

Hertfordshire Skills and Employment Strategy

2021-24

Hertfordshire
Local Enterprise
Partnership

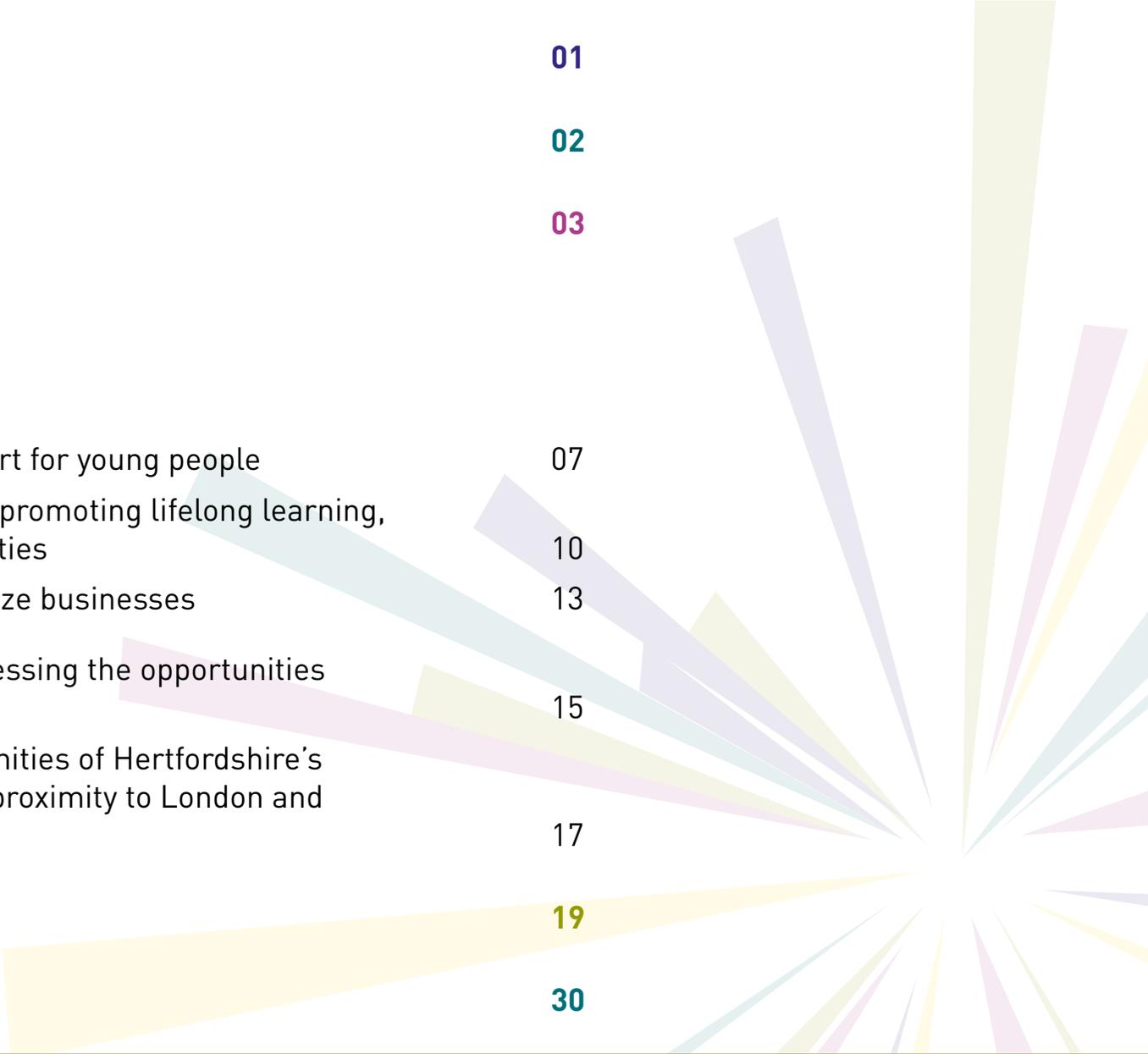



Department
for Work &
Pensions


Hertfordshire

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Foreword



Terry Douris, Executive Member Education, Libraries and Lifelong Learning, Hertfordshire County Council

I am delighted to introduce the third edition of the Hertfordshire Skills and Employment Strategy. Hertfordshire County Council is proud to be a key player in this partnership strategy tailored to our county's needs. The strategy is vital in underpinning the Council's interest in this work which is manifold and covers its interest in the economic health of the county as part of its strategic leadership role, its role as a large employer and its service responsibilities in areas such as Children's Services and Adult and Family Learning. This strategy is integral to the Council's Covid Recovery Strategy as we work to tackle the challenges presented by the pandemic focussing on driving recovery and renewing our ways of working, delivering services and engaging with residents. Hertfordshire is a great place to live, work and enjoy. We have some of the best schools in the country, low crime levels, and a high proportion of our residents are healthy and well. We want to ensure Hertfordshire is a county of opportunity where our residents can enjoy a good quality of life and can maximise their individual potential.



Adrian Hawkins OBE, Chair, Skills Advisory Panel, Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership

Here in Hertfordshire we have solid foundations for growth with a strong legacy of partnership working to deliver skills and employment opportunities. At a pivotal time for the skills landscape with the introduction of the government's Skills Accelerator and Plan for Jobs programme, now is the time to further strengthen the links between business and educators. Together we are united by one common purpose: to unlock potential and widen access for all, encouraging social mobility and demonstrating that all aspects of the skills agenda including apprenticeships and traineeships are valued options. This strategy, together with Hertfordshire's Enterprise and Innovation Strategy, provides the foundations for growth for the next decade. It sits within a suite of documents being developed by Hertfordshire LEP in partnership to support our recovery post COVID-19 and the realities of life outside of the EU. All of these strategies will be crucial to the future of Hertfordshire's economy and the LEP will help to drive them forward.



Chris Gildersleeve, Service Leader, Department for Work and Pensions, Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire District

The last year has been particularly challenging with many Hertfordshire businesses impacted by the Covid pandemic. Within the county we have witnessed increased demand in some sectors, such as logistics and distribution, whilst many others have seen significant contractions in demand for a variety of reasons. This has had a knock-on impact on the number of Hertfordshire citizens who have either lost their jobs or failed to find employment, with our young people being disproportionately impacted. All of these things show just how critical it is to have an effective community-based skills strategy allied with cohesive partnership working. This edition of the Skills and Employment Strategy builds on the successes and learning of the last few years, addresses the current unique challenges and sets out the key themes that will drive our shared ambition to increase skill levels and employment across Hertfordshire thereby supporting business outcomes and our citizens' life chances.

