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West of England Annual Skills Report

January 2022





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## Linked Resources

[West of England Local Industrial Strategy](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/818989/1907_VERSION_West_of_England_Interactive_SINGLE_PAGES.pdf)[West of England Recovery Plan](https://www.westofengland-ca.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Recovery-plan-version-2.pdf)[West of England Employment and Skills Plan](https://www.westofengland-ca.gov.uk/employment-skills-plan/)[West of England Climate Emergency Action Plan](https://www.westofengland-ca.gov.uk/clean-growth/)[West of England Regional Insights: the most recent economic and Labour Market Intelligence for the region.](https://www.westofengland-ca.gov.uk/regional-insights/)

## Further Information

For further information about the West of England SAP please email:   
[skills@westofengland-ca.gov.uk](mailto:skills@westofengland-ca.gov.uk)

For further information about the underpinning analysis in this report please email: [economicanalysis@westofengland-ca.gov.uk](mailto:economicanalysis@westofengland-ca.gov.uk)

1. **Skills Advisory Panels – Introduction**

## Skills Advisory Panels: the national context

Since 2018, Skills Advisory Panels (SAPs) have been bringing together employers, skills providers and key local stakeholders to better understand and resolve skills mismatches at a local level. SAPs are part of Mayoral Combined Authorities and Local Enterprise Partnerships and there are 36 in total across England. The Department for Education (DfE) has supported SAPs with grant funding primarily to produce high-quality analysis of local labour markets and publish Local Skills Reports, which set out the local skills strengths and needs and how the SAP proposes its area addresses its key priorities.

This second iteration of SAPs’ Local Skills Reports comes at a time when DfE is Trailblazing new Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs), in eight areas of the country, including in the West of England area. Developed by Employer Representative Bodies, LSIPs are part of a suite of reforms launched in DfE’s “Skills for Jobs” White Paper that aims to put employers more firmly at the heart of the skills system. An evaluation of the eight Trailblazers will inform the national roll out of the programme. In the meantime, and before LSIPs are rolled out across the country, it is DfE’s intention that Skills Advisory Panels and this Local Skills Report should continue to influence the behaviour of local partners and feed intelligence to central government, including to sectoral focussed skills teams and the national-level Skills and Productivity Board (SPB).

## The West of England SAP

The West of England SAP was established in March 2020 to oversee the strategic implementation of the people and skills components of the region’s adopted [Local Industrial Strategy](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/west-of-england-local-industrial-strategy) (LIS). The West of England LIS sets out the region’s ambition to drive clean and inclusive growth. Through the implementation of the LIS, we want to ensure people can contribute to and benefit from the opportunities growth brings, focusing on helping grow our economy in ways that protect the climate and environment upon which we and future generations depend.

The West of England Employment and Skills Plan, a key component of our LIS, recognises the distinctive strengths of our people and the places across the region and provides an over-arching framework to help shape the development of employment and skills activities. It sets a collective vision and shared priorities for delivery, reform and investment, helping to influence and catalyse action from local, regional and national partners where priorities align.

The current pandemic and its impact on the economy has meant that the SAP had to adapt and respond quickly to provide evidence and advice around the immediate effects on the labour market and skills provision, as well as to consider the medium and longer term issues of recovery and how these may influence the priorities identified in the Employment and Skills Plan.

Sections 4, 5 and 6 of this report highlight how, drawing on this evidence, the region has significantly enhanced and adapted activity to respond to the challenges of Covid, whilst also keeping firmly focussed on its long term strategic goals. Our keystone programmes - Adult Education, Workforce for the Future, Careers Hub and Future Bright – have all flexed to extend their influence. In addition, a number of additional measures have been introduced through our Regional Recovery Fund, including the Digital Skills Investment Programme and Community Recovery Fund.

In addition to the above, the West of England has been chosen as one of the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) pilot areas. As part of the business engagement activities of the LSIP, the Combined Authority and SAP are working closely with Business West (LSIP lead) providing market intelligence, LMI and a sectoral business voice.

The SAP Board

The West of England SAP is business led, currently chaired by a senior manager from one of the region’s largest employers (Airbus), with a deputy chair from a local leading law firm (Foot Anstey). Membership includes a wide range of business, education and training provider representatives e.g. Business in the Community; Business West; SMEs; Social Enterprise; Higher Education; Further Education; Community Learning; a regional schools representative (from a Multi Academy Trust, Cabot Learning Federation); Western Training Provider Network; voluntary, community and health representatives (West of England Civil Society Partnership; UH Bristol); diversity champion (Babbasa), SWTUC; DWP, local authority economic development and skills leads, Cities and Local Growth Unit rep and BEIS.

SAP meetings moved to monthly during 2020 given the new issues and urgency created by the pandemic. In 2021, these reverted back to quarterly two-hour meetings to allow the SAP to drill further into key strategic issues and ensure that solutions and proposals developed align with national and local activity. The frequency of these meeting will be kept under review.

## SAP Geography

The West of England SAP covers the same functional economic geography as the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) covering the four local authorities of Bath and North East Somerset, Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire. Incorporating the cities of Bristol and the UNESCO World Heritage city of Bath, the region provides a unique blend of urban, rural and coastal areas.

## ****Figure 1: The West of England Local Enterprise Partnership geography****



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# Skills Strengths and Needs

Economic Context

The West of England has a strong and diverse economy and is one of the country’s economic success stories. It is the most productive city region in England outside London, with vibrant innovative businesses and a highly-skilled workforce. With economic links to Wales, the Midlands, London and the South West, ensuring a strong economy recovery in the West of England will help to drive a wider national recovery.

The area benefits from above average levels of productivity, low rates of unemployment, a highly skilled workforce, good rates of pay and high-quality jobs. Whilst growth is expected to continue in the medium-term, productivity growth has plateaued in recent years and is likely to have been impacted by the recent economic crisis.

Prior to Covid, it was recognised that there were challenges to ensure that all residents can benefit from the West of England’s economic growth, in particular people from disadvantaged groups. Equally, from an employer perspective, recruitment was starting to become a challenge, in particular at higher skills levels. Whilst the pandemic continues to, present the region with challenges, it has on the whole exacerbated labour market inequalities present pre-COVID. Therefore, many challenges and long-term aspirations identified in the Employment and Skills Plan and the Local Industrial Strategy remain.

### **Figure 2: Regional Strengths and Challenges**[[1]](#footnote-2)

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| **Skills Strengths**  * Working age population growing, reflecting attractiveness of area * Higher than average employment rate (79% vs England’s 75%) * Better than average wages and high value job opportunities * Highly qualified workforce (48% qualified to L4+ vs 42% for England) * Broad, diverse workforce * High quality and diverse job opportunities from supportive business environment * Four universities and HE provision within FE colleges * Established innovation cluster with network of assets and cutting-edge businesses * Partnership working and local relationships * Strong voluntary and community sector |

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| **Skills Challenges**  * Some employers struggling to recruit and facing skills gaps * Low pay an issue, particularly for part-time workers * Wage and occupational inequality and in work mobility * Educational attainment in schools, particularly for disadvantaged children * NEET levels in parts of the area and for SEND and Children in Care/Care Leavers * Lower than average progression to Higher level learning * Low awareness of apprenticeships * Geographical inequalities and deprivation * Variable quality careers advice * Health inequalities and barriers to work * Growing polarisation of work between higher and lower skilled occupations * Under-utilisation of staff |

Source: [Employment and Skills Plan, Evidence Base](https://www.westofengland-ca.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Employment-and-Skills-Plan-Evidence-Base-2019-FINAL_compressed.pdf)

## Supporting local economic priorities and sectoral interventions

There is a concentration of high value, economically productive sectors in the regional economy, as outlined in the LIS. The LIS aims to promote these high value regional specialisms, particularly cross-sectoral innovation between 3 distinctive and overlapping sector strengths and their supply chains:

* advanced engineering including aerospace
* creative, cultural and digital industries; and
* financial, business and legal ‘tech’ services

These sectors are globally significant and help provide high value employment, allowing for a higher skilled workforce, compared to the national average, to thrive in the area.   
  
The combination of a diverse economic base, incorporating several significant sector strengths and four universities with world-class teaching, research or community engagement, together with the geographical size of the region, supports interaction between sectors. Local intelligence suggests that this diverse economic base, with representation from a range of key industries and a balance of sectors within the economy, has helped to contribute to its lower than national average unemployment rate and higher than national average employment rate.  
  
The LIS and our Employment and Skills Plan also recognise that there are a number of ‘pervasive technologies’, like digital, which are increasingly shaping the activity of a range of sectors and changing the nature of skills demand. Likewise, our shift to a Net Zero economy will create demand for existing and new so-called ‘green skills’ as economic activity restructures – skills policy needs to ensure that supply matches this demand. A recent report (see Green Skills box below), suggests that to meet net zero targets by 2030, an estimated 50,000 net jobs will be required, 29,000 of which will be direct jobs within the low carbon and the renewable energy sector in the region and 20,500 indirect jobs[[2]](#footnote-3). Currently low carbon jobs equate to less than 1% of all jobs available in the region.

The pandemic has led to unprecedented pressures on some of our high value globally leading sectors and assets, putting them at risk. Many of the challenges Covid-19 has brought will likely outlast the pandemic. However, it is notable that the forecasts for high unemployment have not been reached, at least partly due to Government initiatives like furlough. When furlough ended we did not see a significant upsurge in unemployment. The pandemic has been highly sectorally uneven, and we expect some of the sectoral trends to be permanent, and new ways of working, accelerated by the pandemic, to become solidified. Whilst the long term impact of the pandemic on sectors, their supply chains and individuals remains to be seen, there are a number of areas where there is a clear existing and growing demand for skills which align to our strategic aspirations.

Such sectors include construction (including retrofit and green construction), health and social care (the pandemic has put immense pressure on a sector which was already under pressure prior to Covid), Health tech, green skills across all sectors and digitalisation of the economy to name but a few.

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| **Digital Skills** The West of England's ‘digital sector’ comprises over 22,000 jobs (7% above the national average). However, when you look at ‘digital jobs’ across all sectors and job functions, 50.8% of digital jobs sit outside the digital sector, illustrating the true significance and importance of digital skills to the regional economy.  Significant numbers of digital jobs have been advertised in sectors such as information and communication (13,838), professional scientific and technical activities (4,330), public administration, defence and social security (2,252), manufacturing (2,111), financial and insurance (1,627), construction (1.626), wholesale and retail trade repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles (1,415), education (1,282), administration and support activities (1,043) and human health and social work activities (1,036).  A fundamental aspect of building a sustainable regional recovery from Covid-19 and to encourage enterprise and innovation, is the development of digital skills – from basic IT skills to more specific analytics and software design. Key initiatives and programmes supporting the development of digital skills include:   * The **West of England Institute of Technology (WEIoT)**, led by Weston College with Bath College, Gloucestershire College, Yeovil College and University of the West of England (UWE), has a target of supporting 3,000 learners by 2025 with focus on the following sector specialisms: a) Digital and High Tech, b) Health and Life Sciences and c) Advanced Engineering and High Value Manufacturing. The WEIoT also currently delivering Wave 2 National Skills Fund bootcamps (digital) and Skills Accelerator pilots and an In Work Skills Pilot. * **Digital Engineering Technology and Innovation (DETI):** a two-year R&D programme being delivered by a partnership of WECA, National Composites Centre, Centre for Modelling and Simulation, Digital Catapult, University of the West of England, University of Bristol and University of Bath. It brings together advanced engineering companies, digital technology pioneers and universities, to push boundaries (and skills) of digital engineering for the future. Industry partners include Airbus, GKN Aerospace, Rolls-Royce, Siemens and CFMS. * A new £2m **Digital Skills Investment Programme,** forming a key part of the West of England’s Recovery Plan. The programme supports basic digital skills (to build capacity to increase access and take-up) and medium-high level digital skills (through a multi-partner approach to delivering short, innovative, bespoke training courses addressing digital skills gaps). Current bootcamp delivery includes Digital Marketing, games-tech programming including Unity and Unreal, Artificial Intelligence, Unser Experience Design and Cloud Computing. A number of Call 2 partners (and provision) are currently onboarding and this provision will expand during Jan/Feb 2022. * **Adult Education Budget (AEB)** – developing basic ‘entry’ level digital skills provision to support residents to gain lower level digital skills. A key focus of this work is creating pathways from entry level up to level 2/3 and then feeder routes into further higher levels of training to support industry needs. * **Workforce for the Future** – the flagship £8m workforce development programme supporting SMEs and their employees with digital apprenticeships (college consortia), digital learning factories (National Composites Centre), and digital pathways (University of the West of England). |

