

Sussex and Brighton Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) 2026-2029

Shaping Future Skills for Sussex & Brighton

Provider and Stakeholder Consultation Event - 3 February 2026

Important – Please Note

- The slides that follow are a **summary of our findings** in the development of the Sussex and Brighton LSIP **as of 3 February 2026**.
- We are using them for consultation purposes and as such **they are subject to change**.

Welcome and Scene Setting

Ana Christie – CEO, Sussex Chamber of Commerce

Claire Witz – LSIP Lead, Sussex Chamber of Commerce (Consultant)

What the LSIP is and why we are here today

The Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) sets out the skills and training priorities for Sussex and Brighton.

It is:

- Employer-led
- Evidence-based
- Focused on skills from **entry level through to higher and professional levels**

Why this matters

- It directly influences local education and training provision
- It shapes investment decisions and funding priorities
- It helps ensure people can access the skills employers need

Why we're here today

- To discuss the next iteration of the LSIP (2026-29) – working title LSIP 2.0
- To hear about our evidence findings to date
- To get your reflections on the evidence

LSIP 2.0 - what Sussex Chamber is doing

We are working with employers, core partners and wider stakeholders to develop the **next Sussex & Brighton LSIP** report and action plan to cover **2026–2029**.

This includes:

- Employer surveys and in-depth interviews
- Sector-specific and cross-sector workshops
- Analysis of labour market and workforce data
- Consultation and collaboration with education and training providers

What's different this time

- Stronger focus on **cross-sector skills**
- Skills up to **Level 8**, including higher and professional skills
- Clearer links between skills, jobs and career pathways
- Alignment with devolution and Skills England priorities

Thanks to our host for today

The logo for the University of Sussex, featuring the letters 'US' in a large, dark blue, serif font.

UNIVERSITY
OF SUSSEX

Graeme Peddlingham, Deputy Pro-Vice-Chancellor for the Student Experience

Robin Banerjee, Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Global and Civic Engagement

What you can expect today

- To hear more about the **Strategic Context** of the LSIP
- To find out what the LSIP **Evidence Base** (Labour Market Information and Employer Feedback) is telling us so far
- To give **your reflections** on what the evidence is telling us
- To find out more about the **process and next steps**

At the end of the workshop, you will hear from the **Universities** who are going to tell us more about the **new Civic University Agreement** and what it means for Sussex and Brighton.

Strategic Context

Claire Witz – LSIP Lead, Sussex Chamber of Commerce (Consultant)

LSIP and the wider skills system

The Local Skills Improvement Plan sits **at the centre of the skills system**, connecting national priorities with local delivery and employer needs.

National direction

- UK Industrial Strategy
- Post-16 Education and Skills White Paper
- Skills England

Local direction

- Devolution and Local Growth Plans
- Get Sussex Working Plan
- Local Economic Strategies

Where the LSIP fits

- Brings the **employer voice** into this system
- Translates national priorities into **local skills needs**
- Aligns provision to **real jobs and workforce demand**

LSIP Key Sectors



Construction



Creative & Cultural



Digital Technologies



Engineering & Advanced Manufacturing



Health Care & Life Sciences



Land-based Industries



**Professional & Business Services
(new)**



Hospitality & Visitor Economy

LSIP Cross-Sector Skills Themes

Alongside sector-specific needs, we are focusing on **four cross-sector skills themes** that cut across every industry in Sussex and Brighton.

These themes will:

- Sit at the heart of the LSIP
- Shape future training, provision and pathways
- Apply across all sectors and occupations

Digital & AI Readiness

- Building digital confidence, data literacy and AI capability at every level
- From basic digital skills to advanced and specialist use
- Supporting productivity, efficiency and innovation

Green & Sustainability Skills

- Embedding net-zero, energy efficiency and sustainable practice into training
- Practical green skills, not just policy knowledge
- Relevant to everyday roles as well as specialist jobs

Innovation & Technical Excellence

- Fostering problem-solving, R&D literacy and advanced technical skills
- Supporting quality, competitiveness and growth
- Encouraging continuous improvement and innovation

Access Routes into Employment & Career Pathways

- Ensuring jobs and careers are open to everyone
- Clear entry routes, progression and retraining pathways
- Supporting young people, career changers and those furthest from work

Labour Market Information

- what is it telling us?

