STOKE-ON-TRENT & STAFFORDSHIRE

Local Skills Improvement Plan Progress Report

Staffordshire Chambers of Commerce.

Skills Hub RESEARCH

Funded by UK Government

1. Summary of the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Local Skills Improvement Plan

What is the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Local Skills Improvement Plan?

The Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP), published in August 2023, has been developed and coordinated by Staffordshire Chambers of Commerce in collaboration with key partners, training providers and businesses.

The LSIP highlights the challenges, opportunities, and key priorities for change through detailed analysis of local labour market intelligence, sector-based trends coupled with an extensive programme of consultation and engagement with employers across Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire.

The aim of the report is to help promote the improvement of skills across the region, supporting economic growth, productivity and innovation across business and the local economy. A Roadmap for Change has been developed, with key actions and priorities, to support the delivery of LSIP and meet the needs of employers and providers across the region.

The Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire LSIP covers the whole of the county of Staffordshire and recognises sectors that are important to each city and borough region, ensuring that businesses of all sizes are reflected across the report.

Key LSIP Priority Sectors

While LSIP engagement with businesses of all sectors and sizes has been reflected in the report, there is a specific focus on key sectors that were identified as a priority by the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Strategic Economic Plan, and extensive sector-based evidence developed by partners and stakeholders as part of the Skills Advisory Panel.

These priority sectors include:

- Engineering and Advanced Manufacturing, including ceramics
- Advanced Logistics
- Health and Social Care
- Construction
- Decarbonisation and Energy Distribution

The LSIP also recognises the important cross-cutting sector themes of digital skills, net zero and green skills and the significant role they play in businesses now and in the future.

LSIP Vision and Objectives.

Our LSIP Vision remains unchanged and builds on our existing strong skills infrastructure to transform and improve attainment, support residents of all ages and backgrounds into better paid jobs to drive economic growth, productivity and innovation.

The current LSIP Vision Statement is set out below alongside the key objectives it is looking to achieve.

Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire LSIP Vision:

"Improve the opportunities for the current and emerging workforce in Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire region by developing an exemplary strategic partnership with all local providers and employers. This will create a dynamic skills system and ensure that everyone's potential is reached, increasing prospects for more fulfilling careers, higher valued and better paid jobs to increase business growth, productivity, and investment in a rapidly changing world now and in the future."

Objectives

Building on the research of the LSIP, through consultation with employers, training providers, public sector partners and key stakeholders, we have developed the following objectives:

Objective 1: Ensure a more comprehensive match between the demand for, and supply of, the skills that employers need to thrive and boost their growth and productivity.

Objective 2: Help support collaboration between providers, businesses, and public sector stakeholders to deliver a more responsive and future-facing skills system in the region.

Objective 3: Increase awareness and accessibility of provision and address barriers to progression, especially for the adult workforce and those from diverse backgrounds, disadvantaged communities, and under-represented groups.

Objective 4: Recognise that improving the supply of skills must be accompanied by demand-side measures with greater employer engagement and understanding of the benefits of training.

Objective 5: Ensure that there are effective pathways for learners to achieve their potential and ambitions, from foundation through to higher technical qualifications.

Objective 6: Support individuals in Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire through enhanced careers guidance to gain the best skills to realise their aspiration and potential to find employment in the area.

Roadmap for Change

To deliver on our vision statement and the objectives identified through our LSIP, we have developed a Roadmap for Change with key priorities that the LSIP will look to focus on through a series of actions and milestones.

1. Improved co-ordination and collaboration
2. Simplified and flexible skills system – more responsive to employer needs
3. Addressing staff recruitment and challenges in education
4. Development of Skills Growth Maps on cross-cutting themes
5. Unlocking further opportunities for apprenticeships
6. Promoting and developing best practice in business
7. Careers Transition Period
8. Use local knowledge and best practice to influence the skills system

2. Who is this LSIP Progress Report for?

Following the publication of the LSIP, the Chambers along with partners, providers and stakeholders (See Annex 2) have been working toward the key priorities set out in the LSIP Roadmap for Change.

This Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) Progress Report provides updates to our Roadmap for Change since the publication of the LSIP.This report will showcase the evidence and impact that the LSIP has had so far by setting out:

- Which of the actions/changes set out in the Roadmap for Change have been achieved
- What the impact and benefits of these actions/changes have been
- What still needs to be achieved including the development of new actions/changes for the Roadmap for Change

This report is key for all stakeholders, including employers who have engaged with the LSIP to understand the progress that has been made so far.

For businesses that have not yet engaged, it provides an opportunity to review what the LSIP is working toward and how they and training providers can continue to get involved in the delivery of the Roadmap for Change.

Any business who wants to get involved in the LSIP process over the next 12 months can register their interest through the following QR code:

3. Strategic and economic context update

Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire continue to remain a major economic growth opportunity for the UK, with its strategic location at the heart of the West Midlands. There are a number of significant investments that are still due to take place across the region creating significant jobs and inward investment, including:

- Goods Yard
- West Midlands Strategic Freight Interchange
- Meecebrook
- Stafford Station Gateway
- Ceramic Valley Enterprise Zone
- I54

Our local colleges, universities, and providers have also made significant investments in their infrastructure over the last 12 months, which aligns to the priorities of the LSIP. These investments include:

- Staffordshire University have invested £5.8million in Centre for Health Innovation, delivering world-class healthcare education. Using advanced AR and VR technology, this investment includes Outdoor Simulation Space, a Simulation Suite, Life-Like Clinical Simulation, Emergency Department Space and Ward Simulation.

- Stoke on Trent College officially launched its Advanced Construction Centre as part of a multi-million-pound facility, skills and learning improvement programme. The Construction Skills Hub brings together the industry-standard facilities, expertise, and equipment.

- South Staffordshire College's Tamworth campus will be relocated to the city centre in a new £30m build. The new campus will provide a high-quality teaching and learning environment through a mix of general teaching spaces, specialist teaching spaces – such as engineering, automotive and construction workshops, digital hub, hair and beauty training salons, as well as a commercial café and hair salon.

- Newcastle and Stafford College Group opened their new £28m Skills and Innovation Centre. This new centre is equipped with leading edge equipment and state-of-the-art skills around construction, engineering, and motor vehicle facilities. The College Group will also be opening a £8m two-storey, purpose built T Level Centre in September 24 primarily driven by increased demand for new T-level pathways. NSCG is the lead FE provider for the £21.5m Institute of Technology (IoT), expected to open in May 2025 and is key to the delivery of the LSIP priorities and actions

- Burton & South Derbyshire College (BSDC) are set to benefit from brand new facilities, through initial funding of £3.2 million from the Government's Stronger Towns Fund. These innovative facilities will include a Health and Social Care Realistic Working Environment, a Mechatronics Suite, a Creative Digital Learning Hub, Cyber Security Lab, and a Games Development Suite.

- The City of Stoke-on-Trent Sixth Form College opened its new Centre for Medical and Healthcare science in 2023, with state-of-the-art classroom, laboratories, research facilities and simulation rooms.

Key Economic Changes

While there have not been any significant economic changes or impacts locally, there has been national infrastructure changes to High Speed 2 that will impact Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire

Construction of HS2 between London and Birmingham is set to continue; however, the Government published 'Network North: Transforming British Transport' on 4 October 2023, which outlined significant changes to the HS2 project. These include scaling back the railway, halting plans to extend the line beyond Birmingham to Crewe and Manchester.

The new line will connect to the West Coast Main Line at Handsacre Junction in Staffordshire, to allow HS2 trains to reach cities in the North of England and Scotland on the existing West Coast Main Line.

It was anticipated that this scrapped section would have created up to 6,500 jobs, creating further opportunities for investment. It is likely that this will be significantly reduced, impacting on construction jobs and demand for the region.