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| ***Green Skills***  The West of England has set an ambitious goal to be net zero carbon by 2030. To achieve this target, a step change is required across a number of deliverables including ensuring that the labour market is equipped with the right skills to support this transition - be it in ensuring the construction sector has the skills required to retrofit existing buildings and implementing low carbon standards in new developments, or supporting traditional businesses to benefit from growth in the green economy e.g. within advanced engineering and aerospace.  To support the net zero carbon goal and aid green recovery, WECA commissioned a study to analyse the current scale of a) retrofit and b) the wider ‘green skills’ market, how these can be stimulated to support our net zero ambitions, the current skills pipeline to support this growth and where further skills provision is required. It is critical that WECA seek to mitigate, rather than contribute towards a ‘boom and bust’ scenario, so must consider short, medium and long-term actions to help develop both the regional retrofit and green skills markets. The reports are helping to ensure that skills gaps and opportunities are fully reflected in the Combined Authority’s new £50m Green Recovery Fund (agreed at Committee in December 2021). This includes funding for a new Regional Retrofit Accelerator programme.  The Retrofit and Green Skills reports:   * Identify and quantify the existing retrofit/green skills market, highlighting existing regional specialisms and high growth areas. * Provide a summary of existing skills provision, short falls and factors that may restrict job creation. * Provide insight into regional growth scenarios for the retrofit market and green jobs/skills market, including barriers, risks and opportunities. * Discuss the possible retrofit and green skills workforce requirements necessary to achieve the commitment of becoming carbon neutral by 2030 as part of the Climate Emergency declaration. * Set out the levers for market interventions and stimulus available to WECA, its Unitary Authorities and partners at community, regional and policy level.   The Retrofit report highlights:   * For the WECA region to meet net zero by 2030, a further 50,383 total net retrofit jobs would be required. Currently low carbon jobs equate to less than 1% of all jobs in the region. * This would consist of 29,669 direct jobs and a further 20,714 indirect jobs as the wider supply chain would mobilise to support the increased demand for low-carbon technologies and infrastructure. Of these indirect jobs, 52% are likely to be in construction and installation, 10% in manufacturing and 38% in ops/maintenance.   The Green Skills report highlights:   * Over 45,000 new ‘green jobs’ will be required at all skills levels and across all sectors by 2030. * Key sectors where these new green jobs will be created include low carbon services (green finance, digital and legal), environmental consulting, engineering (nuclear, aerospace etc), construction, low carbon energy (solar PV, offshore, nuclear, hydropower etc) and transport (EV).   For clarity, the West of England Combined Authority has adopted the following definition of Green Jobs:  *“A job which will directly contribute towards the reduction of emissions and help to protect the environment”*  and/or  *“will help to create the job functions, responsibilities, conditions, working practices and/or business processes which contribute towards reducing emissions, lowering the carbon footprint and protecting the environment.”*  Progress made towards realising the retrofit and green skills opportunity includes:   * Mayors Skills Summit (July 21) launched the above reports and ensured green skills were front and centre of the CA priorities. * Green Recovery Fund approved (Dec 21). * Low Carbon Challenge Fund saw 1.7m of Green Grants approved through the Growth Hub, mobilisation of the £1.3m Innovative Local Energy Scheme and £220K Innovative Housing Retrofit scheme. * Workforce for the Future onboarded two new delivery partners focusing on a) Skills for Clean Growth (University of the West of England will support 100 SMEs) and b) Modern Methods of Construction (YTKO will support 120 SMEs). * Careers Hub gained approval for a new Green Futures Fund (Nov 21). * Grass roots £1.5 Community Support Fund (funded through the Recovery Fund) includes environmental social value measures. * New skills training and bootcamps launched including Achieving Zero Carbon Buildings and Digital Clear Air. * FE and HE partners undertaking ‘green audits’ of their curriculum. * South West Energy Hub (which resides within the CA) supporting public and not-for-profit organisations to set up green energy projects. |

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| **Health and Social Care** The ‘Shape of the UK Labour Market (2017-2027)’ report provided pre-pandemic predictions which identified health and social care and caring professions as growth sectors. These predictions are likely to have been exacerbated by the pandemic, whilst at the same time the true impact of the pandemic and ‘skills loss’ from the sector has yet to be confirmed.  Pre-pandemic ‘employment by sector’ figures show that ‘Human health and social work activities’ equated to over 13% of all jobs in the region and 6.26% of total GVA for the region. Additionally, the number of health businesses in the region increased by 25% between 2016-2019. However, it has been reported that jobs declined by 2,600 between 2019-2020 due to the impact of the pandemic.  An aging population and the Covid-19 pandemic have highlighted a growing demand for skills within health and social care. Indeed, ‘nurse’ is one of the top 5 occupations to be advertised in the West of England (May 21). However, there are significant labour market shortages (especially in the care sector). Covid-19 has made recruitment into this sector even more of a challenge. Even more worryingly, the staff turnover rate in the adult social care sector is 30.8% and average turnover for certain roles even higher e.g. support workers (39.5%) and domiciliary roles (43.7%).  Research suggests health employment in the region will increase by 10,200 (0.9% annually) with the highest number of job openings in the region forecast to be in Caring personal service occupations. Alongside this, a substantial number of job openings are forecast for Health professionals (27,100 opening by 2036) in order to meet pressures and recover from the pandemic. This is double the growth seen in the last decade.  However, the same research reports that ‘replacement demand (2020-2036) will be significant at 59,700 jobs, resulting in a net requirement for 69,000 job openings.  Key skills that will be required as a result of anticipated occupational changes and drivers are:   * Digital skills – increased adoption of technology across all functions to implement data-driven healthcare; * Patient care, care planning, budgeting, staff management etc * Multidisciplinary skills e.g. transformation of care pathways, clinical practice, leadership skills etc.   The demand within this sector spans a wide range of roles and covers a breadth of skills and training levels from entry level to high skilled, technical roles. Some of the key challenges and activities include:   * There are 501 SME CQC regulated Adult Social Care providers in the West of England as well as the NHS providing significant employment opportunities. However, the health sector has not been seen as a ‘career of choice.’ It is well reported that the health care sector has had significant difficulties in finding the right skills and/or retaining people and skills. * Covid has put immense pressure on the NHS and heath care sector, which was already under pressure. There’s a need to upskill the current workforce as well as bring new talent into the sector (including apprenticeships). * The Skills for Care report identifies that over 10,000 registered managers are due to retire from the sector over the next 15 years. The sector must therefore commit to investing in CPD to ensure the sector has the workforce it needs in the future. * Opportunity to match transferable skills as people are coming off furlough and/or being made redundant. * To address some of the above issues, the Combined Authority has part-invested in a new Health & Active Living Skills Centre (Weston College). This includes the new simulation ward, Nursing Associate qualification and Accredited Nursing Training Centre, making it easier for people to enter and upskill within the profession. The Simulation ward showcases the ‘Health Tech’ digital skills now required within the profession. * Health Tech and digital skills are becoming increasingly important to the sector * Workforce for the Future – commissioned a tailored support programme for the Adult and Social Care sector (delivered by Business West). This project supports leaders and managers of care organisations to build, develop and sustain their workforce. |

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| Construction There is a well-documented skills crisis in construction. The Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) predicts that over the next five years construction will need [281,000 additional workers](https://www.citb.co.uk/documents/research/csn_outlook_2021_2025.pdf) and in the West 27,000 new entrants will be required. In the West of England job growth is forecast to increase by 1.6%pa (double the national rate of 0.8%), a net increase of 14,000 jobs by 2036.  However, the sector faces a massive challenge in attracting and retaining talent with over 80% of learners in the West of England who receive a qualification in construction dropping out of the sector within two years – well above the national average at 60%.  The West of England has over 46,000 businesses employing 627,000 people. According to latest job adverts, 5% of jobs advertised (by sector) are in the construction industry with construction equating to 7.8% total employment. In terms of regional specialisms, ‘Civil Engineering’ and ‘Construction Products and Services’ are key strengths making a strong contributions to regional GVA.  In the West of England, there were 6,281 start-ups recorded in July 2020 to June 2021, and overall Construction was the second largest start-up sector in the region at 1,125. Housing, Construction and Development accounted for 21% of sub-regional GVA in 2018. Research suggests that in the West of England, job growth will increase at 1.6% per year (double the national rate of 0.8%), bringing a net increase of 14,000 jobs by 2036.  A substantial number of job openings are forecast for Skilled construction and building trades (21,000), predominantly driven by replacement demand (17,900) resulting from retirements and Brexit  In order to support the construction sector, the CA has invested in a number of projects through its Workforce for the Future Programme. These include apprenticeships, levy share to support SMEs in the construction sector and an ‘Unlocking MMC for SMEs’ (delivered by YTKO) to help local construction SMEs who are at risk of being displaced due to the uptake and acceleration of MMC and offsite solutions. These support services are funded until Sept/Oct 2023.  Additionally, as detailed in the Green Skills section above, there is a considerable retrofit opportunity which needs to be realised in the West of England. |

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| Manufacturing Manufacturing comprises 6% of the West of England's employment, with 78 high growth businesses out of 871 (source: WoE Quarterly Economic Briefing Oct 21). However, unlike some of the other sectors above, according to latest data it doesn’t feature as a ‘regional specialism’ a ‘commonly sought after job (based on the number of job postings), nor in the top list of jobs in 2020 (based on the EMSI Strength Finder tool).  One area to note however, is that metal working technology does feature in the top regional specialisms and commands a higher salary due to the specialist nature of the job function. |

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| **Haulage and Logistics**  The Logistics sector, and particularly the availability of Heavy Goods Vehicle (HGV) drivers, is seen as critical to both the regional (and national recovery) from the Covid-19 pandemic. However, a recognised lack of HGV drivers is having a negative impact on the recovery. With the West of England hosting major transport and logistics infrastructure (motorways, railways, the Bristol Port/Avonmouth area and Bristol airport) a constrained ability to move goods into, out of and around the sub-region has a negative impact on our businesses, employers and local economy. Therefore, for the West of England, and its local economy, to successfully recover from the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic a strong, vibrant and healthy logistics sector is required.    **The Logistics Sector in the West of England:**  West of England GVA data shows that the Land Transport sector contributes approximately £167m (2018) to the West of England. Warehousing and other supporting activities contribute £222m (2018). Despite its economic benefit the sector does not employ a significant number of individuals in the West of England. The 2020 employment figures show that 11,500 individuals were employed in the whole land transport sector (about 1% of the total recorded workforce in the West of England) and there were approximately 7,000 HGV drivers.  There were 5,952 start-ups in the West of England between Sept 20-Aug 21. 619 of these were in ‘Transport, Storage and Communication’ illustrating the growth within the sector regionally. Furthermore, of the 1,721 businesses that interacted with the Growth Hub in Q2 of 2021, ‘Export and Import’ was one of the top five types of support sought, indicating the strength and potential of the sector.  **Recruitment Issues:**  One of the most pressing challenges issues facing the Logistics Sector is recruitment and retention of HGV drivers which is a recognised issue on a national basis. Over the last four years the number of HGV drivers nationally has fallen by 53,000. The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated this issue with the 26,000 fewer UK nationals employed as HGV drivers in the year ending June 2021 than in the year end June 2019.  The HGV driver issue has also been compounded by Britain’s exit from the European Union has seen that source of workforce reduced. There were 28,000 EU nationals working as HGV drivers in the year ending June 2021 which is 12,000 (30%) fewer than the year end June 2017.  Determining the exact drop in HGV driver numbers employed in the West of England is challenging. However, using the national figures as a guide WECA can extrapolate the following reductions in HGV driver numbers in the West of England:     |  |  | | --- | --- | | Drop in HGV drivers regionally based on percentage of national figure | Total | | Oct 2018-Sep 2019 | 5102 | | Jan 2019-Dec 2019 | 5007 | | Apr 2019-Mar 2020 | 5615 | | Jul 2019-Jun 2020 | 5157 | | Oct 2019-Sep 2020 | 4817 | | Jan 2020-Dec 2020 | 4830 | | Apr 2020-Mar 2021 | 4543 | | Jul 2020-Jun 2021 | 4569 | |

