

# Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP)

Essex, Southend  
and Thurrock

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## Progress Report

June 2024

This progress report has been prepared in accordance with Local Skills Improvement Plans: Stage 2 Guidance (dated November 2023) and is intended to review progress against the local skills improvement plan published in August 2023. This report was produced in June 2024, but publication was delayed due to the pre-election period.



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This Local Skills Improvement Plan has been approved by the Secretary of State in line with the approval criteria set out in the [Skills and Post-16 Education Act 2022](#), and in accordance with the [LSIP statutory guidance](#).

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*All images used within this report are of local educational facilities, supplied with permission for use by the Federation of Essex Colleges (FEDEC), and Essex engagement events.*



## Section 1: Who is this publication for?

*This report is an update of the full LSIP report and annexes produced in August 2023 to inform businesses and stakeholders of progress. You can view the original LSIP Report [here](#) and the annexes [here](#).*

We're thrilled to be able to share this report, setting out the progress of the Essex LSIP so far. Right from the outset, we have been clear that this is about putting business at the forefront and ensuring that the [original LSIP report](#) delivers for Essex.

**You will see the wide range of work that's been happening over the past year and the very real impact that this is having and will continue to have. Further detail is in the pages ahead, but some notable examples include the sector work and groups established, the employer toolkit underway, the £6.1 million of local skills improvement funding secured (with local authority match) and the range of events informing and engaging businesses. Importantly we're also utilising existing work and groups where possible – such as the Essex Construction Alliance and Inclusive Alliance.**

A powerful aspect of the LSIP has been the galvanising effect it's had on stakeholders and partner organisations across Essex. I said in the original report that I'd been overwhelmed by the collaboration of our colleges, providers, employers and local authorities and this continues to be the case.

With everyone working towards a common aim and clarity on local skills priorities, we are increasingly leveraging more funding, informing local provision and helping to shape new resource and activity far beyond the original scope. I am proud to say that this local collaboration has been particularly strong in Essex and was even remarked on by former Skills Minister Robert Halfon MP at a national LSIP event in Westminster.

There is also some exciting work in development with our partners such as a digital platform to tackle the challenges of navigating the skills system. Through such initiatives, Essex is truly leading the way and that entrepreneurial spirit continues to shine!

This report is primarily for businesses and wider stakeholders to keep you informed and to reassure you that real change is happening. It is deliberately short as we appreciate that time is often limited. You can continue to engage on the LSIP in a variety of ways and if you're new to the work, we'd be happy to speak to you.

A huge thank you to everyone involved so far, we couldn't do it without you and together we are making a difference!

**Denise Rossiter**, Chief Executive,  
Essex Chambers of Commerce



**“You said, we did  
– but this is just  
the start.”**

**– Denise Rossiter**

## Section 2: Strategic and economic context update

As was outlined in the original LSIP, the report covers the local authority areas of Essex, Southend and Thurrock. All references to 'Essex' include these three areas.

Essex is one of the largest areas in England, with a population of 1,863,300, of which 62.2% are of working age. It is diverse, with one of the longest coastlines, rural and urban areas and some of the wealthiest and the most deprived parts of the country. Proximity to London is significant to the labour market, with high levels of commuting into the capital and other areas (10% of Essex residents travel more than 10km to work). Home working is now sizeable, with 32.1% of residents working from home. See the original report and data annex for further information.



**Updated: Key facts and figures** (for more information, see [annex C of the LSIP](#))

	Essex	Southend	Thurrock	UK
Skills Level 4 and above (2023)*	39.5%	41.8%	36.3%	45.7%
Skills Level 3 and above (2023)*	62.0%	63.1%	58.1%	66.9%
Skills Level 2 and above (2023)*	88.8%	85.8%	82.4%	85.8%
Skills Level 1 and above (2023)*	92.1%	88.7%	86.2%	88.5%
Other qualifications (2023)*	3.0%	5.9%	6.8%	4.7%
No qualifications (2023)*	4.9%	5.4%	7%	6.8%
Earnings (weekly by place of residence) (2023)	£711.60	£730.60	£711.90	£682.60
Earnings (weekly by workplace) (2023)	£657.70	£608.50	£674.90	£682.60
Out of Work benefits (2024)	3.1% (27,955)	4.5% (5,085)	4.3% (4,825)	3.8%
Job density (2022)	0.78	0.71	0.76	0.87
Total employee jobs (2022)	602,000 (66.8%)	65,000	73,000	68.8%
Number of businesses (2023)	66,520	7,025	6,895	NA
Proportion of businesses which are SMEs	99.7%	99.6%	99.8%	NA

\*As % of working age population. For more figures also see [www.nomisweb.co.uk](http://www.nomisweb.co.uk)



## Section 2: Strategic and economic context update (continued)

**Since publication of the original LSIP, there have been a number of developments in the local landscape:**

**Devolution in Essex** – In August 2023, the report set out what a Devolution Deal could mean for Essex including more funding and greater control over fundamental issues such as health, planning, transport, skills, economic growth, employment and infrastructure. The Leaders of Essex, Southend and Thurrock Councils (along with Leaders of district, borough and city councils and the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner) had submitted an [Expression of Interest \(EOI\)](#) to government setting out the key principles and areas that Essex partners wished to explore. This included skills as a priority and ambitions to boost productivity.

