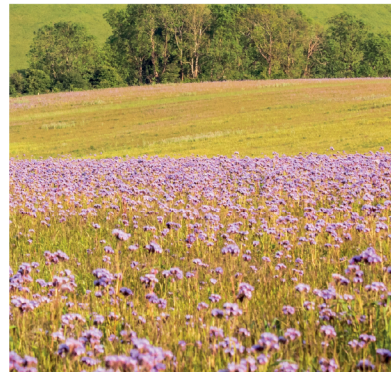
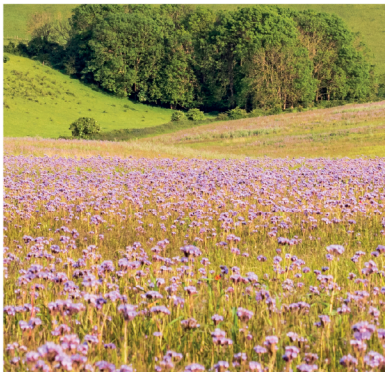


# Sussex and Brighton Local Skills Improvement Plan

2026 – 2029



**Future Skills  
Sussex** ✨



Funded by  
UK Government



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

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# 1. FOREWORD

Ana Christie

CEO, Sussex Chamber of Commerce



"I am pleased to present the Sussex and Brighton Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) 2026–2029.

This plan builds on the strong foundations established through the LSIP Trailblazer and the 2022–2025 refresh. Over the past four years, Sussex Chamber of Commerce has worked closely with employers, providers and partners to develop a clear, evidence-led understanding of the skills challenges and opportunities facing our region. What has emerged is not only a robust picture of need, but a shared commitment to act.

Sussex and Brighton benefit from a well-established and increasingly collaborative skills system. Further education providers, universities, independent training providers, local authorities and sector bodies have worked together to respond to LSIP priorities, supported by investment through initiatives such as the Strategic Development Fund and Local Skills Improvement Fund. This plan builds on that progress, recognising both the strength of existing provision and the partnerships that underpin it.

However, the context continues to evolve. Technological change, particularly the rapid pace of digital and AI adoption, is reshaping roles and raising expectations across sectors. At the same time, employers are facing ongoing workforce pressures, changing labour market dynamics, and increasing requirements around sustainability. These shifts reinforce the need for a more responsive, joined-up and employer-informed skills system.

This LSIP sets out four priorities designed to address these challenges. They reflect consistent messages from extensive employer engagement, labour market intelligence and consultation across Sussex and Brighton. Crucially, they move beyond identifying skills needs to setting out the system-level changes required to respond.

The LSIP sits alongside wider strategic ambitions for the region, including the Get Sussex Working Plan and emerging devolution arrangements. It provides a clear mechanism for aligning employer demand with education and training provision, ensuring that skills investment supports both economic growth and access to opportunity.

The strength of this plan lies in the breadth and depth of engagement behind it. Hundreds of employers have contributed their insight, alongside providers and wider stakeholders across the system. That collective evidence base gives us confidence not only in the priorities identified, but in the shared responsibility to deliver them.

The focus now is on implementation. Delivering this plan will require continued collaboration, clear accountability and a willingness to adapt as the context changes. Sussex Chamber of Commerce will continue to work with partners across the system to translate these priorities into action and to monitor progress over the coming years.

I would like to thank all those who have contributed to the development of this plan. Your insight, challenge and commitment will be essential as we move into the next phase."



**Jess Gibbons**

CEO, Brighton and  
Hove City Council



**Becky Shaw**

CEO, East Sussex  
County Council



**Leigh Whitehouse**

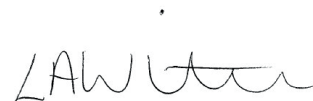
CEO, West Sussex  
County Council

"As Brighton & Hove City Council, East Sussex County Council and West Sussex County Council we are pleased to support the Sussex and Brighton Local Skills Improvement Plan 2026–2029 and the shared priorities it sets out to respond to the skills needs of employers across our area, while also driving inclusive economic growth and improving opportunities for residents.

Working in close partnership with Sussex Chamber of Commerce as the designated Employer Representative Body (ERB), we have played an active and integral role throughout the development of this plan. Engagement in the LSIP Board and the LSIP-Local Authority Working Group has allowed us to provide constructive challenge and support, helping to shape a plan that is aligned with local economic strategies and plans, including the Get Sussex Working Plan, and reflects a shared commitment to addressing the skills needs of our residents, employers and communities.

This partnership working recognises the importance of local authorities across Sussex and the ERB working together to inform priorities and support the development of a robust LSIP for 2026–2029, ensuring a clear line of sight between local economic priorities and employer demand.

As Sussex moves forward through devolution and the establishment of new strategic authority arrangements, we are committed to continuing this close collaboration. Together, we will support the delivery of the LSIP, ensuring that skills provision remains aligned with local priorities and responsive to the needs of employers and the wider economy."







## Mark Rogers

### Interim Chief Officer, Sussex and Brighton Strategic Authority



"This Local Skills Improvement Plan is a strong example of Sussex and Brighton working at its best. It reflects the serious commitment that employers, providers and partners have already shown in coming together around shared skills priorities and a shared ambition for the area.

As the Sussex and Brighton Strategic Authority (Strategic Authority) is established, we will want to build on that spirit of close joint working, so that skills, employment and economic priorities are brought into even clearer alignment and more local people can benefit from the opportunities our area has to offer."



## 2. INTRODUCTION

### WHAT A LOCAL SKILLS IMPROVEMENT PLAN IS

Forming a key part of the overall strategic planning system in an area and an integral part of the [Post-16 Skills White Paper](#), a Local Skills Improvement Plan sets out the **priority skills needs and the actions required to ensure post-16 technical education and training better aligns with local labour-market demand**. It brings together a clear, evidence-led assessment of the skills, capabilities and technical expertise employers need now and over the next three years, covering provision from entry level through to Level 8.

LSIPs **do not cover the entirety of skill needs within an area** but focus on those that are most critical.

An LSIP draws on **employer insight, wider labour-market evidence, and the sector priorities** of the local area. It provides the mechanism through which employers, providers and local partners can build a shared, forward-looking understanding of skills needs, and the adjustments that may be required, to technical education and training provision. All partners are expected to play an active part in its development and delivery.

The Post-16 Skills White Paper introduces a new expectation on **higher education providers to engage with the development, review and implementation of LSIPs**, and a **stronger expectation that they cover technical skill needs at all levels including levels 4 to 8**. Through this engagement with LSIPs, higher education providers will build on and strengthen their collaboration with local and strategic authorities, further education colleges and independent training providers, and ensure they are better meeting the needs of employers.

### WHO THE LOCAL SKILLS IMPROVEMENT PLAN IS FOR

The LSIP is intended for all organisations involved in shaping, delivering or benefiting from technical education and training across Sussex. This includes:

**Employers and sector bodies**, ensuring businesses of all sizes have a coordinated and influential voice in shaping technical training which will in turn benefit their business.

**Further Education (FE) providers**, including FE colleges, sixth-form colleges, independent training providers (who receive public funding for training) and other designated institutions, all of which have a statutory duty to have regard to the LSIP when planning provision.

**Higher Education (HE) institutions**, particularly those delivering higher-technical and technical programmes up to Level 8.

**Local Authorities**, who plan and commission adult education, careers and employability activity, and will provide alignment with emerging Local Growth Plans and the [Get Sussex Working Plan](#) in non-devolved areas.

**Strategic Authority**, whose skills remit will evolve over time and be informed by the LSIP and its accompanying data and intelligence.

**Wider delivery partners**, including Jobcentre Plus, careers services, community organisations, trade unions and others supporting progression into work.



## WHY THE LOCAL SKILLS IMPROVEMENT PLAN MATTERS

LSIPs are important to a local area because they:

- **Identify the skills most critical to local growth** – drawing on employer voice, labour-market evidence and local strategies.
- **Support better alignment between skills supply and demand** – ensuring FE and HE provision evolves with employer needs and local economic priorities.
- **Strengthen employer engagement** – enabling more businesses to participate in curriculum design, industry placements and investment in skills.
- **Improve opportunities for local people** – by shaping clearer progression pathways and supporting a more coordinated technical education offer.
- **Inform how funding is used** – helping partners understand where curriculum change, collaboration or new investment will have the biggest impact.
- **Support wider local strategies** – ensuring the skills system connects to local economic strategies and/or Local Growth Plans, the [Get Sussex Working Plan](#), and other strategic frameworks.

Overall, LSIPs provide a focused, evidence-led mechanism for aligning technical education with the needs of the labour market, helping to improve productivity, support good jobs and strengthen the skills system across the area.

