition for 2030](#)

Regional Data and Information

[Business Manifesto | Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce](#)

[ey-uk-regional-economic-forecast-03-2025.pdf](#)

[Screen-Berkshire-impact-report-v5-lowres.pdf](#)

[Berkshire's Framework for Visitor Economy Development - Visit Windsor](#)

[Our Trust Strategy 2025-2030](#)

[Quarterly Economic Survey - Q4 Report - 2025](#)

Involvement of Providers

All categories of providers were involved in development, including:

- Further Education colleges
- Independent training providers
- Higher Education institutions
- Providers with statutory duties under the Act
- Providers without statutory duties

Schools and sixth form settings were engaged, particularly in relation to careers pathways, progression and early engagement with priority sectors

Provider Panels and Local Authority Panels were convened in November 2025 and February 2026 to

test findings and assess delivery feasibility. This ensured that agreed actions are realistic within current funding and regulatory frameworks.

Involvement of Local Stakeholders

Local stakeholders were engaged through:

- The Berkshire Prosperity Board
- The Skills and Employment Workstream
- The Get Berkshire Working Oversight Committee
- Cross-Thames Valley Defence and Health and Life Sciences working groups
- Thames Valley FE Group
- LSIP Panel Meetings

In Berkshire, anchor institutions including the university, NHS organisations and local authorities play a central role in the local economy and in supporting workforce participation. The LSIP aligns with a wide range of VCSE organisations that provide alternative provision, employability support and progression pathways for those furthest from the labour market. These partners are particularly important in delivering vocational ESOL, pre-employment training and targeted support that enables individuals to access opportunities in LSIP priority sectors. Working alongside Get Berkshire Working, this approach helps ensure that inclusion, skills development and employer demand are connected, supporting both access to work and progression within key industries.

An example list of providers involved is below:

- University of Reading
- University College of Estate Management
- Royal Holloway University
- BNU
- Activate Learning
- Newbury College and University Centre
- The Windsor Forest Colleges Group
- New Directions
- West Berkshire Training Consortium
- UTC Reading
- BAM Construction Training
- Chiltern Training
- CoTrain
- Equal Engineers
- Resource Productions
- JTL Training
- Multi Trades Training
- New Meaning Training
- QA
- The Management Academy
- The Digital College
- Explosive Learning
- Kennet School

Events September 2025-May 2026	
LSIP Led Employer Events	Partner Employer Events attended by LSIP (Examples)
Manufacturing WDP 18th September	Reading Career Event
Windsor Debates 26th September	Federation Of Environmental Trade Associations Meeting
Hospitality WDP 30th September	Bayer Recruitment Event
Defence WG 3rd October	Retrofit Event
Construction WDP 9th Oct	CPD Retrain Expo
HLS WG 15th Oct	Go Connect SME Business Event
Screen WDP 23rd Oct	TVAI Event
State of the Region Conference 24th October	Heathrow Expo
Care Festival 26th November	Life Science for STEM Event
Care WDP 9th December	The Power of Robotics and AI Event

Events September 2025-May 2026	
LSIP Led Employer Events	Partner Employer Events attended by LSIP (Examples)
AI & Digital Forum 22nd Jan	Construction Steering Group
HLS WG 5th Feb	Tech STEM Event
Talent Pipeline Forum 10th Feb	AI Skills Report Launch
Defence WG 13th Feb	NVIDIA AI Conference
Leadership & Management Forum 12th March	Thames Valley Expo
Windsor Debates 20th March	Reading Business Network Event
Haulage WDP 15th April (Activate organised and ran meeting)	Dentistry and Life Science Show
Hospitality WDP 7th May	ECTA Alliance Meeting
Growth Conference 12th May	TWFCG AI Conference
	Reading Pub Watch

List of Stakeholders Involved (not inclusive)

- Berkshire Prosperity Board
- Bracknell Forest Council
- Reading Borough Council
- Royal Borough Windsor and Maidenhead
- Slough Borough Council
- West Berkshire Council
- Wokingham Borough Council
- Skills and Growth Hub
- Berkshire Careers- Skills and Growth Hub
- Careers and Enterprise Company
- Berkshire Active
- Berkshire Care Association
- Thames Valley AI (TVAI)
- Berkshire Local Visitor Economy Partnership
- British Computing Society
- CECA Civil Engineering Contractors Association
- CILT Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport
- CIMSPA Chartered Institute for Sports and Physical Activity
- CITB
- Cogent Skills
- ECA
- FMB, Federation of Master Builders
- Home Builders Federation
- IMI Institute of Motor Industry
- Institute of Sales Professionals
- Logistics UK
- Road Haulage Association
- Skills for Care
- UK Hospitality
- STFC Apprenticeships & UKRI Apprenticeship
- STFC UKRI
- Kings Trust
- Unison