Furthermore, it echoed some of the priorities within the LSIP, such as equipping people to work in key sectors, unlocking opportunities in areas such as digital, low carbon and net zero and utilising existing funding such as the Apprenticeship Levy. The EOI noted the importance of the LSIP and supporting this.

In January 2024, the Minister for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities confirmed that an Essex deal would be paused until after the general election.

Partners remain committed to pursuing the ambitions set out, including the LSIP priorities. Through such arrangements and underpinning work already done for the EOI, progress can continue to be made and with the LSIP a key part of this. The work has also assisted with the transition of LEPs to local authorities.

### **Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) Transition and a new role for local authorities**

– The original LSIP set out the role of the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP), covering Essex, Southend, Thurrock, Kent, Medway and East Sussex. This therefore encompassed three LSIPs (Kent & Medway, Essex and Sussex) with Kent & Medway and Sussex also being trailblazers, whereby eight areas in England tested the LSIP concept in 2022.

The original report noted that LEPs nationally were under review by government which could bring about changes to SELEP involvement in skills (such as its employer led Skills Advisory Panel and data support) and other areas of work locally. In August 2023 Government informed LEPs that core funding would end in March 2024 and that upper tier local authorities (county and unitary) would undertake LEP functions in future.

The SELEP Board agreed an effective and swift transition of work to local authorities and agreed an integration plan at their December Board meeting. As of 1st April 2024, the activities that were undertaken by SELEP are therefore now being undertaken by local authorities. As per [government guidance](#), this includes ensuring business representation, strategic economic planning, Growth Hubs and management of relevant government funding.

For skills work, given the clear role of LSIPs in informing the local skills landscape, the LEP's Skills Advisory Panel held its final meeting in December 2023. LSIP leads had attended meetings to help ensure a smooth transition and Essex employers on the panel have been linked into LSIP work where appropriate.

Some work will continue to happen across the SELEP geography and this includes the **major projects group**, which brings together large infrastructure projects across the south. This now includes representation from the LSIP leads to ensure join up. The three LSIP leads in the SELEP area have also continued to share best practice and work together on issues such as tutor shortage.

## Section 2: Strategic and economic context update (continued)

**There is also an expectation that there will be a new Greater Essex Business Board (official name to be confirmed) established in the coming months.**

**This will link to the LSIP Employer Board (now fully established and recognised as the [Employment and Skills Board](#)) and will include representation from the Essex Chambers of Commerce to ensure join up.**

As per [government guidance](#), local areas are also encouraged to produce economic strategies on an ongoing basis to support local decision making.

**Close alignment of the local authorities already to the LSIP is illustrated by £610,000 match funding** provided by Essex County Council to the Local Skills Improvement

Fund and a quote provided by Councillor Tony Ball, Essex CC Cabinet Member for Education Excellence, Lifelong Learning, and Employability helps to illustrate this further:

*“We welcome the news of the successful bid to help improve skills in Essex and are pleased to announce we will be contributing an additional £610,000 to the pot to further improve skills in Essex. Working collaboratively with Essex Chambers of Commerce, local employers and further education providers, the LSIP has identified key areas for us to support and invest in. Our added investment will help boost opportunities for employers and residents alike. We look forward to continuing to work closely with our partners to support the delivery of the LSIP.”*



**“We look forward to continuing to work closely with our partners to support the delivery of the LSIP.”**

**— Cllr Tony Ball**





## Section 3: Summary of the LSIP

**Essex Chambers of Commerce were chosen by the Department for Education (DfE) as lead for the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) in 2022.**

Plans have since been rolled out across England to provide an employer voice and perspective of skills needs locally, with Further Education Colleges required to respond to them, as per the Skills for Jobs White Paper and [reforms to post-16 technical education and training](#).

Essex Chambers of Commerce worked with stakeholders to undertake engagement with local employers between September 2022 and March 2023 to collect the information and insight that informed the local plan. This captured the needs of the labour market and local employers across the whole of Essex and identified action-based solutions required to enable local colleges and skills providers to effectively meet those needs. A link to the full LSIP report is provided in Section 1 and there is an [Executive Summary](#) also available.

As is outlined in Section 2, all references to Essex in the report include Essex, Southend and Thurrock. As one of the largest LSIP areas nationally (a population of 1.9 million) and an entrepreneurial location (home to nearly 81,000 businesses) skills and recruitment was at the forefront of employers' concerns and this continues to be the case.

The LSIP contained a number of priorities and these were based around three themes with specific areas of focus under each as set out below. The work to implement the LSIP has been overseen by [the LSIP Essex Employment and Skills Board](#) supported by sector groups and building on existing sector arrangements wherever possible.

As is outlined below, a significant amount of progress has been made since the report was published in August 2023 and with much in the pipeline. Engagement with businesses and stakeholders has continued to be a key feature of work and with both encouraged [to get involved in the work](#) at any time.