Executive Summary

This is the third skills strategy for Hertfordshire, now known as the Skills and Employment Strategy.

The strategy has been developed by Hertfordshire County Council, Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership and the Department for Work and Pensions in consultation with partners from across the county. The aim of the strategy is to ensure the county's skills provision addresses the local skills challenges and opportunities, meeting the employment needs of the future, whilst supporting all residents to reach their potential.

The previous two strategies, in place since 2015, have been successful in helping to increase and develop the capacity of the county's existing and future workforce, secure significant funding for Hertfordshire to support this agenda and achieved greater joined up working across the county.

The Covid-19 pandemic has brought unprecedented economic upheaval and many businesses are under significant financial pressure. For the first time in a generation, Hertfordshire is likely to have a real unemployment problem and young people are likely to bear the brunt of this.

As the county moves to a different economic landscape the strategy provides a clear plan for how to ensure the county's workforce has the right skills to support economic recovery and growth. Partner organisations across Hertfordshire continue to be encouraged to refer to this strategy and reflect it in their own plans knowing that collectively we will be working towards the same strategic aims.

The strategy has five themes:

- Unlocking emerging talent, support for young people aged 16 – 24 years
- Adult learning and employment, working towards full employment, promoting lifelong learning and retraining opportunities
- Skills to grow small and medium size businesses, enabling employers to build their future workforce
- Priority and growth sectors, harnessing the opportunities and investing in skills of the future
- Placemaking, seizing the opportunities of Hertfordshire's business assets together with the proximity to London and other key economic areas

The five themes are supported by 3 cross-cutting priorities; digital skills, low carbon and clean growth and inclusive growth.

A detailed action plan included in this strategy will be monitored biannually by both Hertfordshire County Council and Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership. There is a need to remain agile and the strategy will be reviewed annually to allow for further future proofing.

The need for collective leadership on skills development remains, Hertfordshire County Council, Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership and the Department for Work and Pensions will continue the partnership approach of developing and implementing the strategy. A countywide strategy provides key stakeholders with a common platform against which to align their own strategies, strengthen justification and evidence for securing funding, and an overview of the high-level interventions required to support the economy and residents of Hertfordshire.

Introduction

The Hertfordshire Skills and Employment Strategy, in place since 2015, has been successful in helping to increase and develop the capacity of the county's existing and future workforce as well as securing significant funding for Hertfordshire to support this agenda.

Key achievements:

- The strategy has helped to secure circa £29m of European Social Funding (ESF) for Hertfordshire to deliver skills and employment initiatives
- Hertfordshire County Council Adult and Family Learning Service secured £5.5m from The Big Lottery/ESF to run the Building Better Opportunities programme in partnership with a number of voluntary and third sector partners. A further two years of funding of circa £3.4m was secured in 2019, and in 2021 a further £2.8m has been secured. The project provides intensive, long-term and individualised coaching to work and employment with adults with complex barriers to learning
- Hertfordshire County Council Services for Young People successfully bid for £1m European Social Funding to support 15-24 year olds Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) or at risk of becoming NEET, including those leaving care with a focus on mental health and wellbeing support, into the Labour Market
- The Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership continue to provide capital funding via its Skills Capital and Skills Estate and Equipment Funding Programme in order to support local providers to meet the needs of local employers, circa £27m has been allocated
- The Hertfordshire Opportunities Portal, HOP, has been developed and launched, enabling residents to access the resources they need to make informed career decisions as well as connecting employers with future skills pipelines
- The Hertfordshire Skills Framework, has been developed, published and promoted, setting out the key employability skills and attributes sought by Hertfordshire employers
- The Careers and Enterprise Company (CEC) Enterprise Adviser Network and Careers Hubs have been established, achieving all targets and enabling Hertfordshire schools to continue to outperform other areas of the country based on Gatsby Benchmarks; a framework for good career guidance developed to support schools in providing students with the best possible careers education, information, advice, and guidance
- The Hertfordshire Skills Advisory Panel has been established and a Local Skills Report has been published providing a detailed insight into local skills and employment needs across the county
- The Skills & Employment Dashboard has been developed and launched providing an interactive resource to enable stakeholders to better understand the county's labour market and to support data-driven decision making relating to local skills provision
- The Department for Work and Pensions led mapping of provision across Hertfordshire for initiatives that support vulnerable adults into employment to ensure a joined-up approach is now at a business as usual status through the Complex Needs Toolkit

This third edition of the strategy takes us to 2024 with several of the same aspirations as the previous two strategies making clear our approach and commitment, while recognising recent changes in the economic landscape. There is a need to remain agile and this strategy will be reviewed annually to allow for further future proofing.

The Covid-19 pandemic has brought unprecedented economic upheaval and many businesses are under significant financial pressure. For the first time in a generation, Hertfordshire is likely to have a real unemployment problem and young people are likely to bear the brunt of this. [Hertfordshire's Recovery Plan 2020](#) has been developed to chart a clear route through the short-medium term economic effects of the pandemic. It aims to accelerate recovery as well as position Hertfordshire for sustained and good economic growth. In seeking to accelerate economic recovery, there is a need to match people with job opportunities, equip them with the skills to thrive in the future, and give employers the confidence to recruit and use those skills well.

The need for a Hertfordshire Skills and Employment Strategy remains, as does the appetite to work in partnership. Hertfordshire County Council (HCC), Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) have worked together to develop and implement the strategy since its inception in 2014. At a pivotal time for the skills landscape with the introduction of the Skills Accelerator programmes and the Community Renewal Fund, precursor to the Shared Prosperity Fund, a countywide strategy will provide key stakeholders with a common platform against which to align their own strategies, strengthened justification and evidence for securing funding, and an overview of the high-level interventions required to support our economy and people.

The strategy is underpinned with evidence from the [Hertfordshire Local Skills Report 2021](#), a detailed insight into local skills needs across the county outlining an in-depth understanding of the skills landscape, the opportunities and the gaps that impact our economic future.

The aim of the strategy is to ensure our skills provision addresses our local skills challenges and opportunities and is meeting the employment needs of the future, whilst supporting all residents to reach their potential. This strategy includes a detailed action plan identifying the planned work programme for each of the three organisations responsible for implementing the strategy.

Partner organisations across Hertfordshire continue to be encouraged to refer to this strategy and reflect it in their own plans knowing that collectively we will be working towards the same strategic aims.

Monitoring progress

The progress of the action plan will be reported biannually to Hertfordshire County Council Education, Libraries and Lifelong Learning Cabinet Panel and the Skills Advisory Panel of the Hertfordshire LEP, that includes senior representation from Department for Work and Pensions. There is a need to remain agile and this strategy will be reviewed annually to allow for further future proofing.