### THE EVOLUTION OF THE SUSSEX AND BRIGHTON LOCAL SKILLS IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Since the introduction of the Sussex and Brighton LSIP Trailblazer report in 2022, employers, providers and partners across the area have worked more closely to strengthen the alignment between skills provision and labour-market need. This has supported greater collaboration across the skills system, improved use of labour-market intelligence in curriculum and workforce planning, and investment in skills provision and infrastructure.

However, the context has evolved significantly. Technological change, demographic pressure, increasing expectations around sustainability and the emergence of devolution and the Strategic Authority now require a stronger focus on coordinated system-level change, workforce capability and alignment between skills investment, employer demand and economic priorities.

### HOW THE LOCAL SKILLS IMPROVEMENT PLAN WAS DEVELOPED

This plan has been developed in partnership with a wide variety of stakeholder groups including employers, employer networks, sector bodies, trade unions, higher education providers, further education providers, independent training providers, local authorities, employment, careers and employment support organisations, awarding bodies, community and voluntary organisations and more recently the newly formed Sussex and Brighton Strategic Authority.

To find out more about how the LSIP was developed, see **Annex C – Background and Methodology**.

## 3. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Sussex and Brighton's economy is diverse, SME-led and under pressure to adapt. Rapid technological change, an ageing workforce, fewer young entrants, increasing inactivity amongst working age residents and rising expectations around digital capability and sustainability are reshaping how businesses operate and what they need from the workforce. These challenges are amplified by a distributed economy spanning coastal, rural and urban areas, and by a business base dominated by micro and small employers with limited capacity to engage in training. Taken together, these pressures risk constraining productivity, widening gaps between businesses and individuals, and limiting access to opportunity across Sussex and Brighton.

This LSIP has been developed through extensive collaboration with stakeholders and reflects a shared, evidence-led understanding of the skills challenges facing the area. It aligns with a changing policy landscape, including the UK Industrial Strategy 2025 and the Post-16 Education and Skills White Paper, and supports delivery of local priorities such as the Get Sussex Working Plan. It will also align with the emerging Strategic Authority, providing a mechanism to connect employer demand, skills provision and economic growth as devolution arrangements develop.

### Economic context and sector strengths

The Sussex and Brighton area has:

- 73,735 businesses generating over £51.7bn GVA
- A working-age population of over 1 million
- A strong but SME-dominated business base

Eight key sectors underpin the LSIP, reflecting both growth-driving and high-employment industries:

- Construction
- Creative and cultural industries
- Digital technologies
- Engineering and advanced manufacturing
- Health, care and life sciences
- Hospitality and visitor economy
- Land-based industries
- Professional and business services

This sector mix reflects the breadth of the economy and its geographic diversity. Future demand in some sectors will be shaped by major infrastructure and investment, including substantial house building, Gatwick Airport's Northern Runway and the Rampion 2 offshore windfarm.

### What employers are telling us

Across sectors, employers report consistent and cross-cutting challenges:

- Pressure is greatest in **technician, specialist and mid-level roles**, not entry-level
- **Digital and AI capability is now a baseline expectation** across most roles
- **Sustainability requirements are increasingly embedded** in existing jobs
- **Entry and progression routes are less clear**, with fewer traditional pathways into work
- **Time, capacity and access to relevant training** remain the biggest barriers, particularly for SMEs

These challenges reflect not only skills shortages, but wider system issues around progression, leadership capability, workforce development and access to training.





## From evidence to priorities

To analyse these challenges, evidence from employer engagement, labour-market intelligence and stakeholder consultation was structured through four cross-cutting skills themes:

- Innovation & Technical Excellence
- Digital & Technological Readiness
- Green & Sustainability Skills
- Access Routes into Employment & Career Pathways

These themes were used to identify the detailed technical skills, strategic capabilities and core workplace skills required across sectors, to test findings with employers and stakeholders, and to determine where coordinated action would have the greatest impact. They form the analytical bridge between the economic context and the four Skills Priorities.

## Skills priorities for Sussex and Brighton

The LSIP identifies four priorities for 2026–2029 to bring about system level change:

- **Priority 1:** Secure and grow technical capability across the Sussex and Brighton workforce and future pipeline to underpin innovation, productivity, business leadership, quality and environmental sustainability
- **Priority 2:** Make digital and technological capability a baseline expectation across the Sussex and Brighton workforce and future pipeline, supporting safe and responsible use of emerging technologies
- **Priority 3:** Embed skills for environmental sustainability and climate resilience across the Sussex and Brighton workforce and future pipeline, supported by leadership capability to enable consistent and effective implementation

- **Priority 4:** Strengthen access, entry and progression routes into employment to reflect technological change and Sussex and Brighton's demographic realities, so that pathways remain inclusive, clear and aligned with employer expectations

## Delivering the priorities

The LSIP and its supporting SMART action plan (**see Annex B – LSIP action plan**) have been developed collaboratively with stakeholders across Sussex and Brighton. Together, they set out a coordinated programme of system-level action focused on:

- Identifying capability needs more clearly
- Aligning education and training pathways with those needs
- Strengthening employer engagement and co-design
- Improving routes into and progression within employment

Sussex Chamber of Commerce, as the ERB, will continue to work with partners across the system to translate these priorities into action and to monitor progress over the coming years.

Governance is provided through the Future Skills Sussex LSIP Board, with future alignment to the emerging Strategic Authority.



## 4. STRATEGIC AND ECONOMIC CONTEXT

### WHY THIS CONTEXT MATTERS

The skills priorities set out in this LSIP are shaped by the economic structure, labour-market dynamics and policy environment of Sussex and Brighton. Understanding how the local economy operates, where demand is concentrated and how this is changing is essential to identifying where the skills system must adapt.

### POLICY AND SYSTEM CONTEXT

The skills system in Sussex and Brighton is evolving within a changing national and local policy landscape, with increasing emphasis on employer leadership, local coordination and stronger alignment between skills provision and economic priorities.

At a national level, the [UK Industrial Strategy 2025](#) identifies eight priority growth-driving sectors including Advanced Manufacturing, Creative Industries, Digital and Technologies, Life Sciences and Professional and Business Services. The [Post-16 Education and Skills White Paper \(2025\)](#) reinforces the need for a more coordinated and responsive skills system, with stronger alignment between Skills England, the Department for Work and Pensions, employers, providers and strategic authorities to ensure that education and training provision reflects labour-market demand. These reforms also support the Government's wider missions to [kickstart economic growth](#) and [break down barriers to opportunity](#) through improved workforce capability, participation and progression.

Locally, the establishment of the Sussex and Brighton Strategic Authority in March 2026 represents a significant shift in how skills, employment and economic development will be planned and delivered across the area. As the Strategic Authority becomes established, it will take on a greater role in shaping adult skills provision, employment support and economic growth, enabling decisions to be made closer to local labour-market need.

In the period leading up to Mayoral elections in 2028, work is underway to develop a Sussex

and Brighton Prosperity Strategy alongside a Strategic Skills Plan expected in 2026/27. This is anticipated to inform future [Adult Skills Fund](#) commissioning from 2027/28, creating a more integrated and locally responsive skills system. Initial investment through the Strategic Authority's flexible fund (c.£30m across 2026–28) will support this transition and enable early alignment activity.

The Sussex and Brighton LSIP provides an established employer-led evidence base to support this work, bringing together employer insight, labour-market intelligence and stakeholder engagement to identify shared workforce priorities across the area. As the Strategic Authority develops, the LSIP will help inform strategic skills planning, investment and commissioning decisions, supporting alignment between workforce demand, economic priorities and the future Sussex and Brighton Prosperity Strategy.

The Sussex and Brighton LSIP also supports the Get Sussex Working Plan by providing the employer-side evidence needed to understand where employment opportunities are likely to arise, how roles are changing, and what skills, behaviours and support people will need to enter, remain and progress in work. While the Get Sussex Working Plan focuses on increasing labour-market participation and improving access to sustainable and inclusive employment, the LSIP adds detailed intelligence on employer demand, sector pathways, technical skills needs, workplace readiness and progression barriers. This helps local partners align employment support, careers activity, adult learning and technical education with the real requirements of employers across Sussex and Brighton.



## THE SUSSEX AND BRIGHTON ECONOMY

### A diverse and distributed economy

The Sussex and Brighton area comprises three upper-tier authorities - Brighton & Hove, East Sussex and West Sussex - forming a diverse and polycentric economy. Distinct coastal, rural and urban labour markets create different patterns of employer demand, access to opportunity and workforce challenge.

The scale and composition of the economy is reflected in the following:

- **73,735 registered businesses** (ONS 2025), compared with 73,810 (ONS 2024), generating over **£51.7bn in Gross Value Added** (ONS 2023)
- A **working-age population** of 1,064,629 (ONS 2024), up from 1,053,926 (ONS 2023)
- A well-established skills and training infrastructure, including FE and Sixth Form colleges, universities, independent training providers and Institutes of Technology
- Strategic economic assets including Gatwick Airport and the ports of Shoreham and Newhaven

Economic activity is distributed across the area. High-value employment clusters are concentrated around Gatwick and Crawley, alongside advanced manufacturing, engineering, digital and health-related activity in areas such as Worthing, Burgess Hill and Hastings. Brighton & Hove is a significant centre for digital, creative and professional services, while coastal and rural areas continue to face challenges linked to productivity, pay and access to opportunity.