### Skills system priorities

- Skills planning system for Essex
- System access & flexibility
- Information, Careers Advice & Guidance
- Tutor shortages & capacity of providers to respond
- Inclusive employment
- Barriers to engagement

### Skills priorities

- Soft skills and behaviours
- Basic English, Maths and ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages)
- Digital skills and 'Digitech'
- Green skills
- Leadership and Management skills

### Essex Sectors and Technical Skills

- Advanced Manufacturing, Engineering & Aviation
- AgriTech & Food Tech
- Community & Voluntary
- Construction & the Built Environment
- Creative & Cultural
- DigiTech
- Education
- Health, Social Care & Med Tech
- Professional Services
- Transport & Logistics

## Section 4: Priorities and actions (Roadmap)

The original LSIP contained a roadmap, setting out how the priorities and recommendations would be delivered against and with timescales for these. The table below explores this in more detail and reviews progress against

the areas of action and activity. To preface this, it is also helpful to focus on some of the **key areas of progress and highlights** to illustrate the significant progress so far:

- ✓ Sector Reviews to be completed and uploaded on [LSIP web pages](#) by summer 2024
- ✓ Sector groups established and meeting dates confirmed by summer 2024
- ✓ LSIP [Employment and Skills Board](#) fully operational
- ✓ Regular [LSIP newsletter](#) circulated
- ✓ [LSIP web pages](#) launched
- ✓ Surveys and employer engagement continuing
- ✓ £5.5m LSIF secured with £610k local authority match
- ✓ Employer and apprenticeship toolkits underway
- ✓ Related local activity delivering against LSIP (e.g. Green Skills portal, [Essex Careers magazine](#))
- ✓ Range of events and networks supporting and involving the LSIP (e.g. [FEDEC](#), Lower Thames Crossing)
- ✓ Exploration of digital platforms such as the 'Essex Connector' and technology to maximise existing resources







## Section 4: Priorities and actions (Roadmap, continued)

Revisiting the roadmap – the original LSIP included an overview of key areas of work and these are revisited in the following table:

Priority & Stakeholders	Action / Activity / Milestone	Method of implementation and outcomes expected	Monitoring	Progress status
<b>Section 1: Essex Skills Priorities</b>				
<b><u>Soft-skills and Behaviours</u></b> <b>Stakeholders:</b> Chambers, ERBs, local authorities, colleges, and ITPs.	The intent is to integrate employability skills into the education system, foster soft-skills development, refine vocational programs, create a virtual training package, and establish a support program for adults.	LSIP CPD and awareness training, offering detailed Labour Market Information, and ensuring the identification and implementation of new qualifications.	Regular monthly engagements with FEDEC, supported by annual report.	<b>ON TRACK TO DELIVER</b> Sep 23 – Dec 2024
<b><u>Basic English, Maths and ESOL</u></b> <b>Stakeholders:</b> Chambers, ERBs, local authorities, colleges, and ITPs.	Refine the curriculum for English and Maths to align with industry applications, promote national programs like Maths Multiply, and improve ESOL access and funding county-wide.	Implement a comprehensive LSIP CPD and awareness training program for employers, educational institutions, ITPs, and local authorities, coupled with the development and dissemination of new employer support tools for colleges, derived from sector-specific employer insights.	Evaluation will be conducted through the sector-based skills groups and the LSIP Board. Quarterly Monitoring.	<b>ON TRACK TO DELIVER</b> Sep 23 – Dec 2024
<b><u>Digital Skills and Digitech</u></b> <b>Stakeholders:</b> Chambers, ERBs, local authorities, colleges, ITPs, and Microsoft.	It is imperative to provide both foundational and advanced digital skills. A review of the existing digital curriculum is necessary to align it with current industry requirements. Ensure skills development aligns with business need and is aligned to an Essex wide digital strategy.	Update and refine the digital curriculum to align with current industry standards, enhance digital skills within vocational programs, ensure comprehensive proficiency in industry-specific software for learners, and establish a network of local digital training hubs to provide accessible, contemporary digital skills training and apprenticeship opportunities across the county.	Evaluation will be conducted via monthly meetings with FEDEC, local authority, and the Employment and Skills Board.	<b>ON TRACK TO DELIVER</b> Sep 23 – Dec 2024
<b><u>Green Skills</u></b> <b>Stakeholders:</b> Chambers, ERBs, local authorities, colleges, ITPs, and Sector Bodies.	Review and enhance current county wide green skills and low carbon training offer. Develop a network of green skills and low carbon training hubs across the county.	Enhance the county's green skills and low carbon training to meet upskilling needs, establish a network of training hubs, embed green skills and low carbon awareness in all study programs, and initiate an annual, green-focused educational conference in Essex.	Evaluation will be conducted via monthly meetings with FEDEC, local authority, and the Employment and Skills Board.	<b>ON TRACK TO DELIVER</b> Sep 23 – Sep 2025
<b><u>Leadership and Management Skills</u></b> <b>Stakeholders:</b> Chambers, ERBs, local authorities, colleges, and ITPs.	Ensure the soft-skills and behaviors framework developed in priority 1 includes Leadership as a key element.	Incorporate Leadership into the soft-skills framework, foster intergenerational knowledge exchange for mentorship, create targeted courses for emerging leaders, update leadership curricula for modern work environments, and develop a toolkit for managing diverse teams.	Regular monthly engagements with FEDEC & EPN. Evaluation will be conducted through the sector-based skills groups and the LSIP Board. Quarterly Monitoring.	<b>ON TRACK TO DELIVER</b> Sep 23 – Sep 2025