Kirsten Trussell – LSIP Strategic Lead, Sussex Chamber of Commerce (Consultant)

A high-skill economy... but not everywhere

- Sussex and Brighton has a **higher-than-average concentration of professional and higher-skilled roles**
- BUT, the **structure of employment** varies significantly by place
- **Productivity** is strong overall but is not consistent across the area

Provocation

If occupational demand differs this clearly by place, how well is our skills system responding to that reality?

What this implies for the LSIP

Skills provision needs to respond to **place-based variation**, not assume uniform demand.

Rising pay, but uneven outcomes

- Average weekly pay has **increased in every Sussex local authority since 2021**.
- Despite this growth, **only a small number of areas now match or exceed national and South East pay levels**.
- Areas with higher pay tend to have a **greater concentration of professional and technical roles**.

Provocation

Are our skills pathways supporting progression everywhere – or only where high-skill ecosystems already exist?

What this implies for the LSIP

The LSIP must focus on **progression and skills depth**, not just entry-level supply.

An ageing workforce we're not replacing

- Sussex has an **older working-age population profile** than England and the South East.
- **People aged 16–24 form a smaller share of the population in Sussex than in the South East and England**, limiting the scale of new labour-market entrants.
- Participation among people aged **50–64 varies widely by area**, with some local authorities performing significantly better than others.

Provocation

If workforce replacement can't rely on young entrants alone, how well does the system support retraining and re-entry?

What this implies for the LSIP

Adult retraining and mid-career pathways are **structural requirements**, not marginal activity.

Jobs exist, but participation doesn't follow

- Economic inactivity exceeds national and regional averages in **several Sussex districts**, particularly in coastal and rural areas.
- Claimant rates have **risen locally while falling nationally**, indicating localised labour-market pressures.
- Recruitment demand remains **strong across care, service and technical roles**.

Provocation

Where does the skills system unintentionally block access to work?

What this implies for the LSIP

The LSIP needs to address the **interface between skills, employability and access**, not treat them separately.

A micro-business economy under pressure

- Most Sussex businesses are micro-firms: **at least seven in ten – and in some sectors more than nine in ten – employ fewer than 10 people.**
- Net business growth returned in 2023–24 but remains **below the England average.**
- Construction and professional services account for a **large share of enterprises across Sussex.**

Provocation

Is the way we design and deliver skills realistic for an economy dominated by micro-employers?

What this implies for the LSIP

Skills delivery models must work for **small employers with limited capacity**, not just large organisations.

Demand that doesn't go away

- **Care, health and people-facing roles dominate** vacancy volumes across Sussex.
- Technical and professional roles appear **consistently year-round**, albeit in lower volumes.
- Recruitment patterns repeat over time, indicating **ongoing replacement demand**.

Provocation

Are we designing provision to reduce churn – or just to keep up with it?

What this implies for the LSIP

The LSIP should prioritise **retention, progression and quality of outcomes**, not just throughput.

Table Discussion

Given what you've heard about the labour market, where is the skills system in Sussex most out of step with the reality employers and residents are experiencing?

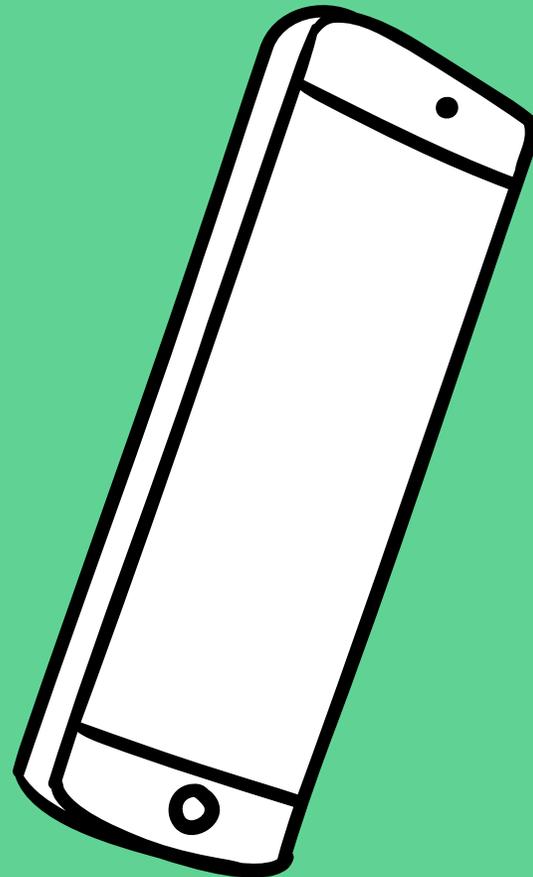
You might want to think about:

- Out of step *for who?*
- Out of step *where?*
- Out of step *at what point?* – entry, progression, retraining

Instructions:

- **Discuss** at your table
- **Capture** key points on flipchart
- Agree **one clear headline point** per table

Share your headline point (1 per table)



Let's Take a 15-Minute Break

Employer Findings

- what are they telling us?