### A business base shaped by SMEs

The Sussex and Brighton economy is characterised by a high concentration of small and micro-businesses, with the majority employing fewer than ten people. This is a defining feature of the local economy and has direct implications for skills demand and engagement with the skills system.

Many smaller employers face constraints around time, capacity and awareness of training options, limiting their ability to invest in workforce development or engage with more complex provision. This drives demand for flexible, accessible and work-based training that can be delivered alongside business operations.

Further analysis of the Sussex and Brighton business base can be found in **Annex D – Overview of the Sussex and Brighton Labour Market**.

### Key sectors and economic strengths

Drawing on employer evidence, labour-market intelligence and alignment with national and local priorities, eight key sectors have been identified for the Sussex and Brighton LSIP 2026–2029. These sectors reflect both growth-driving industries and high-employment sectors critical to the resilience of the local economy.



The diagram below sets out the LSIP key sectors and their alignment to the UK Industrial Strategy.

Further analysis on the key sectors can be found in **Annex E – Key Sector Analysis**.

|                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>CONSTRUCTION</b><br><br><b>Avg advertised salary:</b> £39,104<br><b>Employees:</b> 37,125                              | <b>Key occupations:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elementary Construction Occupations n.e.c</li> <li>• Buyers and Procurement Officers</li> <li>• Construction and Building Trades n.e.c.</li> <li>• Construction and Building Trades Supervisors</li> <li>• Quantity Surveyors</li> </ul> <i>Industrial Strategy Alignment</i>                                |
| <b>CREATIVE &amp; CULTURAL INDUSTRIES</b><br><br><b>Avg advertised salary:</b> £31,040<br><b>Employees:</b> 12,995        | <b>Key occupations:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Author, Writers and Translators</li> <li>• Advertising and Marketing Associate Professionals</li> <li>• Gardeners and Landscape Gardeners</li> <li>• Events Managers and Organisers</li> <li>• Marketing, Sales and Advertising Directors</li> </ul> <i>Industrial Strategy Alignment</i>                    |
| <b>DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES</b><br><br><b>Avg advertised salary:</b> £36,544<br><b>Employees:</b> 20,425                      | <b>Key occupations:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Programmers and Software Development Professionals</li> <li>• Advertising and Marketing Associate Professionals</li> <li>• IT Business Analysts, Architects and Systems Designers</li> <li>• IT User Support Technicians</li> <li>• IT Network Professionals</li> </ul> <i>Industrial Strategy Alignment</i> |
| <b>ENGINEERING &amp; ADVANCED MANUFACTURING</b><br><br><b>Avg advertised salary:</b> £31,040<br><b>Employees:</b> 123,650 | <b>Key occupations:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vehicle Technicians Mechanics and Electricians</li> <li>• Engineering Technicians</li> <li>• Production and Process Engineers</li> <li>• Mechanical Engineers</li> <li>• Plant and Machine Operatives n.e.c.</li> </ul> <i>Industrial Strategy Alignment</i>                                                 |
| <b>HEALTH, CARE &amp; LIFE SCIENCES</b><br><br><b>Avg advertised salary:</b> £26,304<br><b>Employees:</b> 37,125          | <b>Key occupations:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Care Workers and Home Carers</li> <li>• Other Registered Nursing Professionals</li> <li>• Social Workers</li> <li>• Health Care Practice Managers</li> <li>• Health Associate Professionals n.e.c.</li> </ul> <i>Industrial Strategy Alignment</i>                                                           |
| <b>HOSPITALITY &amp; VISITOR ECONOMY</b><br><br><b>Avg advertised salary:</b> £39,104<br><b>Employees:</b> 111,600        | <b>Key occupations:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cleaners and Domestics</li> <li>• Kitchen and Catering Assistants</li> <li>• Chefs</li> <li>• Managers and Directors in Retail and Wholesale</li> <li>• Waiters and Waitresses</li> </ul> <i>Industrial Strategy Alignment</i>                                                                               |
| <b>LAND BASED INDUSTRIES</b><br><br><b>Avg advertised salary:</b> £28,096<br><b>Employees:</b> 37,125                     | <b>Key occupations:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gardeners and Landscape Gardeners</li> <li>• Animal Care Services Occupations n.e.c.</li> <li>• Biological Scientists</li> <li>• Farm Workers</li> <li>• Agricultural and Fishing Trades n.e.c.</li> </ul> <i>Industrial Strategy Alignment</i>                                                              |
| <b>PROFESSIONAL &amp; BUSINESS SERVICES</b><br><br><b>Avg advertised salary:</b> £30,016<br><b>Employees:</b> 94,870      | <b>Key occupations:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Book-keepers, Payroll Managers and Wages Clerks</li> <li>• Solicitors and Lawyers</li> <li>• Chartered and Certified Accountants</li> <li>• Other Administrative Occupations n.e.c.</li> <li>• Human Resources and Industrial Relations Officers</li> </ul> <i>Industrial Strategy Alignment</i>             |

**Data note:**

Avg advertised salary and key occupations data - Lightcast Nov 2025. It should be noted that the algorithm used by Lightcast can only collect information on jobs posted online. Our key sectors often recruit through specific sector related agencies or word of mouth, and these postings would not be captured by Lightcast  
Employee numbers-BRES Open Access Data - 2024-based on SIC codes 2007. It should be noted that BRES data only includes PAYE workers. The SIC codes used have been the most relevant for our Key Sectors but in some cases cannot fully reflect the wide range of occupations and employees within these sectors across Sussex, therefore the employee numbers should be taken as an approximation

These sectors illustrate the breadth of the Sussex and Brighton economy, spanning construction; creative and cultural industries; digital technologies; engineering and advanced manufacturing; health, care and life sciences; hospitality and visitor economy; land-based industries; and professional and business services.

## Infrastructure and future demand

Planned infrastructure and investment will play a significant role in shaping future skills demand.

The proposed expansion of Gatwick Airport, including bringing the Northern Runway into routine use, and the development of the Rampion 2 Offshore Wind Farm are two major



projects expected to increase demand for construction, engineering and low-carbon skills over the coming decade.

Alongside wider housing and infrastructure development, these investments reinforce the need for coordinated workforce planning and a skills system capable of responding to both immediate and longer-term demand.

At the same time, rapid advances in digital and other technologies and artificial intelligence are reshaping business models and job roles across sectors. While these changes create opportunities for productivity and innovation, they also expose gaps in capacity, confidence and leadership, particularly within smaller firms.

## LABOUR MARKET PRESSURES

Sussex and Brighton faces a combination of demographic, economic and structural labour-market challenges which directly influence skills demand.

The population profile is older than regional and national averages, with relatively fewer young people entering the workforce. This limits the pipeline of new entrants and increases reliance on retaining and upskilling the existing workforce.

Economic inactivity remains a challenge in parts of the area, particularly in coastal and rural communities. This is a key point of connection with the Get Sussex Working Plan, as the LSIP helps identify the sectors, roles, progression routes and employer expectations that employment and skills partners need to understand when supporting people into sustainable work.

Youth participation has also worsened in recent years, with increases in the proportion of young people not in education, employment or training, alongside a rise in those whose activity is not known.

Employment is weighted towards higher-skilled roles overall, but this varies significantly by

place, reflecting the diverse structure of the local economy. Recruitment pressures remain strongest in care, health and people-facing service roles, alongside ongoing challenges in attracting experienced and senior staff across a range of sectors.

These pressures sit within a wider context of economic uncertainty, rising costs and changing workforce expectations, including greater emphasis on flexibility, wellbeing and progression.

A full analysis of the Sussex and Brighton labour market is provided in **Annex D – Overview of the Sussex and Brighton Labour Market**.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR THE SKILLS SYSTEM

Taken together, these factors build on the good work delivered by all partners to create a clear case for ongoing change in how the skills system operates across Sussex and Brighton.

They highlight the need for:

- **Provision that reflects a diverse and distributed economy**, able to respond to different local labour markets across coastal, rural and urban areas
- **Accessible and flexible training routes**, particularly for SMEs with limited capacity to engage in traditional provision
- **Stronger entry and progression pathways**, addressing youth participation, mid-career development, returners, career changers and economically inactive adults, in support of the Get Sussex Working Plan
- **Greater focus on upskilling the existing workforce**, given demographic pressures and constrained labour supply
- **Closer alignment between employers, providers and the emerging Strategic Authority**, ensuring skills investment supports economic priorities and infrastructure demand

These system-level challenges underpin the skills priorities set out in the following section.