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| Tourism and Hospitality **National picture**   * As reported in the commons (March 2021), economic output in the hospitality sector was down 90% in April 2020 compared to Feb 2020. * In march 2021, ONS reported that 43% of hospitality businesses were trading compared to 73% across all industries. * 55% of hospitality businesses had temporarily paused trading compared to 24% across all industries * Almost 1 in 5 hospitality businesses (19%) had ‘low confidence’ that their business would survive * Jan-March 2020 to July-Sept 2020, the number of workers in the sector fell by 6% nationally (147,000). * In Jan 2021, 56% of eligible jobs in food and accommodation were furloughed compared to only 16% across all industries.   **West of England snapshot**  The tourism and hospitality sector has been disproportionally affected by the global coronavirus pandemic, which is of particular concern to the West of England, where pre pandemic the sector supported over 8% of regional employment and injected over £2.3bn into the economy annually andof this almost a fifth of direct spend was from international visitors.  Reports from the South West Tourism Research Company show that the visitor economy in the region contracted by an estimated £1bn last year. A reduction of 54% of the total tourism related business turnover; £1.388bn in 2020, against £2.976bn in 2019.  Furthermore:   * Accommodation & food service activities, Arts, entertainment and recreation and ‘other services’ collectively represent 12% of employment in the region (2019) * The ‘Food and beverage’ sector employed 64,253 in 2020. * In the ‘caring, leisure and other service occupations’ 6.2% of those in employment were on 0 hour contracts (Jan-March 2021). * ‘Other services’ had a high number of claims for the Self Employment Income Support Scheme – Tranche 3 (Jan 2021). * Customer service is the second highest skill sough in job postings. It features in 14.7% of all postings (May 2021).   The most pressing challenge facing the tourism and hospitality sector is recruitment and retention of talent. Skilled and operational delivery roles across both front and back of house, previously benefited from skilled European workforce, with transient and seasonal roles supplemented by students and casual work.  The compound impact of the pandemic and exit from the European Union has seen that source of workforce reduced. Also, there is a longstanding perception that the sector provides poor pay, working conditions and lacks security, which has been exacerbated by the pandemic. Encouraging young people to look to the sector for career opportunities is also needed. |

## **Skills for particular groups and those furthest from the labour market disproportionately affected by the pandemic**

Alongside skills for specific sectors, the Employment and Skills Plan calls for a focus on supporting those furthest away from the labour market through the development of entry level skills, as well as supporting individuals progress within their careers through lifelong learning and support. The region has pockets of long-standing deprivation, with 16% of Local Super Output Areas in Bristol falling into the most deprived 10% in England, 6% in North Somerset and 2% in B&NES[[3]](#footnote-4).

A number of challenges have been identified where particular cohorts need more targeted support this includes but not limited to:

* **Unemployed and inactive looking for work** – supporting individuals into employment who often have complex barriers to work such as housing, mental health, drug and alcohol problems, debt, health, childcare, transport, etc. and therefore support programmes must take this into account.
* **Progression of the resident population** - whilst the West of England is successful in attracting highly skilled individuals into the area, it is less successful at producing its own highly skilled people, resulting in inequalities.
* **Educational attainment and preventing NEETs** - Educational attainment in schools (as measured at KS2, KS4 and KS5) is slightly below the national average for all young people (except in B&NES), but significantly below the national average for disadvantaged children (at all three stages).

* Other ‘at risk’ groups - including BAME individuals, those with disabilities, lone parents, women and domestic abuse victims. Evidence suggests that minority groups often struggle to access skills and employability programmes.

A number of the recovery fund initiatives are targeted at improving the skills and employment opportunities for those who are either unemployed and/or have been disproportionately affected by covid. These include:

* **Digital Skills Investment Programme (DSIP):** The key focus of this funding is ensuring that 100% of participants will be from groups underrepresented in digital roles across the region or from groups disproportionately affected by COVID. Two funding rounds have already been made available since the project launched in spring 2021. This has so far provided fully funded inclusive training for 236 participants at the medium/higher level and 292 participants at the baseline/ lower level. This funding is conditional on positive progressions being made, i.e. either into work or onto another form of training.
* **Community Support Fund (CSF):** targeted to reach 1000 residents from disadvantaged groups through projects which build community cohesion, financial resilience, wellbeing and/or pride of place. 65% of participants will be expected to make positive progressions onto further employability support, training, education or volunteering.
* **Visitor Economy Recovery Programme:** support for the sector as it recovers from the pandemic, including measures to help address significant staffing and recruitment issues. The pilot will utilise the Combined Authority’s new business to business ‘jobs connect’ service to help people across the region fill vacancies in the sector.

# Skills Strategy

The West of England Employment and Skills Plan, published alongside our Local Industrial Strategy, has set the direction for much of our employment and skills activity (the vision and objectives of the Plan are set out below). This Plan will be refreshed in 2022 to more closely align with the Metro Mayor’s priorities, including ‘to help people access secure and fairly paid jobs, working with training providers, trade unions and local employers’. The refreshed Plan will also reflect on changes in the regional labour market as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, particularly where issues have been exacerbated, as set out in this report.

## 

### Employment and Skills Plan Vision

*‘By 2036, the West of England will be internationally recognised for its sustainable, inclusive and diverse economy, providing a high quality of life, prosperity and opportunities for all its residents. Our people will be skilled, healthy and able to access ‘pathways of opportunity’ to achieve their potential and our businesses will be able to find the skills and talent they need to innovate, add greater value and thrive.’*

To achieve this vision the West of England will work towards 5 strategic objectives:

Objective 1: Integrating our employment, skills and education system to ensure it is aligned with demand and responsive to changing patterns of employment. 

*Why is this important?*

* Misalignment of supply and demand of current skills and employment landscape
* Technological and digital advances are expected to disrupt the world of work, our system must be responsive
* Funding and delivery models are fragmented, leading to duplication, gaps and confusion for learners and employers

*Priority areas/groups:*

* Identification of duplication, gaps and conflicts in the system
* Identify opportunities for freedoms and flexibilities to encourage greater impact
* Intelligence to align funding, strategic priorities and investment decisions
* Ensuring provision aligns with employer and employee needs
* Ensuring provision is intelligence led, informing national and regional decision making
* Ensuring provision is accessible and flexible to ensure optimum take-up and impact

Objective 2**:**Encouraging all young people to achieve their potential.

*Why is this important?*

* Educational attainment at school age, especially for disadvantaged groups, is below average
* NEET levels are higher than average, especially amongst disadvantaged groups
* There is strong evidence that good school outcomes and careers information deliver lifelong impacts
* With expected growth in high skilled jobs in the area, our young people need the skills to be able to access these opportunities
* Progression to Higher Education is below average

*Priority areas/groups:*

* Improving educational attainment (age 5-18), particularly for disadvantaged groups
* Development of skills with a strong employability and enterprise link, with a focus on skills requirements of the future
* Preventing young people from becoming NEET
* Ensuring disadvantaged young people are supported to achieve their potential, including outcomes for young people with Special Educational Needs & Disabilities
* Raising aspirations of all young people and their parents through effective careers education advice and guidance
* Ensuring young people within the region have the opportunity to progress to Further and Higher Education as well as apprenticeship and technical routes to higher skilled jobs

Objective 3:Supporting everyone who is able to work by helping to address their barriers to employment.

*Why is this important?*

* Addressing barriers to employment would improve quality of life and reduce costs of existing benefit payments
* Access to employment can be affected by race, gender, disability, age, where you live and other factors. Supporting certain groups or locations could help address this
* Barriers to work can be complex and solutions often need to be tailored, but common barriers include low skills (including basic skills), health issues (including mental health), transport, language and childcare as well as social issues such as housing, drug and alcohol misuse and other complex needs

*Priority areas/groups:*

* Supporting people with low level or no formal skills
* Supporting older workers who may need to reskill or upskill – the over 50’s have been significantly impacted by Covid and need additional support.

Focusing action in areas with higher levels of deprivation

* Supporting people with complex barriers to education, employment and training
* Supporting people from diverse backgrounds
* Ensuring employers recognise the value of a diverse, skilled and active workforce and can create opportunities for all

Objective 4**:** Empowering people to progress within employment, including to better higher paid opportunities, if they wish to do so.

*Why is this important?*

* 17% of people are paid below the real living wage with implications for child poverty[[4]](#footnote-5)
* Low pay and insecure jobs can leave people stuck in poverty and reliant on benefits
* Pay and occupational profiles are not equal, with women, disabled people, people from BAME groups less likely to benefit from higher pay and higher level occupations
* There is evidence of under employment and failure of employers to take-up modern management practices, which can limit progression opportunities for employees

*Priority areas/groups:*

* People in low paid/insecure employment
* People without a level 2 qualification, or those that need level 3 and level 4 skills for progression
* People working part-time and self-employed
* People working in low skilled jobs who are under-employed
* People with other barriers to progression, including Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, mental health, childcare and transport
* Supporting people from diverse backgrounds and ensuring employers recognise the value of a diverse workforce
* Supporting employers to address skills gaps and fully utilise their workforce through modern management practices

Objective 5:Ensuring employers are able to recruit and retain the diverse skills and talent they need to thrive from within and beyond the region.