Kirsten Trussell – LSIP Strategic Lead, Sussex Chamber of Commerce (Consultant)

Digital and AI Readiness

What the evidence is telling us

- **Digital and AI capability is now a core business competence across all sectors**, embedded in everyday roles, workflows and decision-making – not a specialist or IT-only function.
- **The primary readiness gap is applied judgement and confidence**, not awareness: employers are struggling to embed digital and AI tools safely, consistently and productively into live work.
- **Leadership and management capability is the critical enabler or blocker** of digital and AI adoption, shaping whether tools deliver productivity, quality and compliance benefits.

“

“AI doesn’t reduce the need for skills - it raises the bar on who we need.”

Technical skills needed

Applied, role-embedded – not “digital jobs”

- Confident use of **sector-specific digital systems and platforms**
- **Data handling and interpretation** relevant to role and context
- Safe and effective use of **AI-enabled tools**, including validation and quality checking
- **Cyber awareness** and **secure digital working** practices
- Integration of digital tools into **day-to-day operational workflows**

Strategic capabilities needed

How organisations adopt, govern and scale digital and AI

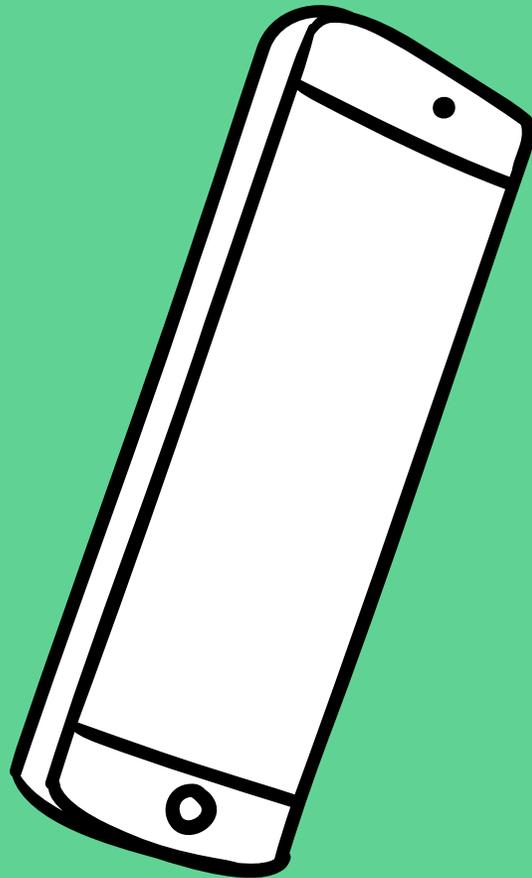
- **Judgement in selecting and implementing tools**, not just using them
- Understanding **risk, ethics, data quality and governance** in AI-enabled work
- Ability to **standardise digital practice** across teams and roles
- Translating technology adoption into **productivity, quality and resilience**
- Leading digital and AI change **without disrupting delivery**

Core workplace skills needed

Sometimes called employability skills, but clearly more than that

- **Critical thinking and professional judgement**
- Confidence to **question outputs**, challenge assumptions and escalate risk
- **Accountability for decisions** supported by digital or AI tools
- **Adaptability** as systems, tools and processes change
- Clear communication in **digitally mediated environments**

Your reflections



Green and Sustainability Skills

What the evidence is telling us

- **Green and sustainability skills are primarily being expressed as embedded requirements within existing roles**, rather than as demand for large volumes of new, standalone “green jobs”.
- **Where green skills are surfacing most clearly, they are driven by delivery, compliance and procurement pressure**, with strongest signals in construction, land-based activity and professional services.
- **There is a growing risk of under-preparing the mainstream workforce**, as Net Zero expectations rise faster than employers’ confidence, capacity and clarity about what skills are required in practice.