## 5. SKILLS NEEDS AND PRIORITIES IN SUSSEX AND BRIGHTON

### UNDERSTANDING SKILLS NEEDS

The economic trends, sector strengths and labour-market pressures outlined in the previous section shape the skills challenges facing Sussex and Brighton over the coming years. While the area benefits from a diverse economy and strong areas of innovation and growth, employers consistently report difficulties accessing the skills and capabilities needed to sustain productivity and respond to technological, demographic and environmental change.

To analyse these changing skills needs, evidence from national and local economic strategies, labour-market intelligence and employer engagement was brought together and organised around **four cross-cutting skills themes: Innovation & Technical Excellence, Digital & Technological Readiness, Green & Sustainability Skills and Access Routes into Employment & Career Pathways**. These themes reflect common pressures affecting multiple sectors rather than the needs of any single industry.

The themes provided a structured framework for analysing employer evidence and for guiding further engagement and consultation with businesses, providers and stakeholders to test and refine the emerging findings (see **Annex C – Background and Methodology** for further details).

Taken together, the themes highlight the key capability gaps and workforce challenges shaping employer demand across Sussex and Brighton drawing on employer engagement, labour-market intelligence and stakeholder consultation. They provide the analytical bridge between the economic context described earlier and the skills priorities set out in the following section, which identify the areas where coordinated action across the local skills system is most needed.

For the purposes of this LSIP, **current skills needs** are defined as skills, capabilities and pathway issues that employers report as affecting recruitment, retention, productivity, service delivery or progression now. **Medium-term skills** needs are defined as those **expected to grow or intensify within the next three years**, driven by technological change, demographic pressures, regulatory and sustainability requirements, infrastructure investment and changing employer expectations.

The main report summarises these needs at cross-sector level through the four skills themes below. **The detailed sector-by-sector breakdown of current skills gaps and medium-term requirements is set out in Annexes G1–G4.**

#### Each skills theme sets out:

- 1 A summary of the cross-sector short and medium-term skills needs across Sussex and Brighton
- 2 A breakdown of the cross-sector skills and capabilities required, including:
  - Technical skills
  - Strategic capabilities
  - Core workplace skills

In addition, **Annexes G1 - Skills Needed for Innovation & Technical Excellence, G2 - Skills Needed for Digital & Technological Readiness and G3 - Skills Needed for Green & Sustainability** provide further detail as follows:

- 3 A breakdown of sector-specific skills and capabilities, including:
  - Technologies and systems referenced
  - Skills and capability gaps (current)
  - Roles most affected
  - Future capability requirements (within 3 years)



**Annex G4 - Detailed Findings from Access routes into Employment & Career Pathways** provides further detail as follows:

- 4 A breakdown of sector-specific findings, including:
- Access challenges and barriers
  - Entry pathway gaps

- Roles most affected
- Future pathway requirements

For in depth mapping of occupations against the Standard Occupational Classification (SOC 2020) and the Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) see **Annex A – Explanatory Information on Skills**.

## SKILLS NEEDS BY THEME

### 1. Innovation & Technical Excellence

Innovation and technical excellence **play an important role in productivity, quality and competitiveness** across the Sussex and Brighton economy. The area has several **distinctive innovation strengths** driven by leading research institutions, specialist engineering employers and strong creative and digital capabilities. The University of Sussex carries internationally recognised research in areas such as **quantum technologies, artificial intelligence and photonics**; the University of Brighton has strengths in **creative practice, applied engineering and health innovation**; and the University of Chichester contributes applied research and workforce development in **creative industries, sport science and education**.

These capabilities sit alongside **established technical clusters in advanced manufacturing, aviation, engineering, logistics and medical technologies**. Major employment centres such as Gatwick Airport, Manor Royal Business District, Worthing's engineering base, Shoreham and Newhaven Ports, and the growing quantum research base in Brighton together create an ecosystem where innovation and technical capability can develop and diffuse across the local economy.

At a national level, **several Industrial Strategy priority sectors** - including Advanced Manufacturing, Life Sciences, Creative Industries, Digital Technologies and Professional & Business Services - **align with existing economic strengths in Sussex and Brighton**. National policy also places increasing emphasis on higher-level technical

skills and the diffusion of new technologies into businesses, particularly SMEs.

Evidence gathered through research, employer workshops and stakeholder consultation in Sussex and Brighton suggests that **innovation is rarely described by employers as abstract research or invention**. Instead, it is **expressed through the practical challenge of embedding new technologies, systems and standards** into everyday operations.

Across sectors, employers consistently highlight **pressure in technician and mid to higher level technical roles**. These roles are critical for maintaining equipment, managing systems, troubleshooting faults and ensuring that operational processes meet regulatory and quality standards. However, many employers report persistent shortages of experienced technicians alongside rising expectations about the level of technical capability required.

Employers also expressed growing **concern about succession and knowledge transfer**. Ageing workforces, reduced mentoring capacity, and high operational pressures are limiting opportunities for experienced staff to pass on expertise. Employers described increasing **reliance on a small number of highly experienced individuals**, creating risks for organisational resilience and long-term capability.

Employers identified a **gap in core business fundamentals** within the skills system, including quality management and assurance,

governance, compliance and health and safety. These capabilities are rarely addressed through structured training but are critical to business performance, particularly for SMEs without dedicated specialist functions.

Taken together, the evidence suggests that innovation and technical capability in Sussex and Brighton depend less on generating new ideas and more on the ability of organisations to embed new technologies, sustain technical standards and maintain strong pipelines into technician and specialist roles.

The following sections explore these findings in more detail, drawing together labour market analysis, employer engagement and consultation evidence to give a summary of current and medium-term skills needs and three distinct areas of skills demand: **technical skills, strategic capabilities and core skills**.

### Summary of Current and Medium-term Skills Needs

**Current skills needs** include technician-level occupational competence, troubleshooting, maintenance, quality assurance, compliance, continuous improvement, technical supervision and the ability to apply specialist knowledge in live operational settings. Employers are already experiencing pressure in technician, specialist, supervisory and mid-level technical roles, with concerns about succession, knowledge transfer and the loss of experienced staff.

**Within the next three years**, demand is expected to increase for higher-level technical capability, including the ability to work with modern equipment, automation, digitally enabled systems, advanced production technologies, precision tools and emerging sector-specific technologies. Employers also expect stronger demand for technical leadership, applied problem-solving and the ability to embed innovation into day-to-day operations.

### Cross-Sector Skills and Capabilities

Across sectors, employers highlighted three broad categories of capability required to address these pressures.

### Technical skills

These are applied technical capabilities embedded within occupational roles, rather than abstract innovation skills.

- Advanced **technical and technician-level occupational competence**
- **Troubleshooting, fault-finding and maintenance** capability
- Operation and optimisation of **modern equipment, systems and processes**
- **Quality assurance and standards compliance** within technical work
- **Continuous improvement** methods applied within operational settings
- Use of **data and digital tools to support technical decision-making**

### Strategic capabilities

These capabilities determine how organisations sustain technical excellence and embed innovation over time.

- Embedding **new technologies and working methods** into operational practice
- Managing **technical change without disrupting delivery**
- Maintaining **quality and regulatory standards** while adapting to new systems
- **Knowledge transfer, mentoring and succession planning**
- Judgement about **when and where to invest in innovation**
- Leading improvement and technical development at **team and supervisor level**

### Core workplace skills

These capabilities underpin technical excellence in practice.

- **Professional judgement and accountability**
- Strong **attention to quality, standards and detail**
- **Problem-solving** in complex operational environments
- **Collaboration** across technical, operational and support roles
- **Willingness to learn, adapt and improve** as technologies and practices evolve



## 2. Digital & Technological Readiness

Digital and technological capability plays an increasingly important role in productivity, innovation and competitiveness across sectors in Sussex and Brighton. The area has **established strengths in digital technologies and creative tech**, particularly in Brighton & Hove and West Sussex, where games, digital media and software development form an established cluster with strong links to immersive, AI-enabled and data-driven applications. Digital technologies support activity in engineering, construction, land-based, logistics, financial and professional services, health innovation and the visitor economy across wider Sussex.

Nationally, the Industrial Strategy identifies **Digital & Technologies as a priority growth** sector, with demand for software engineering, data analysis, cybersecurity, cloud infrastructure and AI-related skills accelerating across the economy. National policy on post-16 education and skills also positions **digital capability as a foundational skill for workforce participation and progression**.

Evidence gathered through the Sussex and Brighton LSIP research, employer workshops and stakeholder consultations indicates that **digital and technological capability is increasingly embedded within everyday work** across multiple sectors. Employers described growing use of digital systems such as BIM and digital site management tools in construction, automation and data systems in engineering and manufacturing, AI-assisted workflows in professional services, and digital rostering and care systems in health and care.