An Outcomes Framework for the Hertfordshire Skills and Employment Strategy is being developed to provide a way to understand and measure the extent to which the strategy makes a positive difference to the Hertfordshire economy and to people's lives; it will also evidence what is working well. The outcomes and corresponding indicators will identify where improvements have been achieved or where further work is needed together with a statement around risk where external factors may affect progress. This will ensure all partners are working together towards a coherent set of objectives, prioritising resources and delivery where appropriate.

Measures of success will include:

- Increase the number of young people who undertake an apprenticeship or technical pathway
- Reduce the gap between young people aged 16 & 17 from identified vulnerable groups who are in education and training with the rest of the Hertfordshire 16-17 population
- Reduce the number of young people who are Not in Employment, Education and Training
- Reduce the percentage of adults with no qualifications
- Increase the percentage of adults completing a full Level 2, Level 3 or Level 4 qualification
- Increase the number of Sector Based Work Academy Programme placements for those furthest from the labour market
- Reduce the Hertfordshire claimant count rate
- Reduce the percentage of residents who are long-term unemployed
- Increase the number of employers in the county who are recognised as a Disability Confident Employer
- Increase the number of adults with disabilities into sustained work
- Reduce the percentage of employers that say they have one or more skills gaps in their organisation
- Double the page views on Hertfordshire Opportunity Portal annually
- Engage 3 new large organisations to implement levy-transfer programmes to support SMEs in their community, sector or supply-chain
- Increase the number of district and borough councils that have a local skills & employment plan

Key Themes

Engagement with our wider skills and employment partners took place in early 2021 and resulted in the development of five themes which form the basis of this 3rd edition of the strategy:

- **Unlocking emerging talent**, support for young people aged 16 – 24 years
- **Adult learning and employment**, working towards full employment, promoting lifelong learning, retraining and upskilling opportunities
- **Skills to grow small and medium size businesses**, enabling employers to build their future workforce
- **Priority and growth sectors**, harnessing the opportunities and investing in skills of the future
- **Placemaking**, seizing the opportunities of Hertfordshire's business assets together with the proximity to London and other key economic areas

The five themes are supported by 3 cross-cutting priorities, foundations for responsible growth affecting skills supply and demand.

Digital strategy

Hertfordshire will prioritise its Digital Skills Strategy working with national programmes such as the Digital Skills Bootcamp

and learn lessons from colleagues in supporting LEP areas who are delivering Digital Skills Partnerships. To ensure the delivery of the full breadth of digital skills, Hertfordshire will support the development of the Hertfordshire Institute of Technology and work with Further Education, Higher Education and other providers. The digital divide, that is the gap between those who have full access to digital technologies, such as the internet and computers, and those who do not, will need addressing too.

Low carbon and clean growth

Hertfordshire intends to play its role in meeting the global climate change challenges and aims to maximize the clean growth opportunities for our industries as we transition to a greener and cleaner economy. This will require significant upskilling, investment and innovation by the public and private sectors, creating whole new industries, technologies, and professions. The Government's Green Jobs Task Force is setting the skills marketplace and direction as we move to a high-skill, low carbon economy, enabling the skills sector to adapt to the UK's commitment to achieving net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. Hertfordshire LEP recognises the potential a Low Carbon Environment Goods Services (LCEGS) economy can bring to creating new 'green' jobs for all.

It will support, promote and expand skills and education that enable all local people to actively participate in this new greener economy.

Inclusive growth

Hertfordshire wants to enjoy a strong economy and for all its residents to have an opportunity to share in this prosperity and enjoy a good quality of life. Promoting the benefits of a diverse workforce and creating opportunities for all through education, skills and employment support.

The strategy sets out the actions that will help our economy as we address short term issues that relate to the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic and, once conditions improve, support Hertfordshire's residents to flourish and its businesses to grow and in turn strengthen the county's economy.

The strategy has been developed taking into account the Enterprise, Digital Infrastructure and Clean Growth and other Hertfordshire Growth Board agendas and [HCC's Diversity & Inclusion Strategy](#). It is intended to be overarching and to influence and enhance local district economic development strategies, to ensure a joined-up approach and to maximise leverage of public sector resources.



Theme 1: Unlocking emerging talent – support for young people

A partnership approach supporting young people aged 16 to 24 years in the transition from education to employment through access to impartial advice and guidance; encouraging informed career decisions.

Our overarching ambition is for young people to be inspired and prepared to become the county's workforce with the skills to deliver Hertfordshire's future prosperity

The 18-24 age group have been adversely affected by the pandemic and there has been a sharp rise in the claims for out of work benefits from 2.7% in March 2020 to 7.9% in January 2021. At the end of February 2021, 6,361 from this group were registered for Universal Credit as not working and available for work or working but earning very low amounts.

Young people in Hertfordshire schools consistently perform well with 51.7% of pupils achieving grades 5 or above in English and mathematics GCSEs in 2019. This compares favourably with the England rate of 43.4%. More 16-year olds choose to stay on at school than move into Further Education (FE) provision. Less young people are taking up the opportunity of an apprenticeship.

The number of our young people who are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) is lower than the national average. Those with more adverse childhood experiences and / or having a

Learning Difficulty (LD) are at greater risk of becoming NEET. The NEET rates for those with greater vulnerabilities can be up to 10 times higher than the county average and they are less likely to continue in learning beyond the age of 16 years of age. The groups of young people who are most at risk of becoming NEET include children looked after, care leavers and young people who have been involved in the criminal justice system. However, this does not give the total picture; there are currently 71 Hertfordshire care leavers attending University.

It is important not to lose focus on young people who do not achieve high grades at Key Stage 4. These young people make up most of the intake of FE Institutions. Technical and vocational pathways are a great opportunity for them as they are able to learn, earn and succeed whilst contributing to the wider economy.

A survey by Hertfordshire County Council's Services for Young People (SfYP) in July 2020, following the first national lockdown, found that most young people are resilient with 72.5% saying that they were "okay" and 23.3% "feeling down, but managing". The remaining 4.2% responded that they needed additional support.

Local research on behalf of HM Lord-Lieutenant of Hertfordshire in February 2021 into the impact of the pandemic on Years 12 and 13 students found they were pessimistic about employment opportunities in the immediate and near future. They recognised

that they would be competing for jobs in a crowded market and were concerned that employers would see them as “the Corona generation” with a disrupted education and meaningless grades and therefore less employable. Most of the students with previous mental health issues spoke of how this had deteriorated during the pandemic. They also spoke of peers, who had not had mental health issues previously, being affected at this time.