*Why is this important*

* Some employers are finding it hard to recruit staff to help them grow and others have workforces that lack the skills they need for the future
* Employers play a key role in workforce development, but there is scope to increase training and development, which evidence shows is ‘good for business’
* There are gaps in the skills pipeline to support our growing innovation sector (e.g. STEAM skills)
* Our clean growth and infrastructure ambitions will require growth in certain skills
* Skills pipelines, such as apprenticeships are under-utilised
* Some groups are under-represented in the workforce, providing an opportunity to address the shortages
* Improving the health of our workforce can improve productivity and reduce staff turnover
* A culture of lifelong learning and continuous professional development will enable to the workforce to adapt to future skills requirements

*Priority areas/groups:*

* Development of skills to support a diverse, clean and innovative economy with opportunities for progression and growth
* Increasing awareness among employers and individuals of the range of skills development pathways (e.g. apprenticeships and T-levels) to increase engagement in these routes from both employers and individuals
* Increasing Continuous Professional Development activity amongst employers and the self-employed
* Increasing employer engagement with schools, colleges and communities
* Increasing workforce diversity and helping businesses recognise positive impact on driving business growth
* Improving workforce health

The Employment and Skills plan has identified a number of strategic actions, many of which work towards more than one objective:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Strategic Activities** | **SO1** | **SO2** | **SO3** | **SO4** | **SO5** |
| 1 | Work towards a more integrated regional skills function. To include intelligence, evidence-based commissioning, co-ordination of provision and informed decision-making | Checkmark | Checkmark | Checkmark | Checkmark | Checkmark |
| 2 | Co-design activities which challenge and support our schools to improve outcomes and raise aspiration among young people |  | Checkmark |  |  |  |
| 3 | Enhance careers education, advice and guidance through expansion of the Careers Hub model. By co-designing a world class careers advice service that adds value to and complements the current CEC offer | Checkmark | Checkmark |  |  | Checkmark |
| 4 | Secure investment for a community grant scheme for projects targeting local need or specific hard to reach groups | Checkmark |  | Checkmark | Checkmark |  |
| 5 | Infrastructure to connect people to employment and skills opportunities. Align plans to ensure employment and skills opportunities are supported by infrastructure that links people to opportunities | Checkmark | Checkmark | Checkmark | Checkmark | Checkmark |
| 6 | Support effective retraining opportunities across the region, ensuring residents and businesses are well prepared for a changing labour market |  |  | Checkmark | Checkmark | Checkmark |
| 7 | Develop Future Bright Plus Build on successful parts of programme and expand remit based on mid-term evaluation | Checkmark |  | Checkmark | Checkmark | Checkmark |
| 8 | Further development/re-boot of the Apprenticeship Hub Focusing on brokerage (people and businesses) to maximise uptake and linked to the Growth Hub | Checkmark | Checkmark | Checkmark | Checkmark | Checkmark |
| 9 | Adult Education Budget Commissioning Strategy Align commissioning strategy to the vision and objectives of the Employment and Skills Plan | Checkmark | Checkmark | Checkmark | Checkmark | Checkmark |
| 10 | Develop initiatives to help employers plan for skills e.g. through development of anchor institutions network, Workforce for the Future and Enhanced Growth Hub offer | Checkmark | Checkmark | Checkmark | Checkmark | Checkmark |
| 11 | Supporting key growth sectors and innovation 'ecosystem' i.e. through Global Centre of Innovation Excellence, Institute of Technology, Digital Skills | Checkmark | Checkmark | Checkmark | Checkmark | Checkmark |

The full employment and skills plan is available to view [here](https://www.westofengland-ca.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/West-of-England-Employment-and-Skills-Plan-July-FINAL.pdf).

### Sector Specific Priorities

Alongside the sector priorities identified within the West of England LIS and highlighted above, digital skills are becoming ever more important in today’s economy and are a near universal requirement for employment. Digital skills in LIS priority sectors, alongside cross-sectoral digital skills requirements, are therefore likely to be especially important to the region’s recovery and growth. This covers the spectrum of basic digital skills which are transferable between multiple sectors, to more specific digital sector skills such as analytics, cyber security, games and animation, networking and cloud infrastructure and programming and software development (see Appendix A for more detail).

As identified in the region’s Climate Emergency Action Plan the development of green skills will play an important role in achieving the regions target of net zero carbon emissions by 2030; however, a significant step change is required if this target is to be achieved.

In addition, the pandemic has highlighted the large number of vacancies that exist in Health, Social Care and MedTech. The LIS also identified the rising prominence of medtech in the region; whilst smaller in scale the sector has been growing quickly in the region and the pandemic is likely to present further opportunities providing innovative solutions in the broader health and social care sector.

## Covid-19 Recovery and Renewal Skills Priorities

The Covid-19 recovery plan continues to build on the vision set out in the local industrial strategy:

*“Drawing on the unique strengths of the region to drive clean and inclusive growth.”*

The overarching ambition for the recovery plan is to:

*“Build back better by capitalising on our ingenuity, creativity and diversity to create good jobs and a high quality of life for all our residents whilst achieving sustained emission reductions. As we build back our places, we will strive to create greener, healthier, more vibrant communities to live and work, to ensure the region continues to attract visitors, talent and investment from around the world.”*

The recovery plan is structured around the following principles for recovery, which form the five pillars of the plan.

5 

Across these five pillars a number of strategic programmes have been identified which will ultimately support the principle for getting residents back into jobs. The programmes focused specifically around getting residents back into jobs are outlined here. Further details of all the proposed programmes in the recovery plan are available to view [here](https://www.westofengland-ca.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/West-of-England-Recovery-Plan.pdf).

By 2025, the Recovery Plan will have achieved the following:

* Over **11,200 businesses supported** to adapt their operations, boost staff skills, and innovate
* **1,800+ jobs** created, plus **750 construction jobs** a year across our investments
* **22,000+ training and skills** placements each year
* Support residents to access good, secure jobs
* Deliver careers advice to **95 schools and colleges** with **10,000 people taking online mental health at work courses**
* Widen community access to business and skills support

# Skills Action Plan

Against the strategic backdrop of the [Employment and Skills Plan](https://www.westofengland-ca.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/West-of-England-Employment-and-Skills-Plan-July-FINAL.pdf) and the [Recovery Plan](https://www.westofengland-ca.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Recovery-plan-version-2.pdf), a range of delivery is planned or underway at local, regional and national levels. Drawing these together for maximum regional impact is a key role for the SAP and partners.

The following provides an overview of four integrated regional interventions which form the keystones of our Action Plan contributing to a range of strategic objectives and activities – Adult Education, Workforce for the Future, Careers Hub and Future Bright – alongside a series of new interventions designed to help the region Build Back Better from Covid.

## Adult Education

***What is the Adult Education Budget?***  
Adult Education is used to help adults over the age of 19 to develop the skills and qualifications needed for life, work, apprenticeships and further learning. For the academic year 2021-22 the WECA Adult Education Budget (AEB) stood at approximately **£16.4 million.**

AEB supports all five of the strategic objectives set out in the Employment and Skills Plan by funding providers to deliver courses tailored to meet specific needs within the region, providing all residents with the opportunity to develop. These provisions help learners build confidence, develop the skills required for work and life and enhance their wellbeing.

Through regular strategic dialogue with AEB providers and as a result of Covid, provision has flexed to include more online provision, specific courses aimed at addressing needs arising as a result of Covid and flexibilities in type of provision delivered by AEB funded providers.

AEB has provided and continues to provide the skills and learning needed to equip adults for work, an apprenticeship and/or other learning. It enables localised, more flexible and tailored programmes of learning to be made available for learners to engage with.

***How?***

AEB has been devolved to the Combined Authority which delivers in partnership with learners, businesses, and education providers to ensure funding yields positive results. New flexibilities adopted by AEB as a result of Covid-19 will continue to be monitored and reviewed, not least as redundancy announcements are being made in certain sectors which may require a targeted and tailored approach. By drawing on detailed evidence base managed by the SAP, AEB is shifting to a more ‘commissioned based’ model where provision is targeted at greatest need. This has been demonstrated through the approach to allocating new national recovery funding (see next section).

***Fit with* *Employment and Skills Plan***

Strategic Objectives: S01, SO2, SO3, SO4 & SO5

Strategic Activities: 1 & 10

For further information about AEB visit: [www.westofengland-ca.gov.uk/adult-education-budget](http://www.westofengland-ca.gov.uk/adult-education-budget)

## Workforce for the Future

***What is Workforce for the Future?***

Workforce for the Future (WftF) is an £8.1m programme aimed at supporting small, micro and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) with identifying and meeting their skills requirements. Operating across all local authority areas in the region (Bath and North East Somerset Council, Bristol City Council, North Somerset Council and South Gloucestershire Council), delivering against all five of its strategic objectives, this programme is a key component of the Employment & Skills Plan.

A core regional support offer was established at the end of September 2020, to provide a comprehensive and joined up one-front-door service for SMEs. This core service comprises:

* **Adviza’s Talent Retention Team** supporting the region’s rapid response to help local small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) retain and redeploy talent and maintain stability during the economic downturn, whilst safeguarding jobs and opportunities for local young people and adults.
* **College Consortia partners (Bath College, Bristol City College and Weston College) ‘**Talent Accelerator’ giving businesses access to future talent and industry-specific training through apprenticeship programmes, student industry placements, funding workforce training and free recruitment support.
* **Business West** providing guidance on upskilling existing staff, attracting and recruiting new staff and aligning workforce with growth plans.
* Western Training Provider Network (WTPN), a consortia of forty-strong colleges, universities and independent training providers helping businesses to explore their workforce and apprenticeship needs, helping them navigate the apprenticeship system, providing 1-1 support and providing the ‘Share to Support’ levy match service.
* **West of England Careers Hub** helping businesses to attract future talent into their business via a tailored action plan, raising brand awareness, developing staff skills and establishing a talent pipeline.
* **University of the West of England (UWE)** Digital Workforce for the Future project helps SMEs improve digital skills across all industry sectors, deepening their understanding of digital skills and potential solutions.

The core service has been enhanced by Phase 2 funding, which has facilitated the introduction of several new sector based and geographically focussed interventions to extend its reach and effectiveness. These are:

* **Business West** (along with Consultancy & Education Ltd, Connecting Learning Ltd and Skills for Care) are offering a tailored support programme for the [Adult Social Care sector](https://www.businesswest.co.uk/adult-social-care-resilience-programme). This project supports leaders and managers of care organisations to build, develop and sustain their workforce through a framework of professional development, resources and targeted support.
* **Bristol City Council’s** South Bristol Talent Pathway is supporting SMEs to access HR, workforce development information, advice and guidance to help meet future productivity challenges.
* **Leonard Cheshire** is helping to build capacity, knowledge and understanding to enable businesses to proactively employ disabled people more actively, confidently and successfully.
* **National Composites Centre** Digital Learning Factories – helping SMEs to identify their digital skills needs whilst also giving them access to digital learning modules. The modules will be delivered in industrial scale, authentic, state of the art production environments.
* **University of the West of England (UWE)** Skills for Clean Growth programme (co-delivered by NatWest) helping SMEs address the skills needed to deliver net zero ambitions for clean and inclusive growth.
* **YTKO ‘**Modern Methods of Construction’ supporting local construction SMEs who are at risk of being displaced due to the uptake and acceleration of Modern Methods of Construction (MMC) and offsite solutions.

***How?***  
WftF is a skills analysis and development programme for SMEs. Designed to help identify current and future skills needs, businesses are paired with one or more of our key partners to review and build the current skillsets of existing employees. The programme helps businesses to gain technical skills, recruitment and training strategies, and action plans so that they can deliver strategic ambitions with a strong, resilient and adaptable workforce.

A total of 66 businesses had completed meaningful activity on the programme as of September 2021, this was primarily through the Creative Workforce for the Future Pilot Project which ran from October 2019 to March 2021. By January 2022, the number of referrals onto the programme reached 239 with a further 198 businesses onboarded onto the programme and working with one or more of the delivery partners. Further details are provided in section 5 below.

***Fit with* *Employment and Skills Plan***

Strategic Objectives: S01, SO2, SO3, SO4 & SO5

Strategic Activities: 1, 8 & 11

Further details of the programme can be viewed at: [www.westofengland-ca.gov.uk/workforce-for-the-future/](http://www.westofengland-ca.gov.uk/workforce-for-the-future/)

## Careers Hub

***What is the Careers Hub?***

The region is home to over 40,000 businesses and has one of the highest skilled work forces in the country. The economy generates many high-quality jobs and we want to give locally grown talent every opportunity to secure employment here in our region, starting with schools. The Careers Hub works with all 95 schools and colleges from across Bristol, Bath & North East Somerset, South Gloucestershire and North Somerset, and supports delivery against strategic objectives 1, 2 and 5 as set out in the Employment and Skills Plan

***How?***  
The schools and colleges are supported to improve careers opportunities and work experiences for young people, allowing them to make more informed choices about their careers. The Careers Hub works to ensure that young people have more opportunities to connect with the world of work and potential future employers. Success is measured by progress against government’s Gatsby Benchmarks.

The Careers Hub builds on the success of the Enterprise Adviser Network, working in partnership with schools, colleges, and businesses to ensure young people get timely and relevant careers advice and meaningful work experience.

