

Greater Essex Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP)

2026–2029

Annex C

Background
and method



Funded by
UK Government

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Introduction

Within this annex report to support the main **Greater Essex LSIP 2026-2029 report**, the **processes and methodologies used to establish the priorities will be set out**. As this will outline, there has been a wealth of work undertaken to inform the LSIP 2026-2029 report. Supporting information to the main LSIP report also includes further information on skills needs (Annex A) and the Action Plan (Annex B). A dashboard has also been developed to enable access to regular and timely data and information to support the delivery against the LSIP.



1. Evidence Base

A range of information has been used to provide an evidence base for the LSIP. This has included a combination of published data sets, employer feedback, plans and strategies of local authorities and broader labour market information such as that provided by major projects. Information from sector bodies and Skills England have also

been utilised. These various sources are set out below.

The [data report](#) to support the first LSIP was also updated in March 2026, so this information was utilised also for consistency. This will soon be replaced with a [data dashboard](#) to enable open and live access to data for stakeholders.

Information	Source	Notes / Links
Employer Feedback – Survey	Survey shared by Essex Chambers to inform the LSIP	See full results at appendix 1. below (Survey was shared at LSIP Essex Chambers of Commerce)
Employer Feedback – Sector Roundtables	Roundtables held from Oct 25–March 26 to inform the LSIP	See information at appendix 2.
Industrial Strategy and Sector Plans	Dept for Business and Trade	Alignment set out in LSIP Sector profiles at – LSIP Sector Insights Essex Chambers of Commerce
Sector Skills Needs Assessments	Skills England	Alignment set out in LSIP Sector profiles at – LSIP Sector Insights Essex Chambers of Commerce
Sector Information for Care	Skills for Care	Information added to sector insight – Health, Social Care, and Medical Technology Sector Insight – Essex Chambers of Commerce and also included as appendix 3 below.
Sector Information for Construction	Construction and Industry Training Board (CITB)	Information provided on infrastructure projects. Also, information as per Construction Workforce Outlook CITB
Five Estuaries Offshore Windfarm Outline Skills & Employment Strategy	Five Estuaries Wind Farm	Microsoft Word – Outline Skills and Employment Strategy V2 (planninginspectorate.gov.uk)
Employment by Sector	Business register and Employment Survey	Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES): provisional results 2024, revised results 2023 – Office for National Statistics
Employment by Occupation Employment Rate and Employment Level Self-Employment Rate Qualification Level	Annual population Survey	Annual Population Survey – Nomis – Official Census and Labour Market Statistics
Enterprise by Employment Size Band	UK Business Counts	UK Business Counts – enterprises by industry and employment size band – Nomis – Official Census and Labour Market Statistics



1. Evidence Base (cont.)

Information	Source	Notes / Links
Enterprise Starts and Closures	Business Demography ONS	Business demography, UK – Office for National Statistics
Median Gross Weekly Wage for Full-Time Workers	Annual survey of hours and earnings	Earnings and hours worked, place of work by local authority: ASHE Table 7 – Office for National Statistics
Population	ONS / NOMIS	Nomis – Official Census and Labour Market Statistics
Adult Education Achievement & Qualifications by Subject Sector Area and LA	Further Education & Skills DfE	Further education and skills, Academic year 2025/26 – Explore education statistics – GOV.UK
Apprenticeship Achievements by Subject Sector Area and LA	Apprenticeship Achievements	Apprenticeships and traineeships, Academic year 2022/23 – Explore education statistics – GOV.UK
HE Qualifiers by Subject HE Destinations	HESA	Table 50 – HE qualifiers by subject of study and level of qualification obtained 2014/15 to 2024/25 HESA
Destinations for KS4 Students, Mainstream Schools KS5 Destinations	DfE	Key stage 4 destination measures, Academic year 2023/24 – Explore education statistics – GOV.UK
Unique Posting Trends and Vacancies for Greater Essex	Lightcast	As per LSIP vacancy dashboard – LSIP Labour Market Dashboard – Essex Chambers of Commerce
Greater Essex Manifesto for Growth	Greater Essex Business Board	GEBB-Manifesto-FINAL-4.pdf
Greater Essex Economic Overview 2025-26	Essex, Thurrock and Southend local authorities	
Southend on Sea Economic Growth Strategy	Southend-on-Sea City Council	economic-growth-strategy.pdf