In March 2021, local research was conducted by Amazing Apprenticeships with 1,700 parents and carers of children in years 7 – 13, on behalf of the Hertfordshire Careers Hub. The survey explored their confidence in supporting their child/children to consider apprenticeships beyond school. The data shows that confidence has dropped by 8% from previous years to 66% of parents and carers saying that they would consider an apprenticeship for their child. The survey also showed that 86% of parents/carers do not feel equipped with sufficient understanding of apprenticeships to be able to support their child, should they wish to apply for an apprenticeship. Encouragingly, 84% of parents and carers do want to be kept informed of opportunities in Hertfordshire through online events and information.

Our ambitions:

Every young person deserves the best possible start to their working life; to be inspired and prepared to choose their path, fulfil their potential and contribute to a thriving economy. There are excellent foundations in place to build on. We want to ensure there are clear and easy routes to access the range of national and local programmes available to them, including the [Hertfordshire Skills Framework](#), via the [Hertfordshire Opportunity Portal](#).

Hertfordshire has for many years had a higher proportion of young people stay on at school or move into FE College provision. In turn lower numbers have moved into work related provision. To address this imbalance and meet the needs of employers, the LEP, funded by the Careers & Enterprise Company, is working with 96% of eligible schools and FE Colleges to develop their careers education programmes towards meeting the Gatsby Benchmark for good career guidance. There are over 100 Enterprise Advisers, who are volunteers from local businesses, supporting this initiative to forge closer ties between schools and employers. We want to build on this success by establishing a network of Careers Hubs across the county.

Re-engaging vulnerable young people who have dropped out of work and / or learning is a clear priority. There are programmes in place such as those delivered by SfYP to support this group. A Hertfordshire Care Leavers programme is currently at the planning stage seeking to provide 15 ring-fenced apprenticeship places for care leavers in Hertfordshire’s local authorities. Hertfordshire Supported Apprenticeship programme, which will help more young people with learning difficulties access apprenticeships is also planned. These and further partnership initiatives, such as the re-established networks between SfYP, the Building Better Opportunities (BBO) Youth Project, training providers and DWP, are being delivered over the next three

years to reduce the gap between those that are disadvantaged and the rest of the population.

The Hertfordshire Apprenticeship Strategy is being refreshed to become the Apprenticeships and Technical Education Strategy and will focus on supporting young people impacted by the disruption to their learning owing to the Covid-19 restrictions. The vision is for young people to be better prepared to apply for apprenticeship opportunities. Additionally, young people, parents, carers and schools will have a greater understanding of the benefits of work-related provision, particularly the apprenticeship route.



We will:

- Improve access to impartial independent advice and guidance, careers education and labour market information for young people
- Continue to develop partnership activity between employers and education to support young people to successfully make the transition from education to the labour market
- Increase the number of young people who undertake an apprenticeship or technical pathway following Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5
- Reduce the gap between young people aged 16 & 17 from identified vulnerable groups who are in education and training with the rest of the Hertfordshire 16-17 population





Theme 2: Adult learning and employment – working towards full employment, promoting lifelong learning, retraining and upskilling opportunities

Supporting adults with barriers to employment and learning, increasing the available workforce and promoting a culture of lifelong learning. Ensuring measures are in place to support adults to retrain and upskill for advanced and higher technical skilled jobs as well as retraining for workers from industries that are contracting.

Our overarching ambition is to work towards full employment and promote a culture of lifelong learning; retraining and upskilling for the future.

Hertfordshire labour market profile has changed dramatically following the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. There has been a 106% increase for those claiming Universal Credit in the Intensive Work Search regime since March 2020. Whilst the Government's furlough and Self-Employment Income Support Scheme has lessened the impact, it will be some time before the full consequences of the economic recession will be known.

Some of the county's workers have been disproportionately affected in terms of opportunity and economically, namely workers from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic background, women, young people, low paid workers and workers with a disability.

Research by Leonard Cheshire Disability shows that people with disabilities are twice as likely to have lost their jobs or have been furloughed during the pandemic; a large proportion of employers have recently indicated that they are less likely to consider employing

people with disabilities as it would put their business under more strain.

We know that pre-Covid, there were residents who were competing in a buoyant labour market but still not finding suitable employment. It is difficult to categorise this group as being vulnerable, as individual circumstances will vary, but it should be acknowledged that their barriers to employment tend to be more complex. Supporting this cohort will present further challenges over those who have recently become unemployed.

Whilst the pandemic has placed extraordinary challenges on the local labour market, it has also brought innovation. Training providers have adapted their delivery to provide courses on-line. This has helped with a countywide joined-up approach to provision. Increasing the digital skills of residents to take up and benefit from these opportunities is vital.

Residents with lower level of skills are more likely to be employed in sectors that have been negatively affected during the pandemic. The need for everyone to adopt a lifelong learning approach has become more apparent in the new economic landscape and there are opportunities for retraining and upskilling to meet the needs of our employers. There are stark differences in Hertfordshire in the

levels of qualifications of our working age population. For example, in Broxbourne 14.6% of the working population have no qualifications compared to 3.6% in Dacorum and the national average of 7.7%. There is a need for education and employment support programmes to be targeted at specific barriers to learning, employment and locations.

Research from Lloyds UK in 2020 found some 17 million adults in the UK do not have the digital skills needed for work. The large scale move to home working and learning in response to the pandemic has accelerated this. It is now essential to have digital skills and those without have been disadvantaged over the past year. Employers indicate that about one-third of the vacancies they find difficult to fill are, to some degree, attributable to a lack of appropriate digital skills amongst applicants. It is incumbent on adult educators to ensure their programmes help support adults with poor digital skills.

The Government Lifetime Skills Guarantee was set up to ensure that all adults are entitled to free vocational education up to Level 3. The qualifications on offer range from engineering to social care to conservation to help residents gain in-demand skills and provide a gateway to higher skilled jobs or sectors offering rewarding careers.

Our ambitions:

Our strategy supports a diverse workforce, fit for the future and focusing on upskilling residents whilst the economy is recovering. We want to develop a cohesive approach to adult education in Hertfordshire, ensuring that everyone understands the education programmes and employment support opportunities available, whether they wish to improve their career pathways, have been recently made unemployed or are long term unemployed. Specific programmes of intervention to address barriers such as low basic skills in English, maths and digital skills remain vital to support the development of fundamental life and work resilience.

We want to create an environment where those most disadvantaged and furthest away from the labour market are inspired, prepared and able to compete for job vacancies using supported learning and work-focused opportunities in partnership with employers. There will be opportunities to retrain and upskill for jobs in our growth sectors. New learning and employment support pathways will be set up to support residents, who used to work in sectors that have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic e.g. retail, hospitality, in understanding how to compete for jobs in growing sectors by demonstrating transferable skills.