In November 2021, the Careers Hub will deliver a £45,000 Green Futures Fund to help secondary schools to deliver projects which deepen understanding of green careers and pathways. This will be delivered during the 2021/22 academic year and link into skills programmes such as Workforce for the Future which the Careers Hub is co-delivering with other delivery partners.

***Fit with* *Employment and Skills Plan***

Strategic Objectives: SO1, SO2 & SO

Strategic Activities: 1, 2 & 3

Further details about the Careers Hub can be viewed at: [Careers Hub - West of England Combined Authority (westofengland-ca.gov.uk)](https://www.westofengland-ca.gov.uk/skills/ean/)

## Future Bright

***What is Future Bright?***

Future Bright is a strategic in-work skills programme, which supports strategic objectives 1,3, 4 and 5 of the Employment and Skills Plan. Available across the West of England combined authority area, the service offers free career coaching, training and support to help individuals to develop the skills and confidence they need to take their next career step and improve their earnings potential.

***How?***  
When joining the programme, individuals are matched with a dedicated career coach who supports them to create a personalised action plan. Future Bright supports people who are:

* Aged 19 and over
* Living in Bath & North East Somerset, Bristol and South Gloucestershire
* Currently in paid work and receiving benefits or tax credits (Universal Credit, Working Tax Credit, Child Tax Credit, Job Seeker’s Allowance, Income Support, Employment Support Allowance, Housing Benefit, or Means-Tested Council tax Reduction

With a further £3.6m of investment from the West of England Combined Authority over three years, Future Bright Plus aims to support 4,000 more people to receive information, advice and signposting with a predicted £7.2 million increase in income achieved across the programme. To make sure that Future Bright can support those who need it most, the scheme has been expanded. Further details of the delivery and progress of both the Future Bright Pilot and Future Bright Plus are provided in section 5 below.

***Fit with* *Employment and Skills Plan***

Strategic Objectives: SO1, SO3, SO4 & SO5

Strategic Activities: 7 &10

Further details of the programme can be viewed at: [www.westofengland-ca.gov.uk/future-bright](http://www.westofengland-ca.gov.uk/future-bright) . This project was initiated as part of a DWP pilot on in work progression but has proven so successful that WECA will continue to fund this for a further 3 years from the end of the current pilot.

**Other Recovery Fund Initiatives**

In order to respond quickly and effectively to the Covid-19 crisis, a Regional Taskforce was convened by WECA to develop and ensure effective support was put in place for businesses and residents. This resulted in an additional £9.4m being set aside to support a green and inclusive recovery. The SAP was a key part of this process and developed a strong evidence base to help inform recovery measures through a series of themed task and finish groups.

New initiatives developed through this process included:

* Community Recovery Fund**:** to support community and voluntary organisations to reach out to residents most affected by Covid-19, and those already furthest from the labour market. A key element will be signposting organisations and residents to employment and skills support that already exists, helping to build capacity, resilience and inclusion within communities. The first funding Call was launched in November 21 and full applications received on 22 Dec 21. A panel met in Jan ‘22 to decide which applications will be supported, with projects initiating from March 22 onwards. **(Aligns with Strategic Objective S01, SO3 & SO4; Strategic Activity 4)**
* Digital inclusion: the pandemic has placed sharp focus on the need to quickly upskill and equip businesses and residents with the digital skills and access they need in a fast-changing economy. The **Digital Skills Investment Programme (DSIP)** is investing significantly to build pathways of provision and access for residents, building on basic digital skills (which can be funded by AEB) to build steps which link to existing specialist and higher-level provision already available in the region. Our LMI and business insight, provided by the SAP and the analysis expertise that this has afforded, shows that our region needs to bridge the gap between entry level and highly specialist provision.  
    
  A key consideration in delivering this programme is to include 100% of participants who are underrepresented in digital roles across the region or from groups disproportionately affected by COVID. Participants will be expected to make a positive progression at the end of the DSIP bootcamp. Further details on the delivery and progress of DSIP are provided in section 5 below.

In addition, DWP funded a digital exclusion package across the WECA authorities (a similar scheme has been set up in North Somerset) to provide individuals with digital ‘kit’ as well as basic training to access common services (e.g. banking). Local Authority partners also accessed DWP Flexible Support Fund to put in place initiatives which help individuals to access basic digital training and kit, aligned to AEB provision and DSIP. (Aligns with Strategic Objective S03, SO4 & SO5; Strategic Activity 4)

* Employability & Skills Portal:A new regional portal launched in December 2020, acting as an all age access hub to help residents access the support, advice and guidance they need to remain in or find new work. The portal was underpinned by a significant mapping exercise which sets out in clear and simple terms what support is available and how it is accessed**.** This service was strengthened in October 2021 with the launch of the new WECA website. The portal now provides an interactive, searchable service helping businesses and individuals to find information of skills provision and support services.   
    
  The next stage of the portal’s development will commence in Spring 22, with the introduction of a light touch signposting service offered via a helpline. This will help to signpost people to the relevant support including local authority ‘one front door’ hubs/services. **(Aligns with Strategic Objective SO1 & SO3 and Strategic Activity 1)**
* **Redundancy Response**: A multi-partner/agency redundancy task force has been created, alongside a new digital business to business **‘talent retention platform’** (matching skills/individuals with jobs), to work with employers and providers to help individuals made redundant find alternative employment opportunities. **(Aligns with Strategic Objective SO3, SO5 & SO5 and Strategic Activity 6 & 10)**
* **Good Employment Charter (GEC):** seeks to set a standard for working practices, supporting businesses of any size, sector etc to improve investment in their staff, positively benefitting individuals, society and the wider economy.   
    
  The charter has been shaped by a Steering Group made up of representatives from TUC, ACAS, CIPD, Business West, FSB, Leonard Cheshire, EDMs and Skills Officers. We have also consulted with the LEP Business Board and are currently consulting with a range of local businesses. It has also been taken to the SAP meeting in December for input and further development. Businesses can become a ‘Supporter’ or ‘Full Member’ and must improve their practices by working towards (are achieving) the following pledges and related criteria:   
  + Real Living Wage
  + Secure Work
  + Inclusive Recruitment
  + Health & Wellbeing
  + Flexible Work
  + Engagement & Voice
  + People Management.
* Sustainability, low carbon and green skills do not ‘standalone’ as a pledge, rather they are incorporated within the above where relevant.

# Assessment of Progress

The following section details the progress made against the Employment and Skills Plan objectives and agreed priorities in the Regional Recovery Plan. Where available (it should be noted that some of the programmes are in their infancy), details of progress and key achievements are also included.

Objective 1**: Integrating our employment, skills and education system**

The establishment of the SAP and development of WECA’s regional economic and labour market intelligence function have acted as key building blocks in achieving this overarching strategic objective.

The diverse membership of the SAP and ability to reach out to a range of sectors and networks means we have been able to tap into intelligence quickly and comprehensively – this was crucial in developing the region’s response to Covid-19 and has meant that the Recovery Plan and activity funded via the region’s Recovery Fund have been focussed on evidence based need.

Regular economic briefings have been produced with detailed and up to date intelligence to inform planning, as well as bespoke publications like the Digital Skills Pack and Green Skills Analysis. Key insights are regularly reported to the SAP, who are encouraged to disseminate to their wider networks as well as feed relevant information/ intelligence back to the SAP for others to use.

Further research to understand future growth opportunities and skills demand has been commissioned with the report due in February 2022. The SAP has welcomed the opportunity to work with DfE in the development of a Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) to further strengthen the voice of business in shaping the delivery of our Employment and Skills Plan. Following confirmation of the pilot LSIP in the West of England (being led by Business West), the SAP has provided knowledge and intelligence to support Business West with the LSIP development. For example, Business West presented details of the preferred approach to LSIP development, employer engagement and intended outcomes at the SAP Board in Dec 2021, with the SAP inputting knowledge, suggestions and making appropriate strategic links to ensure the LSIP links to the wider work of the SAP and its members.

The development of a regional Employability and Skills Portal (see previous section) also represents the starting point in drawing together the plethora of employment and skills support into a single framework to maximise access and take-up.

Objective 2**: Encouraging all young people to achieve their potential**

Progress continues to be made in building our West of England **Careers Hub and Enterprise Adviser Network**, to shape and inspire our future workforce.

The Careers Hub includes all 95 regional schools (including SEND & Alternative Learning Provision) and has helped facilitate a marked improvement in the West of England’s performance against the Gatsby Benchmarks. All schools and colleges are now using the Gatsby benchmarks compared to 58% at the end of March 2019. Furthermore, the average number of Gatsby benchmarks achieved was 4.8/8 at the end of December 2022 compared to 2.46/8 at the end of March 2019. Careers Leaders have been trained in 68/95 of the schools and colleges and seventy eight are matched with an Enterprise Adviser from a local employer.

As set out in section 5 below, the Careers Hub has also led on:

In November 2019, WECA commissioned the Institute for Employment Studies (IES) to research the current provision of Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG) available to residents of all ages in the West of England region. The report set out key recommendations for how WECA could build upon current services available and create a regional CEIAG Strategy.

The SAP has been instrumental in helping to inform and shape the development of this work including through the creation of a ‘roadmap’ and Action Plan for delivery against the prioritised recommendations. The SAP’s intelligence function has helped by collating and presenting LMI to providers of CEIAG to ensure provision is aligned to the needs of the region and by improving the knowledge and skills of CEIAG professionals and providers.

Building on this work, the development of a regional Employability and Skills Portal (see previous section) represents the starting point in drawing together the plethora of employment and skills support into a single framework to maximise access and take-up. Further development of this portal (and the signposting service it provides) will take place in Spring 22.

As part of the Combined Authority’s investment in the ground-breaking **Digital Engineering Technology and Innovation (DETI) programme** (see above), a new Diversity Demonstrator has been created which aims to address the skills and employment gaps in engineering, by championing engineering with children in the West of England, using a network of diverse engineering role models to inspire them. In order to appeal to under-represented groups and increase diversity in the profession, the Diversity Demonstrator focusses on breaking stereotypes and challenging perceptions about science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) careers by showcasing a wide variety of engineering role models from under-represented groups within the industry, including women, people from low socio-economic backgrounds and people of Black, Asian and minority ethnicity. The DETI Skills team at UWE has also started working with My Future My Choice, a grassroots organisation which actively encourages young people to develop their career aspirations.

To maximise the regional impact of government’s **Kickstart** programme, WECA convened a West of England gateway ‘forum’ for regional Gateway organisations. Although employers are no longer able to upload new positions (this closed in Dec 21), the Combined Authority continues to liaise closely with DWP and ‘Gateway’ (coordinating) organisations to maximise the number and quality of kickstart placements in the region. These pre-existing placements can continue to be filled until the end of March 2022. This approach also allows businesses and individuals to access complementary regional and local support to increase the chance of kickstart placements turning into sustainable employment outcomes.

Objective 3**: Supporting everyone who is able to work by helping to address their barriers to employment**

Alongside, longer term measures to unlock barriers to employment – given the profound and far-reaching impact of Covid, several existing services have been adapted to support getting residents back into work:

A range of new funding reforms and flexibilities have been introduced via the devolved **Adult** **Education Budget,** intended to encourage and support providers to increase and maintain levels of support for priority learners. Measures include broadening access to Community Learning funding, increased access to Learner Support Funding (including IT equipment loans and support for mental health – both reported as being particular issues for some residents) and broadening access to full funding for younger and older learners.