## Section 4: Priorities and actions (Roadmap, continued)

Priority & Stakeholders	Action / Activity / Milestone	Method of implementation and outcomes expected	Monitoring	Progress status
<b>Section 2: Essex Skills System Priorities</b>				
<p><b>Skills Planning System for Essex</b>  <b>Stakeholders:</b>            Chambers, Greater Essex Economic Board and Employers.</p>	<p>Develop and implement a system for skills planning across Essex which includes an Essex Employment and Skills Board, with appropriate priority and sector working groups.</p>	<p>Establish a comprehensive skill planning system in Essex with a dedicated board and working groups, streamline access to skills resources with a unified approach, leverage local opportunities portals, deliver consistent labour market insights, prepare for AEB funding under potential devolution, and strategise capital development for skills infrastructure with targeted funding.</p>	<p>Monthly meetings with the local authority. Evaluation will be conducted through the sector-based skills groups and the Quarterly LSIP Board.</p>	<p><b>ON TRACK TO DELIVER</b>            Sep 23 – Sep 2025</p>
<p><b>System Access and Flexibility</b>  <b>Stakeholders:</b>            Chambers, ERBs, local authorities, colleges, and ITPs.</p>	<p>Collaborate with other providers to seek ways of adapting current funding opportunities to meet the flexible demands of employers for upskilling and reskilling.</p>	<p>Implement a collaborative approach with various providers to adapt funding opportunities for employer-driven upskilling and reskilling. Develop mechanisms to enhance information accessibility and simplify the funding landscape for employers. Expand the availability and delivery of Flexi-Job apprenticeships locally. Actively promote the existing flexibilities within AEB funding, the Apprenticeship Levy system, and the levy fund transfer scheme. Innovate adult education provision to meet employer demands, utilizing AEB flexibility pre-Essex Devolution, and prepare to leverage AEB flexibilities post-Essex Devolution to align with local adult priorities. Support central government initiatives to increase funding system flexibilities and pursue a simplification agenda.</p>	<p>Meetings with the local authority are scheduled on a monthly basis. KPIs discussed and evaluated.</p>	<p><b>ON TRACK TO DELIVER</b>            Sep 23 – Dec 2024</p>
<p><b>Information, Careers Advice and Guidance</b>  <b>Stakeholders:</b>            Chambers, ERBs local authorities, colleges, ITPs and Essex Careers Hub.</p>	<p>Proactively seek ways to improve promotion and perception of industry career paths through better employer/education engagement with careers partners and careers hubs.</p>	<p>Implement a comprehensive career advancement initiative that enhances industry perception and engagement through strategic partnerships, educational support, and innovative communication methods. This will include developing a robust strategy to meet educational benchmarks, integrating adult career guidance, expanding promotional materials, creating interactive career pathways, and establishing systems for employer pledges and workplace experiences. Additionally, we will leverage modern platforms and social media to inspire and shape the career aspirations of the youth.</p>	<p>Meetings with the local authority are scheduled on a monthly basis. KPIs discussed and evaluated.</p>	<p><b>ON TRACK TO DELIVER</b>            Sep 23 – Dec 2024</p>



## Section 4: Priorities and actions (Roadmap, continued)

Priority & Stakeholders	Action / Activity / Milestone	Method of implementation and outcomes expected	Monitoring	Progress status
<b>Section 2: Essex Skills System Priorities (continued)</b>				
<p><b>Tutor shortages and capacity of providers to respond</b></p> <p><b>Stakeholders:</b> Chambers, ERBs, local authorities, colleges, ITPs, sector bodies, and awarding organisations.</p>	<p>Further develop work with SELEP and their Delivering Skills for the Future Programme to raise awareness of tutor shortages, contribute towards specialist skills shortages uplift payments, contribute to mentoring/support and remitted time for new &amp; inexperienced teachers, and contribute to teacher training costs (possibly via funded initiatives e.g. Skills Bootcamps).</p>	<p>In collaboration with SELEP colleagues and the Delivering Skills for the Future Programme, we are committed to addressing tutor shortages through awareness campaigns, financial support for specialist skills, and resources for new teacher mentorship and training. Our efforts include promoting the DfE's Teach in Further Education initiative and pioneering methods for industry experts to share their knowledge in colleges, enhancing the practical learning experience. We are working closely with industry partners to facilitate continuous professional development for post-16 educators, ensuring their skills reflect the latest industry standards. Building on the Sector Development Fund, we will utilize the Local Skills Improvement Fund (LSIF) to expand our educational offerings in both established and emerging fields, backed by strategic investments in infrastructure and support for specialized small group instruction.</p>	<p>Regular monthly engagements with FEDEC &amp; EPN. Supported by annual report. Activity oversight and evaluation will be conducted through the sector-based skills groups and the LSIP Board.</p>	<p><b>ON TRACK TO DELIVER</b> Sep 23 – Sep 2025</p>
<p><b>Inclusive Employment</b></p> <p><b>Stakeholders:</b> Chambers, DWP, local authorities, employers, providers, and colleges.</p>	<p>Investigate and develop an employer toolkit that brings together existing resources to support industry in managing mental health, disability, long-term health conditions, those from non-traditional backgrounds, neurodiversity, autism, the over 50's returning to work, ex-service personnel and ex-offenders in the workplace.</p>	<p>To foster an inclusive workplace, we will develop an employer toolkit consolidating resources to aid businesses in supporting diverse employee needs, including mental health, disability, and neurodiversity. This initiative will also focus on integrating individuals from non-traditional backgrounds, such as the over 50's re-entering the workforce, ex-service personnel, and ex-offenders. Additionally, we will enhance the ECCs Inclusive Employer Network, promoting "inclusive by design" principles, and broaden the scope of job coaches and Employment Ambassadors. The supported internships model will be expanded to provide practical experience, and we will increase apprenticeship opportunities across Essex for learners with SEND and unconventional requirements, ensuring equitable access to vocational training and employment.</p>	<p>Monthly meetings with local authority and SEND Alliance. Group KPIs will be rigorously discussed and evaluated.</p>	<p><b>ON TRACK TO DELIVER</b> Sep 23 – Dec 2024</p>
<p><b>Barriers to engagement</b></p> <p><b>Stakeholders:</b> Chambers, LEP, DWP, local authorities, employers, providers, and colleges.</p>	<p>Maximise the use of current bursary schemes to ensure that they are accessed by all and ensure available support is clearly understood and promoted effectively including all ECC Levelling Up Cohorts and Places.</p>	<p>Our intent is to enhance educational opportunities for Essex residents. We aim to help maximise the utilisation of existing bursary schemes, ensuring they are accessible and well-promoted. We will help design maintenance grants and bursaries to aid adults in Levels 2/3 during retraining, and prepare for an Essex-specific AEB bursary scheme aligned with potential devolution deals. By reviewing and improving the Travel to Learn infrastructure, we strive to make training accessible and affordable, including exploring options to subsidize transport costs. Additionally, we are committed to improving childcare access and financial aid for learners, and to supporting government policies that incentivize employers to hire apprentices, thereby enhancing accessibility across Essex.</p>	<p>Regular monthly engagements with FEDEC &amp; EPN. Supported by annual report.</p>	<p><b>ON TRACK TO DELIVER</b> Sep 23 – Dec 2024</p>