“

“Net Zero sounds clear until you have to make real decisions on cost and delivery.”

“Sustainability is part of everyone’s job now - it’s not a separate role.”

Technical skills needed

Applied, role-embedded – not specialist

- **Low-carbon methods and processes** within existing roles
- **Resource efficiency** (energy use, waste reduction, materials)
- Understanding and applying **environmental standards and regulations**
- Sustainability-related **data capture** and **basic reporting**
- **Sector-specific green practice** in sectors such as construction and land-based

Strategic capabilities needed

How organisations respond to sustainability expectations

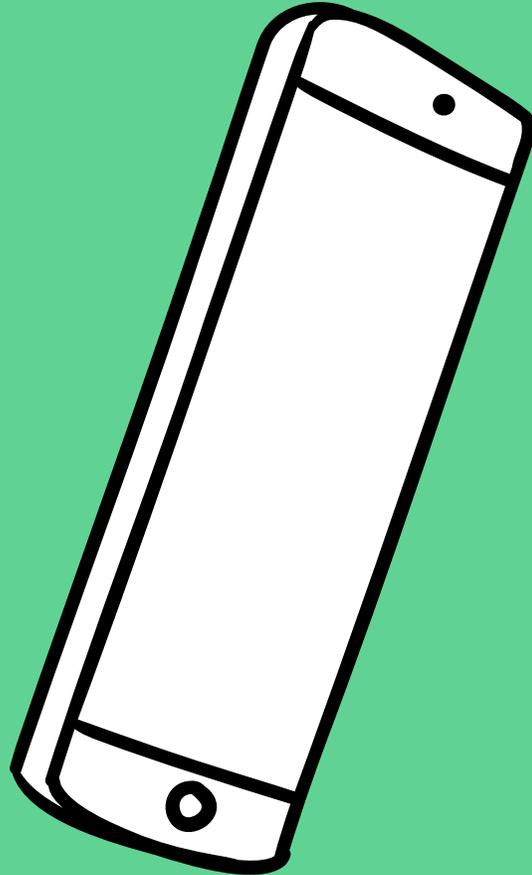
- Translating Net Zero ambition into **practical delivery decisions**
- Understanding **compliance, procurement and reporting requirements**
- Managing trade-offs between **cost, quality and sustainability**
- Anticipating **future regulatory** and **client expectations**
- **Embedding sustainability consistently** across teams and supply chains

Core workplace skills needed

Mainstream workforce capability

- **Environmental awareness** applied to day-to-day work
- **Responsibility and accountability** for compliant practice
- **Problem-solving** in constrained, real-world environments
- **Willingness to adapt** established ways of working
- **Collaboration** across roles and organisations to meet sustainability requirements

Your reflections



Innovation and Technical Excellence

What the evidence is telling us

- **The most acute pressure is at technician and mid-level technical roles**, where employers report persistent shortages, rising technical standards and increasing reliance on a shrinking pool of experienced staff.
- **Innovation is being experienced as implementation and improvement, not invention**: employers need people who can embed new methods, technologies and standards consistently into everyday operations.
- **Succession and knowledge transfer risks are growing**, as delivery pressure, ageing workforces and reduced mentoring capacity weaken pipelines into technical excellence roles.

“

“Our biggest risk is losing experienced technical staff with no one ready to step up.”

“We rely too heavily on a few experienced people.”

Technical skills needed

Applied technical competence, not abstract innovation

- **Advanced technical and technician-level** occupational skills
- **Troubleshooting, fault-finding and maintenance** capability
- **Operation and optimisation** of **modern equipment, systems and processes**
- **Quality assurance**, standards **compliance** and **continuous improvement** methods
- **Use of data and digital tools** to support technical decision-making