However, the evidence suggests that the **primary challenge is not awareness of digital technologies themselves, but the ability to apply them confidently, consistently, securely and effectively in real work contexts**. Employers consistently highlight gaps in applied digital literacy, data interpretation, cybersecurity awareness and the safe use of AI tools across a wide range of roles.

A recurring theme across sectors is the **importance of leadership and management capability** in shaping the adoption of digital technologies. Employers report that successful implementation depends on managers and senior staff being able to understand emerging technologies, set clear expectations around their use and support staff in adapting to new ways of working.

Alongside leadership and people management skills, employers identified **a need to strengthen practical business fundamentals**, including governance, compliance, quality assurance and risk management. These capabilities are often assumed rather than taught but are essential to effective business operation and the successful adoption of new technologies and ways of working.

Employers also emphasise that **digital capability is increasingly required across operational, supervisory and professional roles**. As digital systems and AI-enabled tools become embedded in everyday workflows, staff are expected not only to use technology but to **interpret outputs, exercise judgement and apply digital tools appropriately**.

Taken together, the evidence suggests that digital readiness in Sussex and Brighton is not solely a question of technical supply but of **workforce capability and organisational adoption**. Strengthening digital readiness therefore requires action at multiple levels: improving digital confidence across the workforce, supporting progression into higher-level technical roles, and enabling employers to adopt digital and AI technologies effectively.

The following sections explore these findings in more detail, drawing together labour market analysis, employer engagement and consultation evidence to give a summary of current and medium-term skills needs and three distinct areas of skills demand: **technical skills, strategic capabilities and core skills**.



## Summary of Current and Medium-term Skills Needs

**Current skills needs** include applied digital literacy, confident use of sector-specific systems, data handling and interpretation, cyber awareness, safe use of AI-enabled tools, digital communication and the ability to evaluate digital or AI-generated outputs. Employers are clear that the issue is not simply access to technology, but the confidence, judgement and governance needed to use it safely and effectively.

**Within the next three years**, demand is expected to grow for AI adoption and governance, automation, cloud and data capability, cyber resilience, digital compliance, digital project integration and leadership capability for technology adoption. These requirements are expected to affect all sectors, including those not traditionally seen as digital, as digital systems become embedded in operational, customer-facing, technical and management roles.

## Cross-Sector Skills and Capabilities

Across sectors, employers highlighted three broad categories of capability required to address these pressures.

### Technical skills

These are **applied technical capabilities embedded within occupational roles**, rather than digital jobs.

- Confident use of **sector-specific digital systems and platforms**
- **Data handling and interpretation** relevant to role and context

- **Safe, effective and responsible use of AI-enabled tools**, including validation, quality checking, understanding bias and GDPR
- **Cyber awareness** and **secure digital working practices**
- **Integration of digital tools** into day-to-day operational workflows
- **Critical evaluation of AI outputs**

### Strategic capabilities

This is how organisations **adopt, govern and scale** digital and other technologies.

- **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 deliver**

### Core workplace skills

These are **often called employability skills**, but employers are telling us they go beyond employability and into the core function of the role

- **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**

## 3. Green and Sustainability Skills

Green and sustainability skills are becoming increasingly relevant across the Sussex and Brighton economy, **driven by national climate policy, local decarbonisation commitments and emerging clean-technology capabilities**. Although the area is not a primary generator of renewable energy, it plays an important role in clean transport, hydrogen innovation, retrofit, environmental land management and the circular economy.

Several local assets reflect the development of this emerging green economy. Ricardo's role in clean mobility and hydrogen engineering, the Hydrogen Sussex initiative, the decarbonisation pathways





for Gatwick Airport and the coastal ports (Shoreham and Newhaven) and expanding retrofit and low-carbon construction activity all point to growing demand for technical and operational sustainability skills. In rural Sussex, environmental land management, agritech, biodiversity and sustainable food production are also becoming important areas of workforce development.

At a national level, the Industrial Strategy identifies **Clean Energy and associated supply chains as priority growth areas for the UK economy**. Policy initiatives such as the Clean Energy Jobs Plan highlight expected growth in areas including hydrogen technologies, retrofit and building decarbonisation, energy systems, environmental management and low-carbon engineering. Local authorities across Sussex and Brighton also identify **climate action, sustainability and natural capital as long-term strategic priorities**.

Evidence gathered through the Sussex and Brighton LSIP research, employer workshops and stakeholder consultation suggests that **green skills demand is rarely expressed as large volumes of entirely new “green jobs”**. Instead, **sustainability expectations are increasingly embedded within existing roles across sectors**.

Employers report that the strongest signals of green skills demand currently **arise from regulatory requirements, procurement expectations and client pressure to demonstrate environmental performance**. This is particularly **evident in sectors such as construction, land-based industries and professional services**, where sustainability compliance and reporting are becoming more prominent.

However, many employers - particularly SMEs - report **uncertainty about what green skills mean in practice for their workforce**. Businesses often understand the direction of travel towards Net Zero but **lack clarity about how sustainability requirements translate into operational decisions, workforce capability and training needs**.

Taken together, the evidence suggests initially that preparing the Sussex and Brighton workforce for the transition to Net Zero will **require strengthening practical sustainability capability across the mainstream workforce**, rather than focusing primarily on specialist environmental roles.

The following sections explore these findings in more detail, drawing together labour market analysis, employer engagement and consultation evidence to give a summary of current and medium-term skills needs and three distinct areas of skills demand: **technical skills, strategic capabilities and core skills**.

## Summary of Current and Medium-term Skills Needs

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**Current skills needs** include environmental awareness, resource efficiency, waste reduction, sustainable procurement, environmental compliance, carbon and sustainability reporting, and the ability to apply sustainability requirements within existing roles. Employers report that sustainability is increasingly shaped by regulation, procurement, client expectations and operational efficiency, rather than by large-scale demand for standalone green jobs.

**Within the next three years**, demand is expected to grow for retrofit and building decarbonisation, low-carbon methods and materials, environmental land management, ESG and carbon reporting, climate risk analysis, sustainable infrastructure and stronger leadership capability to translate sustainability commitments into practical workforce and operational change.

## Cross-Sector Skills and Capabilities

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Across sectors, employers highlighted three broad categories of capability required to address these pressures.

### Technical skills

These capabilities are applied within existing occupations rather than specialist environmental roles.

- **Low-carbon methods and processes** within existing roles
- **Resource efficiency** in areas such as energy use, waste reduction and materials management
- Understanding and applying **environmental standards and regulations**
- Sustainability-related **data collection and basic reporting**
- **Sector-specific environmental practices** in areas such as construction, land management and infrastructure

### Strategic capabilities

These capabilities determine how organisations respond to sustainability expectations and regulatory change.

- Translating Net Zero commitments into **practical operational decisions**
- Understanding **compliance, procurement and reporting requirements**

- Managing **trade-offs between cost, quality and environmental performance**
- Anticipating **future regulatory and client expectations**
- **Embedding sustainability consistently** across organisations and supply chains

### Core workplace skills

These capabilities enable the workforce to apply sustainability practices in everyday work.

- **Environmental awareness** applied to day-to-day tasks
- **Responsibility and accountability** for compliant practice
- **Problem-solving** in operational environments with sustainability constraints
- **Willingness to adapt** established processes and working methods
- **Collaboration** across teams and organisations to meet environmental objectives

## 4. Access Routes into Employment & Career Pathways

Improving access to employment and supporting clear progression routes is important for inclusive economic growth across Sussex and Brighton. The area experiences persistent challenges related to economic inactivity, underemployment, rural and coastal disadvantage, transport barriers and uneven access to training opportunities. Participation in the labour market varies significantly across the area, with some communities experiencing long-standing barriers to employment.

These challenges are reflected in Sussex and Brighton's workforce profile. The area has an **older population than the national average and a smaller share of younger labour-market entrants than the national average**, while **economic inactivity and the number of NEETs remain higher** than national levels in several coastal and rural areas. **Improving participation and progression** is therefore important for ensuring that local employers can access the workforce they need while supporting residents into sustainable employment.

Local partners are already working to address these issues through strategies such as the [Get Sussex Working Plan](#), which reflects a shared commitment to improving participation,

progression and workforce inclusion. National policy also places **increasing emphasis on progression and higher-level skills**, including expanding participation in Level 4+ learning and strengthening the alignment between employment support, skills provision and employer demand.

Evidence gathered through the Sussex and Brighton LSIP research, employer workshops and stakeholder consultation indicates that **traditional entry pathways into work are becoming less common across several sectors**. Employers report that **operational pressures, automation and changing business models are reducing the availability of entry-level roles** where people historically developed experience and progressed over time.



Across sectors, employers increasingly expect new recruits to arrive with a **higher level of job readiness and occupational competence**. At the same time, many organisations report **limited capacity to provide structured mentoring and development opportunities for new entrants**. This creates challenges for younger people, those with special educational needs and disabilities, career changers and individuals returning to work after a period of inactivity.