## Section 4: Priorities and actions (Roadmap, continued)

**Essex Sectors and Technical Skills** - In addition to the work outlined in the table above around skills priorities and skills system priorities, there is work underway to deliver against the sectors' and technical skills' priorities.

Most sector groups have been established (or are being established) to enable sector engagement and to ensure ongoing feedback and input from employers. All will be established by the end of summer 2024. Where groups already exist these are being utilised (e.g. Essex Construction Alliance) to ensure join up and avoid duplication. This is working well and the LSIP project team are ensuring consistency across the groups in terms of agendas, Terms of Reference and minutes. Sector representatives such as the Construction and Industry Training Board

(CITB), Skills for Care and The Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport are also feeding into work and sharing information regarding technical skills requirements and any relevant national developments. This work is therefore on track.

To support the work of the sector groups and to provide detailed information, 'Sector Insights' are underway for all sectors and to be completed and published in summer 2024. These will be peer reviewed by employers in the sector groups to ensure they are reflective and will be added to the LSIP pages on the website.

Any new or additional information can also be added to these pages, such as national sector reports and new data.

They will also be utilised by colleges, training providers, and stakeholders such as DWP and the Essex Careers Hub and will help to inform areas of work such as Skills Bootcamps and capital investments and ensuring these are responding to sector need.

A data dashboard to be launched in summer 2024 will further enhance the availability and relevance of information so that it is easily accessed and up to date.

The Essex Careers Hub have fed back regarding how useful this information is for creating labour market information (LMI) resources and the college and provider landscape are utilising it to inform curriculum development.





## Section 4: Priorities and actions (Roadmap, continued)

**Soft-skills and Behaviours** – Colleges have already changed their provision to include a wider focus on Soft Skills and Behaviours. The qualification skills gap analysis is scheduled for review in the 4th quarter of 2024.

**Basic English, Maths and ESOL** – Established sector-based skills groups are actively engaging in ongoing discussions to determine and agree future actions.

**Digital Skills and Digitech** – Colleges have changed their provision to include a wider focus on Soft Skills and Behaviours. The qualification skills gap analysis is scheduled for review in the 4th quarter of 2024, with a subsequent report from the colleges to be solicited. Ongoing discussions with Microsoft and Cisco to support free access to digital learning packages.

**Green Skills** – [LSIF funding](#) has enabled the establishment of new buildings. Due to be completed by 2025. Facilities to be created by March 2025.

**Leadership and Management** – Colleges have already changed their provision to include a wider focus on Soft Skills and Behaviours. The qualification skills gap analysis is scheduled for review in the 4th quarter of 2024, with a subsequent report from the colleges to be solicited.

**Skills Planning** – Formal Skills Planning process to be discussed at first Essex Economic Board in July 2024.

**System and Accessibility** – Scoping of a new AI driven connector tool has commenced. We aim to have a fully scoped working portal ready for November 2024.

**IAG** – Scoping of a new AI driven connector tool has commenced. We aim to have a fully scoped working portal ready for November 2024.

**Tutor Shortages** – Work is underway through the LSIF, with clear outcome targets listed. See [KPI 3: Newly qualified teachers being supported by Advanced Practitioners](#).