Overall, the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire economy remains strong, with further opportunities for job creation and investment.
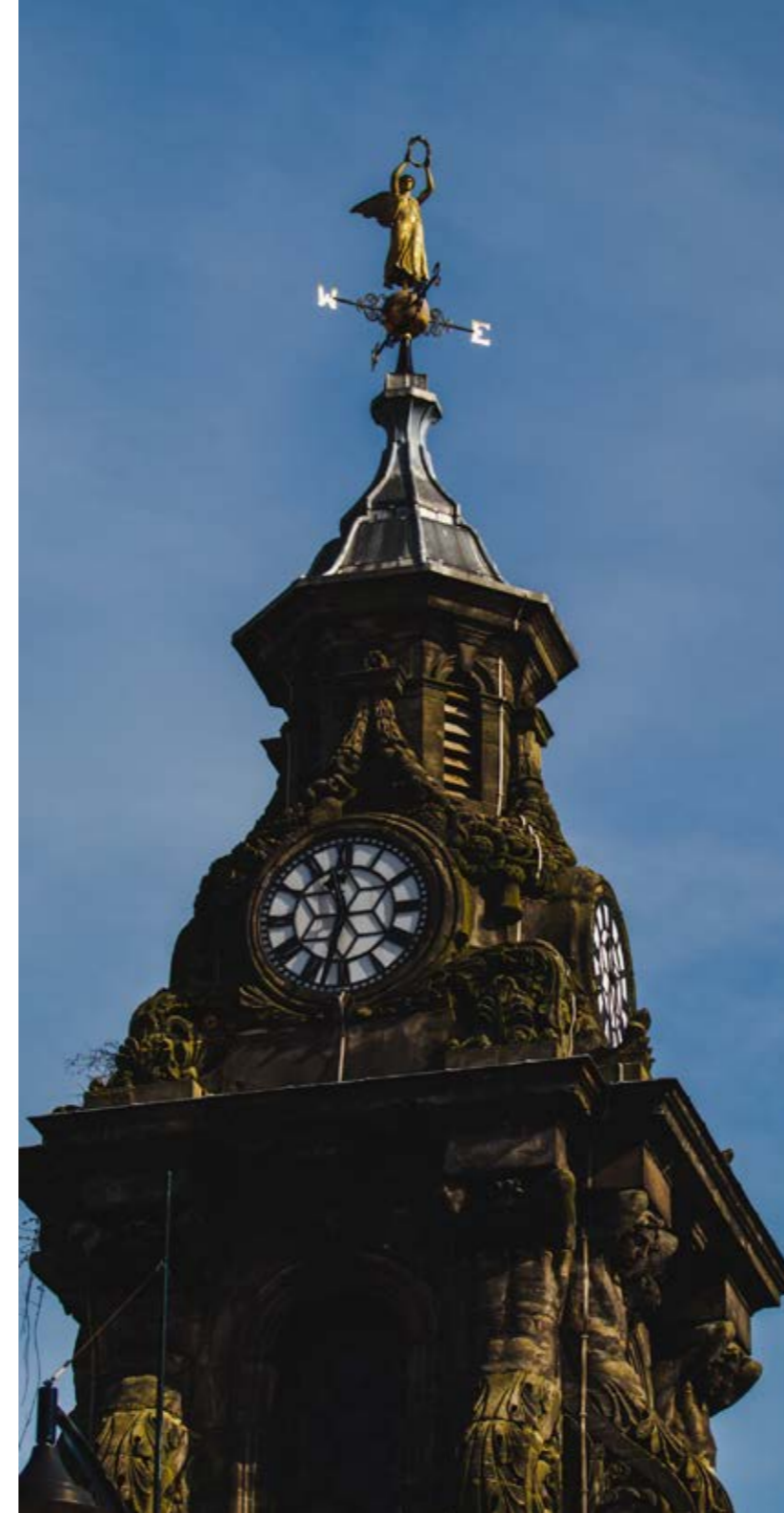
4. Roadmap for Change - Priorities and actions

The Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire LSIP has made significant progress towards its Roadmap for Change since August 2023. Below is a breakdown of the what the actions are, which partners are involved, timescales, the expected outcomes and how progress is being monitored.

Priority – 1. Improved co-ordination and collaboration

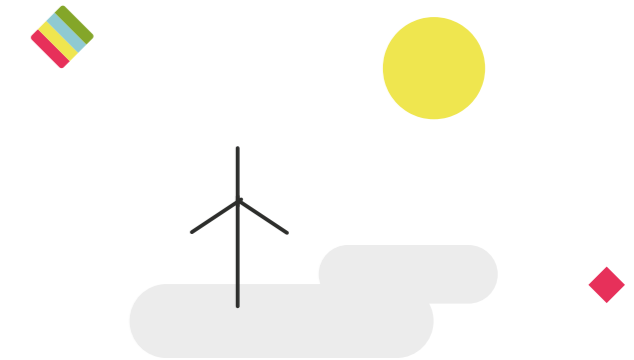| Action	Partners Involved	Timescales	Method of Implementation and Outcomes Expected	Monitoring Arrangements	Progress Status
1.1 To continue to develop a strategic partnership approach across the sub region. Providers, employers, and stakeholders should collaborate to ensure employers have ready access to the skills information on training provision in the area, drawing and evaluating the experiences of other regional and national initiatives.	Staffordshire Chambers SPES FE/HE/ Providers Local Authorities	Start Date: QTR4 2023 End Date: Ongoing	Employer Engagement - Strengthened LSIP Governance Board. Cross College Provider Group – College Principals/CEO Group Marketing/Promotion – LSIP Video to encourage employer involvement. Research – Identify current gaps in provision.	No. of LSIP Board Members from employers, priority sectors, stakeholders. (Quarterly) No. of College Principals/CEO group meetings (Monthly) No. of courses on Skills Hub website. (Monthly) No. of views of Skills Hub website (Monthly) Reduction in no. of current gaps in provision. (Quarterly)	On Track
1.2 Promotion and strengthening of the SPES network to ensure it includes all training providers and stakeholders as part of its formalised strategic partnership.	SPES FE/HE/ Providers Local Authorities Employers	Start Date: QTR3 2023 End Date: Ongoing	Cross Provider Group – Developed new SPES governance structure and board. Research – Identified gaps in SPES membership two improve recruitment Marketing/Promotion - Develop a communications/ marketing plan to approach new SPES members Evaluation - Review the success of SPES Membership and Approach	No. of SPES Board Meetings (Quarterly) No. of Training Providers engaging with SPES (Quarterly) Reduction in no. of current gaps in provision. (Quarterly)	On Track

Action	Partners Involved	Timescales	Method of Implementation and Outcomes Expected	Monitoring Arrangements	Progress Status
1.3 A collaborative awareness campaign to raise provider's offer, including case study examples of successful collaboration between providers and industry to provide responsive skills offer; the pathways of support available for employers; and the benefits that engagement with the skills system can deliver for businesses.	Staffordshire Chambers SPES Local Authorities	Start Date: QTR1 2024 End Date: QTR4 2024	Marketing/Promotion – Launched Look at Me Now website Marketing/Promotion - Produce case studies from various providers on successful partnership working to meet skills needs.	No. of views of Look At Me Now website (Monthly) No. of case studies produced. (Monthly)	On Track
1.4 Enhanced collaborative data sharing and research intelligence projects, coordinated through bringing together the SPES and the SAP Data Group. This should build on the existing SAP data, training provider data, LSIP Insights Dashboard, LA data, Future Skills Unit and others to drive further improvements of local understanding and support future curriculum development.	Staffordshire Chambers SPES FE/HE/ Providers Local Authorities Careers Hub	Start Date: QTE3 2024 (delayed from QTR4 2023) End Date: Ongoing	Research - Review current data sets that are available and identify any gaps. Cross-Provider Group - Create a timetable for cross-provider specialist staff updates/upskilling and evaluate impact Research and Evaluation - Develop a specialist skills agency approach and evaluate impact Evaluation - Review and build upon the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire LSIP Dashboard	Development of an innovative data sharing approach.	Not Yet Started

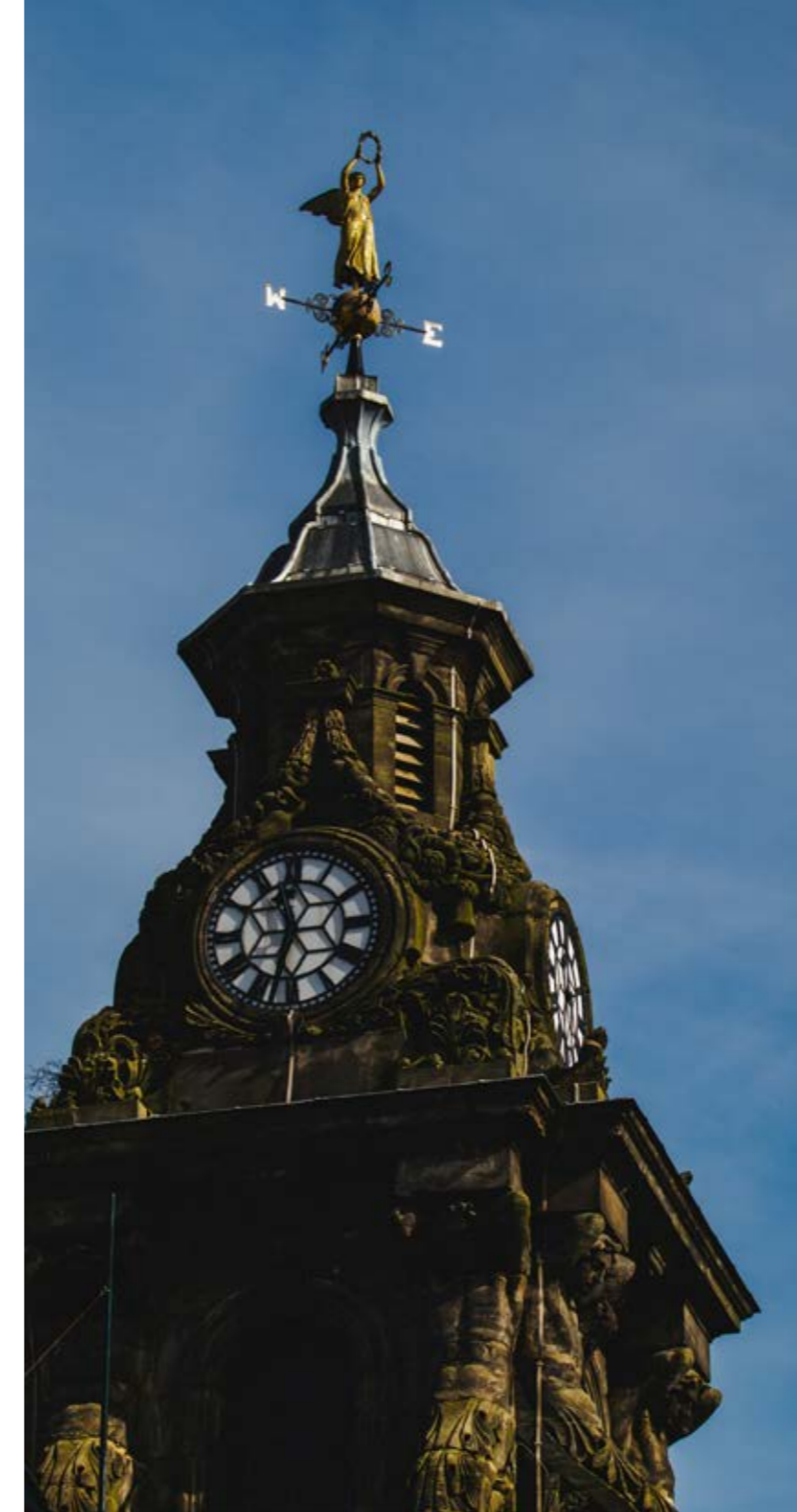| Action	Partners Involved	Timescales	Method of Implementation and Outcomes Expected	Monitoring Arrangements	Progress Status
1.5 Providers and stakeholders should collaborate and share specialist staff expertise to ensure learners across the region benefit from expert training such as by jointly developing collaborative approaches to planning and delivering training, cross-provider specialist staff updating to upskill teachers from across the region and/or developing a cross-provider 'specialist skills agency'.	SPES FE/HE/ Providers	Start Date: QTR3 2024 (delayed from QTR1 2024) End Date: QTR1 2025	Fuding – Utilise LSIF funding to support providers to share expertise and resources Cross-Provider – Continue to build upon the strong partnership working of the Institute of Technology Research – Identify innovation mechanism that providers could take to share expertise and resource and evaluate.	No. of teaching staff (full time or part time) delivering provision across more than one provider. (Quarterly) No. of providers accessing the new shared facilities / curriculum to deliver training (Quarterly)	Not Yet Started
1.6 Providers, employers and stakeholders should collaborate to ensure employers are well-supported to identify the skills training they need for their businesses now and in the future and are able to access it such as through the creation of a one-stop-shop coordinated sign-posting process.	Staffordshire Chambers SPES FE/HE/ Providers Local Authorities	Start Date: QTR3 2023 End Date: QTR4 2024	Employer Engagement – Continue ongoing engagement with employers through focus groups, provider groups and other employer representative bodies. Stakeholder Engagement – Continue ongoing engagement with stakeholders through existing groups such as Countywide Employment and Skill Group. Employer Engagement – Continued expansion of employer engagement methods through providers. Employer Engagement – Development of sector focus groups. Marketing/Promotion – Development of Skills Hub Website with independent advisor support. Research – Identify any additional new/emerging/key sectors to undertake deep dives on – this is currently being undertake with Agriculture/Agri-tech	No. of employer engagement events held. (Monthly) No. of stakeholder engagement events held. (Monthly) No. of employers developing training/skill development plans. No. of courses on Skills Hub website. (Monthly) No. of views of Skills Hub website (Monthly)	On Track