Employers also highlight that **progression routes within sectors are not always clear** to learners or jobseekers. Education and training pathways can be difficult to navigate, and many people struggle to understand how education and training opportunities connect to real jobs and career development.

Taken together, the evidence suggests that strengthening access routes into employment requires **greater alignment between skills provision, employment support and employer engagement**. Improving the **clarity of career pathways, strengthening routes into work along with supported employment and internship opportunities, and supporting progression** within sectors will be important for building a more inclusive and sustainable workforce across Sussex and Brighton.

The following sections explore these findings in more detail, drawing together labour market analysis, employer engagement and consultation evidence to give a summary of current and medium-term skills needs and three distinct areas of skills demand: technical skills, strategic capabilities and core skills.

## Summary of Current and Medium-term Skills Needs

**Current skills needs** include work readiness, professional behaviours, occupational awareness, baseline competence, confidence, reliability, communication, self-management and the ability to contribute productively in live work environments. Employers are also reporting gaps in industry exposure and work experience.

**Within the next three years**, demand is expected to grow for clearer and more inclusive pathways into priority sectors, stronger progression routes from entry-level to technician, specialist and supervisory roles, and better support for young people, adults, returners, career changers and economically inactive residents. Employers also expect pathway requirements to change as AI, automation, demographic pressures and changing job design reduce some traditional opportunities to learn on the job.

## Cross-Sector Skills and Capabilities

Across sectors, employers highlighted three broad categories of capability required to address these pressures.

### Technical skills

These capabilities are increasingly expected **before people enter employment or transition into a role**, rather than being developed primarily after entry.

- **Baseline occupational competence** at the point of entry
- Ability to **operate safely and compliantly** in role
- Familiarity with **core tools, equipment or systems** used in the workplace
- Understanding of **sector-specific working environments** and expectations
- Readiness to **contribute productively in early stages of employment**

### Strategic capabilities

These capabilities relate to how organisations and the skills system support entry and progression.

- Designing clearer **career pathways, supported employment and training opportunities and progression routes**
- Aligning **training provision with real labour-market opportunities**
- Strengthening collaboration between **employers, providers and employment services**

- Supporting **mid-career retraining and transitions between sectors**
- Creating **inclusive pathways** for young people and adults currently outside the labour market
- **Balancing productivity pressures with workforce development**

### Core workplace skills

These capabilities enable individuals to enter work successfully and progress within their roles.

## SKILLS PRIORITIES

Drawing on employer engagement, labour-market data and consultation with providers and wider stakeholders, this section outlines the key skills priorities for Sussex and Brighton.

These priorities build directly on the four cross-cutting skills themes identified in the previous section and reflect the areas where employers and stakeholders highlighted the greatest need for change.

- **Work readiness** and **professional behaviours**
- **Reliability, communication and self-management**
- **Confidence to take responsibility** and contribute early in employment
- Ability to **learn quickly** in live work environments
- **Adaptability** as roles and expectations evolve

Together they highlight where coordinated action across employers, providers and other partners will be most important to strengthen workforce capability, support productivity and ensure the skills system responds to technological, demographic and environmental change.

While all four priorities apply across the key sectors, the nature and intensity of need vary by sector. Where specific sectors were identified during the consultation activities, they are highlighted below.

### Skills Priority 1

*Secure and grow **technical capability** across the Sussex and Brighton workforce and future pipeline to underpin innovation, productivity, business leadership, quality and environmental sustainability.*

#### Sectors of Particular Focus

- advanced manufacturing and engineering
- construction
- land-based economy
- digital technologies
- creative industries

#### Rationale

Technical and higher technical roles, particularly at Levels 3–5+, represent a **significant pressure point** in the Sussex and Brighton labour market. Employer engagement indicates that **progression into technician and higher technical roles remains limited**,

while replacement demand and technological change are increasing the demand for applied technical capability across sectors including engineering, construction, digital technologies and environmental services.

**Major regional infrastructure programmes** – including significant housebuilding, Gatwick Airport’s Northern Runway expansion and the Rampion windfarm expansion – are expected to increase demand for these skills.

This priority aligns with national policy, including the **UK Industrial Strategy’s focus on advanced manufacturing, innovation and**



**clean growth**, and with local ambitions set out in local economic plans and the **Get Sussex Working Plan**, which emphasise productivity, workforce participation and progression into higher-skilled roles.

Together, these factors highlight the need to strengthen the technical pipeline across Sussex and Brighton.

## Skills Priority 2

*Make digital and technological capability a baseline expectation across the Sussex and Brighton workforce and future pipeline, supporting safe and responsible use of emerging technologies.*

### Sectors of Particular Focus

- All

#### Rationale

In Sussex and Brighton, as elsewhere, **digital, AI and automation technologies are already embedded across everyday work** in sectors ranging from professional services and manufacturing to hospitality, healthcare and the creative industries. Employer evidence indicates that the most **significant capability gaps relate not to basic digital access but to applied use, judgement, cybersecurity, governance and leadership confidence** in deploying emerging technologies.

As AI-enabled tools and automation become increasingly embedded within operational and decision-making processes, the need

for **human oversight, ethical management and informed adoption** is expected to grow across occupations and sectors. Without systematic development of these capabilities, digital change risks widening productivity gaps between firms and individuals.

This priority aligns with **national ambitions to strengthen digital adoption and AI capability** within the UK economy. It also supports **local economic priorities around innovation, productivity and business competitiveness** across Sussex and Brighton.

These insights highlight the need to strengthen applied digital capability, leadership confidence and responsible technology adoption across the Sussex and Brighton workforce.

## Skills Priority 3

*Embed skills for environmental sustainability and climate resilience across the Sussex and Brighton workforce and future pipeline, supported by leadership capability to enable consistent and effective implementation.*

### Sectors of Particular Focus

- All

#### Rationale

Environmental sustainability and climate resilience are **increasingly embedded within regulatory frameworks, procurement requirements and operational practice** across multiple sectors. In most cases, sustainability capability is not delivered through new specialist roles but **integrated into existing occupations**, requiring workers and leaders

to incorporate environmental awareness, compliance and efficiency into everyday decisions.

Employer evidence suggests **demand for these skills remains uneven and evolving**, with uncertainty about the pace and scale of adoption across different sectors. **Leadership capability therefore plays an important role** in translating sustainability ambitions into consistent workplace practice.



For Sussex and Brighton, where economic activity spans coastal, rural and urban environments, embedding environmental capability across sectors is important for supporting the transition to a low-carbon and climate-resilient economy. This priority **aligns with national commitments to net zero**

**and clean growth and with local ambitions to strengthen sustainable economic development.**

Together, these factors highlight the need to strengthen practical sustainability capability across the Sussex and Brighton workforce.

## Skills Priority 4

*Strengthen access, entry and progression routes into employment to reflect technological change and Sussex and Brighton's demographic realities, so that pathways remain inclusive, clear and aligned with employer expectations.*

### Sectors of Particular Focus

- All

#### Rationale

Technological change, evolving job design and labour market pressures are **reshaping traditional entry routes into employment**. Employers increasingly report **a reduction in junior roles, rising expectations of work-readiness at entry and reduced capacity for informal workplace learning and development**.

At the same time, Sussex and Brighton face **structural demographic challenges**, including an ageing workforce, fewer young labour-market entrants and persistently high levels of economic inactivity among some groups. These challenges are **compounded by widening participation gaps**, including rising numbers of young people not in education, employment or training and increasing complexity of need among learners with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), alongside ongoing reforms to the SEND system. Employers

and providers report variable confidence in supporting learners with additional needs, and inconsistencies in pathways such as supported internships and transitions into employment.

These trends risk **increasing exclusion from the labour market while weakening the long-term workforce pipeline**. Addressing these challenges will require a system-wide approach that strengthens transitions between education, employment and retraining, while improving inclusion, supporting work readiness and enabling progression throughout working lives.

This priority aligns with **national policy objectives to improve participation and workforce mobility** and **supports delivery of the Get Sussex Working Plan**, which seeks to increase labour market participation and improve access to sustainable and inclusive employment across Sussex and Brighton.





## 6. ACTIONS NEEDED TO DELIVER THE SKILLS PRIORITIES

### FROM PRIORITIES TO ACTION

Addressing the priorities set out in the previous section will require coordinated action across the local skills system including changes to curriculum, stronger employer involvement in shaping provision and entry opportunities, and clearer progression pathways for learners and workers. In some cases, there will be a need for additional investment or national policy support.

**The following section sets out the key actions** employers, providers and wider stakeholders have identified to ensure technical education and training across Sussex and Brighton aligns more closely with current and future labour-market demand.

Some actions can be progressed through existing provision and partnerships, while others will depend on new funding or flexibilities.