2. Alignment with the LSIP Guidance

The LSIP guidance sets out that **‘the work to develop and implement the LSIP must be a collaborative process, involving and drawing on the expertise of all key stakeholders and delivery partners within an area. This includes further and higher education providers, who have a central role both as strategic partners and suppliers of technical skills provision and bring vital knowledge and expertise to the process. This collaboration should include Jobcentres, careers services, and other local and regional stakeholders, such as sector bodies and trade unions. Their involvement will help create a stronger connection between employment and skills.’**

Collaboration to inform the Greater Essex LSIP has been strong. The roundtables held to inform the LSIP have been held across the geography, with all priority sectors engaged. The majority of these have been held at college or training providers' premises which has also fostered early engagement, understanding and collaboration.

By working with sector bodies such as Skills for Care, CITB and Make UK as well as providers, new employers have been engaged. The roundtables were also promoted widely through partner organisations and on Linked-In to ensure maximum attendance and engagement.

The LSIP survey was also widely publicised and shared to ensure feedback was representative. A session was also held with the Essex Provider Network, to help ensure wider reach and input also.

Stakeholders have also been key to the development of the LSIP, with regular meetings and information sharing. Local authority support has been provided for the data aspect of the LSIP and in the development of the Data Dashboard which will add significant value to the local area. Most roundtables have had representation from local authorities, Careers Hub, Higher Education and DWP to help ensure collaboration and to provide information about existing support where appropriate. Some engagement has also taken place in collaboration with local authorities – for example, Essex County Council's Visit Essex team facilitated a session with employers in the Visitor Economy and Skills for Care facilitated a session with care sector employers.

Higher Education has played a strong role in the development of LSIP 2.0, as demonstrated by the supporting statements in the main report and the representation of both universities on the Employment and Skills Board.

All employer-focused sector roundtables held to inform the LSIP included participation from Higher Education.

A more formal, joint strategic approach to further and higher education development will be delivered through the Strategic Pathway Development Group for FE and HE, which will work towards establishing a joint memorandum of understanding.

3. Environmental and Net Zero Goals

Clean energy has been included as a priority within the Greater Essex LSIP given its significance and with further information below.

Many of the priority sectors have a clean energy/net zero aspect, particularly in construction, advanced manufacturing and engineering. Therefore, delivering against this will be a key priority for Essex.

Many employers tell us they recognise the current period of rapid technological and environmental change as an opportunity to improve productivity, strengthen resilience and enhance their long-term competitiveness. Businesses across Essex increasingly see the value in building stronger Digital, Digitech and AI capabilities while adapting to new environmental standards and expectations.

The national Industrial Strategy places clean, secure and affordable energy at the heart of future economic growth. Its focus on strengthening clean energy infrastructure and supporting long-term resilience aligns closely with the opportunities Essex employers are identifying. By connecting national priorities with local ambition, Essex is well-positioned to lead in the transition to a cleaner, more sustainable economy.

Essex already has important strengths in this space. The county is emerging as a significant contributor to the clean energy sector, with developments in offshore wind, hydrogen innovation, solar technology and sustainable aviation fuel. These advances create exciting opportunities for businesses to innovate, for residents to access high-quality careers and for the county to contribute meaningfully to national and global climate goals.

Employers also highlight the potential for growth in clean energy decommissioning, particularly as offshore assets and industrial infrastructure reach the end of their operational life. This creates demand for specialist roles in environmental compliance, safe dismantling, waste handling, marine engineering, project management and site remediation. Meeting this demand offers a major opportunity to develop a unique skills specialism for the region.