Action	Partners Involved	Timescales	Method of Implementation and Outcomes Expected	Monitoring Arrangements	Progress Status
1.7 Building and expanding on the LSIPs use of the representative business voices to develop further employer engagement in the support of the emerging skills landscape.	Staffordshire Chambers SPES FE/HE/ Providers Employers IoT Partners and Stakeholders	Start Date: QTR3 2023 End Date: Ongoing	Employer Engagement – Continue ongoing engagement with employers through focus groups, provider groups and other employer representative bodies. Stakeholder Engagement – Continue ongoing engagement with stakeholders through existing groups such as Countywide Employment and Skill Group. Employer Engagement – Continued expansion of employer engagement methods through providers. Employer Engagement – Development of sector focus groups. Marketing/Promotion – Development of Skills Hub Website with independent advisor support. Research – Identify any additional new/emerging/key sectors to undertake deep dives on – this is currently being undertake with Agriculture/Agri-tech	No. of employer engagement events held. (Monthly) No. of stakeholder engagement events held. (Monthly)	On Track

Priority – 2. Simplified and flexible skills system – more responsive to employer needs

Action	Partners Involved	Timescales	Method of Implementation and Outcomes Expected	Monitoring Arrangements	Progress Status
2.1 Promote existing standalone, sector specific, courses offered and seek to develop and deliver additional standalone courses.	Staffordshire Chambers FE/HE/Providers Employers IoT Partners and Stakeholders SPES Local Authorities	Start Date: QTR3 2024 End Date: Ongoing	Research - Review of current standalone, sector specific courses and the key sectors and businesses that would benefit from the support Cross-Provider - Meetings to identify gaps from research and how to develop and deliver courses to meet these gaps Marketing/Promotion - Develop a communications plan to promote the stand alone, sector specific courses to employers Marketing/Promotion - Development of Skills Hub Website with independent advisor support to promote courses	No. of learners forecast to undertake learning using new facilities/equipment created under the LSIF. (Quarterly) No. employers releasing staff to undertake training developed under the LSIF. (Quarterly) No. of employers reporting that training is giving learners the skills needed. (Quarterly) No. of courses on Skills Hub website. (Monthly) No. of views of Skills Hub website (Monthly)	Not Started Yet
2.2 Explore and develop innovative ways of delivering flexible training such as a micro-credentials or a pick and mix approach across FE and HE. These could be piloted around key priority sectors and the cross-cutting themes of digital and net zero/green skills.	Staffordshire Chambers FE/HE/Providers Employers	Start Date: QTR1 2024 End Date: QTR1 2025	Research - Identifying gaps in short course provision Research - Develop a pilot programme for short course micro-credentials for employers with potential key sectors. Funding - Provider to utilise various funding (UKSPF, AEB) to provide short courses to address LSIP skills shortages. Marketing/Promotion - Development of Skills Hub Website with independent advisor support to promote courses.	No. of learners forecast to undertake learning using new facilities/equipment created under the LSIF. (Quarterly) No. employers releasing staff to undertake training developed under the LSIF. (Quarterly) No. of employers reporting that training is giving learners the skills needed. (Quarterly) No. of courses on Skills Hub website. (Monthly) No. of views of Skills Hub website (Monthly)	On Track

Action	Partners Involved	Timescales	Method of Implementation and Outcomes Expected	Monitoring Arrangements	Progress Status
2.3 To develop a partnership to explore funded and costed (full/part) models of accredited and non-accredited skills training for employers. This could include, for example, the use of Local Skills Improvement Fund (LSIF),UK Shared Prosperity Fund, Skills Bootcamps or the Lifelong Learning Entitlement.	Staffordshire Chambers FE/HE/Providers Employers	Start Date: QTR1 2024 End Date: QTR2 2025	Research - Commission and develop a pilot programme for short course micro-credentials for employers and how this can be funded. Research - Commissioned research to assess and evaluate current methods of delivering funding. Research - Undertake a detailed analysis f how employers utilise their own resources for training. Pilot Programme - Using the information gathered to develop new and innovative ways of funded training, identifying the key sectors that could be targeted.	No. of new level 3 courses at levels 3-5 aligned to LSIP priorities (Quarterly) No. of forecast learner starts on new levels 3-5 courses aligned to LSIP priorities (Quarterly) No. of learners forecast to undertake learning using new facilities/equipment created under the LSIF. (Quarterly) No. employers releasing staff to undertake training developed under the LSIF. (Quarterly) No. of employers reporting that training is giving learners the skills needed. (Quarterly) No. of courses on Skills Hub website. (Monthly) No. of views of Skills Hub website (Monthly)	On Track
2.4 To explore methods of how aggregated sub-regional demand for sector specific courses and qualifications can be captured, to ensure that this demand can then be realised by the most appropriate training provider.	Staffordshire Chambers FE/HE/Providers Employers	Start Date: QTR2 2024 (delayed from QTR4 2023) End Date: QTR 3 2024	Research - Map existing employer and learner demand data for specific sector courses and qualification, working with key stakeholders and data captured as part of the SAP to identify quick win opportunities.	Development of a skills data group building on the SAP data group.	Not On Track

Action	Partners Involved	Timescales	Method of Implementation and Outcomes Expected	Monitoring Arrangements	Progress Status
2.5 To develop a Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Investment and Infrastructure skills group (employers, providers, stakeholders) to review to consider the skills needed to support local and national infrastructure projects.	Staffordshire Chambers FE/HE/Providers Employers	Start Date: QTR 2 2024 (delayed from QTR 4 2023) End Date: Ongoing	Stakeholder Engagement - West Midlands Interchange Skills Group established by local authorities. Stakeholder/Employer Engagement - Establish a stakeholder group around Infrastructure and Investment.	No. of Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Investment and Infrastructure skills meetings held. (Monthly) No. of stakeholders engaged in Staffordshire Investment and Infrastructure skills meetings (Monthly)	Not On Track