A more detailed SMART action plan can be found in **Annex B – LSIP Action Plan**

#### Priority 1

*Secure and grow **technical capability** across the Sussex and Brighton workforce and future pipeline to underpin innovation, productivity, business leadership, quality and environmental sustainability*

##### Sectors of Particular Focus

- advanced manufacturing and engineering
- construction
- land-based economy
- digital technologies
- creative industries

**Below are the system-level actions within the Sussex and Brighton skills system** needed to deliver this priority.

##### Action 1

###### Identify and map the technical capability and leadership requirements across key sectors

Develop a shared understanding of the technical and leadership capabilities needed across Sussex and Brighton's key sectors over the next three years, aligning education and training pathways with sector demand, replacement pressures and future infrastructure and growth needs.

###### *This action will:*

- Establish a clear picture of the technical and leadership capability required across key sectors over the next three years, drawing on existing frameworks, labour market intelligence and sector analysis, including emerging specialist capability linked to clean energy, low-carbon technologies and environmental innovation

Map these capability needs across education and training pathways and programmes (Levels 1–8), including apprenticeships, supported employment, higher technical routes and modular programmes such as [Skills Bootcamps](#)

- Identify where provision may need to be adapted, strengthened or introduced to meet future workforce needs
- Strengthen the understanding of technical capabilities within careers guidance and work experience programmes

##### Action 2

###### Align education and training pathways with technical capability needs

Ensure education and training provision reflects real workplace practice and enables progression into technician, specialist and management roles.

###### *This action will:*

- Work with employers to ensure technical training reflects real workplace practice, standards and technologies
- Strengthen progression routes from Level 3 into higher technical and specialist roles (Levels 4–5 and above)
- Integrate digital, AI and sustainability capability within sector-specific training

- Support modular and flexible learning that enables progression into technical, supervisory and management roles
- Strengthen collaboration between employers and providers so training reflects real operational practice

### Action 3

#### Strengthen entry, progression and retention in technical and specialist careers

Ensure people can enter, progress and remain in technical and specialist careers across their working lives, helping employers address workforce replacement needs and demographic pressures.

##### *This action will:*

- Strengthen entry routes into technical and specialist roles across multiple life stages, including young people, career changers and returners
- Rebuild entry-level pathways (Levels 1–2) that help young people, young people, those with special educational needs and disabilities and others starting out progress into technical training, apprenticeships and skilled work
- Highlight the importance of structured work experience, supported internships, placements and mentoring to support transitions into technical roles
- Strengthen progression opportunities for the existing workforce, enabling technicians and specialists to develop into advanced technical, supervisory and management roles
- Support employers, particularly SMEs, to

offer inclusive and sustainable entry-level and progression opportunities

- Align entry and progression volumes with sector demand, workforce replacement needs and major infrastructure projects

### Expected Outcome and Performance Measures

The expected outcome of this priority is a stronger technical skills pipeline across Sussex and Brighton's key sectors, with clearer alignment between employer demand, provision and progression routes into technician, specialist, supervisory and higher technical roles. By 2030, the LSIP aims to increase progression into relevant higher-level education and training at Levels 4–6+ in LSIP key sectors and increase the number of education and training programmes aligned to identified technical capability needs.

Progress will be measured through the development and validation of a technical capability framework, completion of provision and pathway mapping, evidence of curriculum and programme changes, and stronger progression routes from Level 3 into Levels 4–5 and above. Medium-term measures will draw on Individualised Learner Record data, apprenticeship data, Higher Education Statistics Agency data, provider reporting and feedback from employers and partners. A baseline will be established following completion of the capability mapping activity.

Short- and medium-term Key Performance Indicators to measure outputs, outcomes and success for this Priority are set out in **Annex B – LSIP Action Plan**.

## Priority 2

Make **digital and technological capability** a baseline expectation across the Sussex and Brighton workforce and future pipeline, supporting safe and responsible use of emerging technologies.

### Sectors of Particular Focus

- All

**Below are the system-level actions within the Sussex and Brighton skills system needed to deliver this priority.**

### Action 1

#### Identify and agree the digital and technological capability needed across key sectors

Develop a shared understanding of the digital and technological capability needed



across Sussex and Brighton's key sectors and education workforce over the next three years.

***This action will:***

- Draw on existing local and national frameworks, labour market intelligence and sector analysis to establish a clear picture of the digital and technological capability needed across key sectors and education workforce
- Identify the core knowledge and skills needed to work safely and responsibly with digital, data and AI-enabled systems, including cyber security, data protection, human oversight and responsible use of emerging technologies
- Identify where digital and technological change is having the greatest impact on jobs, sectors and career pathways
- Identify where further work may be needed to fill evidence gaps and agree a shared baseline for Sussex and Brighton

## **Action 2**

### **Align education and training pathways with digital and technological capability needs**

Ensure education and training pathways reflect the digital and technological capability needed in current and future workplaces.

***This action will:***

- Map the digital and technological capabilities identified in Action 1 across education and training pathways and programmes (Levels 1-8), including apprenticeships, adult learning and modular provision such as Skills Bootcamps
- Identify where curriculum content, assessment approaches or progression routes may need to be adapted or strengthened to reflect current and future workplace practice
- Strengthen the awareness of digital and technological capabilities within careers guidance, work experience and progression routes across sectors
- Support educators and training providers to integrate responsible use of digital and emerging technologies into teaching and learning

- Strengthen foundational digital capability for learners and adults without Level 3 qualifications to support progression into work and further training

## **Action 3**

### **Strengthen leadership capability and employer support for responsible technology adoption**

Ensure employers and leaders have the skills, support and system levers needed to adopt and use digital and emerging technologies safely, responsibly and effectively

***This action will:***

- Strengthen leadership capability in areas such as digital governance, cyber security, risk management and responsible use of emerging technologies
- Support employers, particularly SMEs, to build workforce capability for digital and technological change
- Build on existing business support infrastructure, employer networks and sector initiatives to strengthen digital capability across the workforce
- Support ongoing workforce upskilling as digital technologies and workplace systems evolve

## **Expected Outcome and Performance Measures**

The expected outcome of this priority is that digital and technological capability becomes a baseline expectation across education, training and workforce pathways, rather than being treated as a specialist requirement for digital roles only. By 2030, the LSIP aims to support agreed baseline expectations for digital and technological capability to be embedded across education and training pathways in LSIP key sectors, alongside improved employer confidence in leading the safe and responsible use of digital and emerging technologies.

Progress will be measured through the development and validation of a digital capability baseline, identification of priority sectors and occupations affected by digital and technological change, evidence of

baseline digital capability being embedded in sector pathways, and activity to strengthen responsible digital practice, AI governance, cyber awareness and foundational digital skills. Medium-term measures will use provider reporting and the LSIP employer survey, with

a baseline established in 2026/27 to track changes in employer confidence over time.

Short- and medium-term Key Performance Indicators to measure outputs, outcomes and success for this Priority are set out in **Annex B – LSIP Action Plan**.

### Priority 3

*Embed skills for environmental sustainability and climate resilience across the Sussex and Brighton workforce and future pipeline, supported by leadership capability to enable consistent and effective implementation.*

#### Sectors of Particular Focus

- All

Below are the system-level actions within the Sussex and Brighton skills system needed to deliver this priority.

#### Action 1

##### Identify sustainability and climate capability needs across key sectors

Develop a shared understanding of the sustainability and climate resilience skills required across Sussex and Brighton's key sectors.

**This action will:**

- Draw on existing national frameworks, local climate strategies and sector intelligence to establish a clear picture of the sustainability and climate resilience capabilities required across key sectors
- Identify the core knowledge and skills needed across occupations, including carbon awareness, resource efficiency, climate adaptation and regulatory understanding
- Identify where sustainability requirements are already influencing job roles, sector practices and supply chains
- Review evidence periodically over the lifetime of the LSIP to assess whether demand for specialist green occupations is emerging or increasing in certain sectors.
- Use these checkpoints to inform whether additional specialist training provision may be required

#### Action 2

Align education, training and workforce pathways with sustainability capability needs

Ensure education and training pathways reflect the sustainability and climate resilience capabilities required in current and future workplaces.

This action will:

- Map the sustainability capabilities identified in Action 1 across education and training pathways and programmes (Levels 1-8), including apprenticeships, adult learning and modular provision such as Skills Bootcamps
- Identify where curriculum content, assessment approaches or progression routes may need to be adapted or strengthened to reflect emerging sustainability practices
- Support educators and training providers to integrate sustainability and climate resilience capability into teaching and learning
- Strengthen awareness of sustainability capability within careers guidance, sector pathways and workforce development programmes
- Support workforce upskilling in areas such as resource efficiency, sustainable practices and climate resilience

#### Action 3

##### Strengthen leadership capability to enable sustainability and climate action

Ensure leaders and managers have the knowledge and confidence to translate





sustainability commitments into practical workforce skills and operational change

***This action will:***

- Strengthen leadership capability in areas such as sustainability strategy, regulatory compliance and climate risk management
- Support leaders to translate sustainability goals into workforce capability, training priorities and operational practice
- Build on existing business support programmes, sector initiatives and employer networks to strengthen sustainability leadership
- Encourage organisations to embed sustainability capability within workforce development and continuous professional development

### **Expected Outcome and Performance Measures**

The expected outcome of this priority is that sustainability and climate resilience capability is embedded across relevant education, training and workforce pathways,

supporting employers to translate environmental commitments, regulatory requirements and procurement expectations into practical workforce capability. By 2030, the LSIP aims to support sustainability and climate resilience capability to be embedded across education and training pathways in LSIP key sectors, alongside improved employer confidence in leading sustainability and climate-related workforce change.