To seize these opportunities, Essex requires a coordinated post-16 skills pathway across Further Education and Higher Education. This includes technical routes from entry-level green skills to advanced training in clean energy engineering, environmental technology, data analytics, energy systems management and decommissioning.

By designing this provision in close partnership with employers, Essex can ensure that programmes reflect real-world technologies, local sector needs and emerging clean energy supply chains.

Local initiatives such as Essex County Council's clean energy programmes and community-based energy models demonstrate the county's potential to drive innovation while improving energy resilience and affordability. To support this, employers will need access to a workforce capable of designing, implementing, maintaining and responsibly decommissioning future-focused energy solutions.

Clean energy must remain a strategic priority for Essex. By investing in the right skills pipeline, co-designed with industry and aligned with the county's strengths, Essex can unlock significant economic growth, enhance business resilience and ensure that local employers and residents are fully equipped to thrive in the transition to a low-carbon future.

4. Equality of Opportunity

Equality of opportunity is central to the work of the LSIP. Specific sessions have been held in areas such as addressing NEETs and youth unemployment to help ensure the LSIP can help to make an impact.

As the action plan sets out, much of the work planned through the LSIP will help to ensure a diverse workforce and address (for example) gender imbalance in sectors such as construction. It is also a key priority as set out below to help ensure there is clear and simple information about the various pathways on offer and that employers are clear about how they can support and facilitate greater diversity. This will also build on the 'Year of Opportunity' for Essex which looked to improve access to education, employment and training.

The inclusion of the Community and Voluntary sector as a priority within the LSIP also helps to ensure reach to a wide range of community stakeholders and they are able to feedback where there are issues, as well as benefit from support on offer.

LSIP Priority 4 – Building Inclusive, Future Ready Skills Pathways from Entry Level-L8

Greater Essex is entering a period of profound opportunity and responsibility. National reforms to technical education, funding systems and employer-aligned training are accelerating rapidly, and the region must respond with bold, future-

focused action to ensure that all residents benefit from this transformation.

Government reform is reshaping the learning landscape. The introduction of V Levels at Level 3 and new Level 2 occupational and further-study pathways marks a fundamental shift towards a streamlined, employer-responsive education system. At the same time, the ambition for two-thirds of young people to progress into Level 4+ learning requires the region to strengthen progression routes from Entry Level through Level 8. These reforms are not simply structural; they demand coordinated regional action to ensure that learners and providers can grow with them.

Changes to national funding reinforce the need for strategic redesign. The move towards the Growth and Skills Levy, devolved adult education arrangements, and the expansion of the Lifelong Learning Entitlement (LLE) signal a future in which individuals expect flexible, modular and lifelong access to skills development. Greater Essex must anticipate these shifts now, creating a system where funding, employer demand and learning pathways are tightly integrated and easy to navigate.

In this future landscape, NEET young people must be at the centre of regional planning. National policy highlights the need for a joined-up system supporting young people who are not in education, employment or training, ensuring reforms are inclusive and

locally relevant. With changes to automatic enrolment and support mechanisms for NEETs, Greater Essex must design pathways that capture and re-engage these learners early, ensuring that they are not left behind in a rapidly evolving skills economy.

At the same time, employer-driven short-course models such as Skills Bootcamps and Sector-Based Work Academies (SWAPs) are becoming essential tools for fast-track entry into high-demand industries. When embedded into wider Entry Level–8 pathways, Bootcamps and SWAPs can become crucial stepping-stones, enabling residents to quickly access opportunity while still progressing toward higher-level qualifications and long-term career growth.

The urgency is clear, Greater Essex already faces pressures in construction, digital, health, engineering and green sectors, with employers calling for a stronger and more adaptable talent pipeline.

To remain competitive, inclusive and economically resilient, Greater Essex must now design a future-ready skills system that integrates national reforms, local priorities, emerging funding models and comprehensive pathways for all learners, including NEETs. By doing so, the region can unlock opportunity, strengthen its workforce and secure long-term prosperity for communities and businesses alike.