**Priority – 3. Addressing staff recruitment and challenges in education**

Action	Partners Involved	Timescales	Method of Implementation and Outcomes Expected	Monitoring Arrangements	Progress Status
3.1 Providers and stakeholders should collaborate on sharing specialist staff expertise, to ensure learners across the region benefit from expert training such as by jointly developing collaborative approaches to planning and delivering training, cross-provider specialist staff updating to upskill teachers from across the region and/or developing a cross-provider 'specialist skills agency'.	FE/HE/Providers	Start Date: QTR1 2024 End Date: QTR4 2024	Cross College/Provider Group: Establishment of group to look at joint activities to support this action including matrix of skill expertise Institute of Technology - Build on the collaborative approach to the IoT to identify opportunities to share resources and expertise. Marketing/Promotion - Development of marketing to support agreed activities. Evaluation - Evaluate the approach taken and its impact on delivery.	Optimisation of facilities, provision, and workforce: forecast savings through shared costs, including facilities, curriculum design, delivery and other collaboration activities. (Quarterly) No. of teaching staff (full time or part time) delivering provision across more than one provider. (Quarterly) No. of providers accessing the new shared facilities / curriculum to deliver training (Quarterly)	On Track
3.2 Providers, employers and stakeholders should collaborate to strengthen employers' contribution to curriculum delivery. To be piloted and evaluated such as through mentoring, expert masterclasses, development of learning activities and projects and staff up-skilling and work-placements.	Staffordshire Chambers FE/HE/Providers Employers	Start Date: QTR1 2024 End Date: QTR4 2024	Employer Engagement - Establishment of group to produce a matrix of skill expertise in employers. Research/Deep Dive - Survey employers on whether they have been contacted/involved/seen an increase in communication and/or events on the curriculum planning for their employees. Marketing/Promotion - Promote opportunities for curriculum delivery for employers to get involved in. Funding - Provider utilising funding to deliver events to develop curriculum plans with employer and gathering data and resource for current course.	No. of employers releasing / loaning staff to help develop or teach new provision (Quarterly) No. of employers introduced by collaboration partners to new specialist equipment or technology for adoption in their business (Quarterly) No. of employers providing industry placements to FE teaching staff. (Quarterly)	On Track

Action	Partners Involved	Timescales	Method of Implementation and Outcomes Expected	Monitoring Arrangements	Progress Status
3.3 Attract additional skilled teachers to support the delivery of technically focused qualifications and apprenticeships.	Staffordshire Chambers FE/HE/ Providers Employers	Start Date: QTR1 2024 End Date: QTR4 2024	Marketing/Promotion - Produce a joint local marketing campaign to encourage additional skilled teachers to support the delivery of qualifications. Employer Engagement - Institute of Technology attracting employers in to assist with the technical delivery. Employer Engagement - Targeted support to businesses who may have part-time/retiring experienced staff who could become potential teachers. Cross College - Explore opportunity to share the expertise and resource across the different locations. And combine with the expertise from industry	No. of teaching staff undertaking industry placements. (Quarterly) No. of teaching staff undertaking CPD or benefitting from cascade training. (Quarterly) No. of employers providing industry placements to FE teaching staff. (Quarterly)	On Track
3.4 Working with businesses adopting the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Employer Pledge (see Priority 6) to provide more CDP opportunities, visits, briefing sessions and placements for tutors and teachers.	Staffordshire Chambers FE/HE/ Providers Local Authorities Employers Careers Hub	Start Date: QTR1 2024 End Date: Ongoing	Employer Engagement - Develop Terms of Reference/ purpose of gaining an Employer Pledge Stakeholder Engagement - Delivering 46 teacher placements with employers full/half day (including 2 STEM focussed) Marketing/Promotion - Launch Employer Pledge Evaluate - The impact of the employer pledge on CPD opportunities, visits, briefing sessions and placement for tutors and students. Delivering 46 teacher placements with employers full/half day (including 2 STEM focussed)	No. of business completing the Employer Pledge. (Monthly) No. of employers providing industry placements to FE teaching staff. (Quarterly) No. of teaching staff undertaking industry placements. (Quarterly)	On Track

Priority – 4. Development of Skills Growth Maps on cross-cutting themes

Action	Partners Involved	Timescales	Method of Implementation and Outcomes Expected	Monitoring Arrangements	Progress Status
4.1 Work with employers, providers and stakeholders to establish skills growth maps for business to help them understand the fast-moving developments in digital, net zero transition, how they impact their businesses, and the skills and training required to maximise the benefits.	Staffordshire Chambers FE/HE/ Providers Local Authorities Employers SBEN	Start Date: QTR2 2024 End Date: QTR 1 2025	Funding – Keele University and Staffordshire County Council secured Innovate UK funding to map Green Skills across region. Research – Develop similar approach to Digital Skills based on the Green Skills project. Research – Produce a matrix of the skill expertise areas – to be share amongst providers and stakeholders	No. of business engaging in Green and Digital Skills Mapping Pilots	On Track.
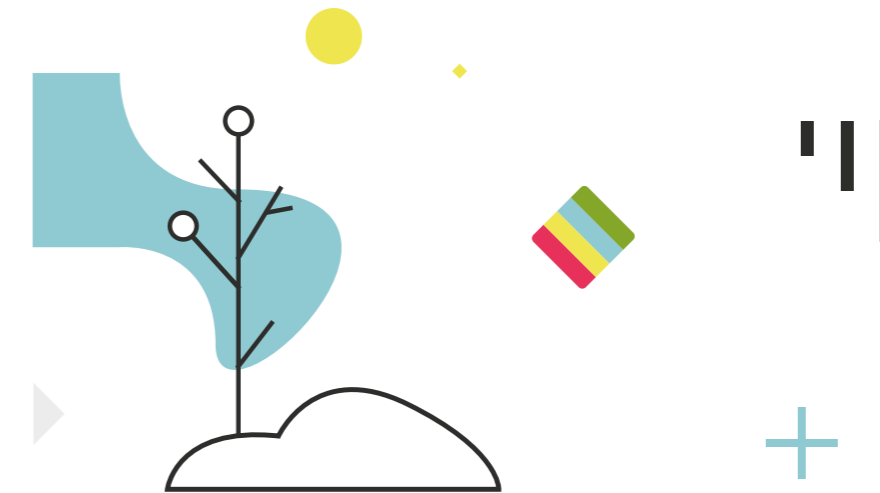
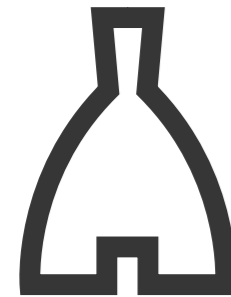**Priority – 5. Unlocking further opportunities for apprenticeships**

Action	Partners Involved	Timescales	Method of Implementation and Outcomes Expected	Monitoring Arrangements	Progress Status
5.1 Providers, employers, and stakeholders to collaborate and explore innovative activities to ensure employers can access impartial information about apprenticeship provision such as through shared/ coordinated information, support in accessing the Apprenticeship Service (and other information portals) and, if required, the creation of cross-region signposting/ brokerage.	Staffordshire Chambers FE/HE/ Providers Local Authorities	Start Date: QTR4 2023 End Date: Ongoing	Marketing/Promotion - Promote existing structures both local and nationally including the apprenticeship service, JET, Staffordshire Jobs and Careers and Ladder for Staffordshire. Marketing/Promotion - Development of Skills Hub Website with independent advisor support to promote apprenticeships. Upskilling - Upskilling parents and teachers about the benefits of apprenticeships in schools. Evaluation - Evaluate the impact of this work on apprenticeship numbers.	No. of businesses developing training/skill development plans. (Monthly)	On Track
5.2 Facilitate and promote apprenticeship levy sharing via a branded Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Levy Share promotional campaign and the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire LSIP Employer Pledge (see Priority 6).	Staffordshire Chambers FE/HE/ Providers Local Authorities Employers	Start Date: QTR4 2023 End Date: QTR1 2025	Research - Produce a list of levy payers across Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire. Funding - Staffordshire Chamber utilising UKSPF funding to develop a pilot levy sharing programme for Stoke-on-Trent. Marketing/Promotion - Promotion of the opportunities of Levy Sharing. Marketing/Promotion - Develop a guide on navigating the DAS System for Levy Sharing.	No. of business sharing their Levy. (Monthly) No. of employers access the shared levy. (Monthly) Amount of levy shared and taken up by employers (Monthly) No. of employers completing the Employer Pledge. (Monthly)	On Track

Action	Partners Involved	Timescales	Method of Implementation and Outcomes Expected	Monitoring Arrangements	Progress Status
5.3 To engage with and promote existing local schemes that promote apprenticeships.	Ladder for Staffordshire Staffordshire Chambers FE/HE/ Providers Local Authorities Employers	Start Date: QTR3 2023 End Date: Ongoing	Provider Engagement - Increased the FE/HE/Provider engagement on existing local scheme such as the Ladders for Staffordshire Marketing/Promotion - Shared best practice on apprenticeships onboarding process through Daily Focus Newsletter. Marketing/Promotion - Celebration local apprenticeship through National Apprenticeship Week, Look at Me Now and social media channels. Research - Map baseline data for Apprenticeships at all levels	No. of views of Look at Me Now website (Monthly) No. of articles around apprenticeship best practice published through Daily Focus Newsletter. (Monthly) No. of businesses engaging with Ladder for Staffordshire. (Monthly) No. of providers engaging with Ladder for Staffordshire. (Monthly) % increase in the number of apprenticeships. (Monthly)	On Track
5.4 Work with employers to facilitate a long-term increase in the proportion of apprentices completing higher-level apprenticeships to increase the higher-level technical skills in the local workforce and benefit growth, productivity, and innovation.	Ladder for Staffordshire Staffordshire Chambers FE/HE/ Providers Local Authorities	Start Date: QTR2 2024 (delayed from QTR3 2023) End Date: Ongoing	Events/Workshops – Develop a series of activities to increase the awareness of higher-level apprenticeships and the benefits for career progression Funding - Staffordshire Chamber utilising UKSPF funding to develop a pilot levy sharing programme for Stoke-on-Trent. Research - Review data available on the number of apprenticeships over the last 5 years – to have a starting base for increase Marketing/Promotion - Market the benefits of higher-level apprenticeship to employers as a career progression route.	No. of businesses developing training/skill development plans. (Monthly)	Not on Track