We will use a place-based approach to ensure that local variances are factored in the planning process and that outcomes meet the needs of that community.

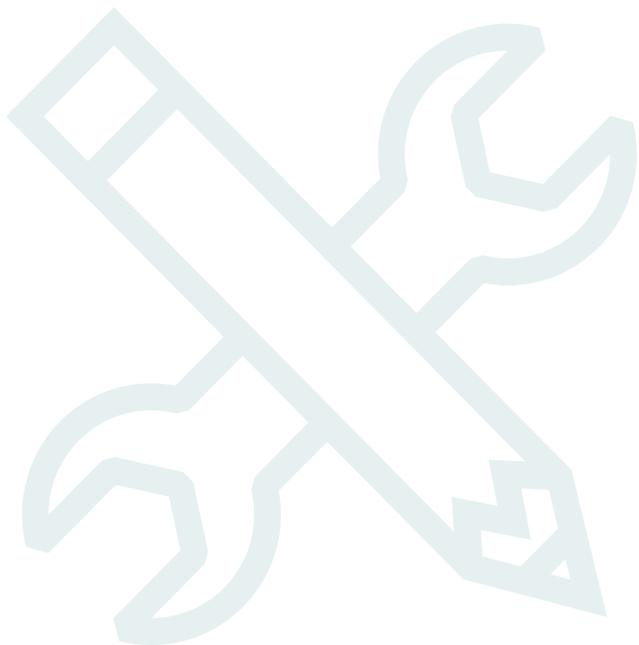
Re-engaging residents who have drifted away from the labour market will be a key priority and sourcing appropriate tailored provision and employment support opportunities is crucial to that success.

In line with Sustainable Hertfordshire Strategy, we will promote careers in 'green' and sustainable industries and will embed concepts for sustainable ways of living and working in education and employment support interventions.

A lifelong learning approach needs to be communicated clearly highlighting the benefits for individuals and employers of the need for regular upskilling and identifying the right pathways of support back into employment. This will include the promotion of tailored education programmes for people with barriers to learning and employment, apprenticeships (including Inclusive Apprenticeships for people with disabilities), the promotion of Supported Employment programmes, the Disability Confident Scheme and other financial support and incentives for residents and employers.

We will:

- Increase the number of Sector Based Work Academy Programme placements for those furthest from the labour market
- Increase the number of employers in the county who are recognised as a Disability Confident Employer and the number of adults with disabilities in sustained employment
- Improve awareness of the availability of information to help support residents make informed choices to help them move closer to the labour market.
- Support residents to develop skills that are fit for the future workplace in relation to digital skills and sustainability





Theme 3: Skills to grow small and medium size businesses

Providing targeted support to small and medium size businesses (SMEs) to develop their workforce and improve the matching of skills to business needs in order to sustain economic growth. Enabling employers to build their future workforce through work-based learning programmes including Apprenticeships, Traineeships, T Levels and technical qualifications.

Our overarching ambition is to support SMEs to build and develop their workforce

The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic alongside addressing the challenges of the EU transition has meant employers have had difficult decisions to make, e.g. redundancies, unable to invest in staff training and recruitment challenges particularly engaging young talent due to workplace restrictions. Both nationally and locally, Government has provided substantial support programmes including Kickstart, Apprenticeship incentives and the Lifetime Skills Guarantee for example. However, we know that employers find the skills and employment landscape complex and appear not to be engaging with the full breadth of support available.

The Hertfordshire Employment, Skills and Enterprise Review from November 2020 identified that:

- 60% of employers say they have one or more skills gaps in their organisation
- 86% of employers are likely to take action to upskill staff in the next 12 months
- 47% of employers were considering taking an apprentice soon but there are reservations to overcome around candidate quality, reassuring employers who have had a poor previous experience and complexity of the process
- 17% of employers are likely to support employees to undertake a higher qualification in the next three years however cost is a significant barrier

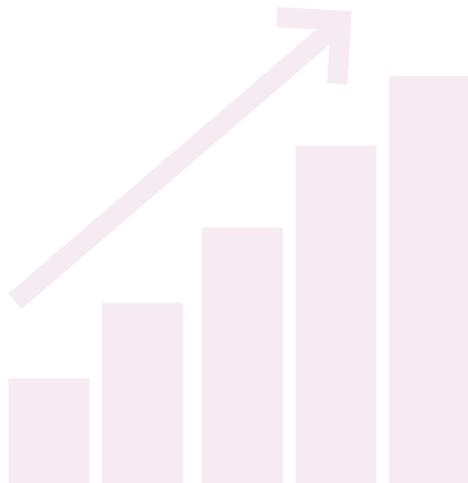
These challenges are particularly demanding for our SMEs of which, 91% are micro (with 0-9 employees), 7% are small (10 to 49 employees) and 1% are medium sized (50 to 248 employees). Continuing to support local businesses, particularly small businesses remains a priority and there are opportunities to facilitate more collaboration between our large businesses and SMEs around their supply chains, local job feeds and across sectors.

Our ambitions:

The Government's Skills for Jobs White Paper sets out reforms to post-16 technical education and training to support people to develop their skills giving employers a greater say in the development of skills. Simplifying the complexity of the skills and employment landscape for employers is essential and it is our ambition to ensure we are putting our employers at the core of our planning and delivery of post-16 skills provision.

We will build on the success of CEC Enterprise Adviser Network and Careers Hubs, SfYP, HOP and other local programmes to support our SMEs to engage easily and effectively with our young people; building the future talent pipelines of our businesses.

Working in partnership with all organisations offering employment support we will encourage employers to recruit from the widest pool of talent, promoting the benefits of employing those with barriers to learning and employment by collaborating in promoting the Disability Confident Scheme.



We want to encourage employers to invest in higher level skills to include a focus on their managers and leaders of tomorrow. We will continue to promote technical education to enable re-training, upskilling and progression, as well as digital skills and skills needed to fulfil our commitment to achieving net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

We want to maximise collaboration between our large employers and SMEs. Large organisations have a significant role to play in terms of being ambassadors for investment in skills and supporting their local communities. Best practice such as levy transfer enables the re-focusing of funds to those sectors and communities where we know apprenticeship programmes provide a very effective skills development and recruitment tool.

We will:

- Support employers to engage effectively with their future workforce
- Encourage investment to upskill the existing workforce
- Enable employers to reach a wider talent pool encouraging a diverse workforce
- Put employers at the heart of planning and delivery of post-16 technical education and training



Theme 4: Priority and growth sectors – harnessing the opportunities and investing in skills of the future

Investing in skills of the future including those of our economic growth sectors: life sciences, advanced engineering and manufacturing, creative, smart construction, agri-tech and our knowledge and digital based assets. Supporting those major employment sectors most affected by the pandemic such as our health and social care sector as well our visitor economy including hospitality, high-street retail, leisure, travel and the arts in alignment with national support programmes.