Progress will be measured through the development and validation of a sustainability capability framework, a regular review cycle to monitor emerging demand, completion of provision and pathway mapping, evidence of curriculum and programme changes, and activity to strengthen sustainability leadership capability. Medium-term measures will draw on provider reporting and the LSIP employer survey, with a baseline established in 2026/27 following completion of sustainability capability mapping.

Short- and medium-term Key Performance Indicators to measure outputs, outcomes and success for this Priority are set out in **Annex B – LSIP Action Plan**.

## **Priority 4**

*Strengthen access, entry and progression routes into employment to reflect technological change and Sussex and Brighton's demographic realities, so that pathways remain inclusive, clear and aligned with employer expectations.*

### **Sectors of Particular Focus**

- All

**Below are the system-level actions within the Sussex and Brighton skills system needed to deliver this priority.**

### **Action 1**

#### **Identify where routes into employment need to evolve across key sectors**

Develop a shared understanding of how technological change, demographic pressures and labour market conditions are affecting routes into and through work across Sussex and Brighton's key sectors.

***This action will:***

- Map current entry points, transition routes and progression pathways across key sectors
- Identify where technological change is altering job roles, entry routes or early career progression
- Analyse workforce trends such as ageing workforces, economic inactivity and declining youth participation that may affect workforce supply
- Assess where these issues vary across different parts of Sussex and Brighton
- Produce an agreed evidence base to identify where pathways may need to be strengthened, expanded or adapted

## Action 2

### **Align education, training and employment pathways with changing workforce needs**

Ensure pathways into employment reflect current and future job requirements and support progression at different stages of life.

#### *This action will:*

- Strengthen routes into employment where traditional entry-level roles are changing or becoming less common
- Introduce structured step-by-step entry routes that combine learning with work experience where appropriate
- Support progression at different life stages and levels, including for young people, career changers, returners and economically inactive adults
- Align employment support, education and training pathways more closely with sector workforce
- Improve the clarity of progression routes so learners, employers and advisers understand how individuals move into and through sectors
- Build on existing experience-based and work-integrated approaches to learning, including placements, project-based activity and employer-designed provision, to strengthen alignment between curriculum and real workplace practice

## Action 3

### **Enable employers to offer more entry and progression opportunities**

Support employers to create and sustain structured entry and progression opportunities that allow people to move into and through employment

#### *This action will:*

- Reduce practical barriers that employers face in offering entry-level and supported employment opportunities, particularly SMEs and micro-businesses
- Encourage shared approaches where employers collaborate to support supervision, employment skills, mentoring and workforce development

- Expand structured work experience, supported internships, placements and transitional roles that lead to sustained employment
- Strengthen mentoring and development opportunities within early career roles
- Improve coordination between employers, employment support services and training providers so candidates are better prepared for entry into work

### **Expected Outcome and Performance Measures**

The expected outcome of this priority is clearer, more inclusive and more employer-aligned routes into and through employment across Sussex and Brighton. The priority is intended to strengthen transitions from education, training and employment support into work, improve progression within work, and support young people, adults, returners, career changers and economically inactive residents to access opportunities in LSIP priority sectors. By 2030, the LSIP aims to increase the proportion of individuals completing education, training or employability programmes who enter employment, progress within employment, or move into further training aligned to LSIP priority sectors within 6–12 months of completion.

Progress will be measured through pathway mapping across LSIP priority sectors, identification of entry routes affected by technological change, analysis of demographic and workforce trends, and evidence of strengthened employer models for work experience, placements, supported employment, mentoring and early career development. Medium-term measures will draw on provider destination data, Graduate Outcomes Survey data, apprenticeship and employment outcomes, and data from wider employment and skills programmes. A baseline will be established using 2025/26 destination and progression data.

Short- and medium-term Key Performance Indicators to measure outputs, outcomes and success for this Priority are set out in **Annex B – LSIP Action Plan**.



## 7. GOVERNANCE AND REVIEWING PROGRESS

As the designated ERB for the Sussex and Brighton LSIP, Sussex Chamber of Commerce has oversight of the delivery of the actions set out in this plan, working collaboratively with employers and partners. This includes translating LSIP priorities into practical action, reviewing progress and reporting annually on delivery.

Delivery of the LSIP will rely on coordinated action across the local skills system. This will include strengthening connections between employers and providers, supporting curriculum alignment where appropriate, and improving access to the skills system for employers - particularly micro and small businesses.

### GOVERNANCE

Governance is provided through the [Future Skills Sussex LSIP Board](#), which brings together employer and partner representation to guide the strategic direction of the LSIP. The Board operates within the Sussex Chamber of Commerce governance framework, ensuring accountability and transparency in the development and delivery of LSIP priorities. As the Strategic Authority develops, there will be ongoing alignment between LSIP governance and emerging regional structures to support coordinated decision-making and delivery. Day-to-day coordination and programme management are undertaken by the LSIP team at Sussex Chamber of Commerce.

### REVIEWING PROGRESS

In line with Skills England requirements, Sussex Chamber of Commerce will undertake an ongoing review of the LSIP and publish annual progress reports during the implementation period. This process will ensure that the LSIP remains responsive to changing employer demand, labour-market conditions and wider economic and policy developments across Sussex and Brighton.

Progress against the LSIP priorities, actions and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) will be monitored through a combination of data,

employer engagement, provider feedback and stakeholder collaboration. This will include some or all of the following:

- reviewing employer skills needs and labour-market intelligence to identify emerging workforce pressures, changes in demand and the implications of major investment and infrastructure projects
- gathering further education and higher education data, including learner outcomes, progression and skills pipeline information, to support consistent monitoring of workforce development activity
- working with providers and partners to review progress in implementing LSIP actions, identify barriers to delivery and respond to emerging intelligence from employers and sectors
- seeking feedback from employers on the effectiveness and impact of changes introduced through the LSIP, including curriculum development, workforce training and progression pathways
- monitoring activity to strengthen employer engagement in the skills system, including participation in curriculum design, industry placements, apprenticeships, work experience, supported employment and workforce upskilling activity

- continuing engagement with local authorities, the Strategic Authority, Jobcentre Plus, careers services and wider stakeholders to ensure the LSIP remains aligned with local plans, employment and skills strategies, and wider economic priorities
- tracking progress and impact through regular monitoring activity, reporting to Skills England and publication of annual LSIP progress reports

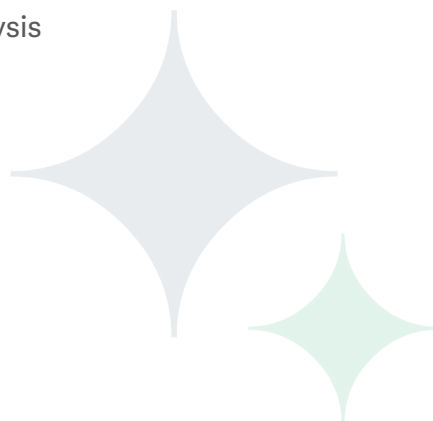
As the Strategic Authority develops, reviewing and monitoring arrangements will move to align with emerging regional governance and strategic planning structures, helping ensure that skills investment, commissioning and workforce planning remain informed by employer demand and the priorities identified through the LSIP.

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## 8. ANNEXES

The annexes to this report provide supporting evidence, technical detail and supplementary information that underpins the Sussex and Brighton LSIP. While some annexes are referenced directly within the report, others are included to provide additional depth, transparency and context on the evidence base, methodology and sector analysis that informed the development of the plan. The Annexes are:

- Annex A – Explanatory Information on Skills
- Annex B – LSIP Action Plan
- Annex C – Background and Methodology
- Annex D – Overview of Sussex Labour Market
- Annex E – Key Sector Analysis
- Annex F – Skills Supply Analysis
- Annex G1 – Skills Needed for Innovation & Technical Excellence
- Annex G2 – Skills Needed for Digital & Technological Readiness
- Annex G3 – Skills Needed for Green & Sustainability
- Annex G4 – Detailed Findings from Access routes into Employment & Career Pathways
- Annex H – Employer Survey Analysis
- Annex I – Provider Survey Analysis





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