Priority – 6. Promoting and developing best practice in business

Action	Partners Involved	Timescales	Method of Implementation and Outcomes Expected	Monitoring Arrangements	Progress Status
6.1 Introduce a 'Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Employer Pledge' to: - • Support employers to absorb the short-term impact on productivity that training can have. • Support recruitment of a diverse current and future skilled workforce	Staffordshire Chambers FE/HE/ Providers Local Authorities Employers	Start Date: QTR3 2024 (delayed from QTR1 2024) End Date: QTR1 2025	Research – Develop an Employer Pledge Marketing/Promotion – Promote the Employer Pledge to businesses across Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire	No. of business completing the Employer Pledge. (Monthly)	Not on Track

Priority – 7. Careers Transition Period

Action	Partners Involved	Timescales	Method of Implementation and Outcomes Expected	Monitoring Arrangements	Progress Status
7. All Careers Transition actions can be found in the LSIP Report. A summary of the actions is included below: • Improve the visibility of careers pathways to students. • Improve engagement from employers and education providers. • Raise the quality of careers provision – with a focus on targeted interventions for under-represented groups. • Roll out and embed Employers Standards and Employer Competency Framework for Skills' (ECF • Amplifying apprenticeships, technical and vocational routes in schools. • SEND and under-represented candidates – Establish clear progression pathways from education into further education or employment.	Staffordshire Chambers Careers Hub Primary/ Secondary Schools FE/HE/ Providers Local Authorities Employers	Start Date: QTR3 2023 End Date: Ongoing	Employer/Stakeholder Engagement – Businesses and schools engaging with the Employer Competency Framework for Skills' (ECF, Employer Standards and Future Skills Survey. Introduction of the process of aligning the ECF with Employer standards as part of an employer roadmap. Employer Engagement – Careers Observatory launched providing small groups of students (aged 12-15) with valuable workplace experiences through an online platform. Events – Develop CPD events to raise teachers' awareness of apprenticeships. Research – Understand the levels of awareness of apprenticeships and T-Levels in teachers and parents. Stakeholder Engagement – Establishment of a SEND Group with schools, providers and businesses to tackle barrier to progression. Marketing/Promotion – Promoted Look At Me Now Website to students, teachers and parents.	No. of business completing the Employer Competency Framework for Skills' (ECF. (Monthly) No. of business signing up to the Employers Standards. (Monthly) No. of students completing the Future Skills Survey. (Monthly) No. of work experience placements offered through the Careers Observatory. (Monthly) % increase in parents and teachers understanding of apprenticeship and T-Levels. (Monthly) No. of business offering opportunities to SEND, under-represented and disadvantaged students. (Monthly) No. of views of Look at Me Now website (Monthly)	On Track.

Priority – 8. Use local knowledge and best practice to influence the skills system.

Action	Partners Involved	Timescales	Method of Implementation and Outcomes Expected	Monitoring Arrangements	Progress Status
8.1 A coordinated lobbying response to UK Government from partners across Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire and national institutions to call for changes to key structural issues within the education and skills system including support to develop a more flexible skills funding system to meet the needs of employers.	Staffordshire Chambers FE/HE/ Providers Local Authorities Employers	Start Date: QTR3 2023 End Date: Ongoing	Employer Engagement - Monitor feedback from employers around national policy and share back to DfE Provider Engagement - Monitor feedback from Providers around national policy and share back to DfE Stakeholder Engagement - Monitor feedback from stakeholders around national policy and share back to DfE	No. of employer engagement events held. (Monthly) No. of stakeholder engagement events held. (Monthly) No. of meetings with Department for Education. (Monthly) Extension of the LSIP beyond 2025. (Quarterly) Extension of the LSIF fund beyond 2025. (Quarterly)	On Track

5. Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire LSIP – What has been achieved so far?

The Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire LSIP has made significant progress since it was published in August 2023.

Below is a breakdown of the key priorities and actions that have been delivered and the impact that they are currently having on skills across Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire.

A breakdown of the key activities undertaken by our local colleges, training providers and stakeholders can be seen in Annex 2.

Improved co-ordination and collaboration

Our region has had great collaboration and co-ordination between providers for a number of years. This has been strengthened further following the publishing of the LSIP.

Providers have continued to work together on the development of areas such as the Institute for Technology, which now has 6 colleges, universities and independent providers working together. There has also been significant collaboration through the Local Skills Improvement Fund to develop curriculum content and potential for shared resources and learning.

We have also seen the strengthening of the Staffordshire Providers for Employability and Skills (SPES) network, now known as the Staffordshire Providers Network (SPN). This is one of a handful of training provider networks in the country. It has been strengthened through an improved governance structure, with appointed Board Members and a Chief Executive to drive activities forward. Membership of the group has started to increase and it is anticipated this will continue over the next 12 months. This strengthened SPN has seen activities take place such as knowledge sharing session amongst providers, sharing of resources and equipment and joint bidding for funding opportunities across our region.

Simplified and Flexible Skills System

Providers across the region have been investing further in more flexible and simplified skills offers since the publication of the LSIP.

Staffordshire University have built upon their previous micro-credentials programme, utilising UK Shared Prosperity Fuding (UKSPF) to offer their Stoke-on-Trent Higher Skills Accelerator.

The University is delivering fully funded short courses, masterclasses and micro-credentials aimed at equipping employees with skills and techniques that can be put into practice in the workplace. Courses are on many topics, such as Digital Marketing, Carbon Net Zero,

Leadership and Data, as well as courses tailored to the Healthcare sector.

South Staffordshire College has launched their Automotive Training Centre offering short and bite-sized electric and Hybrid Training and upskilling programmes and has work nearing completion on the West Midlands NetZero Energy Training Centre to offer 1-3 day skills based training up upskill industry professionals.

Newcastle and Stafford College Group have developed and planned a series of short technical upskilling courses aligned to LSIP priority areas, utilising UKSPF funding. Courses included Network Security / Cyber Security, Automation, Control and Robotics, CAD/CAM and Machining, 3D modelling and more.

Stoke-on-Trent College have launched their new Construction Skills Hub, which brings together the industry-standard facilities, expertise, and equipment to respond to the skills needs set out in the LSIP.

The new Advanced Construction Centre has been funded by the Government T Level capital programme and provides a collaborative, modern and open-plan learning space to support the development of innovative construction skills.

Staffordshire Chambers of Commerce have also commissioned research exploring how a micro-credential approach can provide greater levels of modularity, as well as how smaller units of education and training can help address skill needs in the existing workforce. The research has now been completed and the model will be explored further throughout 2024/2025.

Simplified and Flexible Skills System – Local Skills Improvement Fund

Our six main colleges, as well as the Chamber of Commerce supporting SPN members, bid for £3.2m of Local Skills Improvement Funding to help providers deliver activities and develop curriculum content that would support the skills gaps and priorities identified in the LSIP, meeting employers' skills needs.

Investments included:

Buxton and Leek College investments in computer aided manufacturing equipment, process controls, robotics, fluid power.

Burton and South Derbyshire College Investments in hydrogen and electric vehicle / battery technology.

Newcastle and Stafford College Investments in additive manufacturing, robotics, and automation equipment.

Stoke-on-Trent College

Investments in advanced manufacturing equipment, automation, and electric vehicles

South Staffordshire College Investments in computer aided manufacturing equipment, robotics, and automation.

It is anticipated that this investment will lead to the following: -

- 12 new teaching facilities created (e.g. no workshops / classrooms refurbished / fitted out with new industry standard equipment).
- 25 new level 3 to 5 courses that are aligned with the LSIP to be developed.
- 312 students completing these new courses in the first 12months.
- 670 students to undertake learning using new facilities/equipment created under the LSIF.

More investment into further key LSIP priority sectors, through the extension of the Local Skills Improvement Fund beyond March 2025, is needed. This will ensure that colleges and providers have the best equipment and curriculum possible to meet the skills needs of employers, now and in the future.

Simplified and Flexible Skills System - Institute of Technology

The £21.5m Institute of Technology (IoT), expected to open in May 2025, is key to the delivery of the LSIP priorities and actions. The IoT will have a focus on the following priority sectors: -

- Advanced Engineering and High Value Manufacturing
- Modern Methods of Construction
- Creative, Digital and High Tech
- Health and Life Sciences

Specialising in higher technical education programmes, the new employer-led institute brings together the training offer of Newcastle and Stafford Colleges Group in collaboration with key partners including Burton and South Derbyshire College, South Staffordshire College, Stoke-on-Trent College and Keele University.

The institute will provide progression routes from Level 3 through to Level 7, through full time and part-time study, alongside a modularised flexible training approach as identified in LSIP priority 2.

Signfiicant engagement is taking place with employers, with the support of the LSIP, to ensure that the curriculum, equipment, and future development of the IoT are at the right level and meet employers' skills needs.

Development of Skills Growth Maps on cross-cutting themes

Staffordshire County Council been successful in securing funding from Innovate UK, in collaboration with Keele University, for their Staffordshire Green Skills for Growth project.

This project will lead the way in unlocking the local potential for growth into the 'Green Economy', enabling the rapid upskilling of Stoke on Trent and Staffordshire's workforce.