WECA has increased the low wage pilot income threshold to align with the real living wage and has also enabled learning in the workplace. Additional AEB funding has also been released to support the following areas:

* **Sector Based Work Academy Programme**: An existing well-established programme, led by the Department of Work and Pensions, that seeks to support unemployed residents to secure work through a package of pre-employment training, a work experience placement and a guaranteed interview for a real employment opportunity. The programme forms part of the HM Treasury ‘A Plan for Jobs’ strategy and is supported by a ring-fenced budget.
* **National Skills Fund Level 3 Initiative:** A new programme as part of the wider National Skills Fund providing free Level 3 qualifications to adults who do not already have a Level 3 qualification or higher. This ring-fenced budget is part of the government’s long-term commitment to support adults to get the skills they need to boost their careers.
* **WECA recruitment pipeline:** A new programme that adopts identical design principles to the Sector Based Work Academy programme but responds directly to the particular needs of the West of England Economy through offering a more substantial and higher-level package of pre-employment training.
* **Re-establishing support for priority residents:** Growth funding offered in support of a significant and highly concerning issue within WECA adult education provision e.g. Residents who have been either unemployed or economically inactive for 6 months or more; Residents who are either unemployed or economically inactive, with prior attainment below full level 2; Residents who are employed in jobs which are either low pay or at risk of redundancy, with prior attainment below full level 2.
* **Digital: stimulating demand, improving access and building confidence: seeking** to stimulate demand for digital learning amongst disadvantaged residents, offering loans of equipment and bespoke training to support beneficiaries to confidently utilise the equipment in support of ongoing participation. This work has linked with the DSIP lower call (see section below) to ensure alignment of the two programmes and resulting provision.

This additional support will ensure over 2,000 new learners.

As mentioned earlier, following a very successful pilot, the region’s **Future Bright** service has been extended and expanded (to more effectively reach people affected by the pandemic), offering career coaching, training and support to help people develop the skills and confidence they need to take their next step. Future Bright criteria was flexed to ensure that this vital programme could work with individuals impacted by Covid. This includes:

* At risk of redundancy.
* Have been made redundant.
* Whose hours have been significantly reduced (e.g. zero hours, cut from full to part time).
* Who have been laid off (not furloughed).
* Working as self-employed, where their ability to earn has been severely impacted due to the nature of their business.

The Combined Authority has confirmed an extension of the Future Bright service until the end of Dec 2023, ensuring that this successful in-work progression provision continues to reach adults across the region.

As part of its Regional Recovery Fund, WECA agreed a **£1.5m Community Recovery Fund** aimed at reaching those furthest from the labour market and helping build their confidence and access to move closer to the labour market. This was also a key recommendation of the Employment and Skills Plan. A full business case was approved in March 2021, including a ‘hub and spoke’ delivery model which will be co-delivered by the Combined Authority and its Local Authorities.

It is anticipated that the service will include outreach, capacity building, identifying specific need and addressing this, as well as cross referral of VCSE organisations into Workforce for the Future (see below) where SMEs can benefit from the workforce development menu of support to build their own capacity and growth. A call for a VCS Managing Partner has been launched.

The **WE Work for Everyone** programme has been set up to specifically target people with a learning disability to support them to achieve and maintain paid employment (see Case Study).

**Restart** – is the £3bn investment programme announced in the Comprehensive Spending Review in Nov 2020. It has been commissioned by DWP and delivered by Seetec in the south west CPA 4aarea. Programme delivery began in spring/summer 2021, providing intensive one-to-one support for individuals who have been out of work for 12-18 months. A DWP announcement dated 12 January 2022 has seen the scheme extend to support individuals who have been unemployed for more than 9 months, extending the reach of this service to more individuals in the region.

The West of England Combined Authority has been heavily involved in both the assessment of bids received for this programme and also its delivery. A representative of the People and Skills Team sits on the LEM group and Delivery Board, ensuring that the support aligns and mutually reinforces other interventions.

Objective 4**: Empowering people to progress within employment, including to better higher paid opportunities**

The £4m DWP funded **Future Bright Pilot** came to an end in 2021, with a continuation of the service now being funded until the end of 2023 by the Combined Authority. The pilot evaluation highlights that:

* 89% of participants surveyed reported positive outcomes.
* Significant improvement in awareness of the range of support on offer to participants
* 1,904 participants engaging with education or training.
* Project released over **£550,000** of aligned funding including training opportunities offered. (e.g. AEB)
* 298 participants increasing qualification levels, significantly in a number of cases.
* Annual income increases among participants estimated as being worth over **£1.4m**
* Wellbeing benefits over the project period estimated at **£2.97m**

The successor programme **Future Bright Plus** has been developed to provide additional mentoring and support service for adults in work, but in receipt of some form of benefit or earning below the Real Living Wage, to progress. This was a key recommendation of the Employment and Skills Plan.

As of December 2021, Future Bright had received over 4500 referrals. Of these, 2,900 individuals have worked, or are working, with a coach. Over 1300 have entered learning and training and at least 850 have increased their wages. A total of 429 employers have been engaged in supporting in work progression for employees.

With a further £3.6m investment over three years, Future Bright Plus aims to support 4,000 people to receive information, advice and signposting with a predicted £7.2 million increase in income achieved across the programme. To make sure that Future Bright can support those who need it most, the scheme has been expanded to those aged 18 and over and to those who are earning below the real living wage.

The devolved **Adult Education Budget** is aimed at helping residents achieve the foundational skills required to reach their potential (more detail in section 5). In addition to the measures set out to deliver against Objective 3, additional funding has been allocated for Targeted Level 3 entitlement, part of the ‘Lifetime Skills Guarantee’, which provides fully funded access to a select range of level 3 provision deemed to contribute most towards national industrial strategy. Through this, an additional 218 residents aged 24 and above will be enrolled on level 3 provision.

As detailed above, the Combined Authority’s **Digital Skills Investment Programme (DSIP)** is addressing skills required for digital transformation at both a medium to higher and baseline/lower-level digital skills level. Key to this funding is 100% of participants are underrepresented in digital roles across the region or from groups disproportionately affected by COVID.

The key objectives of the fund are to:

* Address locally identified digital skills gaps; supporting employers to recruit hard to fill vacancies requiring specialist digital skills and improve productivity.
* Building capacity amongst employers to co-design and co-deliver training in a way that is agile and aligns sharply with the specialist digital skill requirements of local employers.
* Supporting WECA residents to undertake training which will result in better quality employment and progression routes in digital roles both within digital companies and across all sectors e.g. finance, health, manufacturing etc. Career progression is a key focus.
* Diversify the digital talent pipeline by targeting groups that are currently under-represented in digital roles and designing training programmes to meet their specific needs.

Six consortia partners consisting of colleges, universities, employer networks/membership organisations and independent training providers are working closely with employers to co-design and deliver creative approaches to address employer and sector specific “in demand” digital skills.

Two funding rounds have already been made available and have fully funded inclusive training for:

* 236 participants at the medium/higher level and
* 292 participants at the baseline/ lower level.

All training funded so far will be completed by July 2022 with further evaluation of progression data up to the end of 2022. Examples of digital training delivery includes:

At a medium to higher level:

* Unity and Unreal bootcamp training for the gaming industry and the wider economy need for 3D visualisation.
* Digital marketing bootcamps to meet the large-scale demand across all areas of the economy.
* User experience bootcamp closed for disabled participants including extensive wrap around support removing barriers to engagement for this cohort.
* Bootcamp around digital skills required for measuring and delivering clear air initiatives.

At a baseline/ lower level:

* Training course to develop 2D and 3D design skills to support this emerging skill in various industries such as construction and furniture and set design.
* Training to support young offenders in the digital skills required to successfully enter and progress in the leisure and sport industry.
* Baseline and lower-level skills to build sector specific digital confidence and more technical skills to progress into more clinical role within the healthcare industry.

Training programmes initiated in June 2021 and so far 72 participants are enrolled/involved in this inclusive training. 33% are women, 13% have a known disability and 3% are from ethnic minority groups. The remainder are individuals that are unemployed, have lost income as a result of Covid, or fall within other groups where additional support is needed to secure a digital role e.g. young people.

The first training bootcamps are just coming to an end with 100% guaranteed interviews for participants and 75% expected to progress onto better employment and at lower level 50% progression onto better employment or further skilled digital training.

Need for digital skills across the economy remains at scale and further funding calls through the DSIP will be available to help fill identified gaps in digital provision as a result of digital transformation and closely aligned to employer priority need.”

Over the lifetime of the project DSIP aims to support 1,244 learners, 760 at the baseline/lower level and 484 at the medium/higher level.

Objective 5**: Ensuring employers are able to recruit and retain the diverse skills and talent they need to thrive from within and beyond the region**

Significant progress has been made against this objective, with additional support made available in the region’s Regional Recovery Plan. Through the LEP and SAP, business perspectives continue to shape the design and delivery of key regional interventions.

The **Workforce for the Future programme** – an £8.1m investment, co-funded with the European Social Fund (ESF) – aims to work with SMEs to help them develop their future workforce, meeting current and future needs. A core ‘skills brokerage’ service aligned to the West of England Growth Hub commenced at the end of September 2020. The SAP has taken part in several ‘deep-dive’ themed sessions to identify the collective understanding of the immediate as well as longer term impacts of Covid-19 on sectors and residents across the West of England, helping to shape the core service. (More details as above)

As of the end of December 2021, a total of 198 SMEs had been ‘onboarded’ onto the programme. Of these, 89% employ 9 or less employees and key sectors accessing the programme include: business services, creative industry, hospitality, pharmaceutical & healthcare and retail.

A pilot **Creative Workforce for the Future** project ran from Oct ‘19 - March ‘21 , supporting 45 SMEs in the creative industry (one of the sectors hardest hit by the pandemic). Further details are included as a case study in the next section.

Following an official launch in October 2020, the **West of England Institute of Technology (WEIoT)** – funded by DfE and WECA – continues to make strong progress, including the delivery of DfE funded Wave 2 Digital bootcamps and Skills Accelerator pilot. The WEIoT involves industry, education and research collaborating to design and deliver flexible, higher-level technical learning to equip people with the skills to fully participate in, and contribute to, economic growth driven by digital innovation and emerging technologies. By 2024, the WEIoT will have delivered STEM-led education and training to 2,000 individuals with all learners studying to at least a Level 4 qualification – more than 96% of learners will be in technical disciplines and over 70% will be apprentices.

The WEIoT aligns with a number of strategic interventions linked to our LIS, including **DETI** (detailed above) and the emerging regional **iSTART** programme – the latter an innovative digital skills programme aiming to support people from diverse social and educational backgrounds to gain new skills leading to high quality jobs in the creative and digital sectors. The WoEIoT is also a Steering Group member for the Digital Skills Investment Programme, helping to share best practice and expertise across the plethora of providers.

# Case Studies

The following case studies help to illustrate how programmes, services and specific actions are leading to successful skills outcomes for residents and businesses across the West of England.

As highlighted in section 6, **Future Bright** is one of a number of initiatives designed to support individuals progress within employment. As of December 2021, Future Bright had received over 4500 referrals. Of these, 2,900 individuals have worked, or are working, with a coach, over 1300 have entered learning and training, at least 850 have increased their wages and 429 employers have been engaged in supporting in work progression for employees.

The following case studies demonstrate how the tailored offer from the Future Bright coaches is helping individuals to unlock their potential.