Our overarching ambition is to support our priority and growth sectors to build their future workforce

Hertfordshire has substantial strengths in advanced engineering and manufacturing. This sector has a lineage to the likes of British Aerospace in Hatfield but is now substantially broader with a strong IT component. The sector contributed £3.5 billion to the Hertfordshire economy in 2015 and grew by 2.1% per year between 2005 and 2015, compared with a national rate of 1.6%.

GSK's presence in Stevenage and Ware has led to some major developments in life sciences including the rapid growth in a clustering of small innovative advanced Cell & Gene medicinal therapeutic products companies on and around the GSK campus. The area has now been identified as a High Potential Opportunity Area by the Department for International Trade (DIT), significantly increasing demand for both higher level and technical level skills in life sciences.

The redevelopment of the Hatfield Aerodrome to Hatfield Business Park has resulted in a thriving hub accounting for over 12,000 jobs and attracting major knowledge-based businesses including Ocado and BT. It is also home to the main campus of the University of Hertfordshire with 25,000 students and world-class specialisms including Artificial Intelligence and Robotics.

Hertfordshire's creative industries are vibrant, especially in relation to film and television. Established studios such as Warner Bros at Leavesden and the BBC studios at Elstree have both experienced growth and are attracting new investment to the county; and the proposed investment in Sky Studios in Borehamwood will ensure the breadth and depth of expertise in south west Hertfordshire is growing.

Herts IQ vision is to create Europe's most desirable, sustainable and in demand business hub operating in modern construction, Agri-tech and related digital and environmental technologies. With a major research competence at BRE in Watford and a strong cadre of major businesses including Willmott Dixon in Letchworth Garden City, Skanska in Rickmansworth and Volker Fitzpatrick in Hoddesdon, Hertfordshire has a significant construction and civil engineering sector.

The health and social care workforce across Hertfordshire and West Essex is around 57,000, with approximately 4,000 vacancies at any one time. There are over 350 job roles in health and social care, from art therapists to anaesthetists, and from social workers to surgeons. The opportunities in health and social care are varied. Health and care services are continuing to improve to ensure people live healthy lives, but this also means that more people are needed to fill crucial health and care jobs.

Our ambitions:

We will promote the career pathways available within our growth sectors. We will develop sector action plans and engagement strategies to help residents understand the opportunities, breaking down any myths about the types of jobs available and working with employers to support them to recruit from a wider talent pool.

We want to fully understand the support needed for our sectors most affected by the pandemic including hospitality, the arts, high-street retail, visitor economy and leisure. While ensuring alignment with government support programmes we will assess local skills and employment requirements and work with employment support providers to ensure these sectors are able to build back to full productivity rapidly.

We want to understand requirements of digital and data analytical skills, the needs of basic digital literacy through to advanced coding and data analytics. Working with our FE colleges and University of Hertfordshire, and with major employers, understanding the digital skills requirement is an ongoing priority.

Hertfordshire is well placed to build and benefit from the significant opportunities of a green growth economy and a workforce with the relevant skills is vital. We need to understand for example

the emerging skills required to enable a net zero future including scientists and engineers skilled in renewable energy and technicians to install and maintain energy systems. These skills requirements are in addition to the existing jobs roles such as project management, maintenance fitters, electrical engineering and welding trades.

We will:

- Determine career pathways for our priority sectors
- Determine support needed for those sectors most affected by the pandemic
- Prioritise the Hertfordshire digital and net zero future skills needs
- Work with the University of Hertfordshire to support the submission and establishment of the Hertfordshire Institute of Technology





Theme 5: Placemaking – seizing the opportunities of Hertfordshire’s business assets together with the proximity to London and other key economic areas

Hertfordshire is at the core of the UK’s science, research and innovation hub and sits at the heart of the UK’s Golden Research Triangle of London- Cambridge- Oxford, an economic area renowned as an engine of growth. Government has ambitious plan to unleash the economic and cultural potential of the Oxford-Cambridge Arc, to transform it into one of the world’s premier growth corridors and a world-leader in sustainability.

Our overarching ambition is to explore the opportunities of a place-based approach, levelling up outcomes in skills and employment and ensuring our residents are aware of the employment opportunities in Hertfordshire

The business assets of our county: Hertfordshire Innovation Quarter, the A1M science corridor (Stevenage, Welwyn and Hatfield), the creative cluster (South West of Hertfordshire) and Innovation Corridor covering East Hertfordshire, brings opportunities to be explored. We need to fully understand the impact on Hertfordshire’s productivity of our county being a net exporter of highly skilled employees and, in most but not all cases, a net importer of lower skilled employees.

Hertfordshire is on the edge of a major city and the settlements within it are either small or medium-sized, but none are dominant; every Hertfordshire town is distinctive and over 10% of the population lives in rural areas.

In recent years boosts to Hertfordshire’s economy have included:

- Stevenage classified as a High Potential Opportunity Area in recognition of its thriving cell and gene therapy cluster of national and international significance
- Elstree Studios to build two new soundstages and ancillary workshops with a £6 million government funding deal successfully secured by studio owners, Hertsmeire Borough Council
- Stevenage receiving £37.5m as part of the Government’s Towns Fund to drive sustainable economic regeneration and deliver long term economic and productivity growth
- Contracts being signed and completed to release £171m of government funding for the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town project
- Hertfordshire IQ being at the centre of the Hemel Garden Communities which will see the transformation of Hemel Hempstead and the development of 11,000 new homes and 10,000 new jobs

Our proximity to London, the Oxford-Cambridge Arc and the Golden Research Triangle provides the opportunity to strengthen our assets in knowledge-intensive industries, but it also results in our region being a net exporter of highly skilled employees which appears to impact on the productivity of Hertfordshire.

There are noticeable variations in rates of long-term economic growth across the county. The areas of Watford, St Albans and Three Rivers are performing above the UK average whereas Stevenage, Broxbourne, East Herts and Welwyn are performing below the 10-year average of 2.5% economic growth. There is a similar narrative of inequality for the qualification profile and earnings of our residents especially affecting the New Towns and in South East Hertfordshire close to the boundary with London.

Our ambitions:

We want our businesses to be able to attract and retain a diverse workforce including highly skilled employees to support the knowledge-intensive industries. We do not want a shortage of skilled workers to act as a brake on economic recovery.

We want to seize the opportunities of our county's position: our proximity to London, the Oxford-Cambridge Arc and the Golden Research Triangle.