The project will develop a detailed "net zero supply chain" roadmap, demonstrating what needs to be done for the county to decarbonise. The researchers will also create an associated net zero skills road map and audit of existing net zero skills provision in the county, to identify not only what skills and businesses will be needed for the net zero transition, but also to identify the current gaps in the county's portfolio.

This roadmap will help providers to create the skills and curriculum content needed to ensure employers have the best skills possible for the green economy and move towards net zero.

This programme will be analysed to see how a similar approach could be undertaken for Digital Skills across our region.

Careers Transition - Careers Hub

The Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Careers Hub is making a significant impact on supporting Priority 7 – Careers Transition priority of the LSIP. This includes:

- Development and roll out of Careers Competency Frameworks
- Development and roll out of Employer Standards
- Launched a Careers Observatory to offer work experience placements to students.
- Establishment of a SEND Group with schools, providers, and businesses to tackle barriers to progression.
- Increased awareness of apprenticeships among teachers and parents of pupils, to support improved careers guidance.
- Linked the promotion of the LSIP skills shortage areas to the careers advice being presented.
- Delivering 46 teacher placements with employers full/half day (including 2 STEM focussed)

To support this work, using LSIF funds, Stoke-on-Trent Sixth Form College have developed Digital Badges that will provide students with an accreditation, recognising the quality assurance of education, training, and experience they have gained, aligned to the career's competency framework. This will support them when applying for jobs with employers.

In addition to this, the Careers Hub in collaboration with the Staffordshire Chambers are working to develop Digital Badges within schools, embedding the competency framework further, which will support the improvement of skills and employability awareness of their students. A pilot of this is due to be implemented in the autumn term 2024 with a few schools.

This careers transition work will ensure that pupils coming through primary and secondary school are aware of local employers and jobs for the future, and are developing the employability skills that businesses stated were needed as part of the development of LSIP.
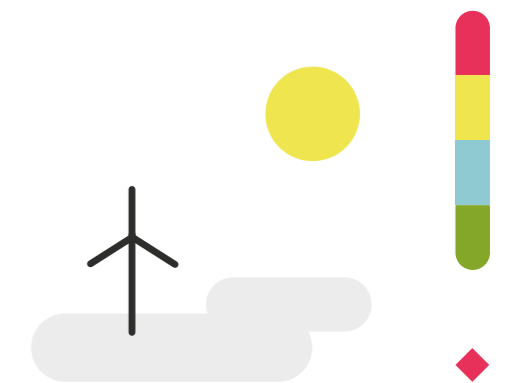
Good Practice

Engagement with employers, by all providers, has also increased significantly since the publication of the LSIP. Many colleges are now hosting Employer Roundtables

Burton and South Derbyshire College have developed a Digital Literacy programme for all learners, which uses machine learning and AI to target key areas such as Cyber Security, Safety Online, effective online research and the use of social media to grow your business. The programme also considers the prior attainment in digital literacy of those undertaking the programme to ensure that key gaps in learning are filled and that learners can build upon their skills

Buxton and Leek College have developed their "BLC Invested Employer" programme. Launched in November 2023, the programme aims to bring employers closer to the college, enabling them to work in partnership to build the workforce of the future, and to give local businesses a platform to update the college on their requirements, support curriculum development and highlight business challenges and successes.

South Staffordshire College host regular forums and working groups with employers at each of their sites, to facilitate ongoing dialogue and information sharing among stakeholders. These platforms enable the identification of emerging skills gaps and the

development of targeted interventions to address them, and ensures that training provision remains aligned with industry needs.

On the back of these forums and working groups, additional funding streams have been secured to support collaborative projects that aim to deliver innovative training programs and initiatives. These funds enable the implementation of pilot projects and the scaling up of successful interventions to meet the region's skill demands. Projects include the Cannock Chase Engineering Academy, Green Village, NetZero Energy Training Centre and UKSPF funded Skills Programme.

Monitoring impact

We are monitoring the impact of our activities through key KPIs set out in the table above, alongside feedback from employers to ensure that we are meeting our priorities and actions.

While many of these actions are short-term, their full impacts will need to be seen for several years.

These KPIs and the currently achieved outputs and outcomes can be found in Annex 1.

6. What still needs to be achieved?

During the process of developing and delivering on the LSIP priorities, there are several priorities and actions that still need to be achieved, as well as changes that need to be made to Roadmap for Change. These changes have been highlighted in the table above.

Roadmap for Change – New Actions

A new action that we have introduced is to explore additional significant priority sectors that are important to the economy of Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire.

One of these new priority sectors is the Agricultural and Agri-tech sector. Staffordshire is a rural county, with approximately 80 per cent of its land area considered rural, and rural districts accounting for 61 per cent of Staffordshire's economic output (Gross Value Added, GVA) in 2018. The rural business base is large and diverse, with 27,000 registered businesses accounting for 70 per cent of all registered businesses in Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire.

Should LSIPs be extended beyond 2025, we will look to include Agriculture and Agri-tech as a key priority sector.

In preparation, we have started to work with key stakeholders to deep dive the sector and engage with businesses,

in order to start to identify the skills challenges, opportunities, and best practice to support the development of the sector. Key stakeholders include the National Farmers Union, Country Land & Business Association, South Staffordshire College, and Harper Adams University,

Roadmap for Change - Delayed Actions

A number of actions have been delayed from their initial start-dates in the published LSIP. These delays and new start-dates have been highlighted in the table above. A more in-depth overview of these delays is explained here.

One action currently behind schedule is the **Introduction of a Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Employer's Pledge** – this pledge will encourage commitment from employers to support training and development of their employees and support the delivery of key points of the LSIP. This includes support around apprenticeships, T Levels, delivering sessions in schools and colleges, developing training plans and more. This action has been delayed while we assess what pledges and commitments are already in progress locally, such as the work of the Careers Hub. We plan to start to develop the pledge in QTR 3 2024.

The action to "**develop a Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Infrastructure Group**" is also behind schedule. The aim of this group was to bring together a series of partners and stakeholders involved in

current or new significant investment and infrastructure projects in the region, in order to review and consider skills needs during the construction phase and later operation of the site.

This work has been slightly delayed as we look to understand what groups exist already, such as the West Midlands Feight Interchange, which stakeholders are key to involvement, and the best format and terms of reference for the group.

Another action, which is behind schedule is to "**Work with employers to facilitate a long-term increase in the proportion of apprentices completing higher-level apprenticeships**". We have experienced challenges in setting baseline data for apprenticeship numbers to monitor increases. We also need to develop a series of workshops and marketing, working with partners and both Staffordshire University and Keele University, to increase awareness of higher-level apprenticeships. We anticipate that this work will commence later in 2024.

The final action that is behind schedule is to "**enhanced collaborative data sharing and research intelligence projects**". This action is to ensure that we have the strongest data possible, available to all providers and stakeholders, which will improve decision-making around curriculum development, monitor improvements and help to make future skills related decisions. The biggest

challenge the LSIP has faced with this action is co-ordinating the available data and developing a group to discuss current data trends, additional data needs and how to disseminate this data. Discussions are planned for Q2 2024 for this action to move forward.

Roadmap for Change – Future Actions

There are several future actions which the Chamber and stakeholders will look to engage with in the coming months. A number of these actions will require employer engagement to ensure they are delivered successfully. These actions include:

Promoting best practice – utilising the Chambers and stakeholders marketing channels, we will be developing key case studies of great work that is happening around skills in Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire, including successful partnerships between employers and providers, new investments, courses, and success stories. These will then be promoted through a range of marketing channels to encourage more employers and stakeholders to consider similar opportunities.

Promote existing standalone sector specific courses – the aim of this action is to showcase the range of courses available to employers across most providers in Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire, to simplify understanding of what is available. This action will be completed with the launch of the new Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Skills hub website, which will showcase all the accredited and non-accredited courses that providers have. It will be able to be broken down into key sectors as well as providing a search functionality. It is anticipated that this website will go live in Q3 2024.

Providers and stakeholders should collaborate and share specialist staff expertise – This action will look at ways in which providers could collaborate and share expertise, to ensure that the best course and curriculum content is being delivered and to mitigate some of the recruitment challenges faced by providers. This action will move forward over the next quarter, through bringing providers together to understand if and how the action can be achieved, as well as ensuring that this can be delivered through the investment that providers have received through the Local Skills Improvement Fund and the launch of the Institute of Technology in 2025.

Extension of the LSIP and LSIF Post 2025 - Alongside the areas that still need to be achieved, we would also like to see an extension to LSIP funding beyond March 2025. Many of the actions require long-term support and investment, to ensure that they can be delivered effectively to meet the skills needs of our local employers. Coupled with this, we would also like to see an additional round of funding for the Local Skills Improvement Fund, with more funding available for revenue spend as well as capital spending. This would allow additional investment into colleges and providers, to ensure that business have access to state-of-the-art equipment and resources, and the best skilled staff to deliver the curriculum.