**Inclusive Employment** – This work is underway with the creation of the Inclusive Alliance Group.

**Barriers to Engagement** – Formal Skills / Access Planning process to be discussed at first Essex Economic Board.



The DfE's **Local Skills Improvement Fund (LSIF)** was put in place to help with delivery against the LSIP and is a mix of capital and revenue funding. Further to a bid, £5.5 million was awarded to Essex colleges and with £610,000 match funding also provided by Essex County Council. This has key aspects of work already showing progress and significant delivery against the LSIP (further information on KPIs and delivery in next section and the supporting annex report). The key components of the Essex programme include:

- A **capital programme** enabling facilities and equipment to be put in place in colleges across Essex that respond to priority sectors.
- A **project to address the teacher recruitment, development and retention** issues including activities to support new entrants from industry through mentoring and support and by maximising use of immersive learning.
- A project to develop a talent pipeline for Essex, through a **joined-up approach to Careers Information Advice and Guidance** and including a digital approach to support.
- Development of **bespoke employer engagement offers** and programmes and including organisational needs analysis and training needs analysis are undertaken.

## Section 5: What has been achieved so far?

**One of the most notable and impactful aspects of the Essex LSIP so far has been the galvanising effect on local partners, a step change that is unprecedented. Local authorities, providers and stakeholders such as DWP, the Careers Hub and sector bodies have combined forces around a common aim.**

The LSIP has also provided clarity and vision locally which has ensured effective and efficient use of public money. Some examples are provided in this section, which also brings the work to life.

A notable example of collaboration is a workshop that was held on 16th May 2024 to bring together local stakeholders, led by Essex Chamber of Commerce and the local authority. This set out ambitions for an 'Essex Connector' in collaboration with [www.getmyfirstjob.co.uk](http://www.getmyfirstjob.co.uk) and is supported by Microsoft.

This seeks to resolve the currently disjointed Careers and Skills advice and guidance in Essex and bring it together in one cohesive and user-friendly space. The ambition is that this would become the centralised support mechanism for Essex employers, FE colleges and training providers underpinned by Artificial Intelligence.

Stakeholder workshops will be held in the coming months with a first version of the Connector due to launch in Winter 2025.

### Collaboration across Further Education locally:

As is outlined in Section 3, further education colleges are required to respond to the LSIP and the recommendations. To this end, the Federation of Essex Colleges (FEDEC) have produced a shared commitment statement, which helps to illustrate the joined-up approach locally and the impact the LSIP is already having:



#### Federation of Essex Colleges Local Skills Improvement Plan Commitment Statement

The Federation of Essex Colleges (FEDEC) is a well-established group of education and training providers within Greater Essex. We work collectively for the benefit of our Essex geography to support high quality education, training and skills provision that meet the needs of our economy. Our mission is to support the region's economy and drive up the prosperity of all people in Greater Essex through the transformational power of learning and skills development. Our partnership approach delivers relevant post-16 learning and skills for individuals and businesses.

The Local Skills Improvement Fund has allowed the FEDEC members to take a systems approach through:

- Speaking as one voice to promote and raise the profile of further education and skills, including apprenticeships, adult education and higher education, to influence change for the benefit of our learners, communities, region and members.
- Collaborative planning and delivery of a cohesive regional skills offer, building on our successful models from the Strategic Development Fund and the current Local Skills Improvement Fund.
- Collaboration and sharing of experience, expertise and resources at all levels within providers, as well as growth and efficiency opportunities.
- Strategic partnerships with key stakeholders in business and government.
- Working collaboratively with the Essex Provider Network (EPN) towards these common goals.

#### David Warnes

Chair, Federation of Essex Colleges (FEDEC)

## Section 5: What has been achieved so far? (continued)

### A clear response from the Independent Training Provider (ITP) landscape:

Alongside FE Colleges, independent training providers are an important part of the local skills offer and as the FEDEC Commitment Statement above reflects, the LSIP has already prompted joint working in this regard. This has been illustrated through the Local

Skills Improvement Fund (LSIF) and the foundation established through a previous funding pot called the Strategic Development Fund (SDF) where providers and colleges worked together to respond to tutor shortages.

The statement below from the Essex Provider Network (EPN) further articulates this joint approach:



### Essex Provider Network Statement

Capitalising on the uniquely progressive collaborative approach adopted between the FEDEC and the Essex Provider Network (EPN) in the previously successful completion of both the Further Education Personal Development Grant (FE PDG) & SDF programmes. The EPN as the overarching body representative of the ITP sector, appreciatively accepted an invitation to coordinate ITP participation alongside Essex Colleges in the Harlow led LSIF project, specifically in respect of the revenue funded Knowledge Exchange element of the programme.

Upon mobilisation, three Independent Training Provider members of the EPN, symbolic of the priority sectors participated, Crown Vocational Training, TCHC Group and The Lightbulb.

Each of the participating ITPs reported high levels of staff engagement culminating in a reported 50 individual staff members gaining knowledge and understanding of shared teaching techniques, by undertaking CPD or benefiting from cascade training. The support funding afforded opportunities for 5 ITP teaching staff members to undertake industry placements offered by 4 link employers, with a further 7 employers reporting that enhanced training of staff has improved learner experience.

Furthermore, at a time of acute tutor shortages across the ITP sector, the additional funding made available to support recruitment and retention, was a valued aspect of the programme, enabling two construction tutors to be recruited to support the independent training sector operating within Essex.