Strategic capabilities needed

How organisations sustain excellence and improvement

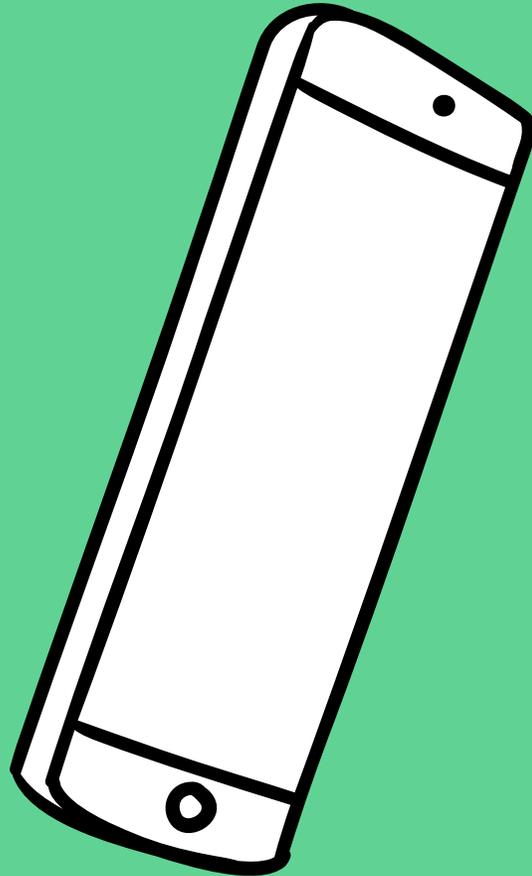
- **Embedding new methods and technologies** into consistent operational practice
- **Managing technical change** without disrupting delivery
- **Knowledge transfer, mentoring and succession planning**
- Judgement about **where and when to invest in innovation**
- **Leading improvement** at team and supervisor level

Core workplace skills needed

What enables technical excellence in practice

- **Professional judgement** and **accountability**
- **Attention to quality, standards and detail**
- **Problem-solving** under real-world constraints
- **Collaboration** across technical, operational and support roles
- **Willingness to learn, adapt** and **improve** as practices evolve

Your reflections



Access Routes into Employment and Career Pathways

What the evidence is telling us

- **Traditional entry and junior pathways are weakening**, as employers face delivery pressure, reduced mentoring capacity and AI/automation absorbing entry-level tasks.
- **Progression, not attraction, is now the weakest point in the system**, with employers struggling to move people from entry, into productive mid-level roles.
- **Demographic change is amplifying risk**, with an ageing workforce, fewer young entrants and a large inactive population increasing pressure on how and where people enter work.

“

“We don't really have space for people to learn on the job anymore.”

“You need people who can contribute straight away, which makes it harder for new entrants.”

Technical 'readiness' needed

Technical readiness now required earlier and at more entry points into work

- **Baseline occupational competence at the point of entry or transition into a role**, rather than being developed primarily after entry
- **Ability to operate safely and compliantly in-role from the outset**, particularly in regulated, safety-critical or customer-facing environments
- **Familiarity with the core tools, equipment or systems required to do the job**, before entering the workplace

Strategic capabilities needed

How organisations are being forced to rethink entry and progression

- Rethinking **where 'entry' into a profession now starts**, given AI, automation and role compression
- Designing what progression looks like where **traditional junior roles are fewer or different**
- Balancing productivity with workforce development and inclusion
- **Succession planning** in the context of ageing workforces
- Creating viable routes for **inactive and under-represented groups** to enter work

Core workplace skills needed

What enables progression when pathways are compressed

- **Work readiness** and **professional behaviours**
- **Reliability, communication** and **self-management**
- Confidence to **take responsibility earlier**
- Ability to **learn quickly in live work environments**
- **Resilience** and **adaptability** as roles and expectations change

Your reflections

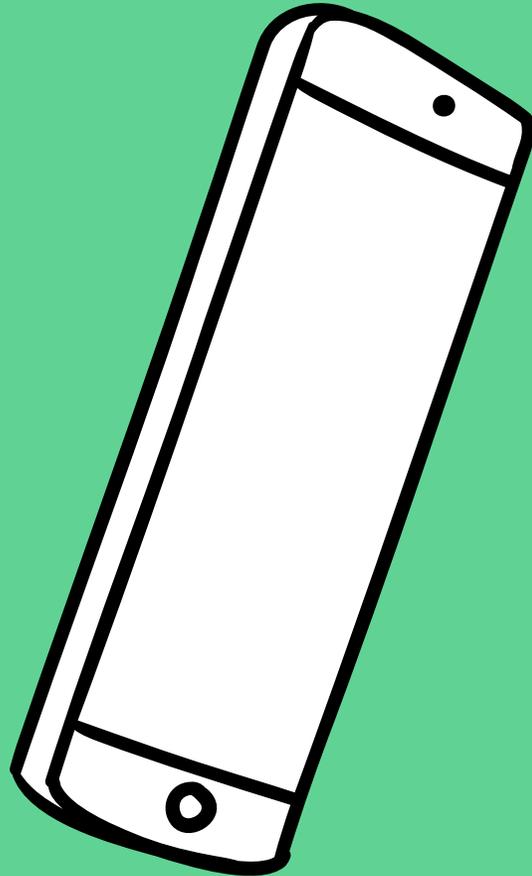


Table Discussion

If what employers are telling us is broadly true, here's the question we want you to wrestle with...