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| ***Case Study 1: Future Bright***  Laura was made redundant when the business she worked for closed as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. She spotted an advert for Future Bright on Facebook and reached out for support. She worked with her career coach Helen through a series of regular meetings by phone or online. Laura said: *“It felt personal and gave me something to own and control. I was made to feel reassured especially as the series of events that lead to me reaching out to Future Bright were firmly out of my control and unsettling.”*  Laura worked with Helen to develop her job application and interview skills and build her confidence in applying for new roles. She would recommend Future Bright to others saying: *“If you find yourself looking for guidance, reassurance or even need a confidence boost – you have nothing to lose with a personal career coach from Future Bright!”* |

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| ***Case Study 2: Future Bright***  Amy got in contact with Future Bright for personal and professional growth and to consider what steps to take in the future. Since joining Future Bright she started a course, took part in exhibitions and arts trails, and got part time and temporary employment – Amy said “the role is within a community led project, it is temporary but good experience for me and will open doors into other similar roles”.  Amy was paired with Career Progression Coach Susannah and has commented “Susannah has been so helpful and knowledgeable throughout the whole process. She’s been very supportive and was really understanding when I didn’t know which path to take. Very friendly, efficient, and professional. My experience of Future Bright was completely represented by Susannah and I couldn’t fault her. We had many conversations about different paths and options that I could take and she always gave good advice”.  Amy plans to complete her course, grow her business and find further roles within community led projects. Amy said, “I feel a lot more positive than when I first got in touch with Future Bright and feel I have a much clearer direction, with manageable goals that I’m able to achieve”. Amy would tell anyone thinking of joining Future Bright “to go for it”.    “I feel a lot more positive than when I first got in touch with Future bright and feel I have a much clearer direction, with manageable goals that I’m able to achieve”.  Amy said my Future Bright Career Progression Coach “Susannah has been so helpful and knowledgeable throughout the whole process. She’s been very supportive and was really understanding when I didn’t know which path to take. Very friendly, efficient and professional.” |

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| ***Case Study 3: Future Bright***  William had been performing for the last ten years as a career until COVID. He lost all his work and self-determination because of COVID. He heard about Future Bright through a friend and got in contact as he wanted to progress within his career.  William was matched with Career Progression Coach Simon. William said “Simon assisted me with the best decisions that would help me to improve my career. He played a very active role helping me think about the most cohesive and realistic way to further develop the skills I have and which would be the best path for me to take in furthering those specific skills and developing new skills to take my career to the next step. Since taking part in Future Bright I feel more confident within my work and within my everyday life. I am more proactive and have a more positive outlook at my development. I think the most important thing I’ve found is a desire for self-development. It has given me a spark that I had started to lose after years of performance. It has given me the opportunity to go back to an educational setting which has given me a huge boost in my enthusiasm for learning and improving my craft”. William would say to anyone thinking of joining Future Bright, “I couldn’t recommend the course enough. Simon was so helpful, and the scheme was so beneficial. I’d say don’t hesitate to get in touch with the team”.   * “Since taking part in Future Bright I feel more confident within my work and within my everyday life. I am more proactive and have a more positive outlook at my development”. * “Having gone through the Future Bright scheme I think the most important thing I’ve found is a desire for self-development. It has given me a spark that I had started to lose after years of performance. it has given me the opportunity to go back to an educational setting which has given me a huge boost in my enthusiasm for learning and improving my craft”. |

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| ***Case Study 4: Future Bright***  Before joining Future Bright Cecilia had been informed that her job was no longer safe and that she would most certainly be offered redundancy. Cecilia said that “I felt a lot of pressure, it was upsetting and stressful. I got in contact with Future Bright because I needed help. I felt that I can do better, but I need someone to show me the right way and to believe in me”.  Cecilia found out about Future Bright from an email she received from Home Search. She was matched with her Career Progression Coach, Andrew about whom she has commented “Andrew was supportive, friendly, always took the time to listen to my problems and asked me questions to understand what my struggles were and how he could help me. Receiving help from my Coach made me become more confident, I have gained more knowledge in Accountancy and I’ve learned to look for solutions, to take challenging situations and to transform them in new opportunities.   “The most important thing that I discovered through Future Bright was to never give up. At the end of this program, I believe more in myself and I’m feeling hopeful that I can secure a better future for me and my family”.   Since joining Future Bright Cecilia has undertaken numerous training courses and improved her CV. Her aim is to now finish the last course and to apply for jobs in Accountancy. Cecilia would say to anyone thinking of joining Future Bright “do not hesitate to enrol in this program; it is a life changing program. It will give you confidence, support, it is like having someone whispering in your ear - You can do this. I don’t have enough words to thank Andrew and Future Bright for how my life has changed”. |

Individuals often face a range of barriers to employment and progression and Strategic Objective 3 of the regional Employment and Skills Plan is designed to identify and remove these. The **We Work for everyone** programme is an example of how specific barriers are being addressed though targeted support.

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| ***Case Study: WE Work for Everyone***  The WE Work for Everyone Programme will specifically target people with a learning disability to support them to achieve and maintain paid employment, supported by a Navigator on a 1 to 1 basis (note on terminology – whilst UK Special Educational Needs (SEN) legislation refers to learning disabilities, in the West of England, the representative group of people from this community of interest have stated their strong preference for the term ‘learning disability’ to be used).  The programme will utilise local provision, driven by a single delivery model and underpinned by a single Menu of Opportunity. Led by Bristol City Council, (lead accountable body), the programme is a partnership between the UA areas of Bristol, South Glos, Bath and North East Somerset and North Somerset, with the West of England Combined Authority, all four local colleges and the DWP. Lasting for 3 ½ years, the total value of the programme is £4,454m. This will be funded through a collaborative bid to the European Social Fund, led by Bristol City Council on behalf of the four LEP wide LA’s for £2.227m, a request for WECA Investment funding of £1.3m and other secured matched funding from LA and FE sources of £927,000.  The WE Work for Everyone project will:   * Offer an individualised programme to support people with a learning disability to access the labour market and identify pathways to help them obtain employment. * Provide intensive 1 to 1 support to identify suitable career pathways and signpost to specialist services, including bespoke models of provision aimed at people with learning disabilities. * Strengthen the work with service users, schools, employers and parents / carers. * Work with people with a learning disability to retain employment by ensuring ongoing support once in employment and working with their employer to meet both the employer’s and the employee’s specific needs. * Identify and embed models of effective practice with internships and supported employment. * Raise awareness of the contribution which people with learning disabilities can make to employers. * Develop a Quality Standards and commissioning framework for specialist employment support, for the West of England area. * Establish a sustainable model of support which can continue long-term across the West of England LEP area |

The West of England Careers Hub and Enterprise Adviser Network is now active in every secondary school in the region and is an important vehicle for *encouraging all young people to achieve their potential*. The following case study demonstrates how employers are directly contributing to the service, helping to shape careers provision to ensure it aligns with economic need.

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| ***Case Study: Careers Hub***  The CEO of a multi-academy trust (MAT) in the WECA region is also a member of the SAP and a strategic representative of schools. Having engaged via the SAP meetings, he suggested that schools would be interested in the green skills agenda and aligning with the regional climate emergency action plan. As a result the Careers Hub has consulted with head teachers as well as shared LMI related to green skills and will be launching a grants scheme to support schools (and therefore young people) to connect and benefit from the opportunities in the low carbon and green economy  The SAP continues to be consulted on how the Careers Hub can best support and engage with schools during the COVID 19 pandemic. We have reviewed our offer to support virtual work experience. WECA has also identified groups that face additional barriers to successful transition at Post 16 and successfully achieved funding from the Careers and Enterprise Company to support delivery of additional careers support for these students.  WECA recently ran a West of England Careers Inspiration event to all schools. The purpose of this was to raise awareness of careers and to demonstrate the breadth of opportunities available. SAP members supported this strategic event by running sessions and giving presentations.  The Careers Hub has also established the ‘Cornerstone Group’ which comprises a group of employers who support and deliver careers outreach into schools. Several SAP members (who are themselves businesses), are members on this group. Not only do they collaborate with schools, but they also use their own employer network(s) to encourage new employers to get involved. In addition, one of our Enterprise Advisers is a SAP member who works specifically with careers advisers within schools.  Enterprise Adviser Quote:  *“I deliver presentations in my day job, so more than happy to do this as an EA. I adapted WECA supplied material to suit the audience. I was keen to explain about the EA role so parents understand new direction in schools with regards to careers (1-8, EAs etc). …… [We] set up a stand for parents to talk about careers and got lots of contact and really positive response to the importance of careers and LMI”*  *School Quote:*  *“The report accurately acknowledges that we are only part way through a transformative journey ……. As a school community, we have worked hard to establish strong foundations across teaching and learning that are driving forward strategic improvements across the academy. Our pupils have higher aspirations than ever before, supported by dedicated teachers and a productive partnership between home and school. Because of this cohesive approach, our students are following exciting and rewarding career pathways that will positively impact on their futures.”* |

The Workforce for the Future programme is already actively engaging with small businesses to help them better understand their future skills needs and link more effectively with education and training providers. The programme can tailor support to meet the specific needs of sectors as demonstrated through Creative Workforce for the Future.

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| Case Study: Creative Workforce for the Future The Creative Workforce for the Future pilot has been led by UWE supported by several partners. It has the following targets:   |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | |  | **Original Pilot Target** | **Extension Target** | **TOTAL** | | SMEs supported (includes 1-2-1 diagnostic sessions, networking events) | 36 | 7 | **43** | | SMEs completing a meaningful project (includes taking on a placement / Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for employees) | 24 | 5 | **31** | | Number of learners / interns provided with a placement in an SME | 12 | 0 | **12** |     The aim of Creative Workforce for the Future (CWFTF) is to support SMEs in the creative and cultural sector to develop a more diversified workforce. This includes undertaking workforce development planning and diagnostic sessions with SMEs involved in the project, engaging them in networking groups to co-design processes and practices to develop and sustain a diverse workforce as well as taking part in more in-depth support such as continuing professional development for existing staff or taking on an intern/placement.  12 interns, all from BAME or socio-economic deprived backgrounds, were also offered placement opportunities comprising of a) 1 six-month placement in a partner organisation; and b) 2 three-month placements at an SME taking part in the project.  Project delivery commenced in advance of the pandemic but quickly had to pivot its delivery mechanisms including the delivery of planned event and the individualised support mechanisms to businesses and interns, to ensure the project as well as those taking part were able to achieve their goals. The project also flexed its offer to businesses to ensure that their needs and requirements were satisfied. Although still in its ‘delivery phase’ this project has already established several benefits, outcomes and areas of learning including the following:  It became evident during the intern’s industry placements that there were gaps in the creative businesses processes around inclusion which brought opportunities as well as challenges for the businesses involved.  As a result, several companies involved in the project have raised awareness of inclusion or established initiatives to address barriers to inclusion, these have included:   * Establishment of a targeted Diversity Taskforce and Inclusion working group with a focus on screen representation and workforce; and * Initiation of several initiatives to try and tackle the lack of diversity in their own organisations.   In addition, several companies have started looking at the language they use in their induction processes and what a meaningful ‘exit’ could look like when the intern placement finishes to cement the relationships and networks.  Several SMEs who have taken part in the project have already offered freelance commissions or employment to the interns who have taken part in the programme (9 of the 12 interns secured work to date). |

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| Creative Workforce for the Future: SME Feedback *“A thought-provoking and illuminating session, allowing space to focus on how we can build inclusion meaningfully into our planning and thinking as an organisation.”*  *“Insightful, and practically useful - a strong focus on what is immediately achievable, and credible ambitions to be moving towards.”*  *“I’m using elements of the sessions with the team to help us think about how we collectively improve. We had a great discussion on how to talk to our clients about improving their approach to diversity and how we can incrementally improve ours. We’re collating ideas for improvements and where we can justifiably celebrate success.”* |

Whilst still in its infancy, the main **Workforce for the Future** programme has received a number of positive testimonials on its effectiveness at supporting business engagement with skills providers:

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| Anthem Publishing is an SME supported by the Western Training Providers Network who are delivering the main apprenticeship service of the Workforce for the Future programme and also supporting with an apprenticeship levy sharing service. WTPN supported the company to find a suitable provider to deliver an apprenticeship, helping the company to navigate the complex apprenticeship sector and finances and supported with setting up of processes and readiness for taking an apprentice on.  *‘An exceptionally professional service has been provided in an easy-to-understand way, especially as there are many facets and sometimes jargon associated with apprenticeships. The advice has been especially relevant to our business…We have been well supported with the selection of a training provider and we look forward to continuing with receiving support in remote induction/mentoring.” Anthem Publishing*  Business West are another delivery partner of the programme providing a range of support including supporting SMEs to identify their skill needs and produce workforce development plans:  *“Business West has been helping us with upskilling the team and developing a workforce development plan for the company and individuals. the whole process has been fantastic for the business so far.”* The Waiting Game  *“Working with Business West on developing our workforce is exciting as it gives us the opportunity to develop specific skills within our staff which we may not otherwise have been able to do.”* WECIL |