## Section 5: What has been achieved so far? (continued)

### Local Skills Improvement Fund – delivery against the LSIP

The LSIF project has made excellent progress and the results of the work undertaken to date are encouraging. Consisting of both revenue and capital elements, the revenue activities funded by the DfE finished in March 2024 whilst the capital projects continue to March 2025. As such, new teaching facilities haven't yet been created but work is underway, and projects are on track for completion across the partnership between now and March 2025.

Regarding revenue-based projects, the outcomes achieved demonstrate the excellent work undertaken by partners to engage with employers and to develop the strength of their teaching resource. To date, the partnership has created 22 new Level 3 and Level 4 courses, with more than 200 people completing training. These courses have been supported by more than 25 employers who have helped shape the design and delivery of the programmes with their expertise and knowledge. Courses include Engineering, Green Skills, Leadership and Management and Digital, so ensuring there was a good response to the LSIF priority sectors.

Courses have also been developed in related areas such as Sales, Health and Safety, Customer Service, Drones and Policing.

An important focus of the project was to attract, retain and develop teachers and tutors within the sector, this element of the project has received excellent support from local employers with 40 employers providing industry update opportunities to FE teaching staff and 61 completing those placements. Over 500 teachers have also benefitted from training to develop their skills through a partnership wide support and mentoring programme. This covered a range of areas in the curriculum including priority sectors. The project has also facilitated collaboration between training providers, sharing of best practice in supporting new teachers has been an overwhelming success and building upon the teaching resource improvements facilitated through the Strategic Development Fund, 5 partners have already been able to improve their coordination and efficiency through sharing new facilities and curriculum to deliver training.

An example of work supported through the LSIF is Colchester Institute's introduction and enhancement of several high-impact courses, significantly elevating the experience for delegates and creating a more professional and welcoming environment for employers. This has led to employers being increasingly willing to release their staff for further development courses.

One of the courses introduced is a renewable energy course (Low Temperature Heating Design) addressing the demand for specialised training in renewable energy – a course developed in collaboration with industry employers and a software provider.

Match funding provided by Essex County Council is supporting the continuation of the LSIF revenue activities until the end of the academic year and outcomes continue to be achieved.







## Section 5: What has been achieved so far? (continued)

### Spotlight on Success

In addition to the highlights outlined in Section 4, throughout the LSIP development and delivery, engagement with employers has been particularly strong and this has taken place through a range of activities such as events, surveys, forums and roundtables.

Notably, the LSIP team are also a key part of skills planning for the future and important members of groups such as the Essex Inclusive Stakeholder Alliance, SEND Alliance Group and Essex Sport and Physical Activity Skills Advisory Panel.

The national Chartered Institute for the Management of Sport and Physical Activity (CIMSPA) have fed back on how positive and proactive the approach to skills is in Essex and with the LSIP a key part of this. The original LSIP Section 4 set out the extensive growth planned locally through major infrastructure projects and housing developments.

As part of responding to this and to help inform future skills needs, engagement is strong with groups such as the Lower Thames Crossing Employment and Skills Group and with Longfield Solar Energy Farm Skills Supply Chain and Employment Steering Group.

The latter has approved a project 'Destination Renewables' to provide training relevant to the sector and to be delivered by Colchester

Institute and Chelmsford College building on a successful two-year programme delivered by Pembrokeshire College. This can therefore also encompass aspects such as wind farms captured in the original LSIP report. The intention is to launch the programme in the autumn for the academic year 2024/25.

A local Skills Bootcamp programme is also in development with the local authority and Department for Education and which will enable delivery against upcoming growth and the LSIP priority sectors.

Increasingly, stakeholder work is also aligned to the LSIP. For example, an [employment platform](#) launched in March 2024 as a pilot project. This is a collaboration between Essex County Council and Mid and South Essex NHS Foundation Trust which allows students, parents and teachers to access career information and industry trends within the NHS. The platform includes elements such as an avatar-based profile, a CV builder, videos and customisable badges. This is well aligned with the health sector being a priority within the LSIP and learning from the pilot will be utilised.

Additionally, the development of the [Executive Summary](#) version of the LSIP has helped to ensure maximum reach for the work in that colleges and stakeholders have been able to share this with their networks also.

Coupled with the re-designed newsletter, this has been an excellent asset for use at events and meetings to ensure clarity on what the LSIP is.

**Ongoing employer engagement continues to be strong**, as illustrated by the strong response rate to the most recent survey which had 354 responses. This helps to illustrate the ongoing recruitment challenges, with nearly 40% of respondents feeding back that they are struggling to recruit. Additionally, over 20% of respondents fed back that they were experiencing skills shortages. Positively, over 75% said that current qualifications in Essex met their needs and over 60% said they could support a high-quality work experience placement. With over 45% requesting further information, this represents a great opportunity to engage more employers in local skills. Further results are [available here](#).