Any employer, provider or stakeholder that would like to get involved in any future actions can do so by contacting skillshub@staffordshirechambers.co.uk

Annexes

Annex 1: Roadmap for Change Key Performance Indicators

Roadmap Priority	KPI	Achieved So Far	Target
	% increase in parents and teachers understanding of apprenticeship and T-Levels. (Monthly)		25%
	% increase in the number of apprenticeships. (Monthly)		15%
	Amount of levy shared and taken up by employers (Monthly)		£100,000
	No. employers releasing staff to undertake training developed under the LSIF. (Quarterly)	22	40
	No. of articles around apprenticeship best practice published through Daily Focus Newsletter. (Monthly)	11	15
	No. of business completing the Employer Competency Framework for Skills' (ECF). (Monthly)		40
	No. of business completing the Employer Pledge. (Monthly)	0	40
	No. of business engaging in Green and Digital Skills Mapping Pilots	0	40
	No. of business offering opportunities to SEND, under-represented and disadvantaged students. (Monthly)		15
	No. of business sharing their Levy. (Monthly)	4	15
	No. of business signing up to the Employers Standards. (Monthly)		40

Roadmap Priority	KPI	Achieved So Far	Target
	No. of businesses developing training/skill development plans. (Monthly)		80
	No. of businesses engaging with Ladder for Staffordshire. (Monthly)		20
	No. of case studies produced. (Monthly)		12
	No. of College Principals/CEO group meetings (Monthly)	6	10
	No. of courses on Skills Hub website. (Monthly)		250
	No. of employer engagement events held. (Monthly)	29	40
	No. of employers access the shared levy. (Monthly)	11	30
	No. of employers introduced by collaboration partners to new specialist equipment or technology for adoption in their business (Quarterly)	59	65
	No. of employers providing industry placements to FE teaching staff. (Quarterly)	31	18
	No. of employers releasing / loaning staff to help develop or teach new provision (Quarterly)	18	27
	No. of employers reporting that training is giving learners the skills needed. (Quarterly)	46	77

Roadmap Priority	KPI	Achieved So Far	Target
	No. of forecast learner starts on new levels 3-5 courses aligned to LSIP priorities (Quarterly)	299	403
	No. of learners forecast to undertake learning using new facilities/equipment created under the LSIF. (Quarterly)	1154	670
	No. of LSIP Board Members from employers, priority sectors, stakeholders. (Quarterly)	19	15
	No. of meetings with Department for Education. (Monthly)	8	10
	No. of new courses at levels 3-5 aligned to LSIP priorities (Quarterly)	25	25
	No. of providers accessing the new shared facilities / curriculum to deliver training (Quarterly)	13	22
	No. of providers engaging with Ladder for Staffordshire. (Monthly)		20
	No. of SPES Board Meetings (Quarterly)	4	8
	No. of stakeholder engagement events held. (Monthly)	12	15
	No. of stakeholders engaged in Staffordshire Investment and Infrastructure skills meetings (Monthly)	0	20

Roadmap Priority	KPI	Achieved So Far	Target
	No. of students completing the Future Skills Survey. (Monthly)		
	No. of teaching staff (full time or part time) delivering provision across more than one provider. (Quarterly)	2	7
	No. of teaching staff undertaking CPD or benefitting from cascade training. (Quarterly)	68	49
	No. of teaching staff undertaking industry placements. (Quarterly)	31	35
	No. of Training Providers engaging with SPES (Quarterly)	31	40
	No. of views of Look At Me Now website (Monthly)	3,217	5,000
	No. of views of Skills Hub website (Monthly)	0	7,500
	No. of work experience placements offered through the Careers Observatory. (Monthly)		
	Optimisation of facilities, provision, and workforce: forecast savings through shared costs, including facilities, curriculum design, delivery and other collaboration activities. (Quarterly)	£67,031	£67,031

Annex 2: Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire – Stakeholder/Governance Engagement

Providers

Employers

Local Authorities

Annex 3: Summary of Provider Activity
Burton and South Derbyshire College

Burton and South Derbyshire College continues to use innovative and exemplar approaches to curriculum design that consider market saturation, sector and occupational trends and technical, vocational, and employability / soft skills requirements, as well as employer and employer representative body (ERB) feedback to plan our curriculum on an annual basis. The Labour Market Information used includes competitor analysis by sector, labour market and occupational trend forecasts and job posting skill requirements. This results in each curriculum area producing a 'balanced scorecard' that identifies the skills that are needed and those that will be the outcome of the training and how these match current and future job need.

The College has supported Stoke and Staffordshire Strategic Development Fund and Local Skills Improvement Fund initiatives working in close collaboration with the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Colleges. The Colleges meet on a regular basis to ensure coordination and we are active within the local 'skills system'. They are also a key partner in the Stoke and Staffordshire Institute of Technology.

Burton and South Derbyshire College's diversity profile at least reflects their local population and, in many cases, exceeds it. They have developed new provision, such as T levels and Higher Technical

Qualifications, in areas that align to national and local priorities as set out in the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire LSIP and they serve three of the most deprived wards in the country.

Their Adult Skills provision is accessible and flexible including distance learning (targeting those who may not be able to access traditional learning in a classroom (such as working mothers) and partnership provision focussing on Job Centre Plus claimants and getting them into work.

The College works with over 1000 employers each year and each curriculum area have their own group of employers who help shape the course content and curriculum, shaping their needs and skills aspirations. The College has progression pathways across its curriculum from entry level to Higher Education aligned to market need and sector demand. Where this may not be the case, they will reflect the requirements of local industries or this provision being available by other providers.

The College provides extensive Careers education, information, advice, and guidance. They are Matrix accredited, work alongside the Careers Hub, work extensively in local schools and provide extensive experiences of work to young people so that their future plans reflect real life working practices.

Buxton and Leek College

Buxton and Leek College have developed their BLC Invested Employer programme, that was launched in November 2023, with the aim to bring employers and the college closer together, working in partnership to build the workforce of the future. The meetings take place on a termly basis with the aim of giving local businesses a platform to update the college on their requirements and highlight their business challenges and successes. At the first meeting the Chamber of Commerce held discussions with local employers (Falco, Röchling, Longbow Bars and Restaurants, Cottage Delight, Buxton Crescent Spa Hotel, Little Stars Childcare) and the BLC Leadership Team about the work to deliver on the action for the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Local Skills Improvement Plan.

The College have also formed a strong partnership with local business networking group 'Fox Networking', an informal business networking group which usually meets fortnightly and are funded by Staffordshire Moorlands District Council. Their staff, where possible, attend all sessions to forge new links, support in curriculum and course development promote apprenticeship opportunities.

The Buxton & Leek College Apprenticeships programmes are in the process of reviewing their course offerings, to align them further with industry needs, based on the LSIP. A part of this has been to consider facilitating the L3 M.O.E.T (Maintenance

& Operations Engineering Technician) Engineering apprenticeship in the future. This programme would run alongside their current engineering apprenticeship offering, being delivered through their world-class facilities at their Leek Campus.

As part of their curriculum planning process, Buxton and Leek College are currently looking at the feasibility of delivering HNC Level 4 Engineering qualification, through online/blended learning, to meet the demands of employers in the rapidly evolving engineering sector. This qualification will provide opportunities for some students to enter, or progress to higher education qualifications such as degrees in engineering or a closely related area, by balancing employment with academic studies within a flexible time-frame.

Buxton and Leek College regularly meet with the Careers Hub to discuss where it can contribute to schools' careers programmes and staff CPD through programmes such as delivering qualification and subject specific talks and taster sessions, tailored projects in response to the needs of the lead career advisors within schools. The college are working with local and international employers such as Leek Building Society and HSBC to provide careers advice and guidance within the financial sectors to schools as well as working with Exertis Cyber Security, one of the UK and Ireland's largest and fastest growing technology

distribution and specialist service providers (with a Stoke on-Trent office), to provide pupils of all levels insights into the cyber security industry with free webinars/talks and resources to promote the skills needed to succeed in this sector.

Newcastle and Stafford College Group

Newcastle and Stafford College Group continue to recognise the importance of strong relationships and continue work collaboratively with employers and the business community. Since the publication of the LSIP, they have hosted the 'We Are Staffordshire - A Place to Grow' conference welcoming c140 representatives from businesses, education, and other public sector organisations to discuss investment in education and how providers can work together with industry to deliver the skills needed to support the local economy.

They have also hosted an important 'Shaping our Curriculum' event which saw key employers from across the region joining NSCG staff for workshop sessions to tease out the skills needs and how these can be addressed through our curriculum delivery. An Institute of Technology Employer (IoT) Event was also held in May, designed to build support and brand awareness for this innovative new facility, as well as forging new employer relationships and collaboration opportunities. The IoT will offer provision in the following LSIP priority areas - engineering & manufacturing, modern

methods of construction, digital and health & life sciences.

The College have developed and planned a series of short technical upskilling courses aligned to LSIP priority areas -e.g. Network Security/Cyber Security and engineering & manufacturing short courses to include automation, control and robotics, inventor, CAD/CAM and machining, lean manufacturing, 3D modelling and printing. Programmes have been planned and recruitment/promotion of the courses is activity taking place.

The College have deployed an online careers tool 'Pathways One' on their recently refreshed nscg.ac.uk website. Providing remapped course pages to feature the tool which gives students and prospective students at local schools an idea of their progression options from the courses we provide, to careers students can move in to, including job roles, indicative salary information (LMI linked), video content, HE routes etc.

The College's school's liaison team continue to work closely with key primary/secondary schools and careers leads across the entire Staffordshire region to provide learners with IAG on their post-16 choices, and support schools to meet their Gatsby benchmarks. During this period the team have delivered school assemblies, attended parents' evenings, coordinated the NAW school tour, delivered 1-2-1 tours for learners, supported with Interview Support sessions, attended application drop ins, subject specific talks and provided general IAG.