5. The Governance Structure

There is an Essex Employment & Skills Board, which has overseen the development of the LSIP 2026–2029 and to ensure that local employer voices are heard throughout.

The membership for the Board is set out below, which illustrates the representation from employers in key sectors and key stakeholders. Further information and Board papers are available at [LSIP Employment & Skill Board | Essex Chambers of Commerce](#)

Additionally, Board members attended many of the sector roundtables and minutes have been produced for all Sector roundtables and shared with attendees for any comments, to help ensure their views are accurately reflected.

Essex Chambers of Commerce Chief Executive Denise Rossiter is also a member of the [Greater Essex Business Board \(GEBB\)](#) and meetings are regularly attended by Joanne Giles, LSIP Executive Director to ensure join up with the LSIP, as is reflected in the GEBB Manifesto.

Employment and Skills Board members:

Joanne Giles – Chair	Essex Chambers of Commerce
Denise Rossiter	Essex Chambers of Commerce
Elaine Oddie	Essex Chambers of Commerce
Katie Lord	TARMAC
Martin Beable	Greater Anglia
Dave Cope	Dept. for Work & Pensions
Lauren Philips	Dept. for Work & Pensions
Hayley Chapman	Active Essex
Louise Searley	Searley Owen
Claudia Girardone	University of Essex
Steve Mannix	Mercury Theatre
Katie McGovern	Essex and Suffolk Water
Johnathon Cuthbertson	Essex County Council
Katharine Ball	Essex Provider Network (EPN)
David Warnes	Federation of Essex Colleges (FEDEC)
Karen Spencer	Federation of Essex Colleges (FEDEC)

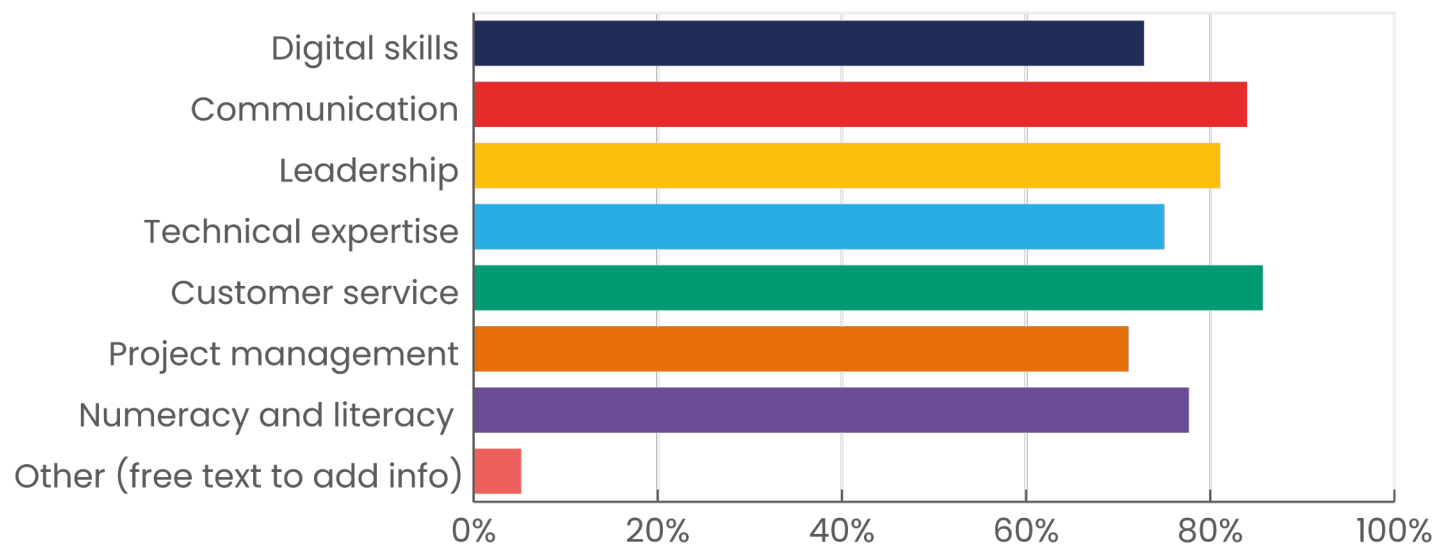
Denise Brown	Federation of Essex Colleges (FEDEC) & Institute of Technology (IOT)
Ann Scott	Federation of Small Businesses (FSB)
Berenice Kude	Ford
Hyla Grimwade	Greater Essex Careers Hub
Tanya Meah	Ground Control
Marcella M'Rabety	London Stansted Airport Ltd
Helen Clements	Morgan Sindall
Liz Storey	SEATS
Brian Warrens	POT Studios
Claire Wright	Rose Builders
Nick Brown	Southend-on-Sea City Council
Tom White	Thames Freeport
Kate Kozlova-Boran	Thurrock Council
Robert Walker	University of Essex
Natalie Bonnick	Lower Thames Crossing – Highways England