The Recovery Fund initiatives aim to reach those disproportionately affected by Covid and who may have become more disadvantaged as a result of this impact. The following are some case studies from the early delivery of the **Digital Skills Investment Programme**:

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| **Case Study 1: Digital Skills Investment Programme** – Digital Marketing bootcamp (delivered by Bath Spa University and consortia partners)   **Joy**  I joined this Bootcamp as an educated unemployed mature lady in my 50s with a severe hearing impairment. I have been struggling to find work as I can no longer hear over the telephone so I had been seeking a career change that enabled me to use my strengths whilst not needing a telephone for communication. I had long been interested in a digital media career but didn’t have a degree in the subject.    The Bootcamp was well run and presented an overview of all the areas you can experience in a digital marketing career. The teaching was excellent and I learned a great deal in a short space of time. I felt very supported during my time on the bootcamp and the tutors always made themselves available for everyone. More importantly, I was blown away with the assistance and support received from the course management team with regards my hearing disability. They went out of their way to provide expensive hearing equipment and ensured that all lectures were captioned on my computer and mobile phone with various captioning app technologies. The networking and company visits were incredible opportunities as well.    What has been an amazing outcome from this Bootcamp for me personally, is I have been out of work for a long time and have not been getting job interviews. The week the bootcamp ended I had a job interview as a marketing assistant, which I didn’t get and I have another interview this week for the role of a Digital Communications Officer. These job opportunities speak volumes about how wonderful these skilled Bootcamps are in helping people back into work and improving their opportunities in the workplace.    I cannot recommend these skilled Bootcamps highly enough – they provide learners with a wonderful experience for growth and learning and the skills to get a job once the Bootcamp has ended. |

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| **Case Study 2: Digital Skills Investment Programme** – Digital Marketing bootcamp (delivered by Bath Spa University and consortia partners)  **Maya**  My experience of the Digital Marketing Bootcamp was a very positive one. I enjoyed developing my understanding of marketing, from identifying markets, google analytics, creating content for social media and more. The lecturers were informative and very approachable and I was also able to meet an excellent group of classmates.    I was provided with support throughout, and felt I could let lecturers know when I was struggling. This was very useful when I had an interview coming up, which I was nervous for. Jason and Tony went through a potential interview process with me and made me feel a lot more confident and prepared.   This support was very effective as I was offered the job as a Digital content creator. I feel that with the help of the course and lecturers, I was able to gain more knowledge around the subject of marketing, which was another great asset to put on my CV. I would definitely recommend this bootcamp or any other bootcamps held by Bath Spa University. |

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| **Case Study 3: Digital Skills Investment Programme** – VR Bootcamp (delivered and created by NextGen Skills Academy, Opposable Games and TechSpark)  **Hollie**  ***How did you find out about the NextGen Futures gaming bootcamp and what made you want to sign up?***    I was having a bit of a ‘what am I doing with my life’ crisis and spoke to my boss about changing careers. She sent me a link to the course and I didn’t even tell anyone else that I applied because I really didn't think I would get a place. I’ve always loved gaming and wanted to get into the industry in some capacity, but prior to starting the course I thought programming would be too difficult.    ***What were your aspirations to get out of the course when you started? Did these change throughout the programme at all?***    I love taking on new challenges and especially learning different software's. Initially I applied for fun and to learn more skills that would make me more employable as a 3D modeler. But as I started to learn more about coding, I really enjoyed the problem-solving aspect and found it more visual than I expected. I’m now really trying to push myself to keep learning games programming and work towards getting hired or incorporating programming into my freelance career. I also wanted to meet new people and just generally learn more about the mechanics of how games are made.  ***Do you feel as if you accomplished these outcomes?***    In a few weeks, I’ll be entering my first game jam with some people on the course. I definitely didn’t think I would have the courage to do a jam so early into learning, but having the support of the course makes it seem much less daunting. Generally, I wasn’t expecting to enjoy programming as much as I do.  ***Was there anything on the bootcamp that you were surprised to learn?***    The masterclass sessions have been the most surprising, because they offer more in depth  lessons about various aspects of working in the games industry. I was also surprised to learn  more about animation and that my knowledge from 3D modelling was actually relevant.  **Why do you think it’s important to encourage people to learn new skills in VR, AR, animation etc?**    I think it’s important that more people from underrepresented backgrounds get the opportunity and access to learn new skills within the tech industry. If we have better representation then ultimately that means we will have more creative and meaningful experiences within the sector, which will benefit everybody. It’s really exciting that companies are starting to understand this, but I think they need to first work on making sure they have an inclusive environment where current staff are accepting and knowledgeable about experiences other than their own. Otherwise, just hiring a few token employees will just put them into a potentially dangerous working environment.    ***What would you say to someone who wants to learn more about games-tech programming?***    Tell people! Let your friends and colleagues know what you’re passionate about and that you actively want to learn more. For me, this made a massive difference and it almost forced me to do something about it.    ***What do you want to do next?***    I want to keep learning and messing about making any little idea for a game. I’m going to keep practicing and building up my skill set. My long-term goals are receiving some funding to work on larger scale projects or gain some experience and get hired! |

# Forward Look

The SAP and partners have made significant progress both against the ambitions, strategic objectives and activities of the Employment and Skills Plan, and in responding to the impact of Covid-19 through the development of the Regional Recovery Plan and associated activity. The region’s labour market has shifted considerably from its long run position and policy and delivery needs to continue to be responsive to this, led by evidence.

Over the coming months, the SAP will continue to bring together the voices of business, skills providers, local government and other key organisations to understand the full extent of the impact of the pandemic on the labour market and to ensure that skills provision in the region responds to the needs of employers and those sectors most adversely affected.

It has been recognised by members of the SAP, with our evidence base also giving us early signals, that the pandemic has further accelerated economic disparities already present. Therefore, the work of the SAP will play a key role in shaping the future narrative for the region, highlighting the importance of the levelling up agenda in making sure all communities are engaged with the economic opportunities that emerge through recovery.

**Future opportunities**

The FE White Paper ‘Skills for Jobs: Lifelong Learning for Opportunity and Growth’ was published in January 2021 and sets out how government will reform further education, so it supports people to get the skills our economy needs throughout their lives, wherever they live in the country. The Skills and post-16 Education Bill will formalise the government's reform agenda.

Focusing post-16 skills on this core mission will increase productivity, support growth industries and give individuals opportunities to progress in their careers. It aims to place employers at the heart of the system so that education and training leads to jobs that can improve productivity and fill skills gaps.

The Combined Authority and SAP are working closely with Business West, the lead organisation for one of the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) trailblazers. We are supporting with providing LMI, promoting engagement activities, supporting the implementation of the overall plan and Business West presented at the SAP board in December 2021.

This collaborative work will continue during the LSIP trailblazer delivery (due to conclude in March 2022). In the meantime, we will also continue to utilise SAP and new LIS while LSIPs are rolled out.

Through the SAP, the Combined Authority/LEP, Business West (Chamber), FE colleges and other key partners are already collaborating with a strong collective understanding of the West of England landscape to build on the recommendations set out in Skills for Jobs. Furthermore, programmes like Workforce for the Future provide a strong framework for connecting businesses and providers perspectives, to improve skills planning – this could be further enhanced as a Skills for Jobs “trailblazer”.

The Skills for Jobs also provides the backdrop for progressing other aspects of our skills strategy e.g. by expanding on strategic opportunities like the West of England Institute of Technology and building on the outcome of our regional Green Skills analysis, to capture the opportunities of a shift to a Net Zero economy.

**Recovery Planning**

The West of England Regional Recovery Plan was published in October 2020. The plan sets out immediate actions to support people and businesses directly impacted by the economic challenges presented by the Covid-19 pandemic. Actions sit alongside broader national and local activity to tackle the impact of the virus. To deliver the plan, existing programmes and plans across the region have been refocused, and a regional recovery fund was established – funding a range of activity, including supporting people to reskill, supporting small businesses, and high street renewal.

The conclusions of the recovery plan highlighted a range of medium-term challenges to our regional economy as a result of Covid. Issues such changing models of work, increased reliance on digitally enabled business models, etc. On some issues, the pandemic has sped up pre-existing areas of change, on others, new challenges have emerged. The next phase of our recovery work will consider these medium-term challenges. The conclusions will serve as a bridge between our immediate action to stabilise the economy and getting the region back on track to deliver the LIS.

The SAP will play a key role taking forward aspects of this work including addressing the strategic questions ‘How can we support people to move swiftly back into work and young people to progress?’ Conclusions of this work will influence the region’s approach to broader engagement with Government on opportunities to strengthen our regional recovery.

**UK Community Renewal Fund/Shared Prosperity Fund**

At the March Budget government announced a £220m UK Community Renewal Fund to pave the way for the £1.5bn per annum Shared Prosperity Fund. The Fund is intended to predominantly support investment in employment and skills, support for business, and investment in communities.

WECA was identified as a ‘lead authority’ to coordinate and carry out initial assessment of bids, w. The evidence base managed by the SAP provided important context for this work, helping us identify projects which will have the greatest impact and legacy.

The West of England has secured £2,466,426 of funding to fund four successful projects under the UK Community Renewal Fund.

The West of England Combined Authority hopes to play a significant role in delivering the Shared Prosperity Fund, including the new £560m Multiply programme which aims to equip thousands of adults across the country with numeracy skills to help improve their careers and earnings potential.

## Sector Specific Skills Forecasts & Deep Dives

The SAP has expressed an interest in understanding which sectors are set to grow and contract following the pandemic. It is proposed that research is commissioned to consider a series of ‘policy on’ and ‘policy off’ forecasts to provide a local level view on future skills demand. This analysis will be supplemented by business insights to help sense-check and inform the work.

Areas highlighted as having substantial growth in the coming years will be subject to sector ‘deep dives’ like the one undertaken for digital skills to identify areas of skills need and carer pathways within the sector. Again, the SAP and their networks will provide a pivotal role in corroborating the findings and ensuring that the content of these reports are reflective of what is happening locally.

The SAP identified the need for a Deep Dive into areas such as Retrofit and Green Skills – the report produced by consultants Equity is complete.

We are currently undertaking a piece of horizon scanning work with consultants Pye Tait to produce an analysis of the forecast occupational changes within certain sectors and an assessment of whether the current post-16 education and skills estate meets current and future needs. Several the SAP members have fed into this work (due to complete in Spring 2022) and will inform several strategic activities.

## Monitoring and Evaluation of existing skills interventions

As demonstrated in chapters 6 and 7, there are substantive interventions being progressed by WECA and partners across the region. As projects develop and lessons learned emerge through monitoring and evaluation, the SAP will play an important role in learning from these and disseminating amongst networks; ensuring future policy and intervention design is informed and shaped by what works.

A key requirement of many of our programmes is the incorporation of social value impact and benefits as well as progression routes. These will be monitored in addition to programme targets and outputs.

1. Data Sources: Annual Population Survey, ONS. Data as of March 2021. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Source: [Local Green Jobs Stimulating a Green Economy, LGA](https://lginform.local.gov.uk/reports/view/lga-research/estimated-total-number-of-direct-jobs-in-low-carbon-and-renewable-energy-sector?mod-area=E09000006&mod-group=AllBoroughInRegion_London&mod-type=namedComparisonGroup) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Source: [English Indices of Multiple Deprivation, 2019](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2019) [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. Source: West of England Working based on the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings, ONS [↑](#footnote-ref-5)