Theme 1: Digital & AI Readiness

If digital and AI capability now underpins how work is done across every sector, are we building workforce and leadership capability for safe, effective adoption – or are we still mainly teaching tools?

Theme 2: Green & Sustainability Skills

Are we building green skills provision for where employer demand is today, or for where policy ambition says it should be in five years' time and how do we deal with that tension?

Theme 3: Innovation & Technical Excellence

If technical excellence increasingly sits at technician and supervisor level, are current skills pathways strong enough to build, sustain and replace that capability over time?

Theme 4: Access Routes & Career Pathways

If AI, automation and delivery pressure are changing where 'entry' into a profession now starts, how well do our current pathways reflect that reality – and who risks being left out?

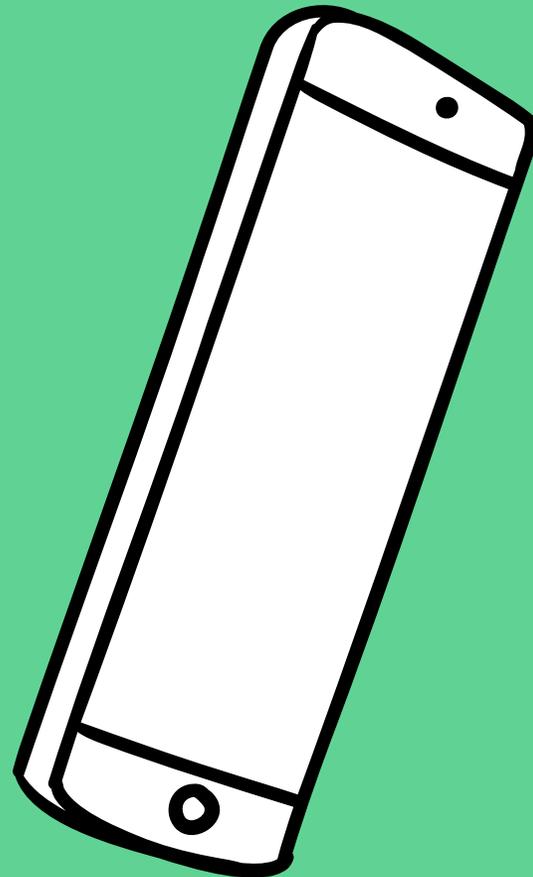
This isn't about solutions. This is about understanding where we are NOW.

Table Discussion

Instructions:

- Each table has been allocated a theme and a provocation question
- **Discuss the question** at your table – you have **about 20 minutes**
- **Capture** all key points on flipchart
- Agree **one clear headline point** per table that you will feed back via Mentimeter

Share your headline point (1 per table)



Next steps

Development Process

Identify Skills Needs

Build a clear picture using sector priorities, employer engagement, and Skills England analysis. Engage SMEs, public sector, and providers to understand current and future gaps.

- Evidence base data refresh – Nov/Dec
- Employer workshops - Jan
- **Stakeholder & Provider workshop – 3rd Feb**
- Development of Case for Change

Define Changes & Actions

Collaborate with Local Authorities, providers, employers and stakeholders to agree overarching changes and specific activities. Establish clear outcomes with measurable progress indicators.

- Action Planning Group Workshops to develop Roadmap for Change (action plan) – 25th Feb

Draft the LSIP

ERB to develop the LSIP Report and associated action plan

- First draft submitted to Skills England – 31st March
- Final draft submitted – 15 May
- Approved LSIP published – end June

LSIP Delivery 2026-2029

Delivering and monitoring the LSIP action plan.

- ERB-led coordination of LSIP delivery of action plan
- LSIP launch event – late summer / autumn 2026
- Annual data and evidence refresh
- Annual LSIP progress reports

Universities Showcase

Civic University Agreement

Thank you!

Thank you for contributing to the Sussex and Brighton LSIP.

We value your time, experience and ongoing collaboration.



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[Future Skills Sussex](#)



<https://www.linkedin.com/company/future-skills-sussex>