We want to investigate and address the challenge of skilled residents commuting out of the county and ensure residents are aware of the employment opportunities in Hertfordshire, reducing the need for extensive travel and supporting our commitment to achieving net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

We want to work with the ten district and borough councils in Hertfordshire to support the development of local skills and employment analysis and plans, mapping local skills demand and supply. Working with local employment solution providers we want to address any obstacles, seeking to understand and address the noticeable variations across the county.

We will:

- Seize the opportunities of our county's position: our proximity to London and other key economic areas
- Further explore the skills and employment opportunities of our business assets
- Investigate and address the challenge of highly skilled residents commuting out of the county
- Work in partnership with district and borough councils in Hertfordshire to support the development of local skills and employment analysis and plans

Hertfordshire Skills and Employment Strategy 2021-24 Action Plan

Theme 1: Unlocking emerging talent – support for young people. Our overarching ambition is for young people to be inspired and prepared to become the county’s workforce with the skills to deliver Hertfordshire’s future prosperity.

Ref. No.	Action	Description	Target date	To be actioned by:	How will the action be funded?
1	Improve access to impartial independent advice and guidance (IAG), careers education and labour market information for young people.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proactively target young people who are at risk of not progressing into an education or training opportunity at the age of 16. Deliver specific support and guidance for those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Establish a third Careers Hub to allow reach across the county. 	March 2023	Careers & Enterprise Company (CEC) / Hertfordshire County Council (HCC)	Within existing budgets with a view to bid for funding to extend projects as appropriate
2	Continue to develop partnership activity between employers and education to help young people successfully transition from education to the labour market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote Kickstart and other employment opportunities to maximise the number of young people onto sustainable employment. Work with Higher Education to ensure graduates are aware of the career opportunities within Hertfordshire. Use existing collaborative forums between training providers, the education sector and employers to ensure that education and training provision supports the skills needs of the county. 	December 2021	CEC / HCC	Within existing budgets with a view to bid for funding to extend projects as appropriate

Theme 1: Unlocking emerging talent – support for young people. Our overarching ambition is for young people to be inspired and prepared to become the county’s workforce with the skills to deliver Hertfordshire’s future prosperity.

Ref. No.	Action	Description	Target date	To be actioned by:	How will the action be funded?
3	Increase the number of young people who undertake an apprenticeship pathway.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and amplify case studies of local, inspiring, young people with interesting stories to share who can act as role models for their peer groups • Develop and launch the Hertfordshire Supported Apprenticeship programme, to help more young people with learning difficulties access apprenticeships. • Promote the apprenticeship pathway to schools and teachers and to parents, carers and directly to young people through Hertfordshire Opportunity Portal (HOP), IAG and Careers Education & Guidance (CEG) programmes. Focusing on both Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5. • Support all schools to maximise the Department of Education (DfE) funded support available through the Apprenticeship Support and Knowledge for Schools and Colleges programme (ASK) • Survey young people about their knowledge and understanding of apprenticeships and ensure promotional material addresses any misconceptions. • Work with employers particularly SMEs to increase the number of available apprenticeship opportunities 	March 2022	HCC	Hertfordshire Apprenticeship Providers / HCC / Further Education (FE) sector / Higher Education (HE) / Employers

Theme 1: Unlocking emerging talent – support for young people. Our overarching ambition is for young people to be inspired and prepared to become the county’s workforce with the skills to deliver Hertfordshire’s future prosperity.

Ref. No.	Action	Description	Target date	To be actioned by:	How will the action be funded?
4	Reduce the % gap between young people aged 16 & 17 from identified vulnerable groups who are in education and training with the rest of the Hertfordshire 16-17 population.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with the Further Education (FE) Sector and with private training providers to support young people who have not reached a NVQ Level 2 standard at the age of 16 to continue to study and achieve, particularly the core subjects of English and maths; additionally to provide opportunities to study qualifications that support the county’s growth sectors e.g. creative, life sciences and construction. • Ring-fence apprenticeship places for Care Leavers in recognition that many Children Looked After and Care Leavers perform less well in education. • Develop and promote programmes supporting young people e.g. the Pathways to Success NEET programme and Herts Youth Futures to young people who are NEET or identified as being at risk of becoming NEET • Promote offers of training and re-engagement programmes that are provided by the voluntary & community sector. • Encourage more young people and schools/FE/HE to consider entrepreneurial activities 	March 2023	HCC	HCC / FE / Apprenticeship & Work Based Learning Providers / Hertfordshire Adult & Family Learning Service (HAFLS) / Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS)

Theme 2: Adult learning and employment – working towards full employment, promoting lifelong learning, retraining and upskilling opportunities. Our overarching ambition is to work towards full employment and promote a culture of lifelong learning; retraining and upskilling for the future.

Ref. No.	Action	Description	Target date	To be actioned by:	How will the action be funded?
5	Increase the number of Sector-based Work Academy Programme (SWAPs) placements for those furthest from the labour market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Sector-based Work Academy Programme is to help people who are looking to start a job and need support to learn the skills and behaviours that employers in particular industries look for. Placements are designed to help claimants build confidence to improve their job prospects and enhance their job applications, whilst helping employers in sectors with current local vacancies to fill them. 	March 2022	Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)	Within existing budgets
6	Increase the number of employers in the county who are recognised as a Disability Confident (DC) Employer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disability Confident is about creating a movement of change, encouraging employers to think differently about disability and take action to improve how they recruit, retain and develop people with a disability. Use the new Hertfordshire Pathways to Employment Forum for Residents with Disabilities to promote the benefits of employing a diverse workforce and promoting the Disability Confident Scheme Increase the number of people with barriers to employment benefitting from employment support with the view to increase the number of people with disabilities into sustained work 	March 2023	DWP/Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)/ HAFLS	Within existing budgets

Theme 2: Adult learning and employment – working towards full employment, promoting lifelong learning, retraining and upskilling opportunities. Our overarching ambition is to work towards full employment and promote a culture of lifelong learning; retraining and upskilling for the future.

Ref. No.	Action	Description	Target date	To be actioned by:	How will the action be funded?
7	Improve awareness of the availability of information to help support residents make informed choices to help them move closer to the labour market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of one platform, HOP to promote career opportunities; adult education, supported employment opportunities training courses, apprenticeships and job vacancies to ensure a joined-up approach across partners and locality. • Target adults who would benefit from adult community learning and community employment support interventions to enter or re-enter employment • In partnership with other education providers, promote via an information campaign the benefits of lifelong learning to residents and to employers 	March 2023	LEP	Within existing budgets
8	Support residents to develop skills that are fit for the future workplace in relation to digital skills and sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage education providers to deliver more learning opportunities for digital skills and sustainability/ environment/green industries • Contribute to breaking down the barriers to digital disenfranchisement 	April 2023	LEP/HAFSL	Within existing budgets with a view to bid for funding to extend projects as appropriate

Theme 3: Skills to grow small and medium size businesses. Our overarching ambition is to support SMEs to build and develop their workforce.