The College also hosted its annual NSCG 'Next Steps' Fayre to support NSCG learners to make informed choices on their future career progression. The day saw staff from 49 universities attend from the length and breadth of the UK. They were joined by almost 40 regional employers who spent the day talking to Newcastle and Stafford College learners about their onward progression plans. Alongside a detailed schedule of over 40 talks, learners were encouraged to participate in activities and network with partners.

In February 2024, the College ran a month-long celebration of apprenticeships to coincide with National Apprenticeship Week 2024. The multi-faceted campaign featured several marketing approaches including a weeklong roadshow aboard a 42ft classic American school bus to 20 schools in the Staffordshire area to promote apprenticeships and deliver activities and targeted careers information, advice and guidance to learners considering an apprenticeship as part of their post 16 options. In addition, the campaign saw the production of a dedicated apprenticeships magazine 'Pocket Your Potential' featuring case studies, CV tips, parent FAQs and much more. The campaign featured the stories of 6 'real life' apprentices from priority sectors talking positively about their experiences as apprentices.

The College have circulated CPD questionnaires to all engineering and construction staff to identify their needs and requirements to upskill them further, to continue to meet the needs of employers. Collaborative training with Stoke-on-Trent College, using LJ Create products for an introduction to their software and hardware, using PLCs, pneumatics, and hydraulics. Further CPD training around Fusion 360 Software Training, External PLC Siemens S7 training, KUKA robotic and additional LJ Create training scheduled for summer/autumn term.

Stoke-on-Trent College

Stoke-on-Trent College held a launch event for the College's Construction Skills Hub, as part of its new strategy – Skills Ready, Future Ready, in March. As part of this, the College officially opened its new Advanced Construction Centre at the College's Burslem Campus in Stoke-on-Trent.

The Construction Skills Hub brings together the industry-standard facilities, expertise and equipment that can be found at the College's Burslem Campus. It responds to the skills needs set out in the LSIP. The new Advanced Construction Centre has been funded by the Government T Level capital programme and provides a collaborative, modern and open-plan learning space to support the development of innovative construction skills.

Around 60 guests were invited to attend the launch event, including representatives from the region's leading construction businesses, stakeholders and education partners. Guests were treated to a showcase of students' work from T Level and Apprenticeship programmes, including the opportunity to see a range of drone-based activities now being used in the construction industry. They also met 'Spot', a large four-legged Mobot developed by Boston Dynamics.

The College held an engineering employer forum and immersion event college, with 20 manufacturing and engineer employers, to introduce the Hub, to support curriculum development and talk about further investment in state-of-the-art equipment and machinery. Further panels are planned and individual engagement in place and working well.

Stoke-on-Trent College have purchased a tensile testing machine to perform tensile tests, where a specimen is subjected to controlled tension until it fails. Tensile testing helps engineers determine various mechanical properties of materials. Learners will be able to train in a safe environment using industry equipment developing skills commonly used for quality control purposes in the Engineering manufacturing processes.

The College have hosted a collaborative training event for all the LSIF partners and colleges in the Staffordshire group to receive training from industry experts for Electrical, Electronic, Pneumatic and Hydraulics, PLCs and injection moulding.

College staff attended a 4-day training course delivered by industry leaders, HAAS covering CNC machining linked to programming and using a 5-axis machine. College staff received industry standard professional development delivered by employers equipping them with the skills and knowledge to deliver in-demand skills sought by organisations such as Klarius, Olympus and Mirage.

Stoke-on-Trent College has hosted the prestigious KMF Young Engineer competition between c15 high schools from Stoke on Trent and Staffordshire. The College hosted 3 workshops using expertise across College in Creative Media, Aerodynamics and Science.

Stoke-on-Trent Sixth Form College

Stoke-on-Trent Sixth Form College have developed a new Broadcast Studio which includes the creation of a new course, lead to increased enrolment, and developed further industry experience through their T-Levels.

The College have developed a Green Academy – Lesson Plan, in collaboration with Colleges, Keele University and employers focused on green/sustainability, with CPD sessions for teachers. This will include industry training for students in new technology i.e lightweight drones, thermal cameras. There have also been resources developed to loan to schools.

Stoke-on-Trent Sixth Form College have also developed Digital Badges that will provide students with an accreditation, recognising the quality assurance of education, training, and experience they have gained, aligned to the career's competency framework. This will support them when applying for jobs with employers.

In addition to this, the Careers Hub in collaboration with the Staffordshire Chambers are working to develop Digital Badges within schools, embedding the competency framework further, which will support the improvement of skills and employability awareness of their students. A pilot of this is due to be implemented in the autumn term 2024 with a few schools.

South Staffordshire College

Through projects like Black Country Innovate, Cannock Chase Engineering Academy, and their Green Village, South Staffordshire College facilitate direct engagement with employers to understand their skill requirements and align training programs accordingly. By investing in modern equipment, providing relevant training, and fostering partnerships, they empower their learners with the skills demanded by the local job market.

Additionally, initiatives funded the Local Skills Improvement Fund and Strategic Development Fund emphasize employer engagement, ensuring that training programs are tailored to meet evolving industry needs. This helps to bridge the gap between education and employment, creating a skilled workforce that drives regional economic growth and enhances productivity.

South Staffordshire College have implemented a number of employer engagement initiatives aimed at fostering a better understanding of the benefits of training and upskilling among businesses. This involved organising workshops, seminars, and networking events where employers were provided with information on the advantages of investing in workforce development. Additionally, collaborative partnerships were formed between training providers and businesses to tailor training programs according to industry needs, ensuring that the skills being developed align closely with the demands of the job market. Moreover, targeted outreach campaigns were conducted to promote the uptake of training opportunities among employers, highlighting the positive impact on productivity, innovation, and employee retention. These activities aimed to bridge the gap between supply and demand for skills by encouraging greater employer involvement in the training process and fostering a culture of continuous learning within the business community.

South Staffordshire College have established regular forums and working groups to facilitate ongoing dialogue and information sharing among stakeholders and employers, ensuring that training provision remains aligned with industry needs. These platforms enable the identification of emerging skills gaps and the development of targeted interventions
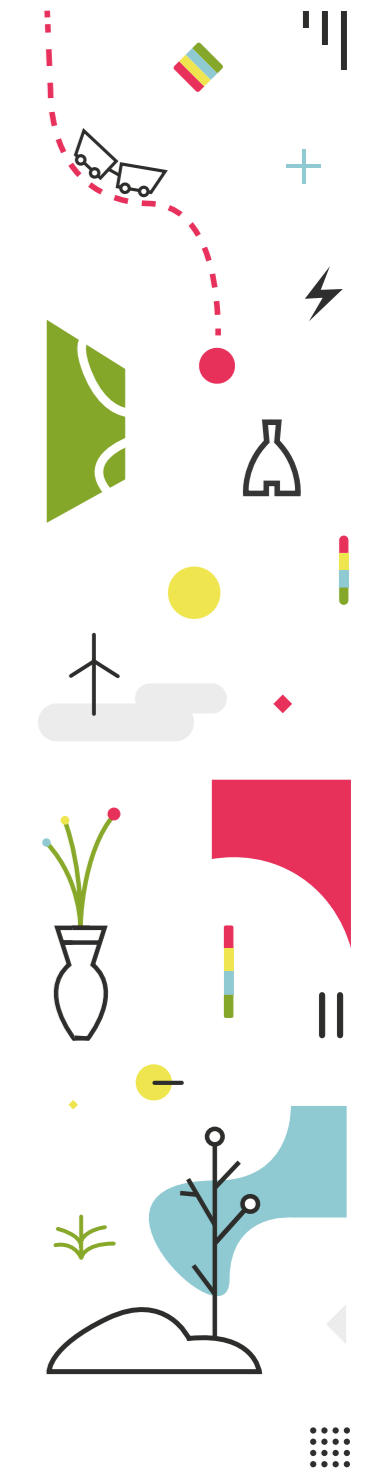
to address them. Furthermore, initiatives such as skills summits and industry advisory boards have been instrumental in bringing together key stakeholders to co-design curriculum and training pathways that are responsive to the evolving needs of the local economy.

Additionally, funding streams have been secured to support collaborative projects that aim to deliver innovative training programs and initiatives. These funds enable the implementation of pilot projects and the scaling up of successful interventions to meet the region's skill demands effectively. Overall, these efforts have resulted in a more cohesive and coordinated approach to skill development, ensuring that the region's workforce remains competitive and adaptable in a rapidly changing labour market.

The College have implemented targeted outreach programs aimed at increasing awareness and accessibility of provision, particularly for under represented groups and the adult workforce. These programs involved collaborations between educational institutions, community organisations, and local authorities to identify and address barriers to progression. For example, workshops and information sessions were conducted in disadvantaged communities to provide guidance on available training opportunities and support services. Additionally, tailored communication

campaigns have been launched to promote the benefits of upskilling and reskilling among diverse demographics, including individuals from ethnic minority backgrounds, those with disabilities, and older adults. These activities aimed to break down barriers to accessing education and training, empowering individuals to overcome obstacles and pursue their career aspirations.

Enhanced careers guidance programmes were implemented across Tamworth, Cannock and South Staffordshire to support individuals in gaining the best skills to realise their aspirations and find employment. These programmes included tailored one-on-one career counselling sessions, workshops on CV writing and interview skills, career fairs featuring local employers, and informational sessions on various industries and job opportunities. Additionally, digital platforms and resources were developed to provide accessible career information and guidance to individuals, including online assessments, job search tools, and virtual career exploration experiences.