## Section 5: What has been achieved so far? (continued)

**Monitoring and impact** – KPIs will be developed for work still ongoing or to be undertaken. For the LSIF, progress can already be seen against KPIs:

KPI	Timing	Proportion of LSIF/ECC Match	Update: April 2024
<b>KPI 1:</b> Creation of 6 new teaching and learning facilities including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 x Digital and employability hub</li> <li>• 1 x Net Zero Centre</li> <li>• 1 x Digital Skills Growth Hub</li> <li>• 1 x Low carbon lab space</li> <li>• 1 x Music technology centre</li> <li>• 1 x Multi-purpose and adaptive digital learning and immersive technology space</li> </ul>	Start: September 2023.  End: March 2025.	100% LSIF Funding.	Capital projects are progressing well.  No delays expected.
<b>KPI 2:</b> New courses designed and delivered at Levels 1-4 (6)	Start: April 2024.  End: July 2024.	Extending activities undertaken through DfE funding.  100% ECC Match Funding.	<b>Current KPI achievement: 1</b>  A L3 course set up with AEM Engineering in Stansted.
<b>KPI 3:</b> Newly qualified teachers being supported by Advanced Practitioners (18)	Start: April 2024.  End: July 2024.	An extension of activities funded through DfE LSIF but these will be additional outcomes above what has been achieved already.  100% ECC Match Funding.	Each partner has funding to support newly recruited teachers. The long-term aim is to create a sustainable model where curriculum teams across partners provide support through better networking and collaboration.
<b>KPI 4:</b> Staff undertaking industry training or CPD upskilling (300)	Start: April 2024.  End: July 2024.	An extension of activities funded through DfE LSIF but these will be additional outcomes above what has been achieved already.  100% ECC Match Funding.	<b>Current update: 56</b>  Direct use of funding to support teachers to undertake essential CPD and industry updating activities. Although still in the planning phase 56 teachers have already made use of this funding.
<b>KPI 5:</b> Learners undertaking activities to develop soft skills (500)	Start: April 2024.  End: July 2024.	Extension of activities funded through DfE.  100% ECC funding.	Waiting for update on numbers from partners.

## Section 6: What still needs to be achieved?

It is important to acknowledge that the work set out in the LSIP is still in progress – it is just nine months since the initial report was published and so there is much still to achieve. With less than a year since the original report launch, the previous sections within this report have outlined the significant advancements already made.

- ✓ **Sector Groups** – to continue meeting quarterly
- ✓ **New LSIF facilities in colleges to be completed by March 2025** (detail below)
- ✓ **Green Skills Hub launched and to roll out** (led by local authority and supported by LSIP)
- ✓ **Apprenticeship Toolkit to launch in summer 2024**
- ✓ **Employer Toolkit to launch in summer 2024**
- ✓ **New 'Essex Connector' digital solution for careers to be rolled out in Essex** (led by LSIP, funded by local authority)
- ✓ **Roll out of [apprenticeship reforms](#) to be promoted locally to boost take up**

As identified, a lot of work is now embedded in the local skills approach and understood/adopted by key stakeholders who are all working towards the same goals through the LSIP. Long-term change takes time, but preliminary work is helping to ensure this will be sustainable and last long into the future.

- ✓ **Launch of new CEIAG platform creating virtual environments for students** (led by colleges through LSIF)
- ✓ **Launch of 'Building a Lasting Legacy' construction programme – September 2024** (led by industry and local authority and supported by LSIP)
- ✓ **Roll out of a local Skills Bootcamp programme informed by the LSIP – October 2024**
- ✓ **Gap Analysis of programme provision in October 2024**
- ✓ **Regular webinars for external stakeholders to share progress on the LSIP**

In the short to medium term, there is some work underway which will continue or commence soon:





## Section 6: What still needs to be achieved? (continued)

### Facilities to be created by March 2025:

#### Chelmsford College

Repurposed Learning & Resource Centre into a **Digital & Employability Hub** aligned to the sector and skills priorities. Will provide new student facilities to deliver the wider essential skills sought after by employers in one dedicated space with new equipment. To include the relocation of the Careers Advice Centre.

#### Colchester Institute

**Net Zero Centre** to introduce domestic renewables training courses at the college and commercial training on Heat Pumps, Solar PV, Solar Thermal, Battery Storage and EV Charging Installations and Digital Skills Growth Hub to level up digital media capability through purchase of new hardware and expand work with creative and digital SMEs.

#### Harlow College

Repurposed teaching spaces into state-of-the-art **digital learning areas** to deliver for digital, creative, health science sectors. To include an immersive operating theatre and test network to include physical and virtual servers.

#### New City College

Conversion of existing storage space into a **low carbon lab space** to introduce low carbon technologies and practices on campus, with the aim of providing a high-quality teaching environment.

#### South Essex College

Repurposing space for new **music technology provision** – to be linked electronically to the Backstage Centre, High House Production Park and new Purfleet Studios. To include practice rooms, a live room, control room suite and post production facility.

#### USP College

Repurposing a theatre to create a **multi-purpose, adaptive digital learning and immersive technology space** with multi media content and high tech lecture style learning. This will also help to address staffing challenges and will expand the reach of digital experts across a broad range of learner groups.

#### Call to action for employers – Get involved!

We hope this report has illustrated the wealth of work underway and the impact the LSIP is already having. We'd like to thank everyone involved again and highlight that none of this would be possible without everyone working together.

If you're not already, there are a range of ways to get involved and make a difference to the local skills landscape. This could include working with schools and colleges, sharing your expertise, offering an apprenticeship or feeding back to us via events and sector conversations. [Contact us](#) if you'd like to know more.



## Annexes – Further information on the Local Skills Improvement Fund (LSIF) projects

To learn more about the Local Skills Improvement Fund (LSIF), read the overview [here](#).



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