Ref. No.	Action	Description	Target date	To be actioned by:	How will the action be funded?
9	Enable employers to engage with their future talent – both young people and older workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilise HOP to provide employers with access to one central and easy to use resource for skills, recruitment and apprenticeship provision within the county. • Provide further funding (as match for ESF) for the further development and roll out of the HOP i.e. additional skills brokers and schools/colleges engagement. • Provide clear information for our employers to enable them to access national programmes including Skills Support for the Workplace, Restart, Lifetime Skills Guarantee, National Careers Service. • Work with FE partners to drive the implementation of T Levels. • Work with intermediaries to develop employer engagement strategies to raise the profile industry placements. 	March 2022	LEP	CEC/ DWP/ European Social Fund (ESF) / Community Renewal Fund/ UK Shared Prosperity Fund

Theme 3: Skills to grow small and medium size businesses. Our overarching ambition is to support SMEs to build and develop their workforce.

Ref. No.	Action	Description	Target date	To be actioned by:	How will the action be funded?
10	Encourage investment in upskilling of existing staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement Hertfordshire Supports Apprenticeships Campaign to promote and increase the take up of apprenticeships at all levels. • Promote to employers the financial incentives that are available to take on apprenticeships, including the Apprenticeship Levy Transfer scheme. • Promote greater take up of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) related higher level qualifications (apprenticeships, bite-size qualifications) amongst the business base, creating progression pathways through to HE. • Support the delivery of the Digital Bootcamps and engage employers in the design of provision. • Provide targeted support to ensure we are developing our managers and leaders of the future from senior management through to entry level team leaders. 	March 2022	LEP/HCC	LEP/ ESF/ DWP/ Lifetime Skills Guarantee

Theme 3: Skills to grow small and medium size businesses. Our overarching ambition is to support SMEs to build and develop their workforce.

Ref. No.	Action	Description	Target date	To be actioned by:	How will the action be funded?
11	Support employers to reach a wider talent pool encouraging a diverse workforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build on the Pathways to Employment Forum to further support the co-ordination of support for employers to recruit from groups with barriers to employment. • Investigate the opportunities to develop a county-wide Job brokerage agency to co-ordinate the matching of skills to employers and provide further support to employers to recruit individuals with barriers to employment. 	September 2022	HCC	HCC/ Community Renewal Fund/ DWP
12	Supporting employers to be at the heart of planning and delivery of skills and education programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate a submission for the local skills improvement plan putting employers at the heart of skills and education planning and delivery. 	March 2022	LEP/ Employment Led Body/FE	Skills Accelerator

Theme 4: Priority and growth sectors – harnessing the opportunities and investing in skills of the future. Our overarching ambition is to support our priority and growth sectors to build their future workforce.

Ref. No.	Action	Description	Target date	To be actioned by:	How will the action be funded?
13	Sector Career Pathways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commission further analysis into priority sectors including Cell & Gene Therapy, Film, Media and Creative, Smart Construction and Digital. • Engage with FE/HE, local employers and sector bodies to establish sector profiles and career pathways for our priority sectors. • Discuss curriculum plans with FE/ HE to ensure alignment with priority sectors in particular 16-18 provision. • Host pathways on HOP. 	September 2022	LEP	LEP/ Careers Hub
14	Support for sectors affected by Covid-19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake analysis to provide evidence to enable support to be directed to sectors most in need following the end of the furlough scheme. • Work with existing programmes such as Restart, JETS, Kickstart, Building Better Opportunities, UK Shared Prosperity/ Community Renewal Fund programmes, Lifetime Skills Guarantee and apprenticeships to ensure businesses and residents have access to the skills required to support business growth. 	March 2023	DWP/LEP/HCC	Within existing LEP budgets

Theme 4: Priority and growth sectors – harnessing the opportunities and investing in skills of the future. Our overarching ambition is to support our priority and growth sectors to build their future workforce.

Ref. No.	Action	Description	Target date	To be actioned by:	How will the action be funded?
15	Enhancing Digital and net zero future Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritise Hertfordshire's Digital Skills Strategy and action plan, working with national programmes such as the Digital Skills Bootcamp, learning lessons from colleagues in supporting LEP areas who are delivering Digital Skills Partnerships. • Work with our FE, HE and provider base to ensure the delivery of the full breadth of digital and net zero future skills needs. 	September 2022	HCC/LEP	Department for Education (DfE), Adult Education Budget
16	Develop our STEM workforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with the University of Hertfordshire to support the submission, and if successful, the establishment of the Hertfordshire Institute of Technology specialising in Digital, Smart Construction and Life Sciences aligning to provision of Further Education. 	March 2023	LEP/UH	DfE

Theme 5: Placemaking – seizing the opportunities of Hertfordshire’s business assets and other key economic areas. Our overarching ambition is to explore the opportunities of a place-based approach, levelling up outcomes in skills and employment and ensuring our residents are aware of the employment opportunities in Hertfordshire.

Ref. No.	Action	Description	Target date	To be actioned by:	How will the action be funded?
17	Supporting the growth of our Opportunity Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a plan for skills and employment to support our areas of opportunity: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Town Centres (Stevenage, Watford, Bishop Stortford, Hatfield etc) • South West Herts (film, TV and media) • The A1M corridor Stevenage, Welwyn-Hatfield (life sciences) • Hemel Hempstead/ St Albans/ Watford (Herts IQ focusing on smart construction) • Innovation Corridor (sciences and construction) 	March 2024	HCC/ LEP and DWP working with LEP Board representatives	Levelling Up Fund/LEP/HCC
18	Investigate and address the challenge of highly skilled residents commuting out of the county	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review communications and campaigns to encourage residents to work within our county. • Promote employment experiencing growth. • Work with local employers to promote and provide opportunities to both Hertfordshire residents and a wider audience. 	March 2024	LEP/ HCC/ DWP	HCC/ LEP
19	Levelling up inequalities within our districts and boroughs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with the 10 district and borough councils to support development of local skills & employment analysis and plans; mapping local skills demand and supply. • Work with local employment solution providers e.g. DWP, HCC, local programmes, FE/HE to address any obstacles and noticeable variations across the county. 	March 2024	LEP/HAFLS	Levelling Up Fund/ LEP

Hertfordshire Skills and Employment Strategy

2021-24

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Hertfordshire
Local Enterprise
Partnership



Department
for Work &
Pensions



Hertfordshire