Appendix 1. Full LSIP Survey results Essex Chambers of Commerce – LSIP Survey 2025/6

Q1 Which of the following skill areas are currently well-covered in your workforce?

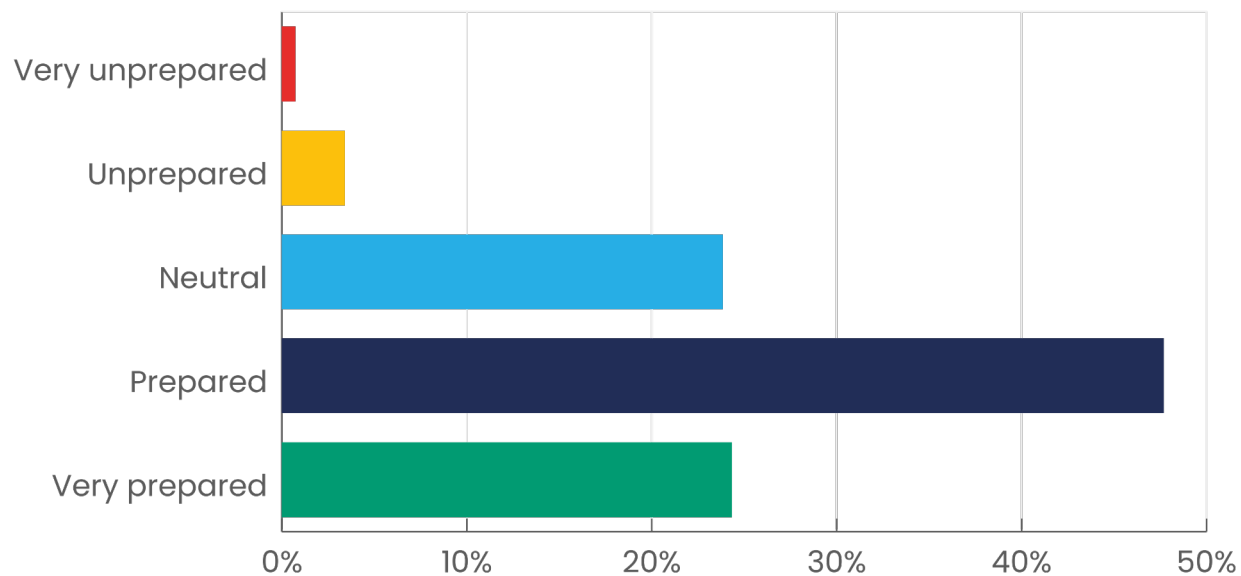
Answer	Responses	Response %
Digital skills	299	72.75%
Communication	345	83.94%
Leadership	333	81.02%
Technical expertise	308	74.94%
Customer service	352	85.64%
Project management	292	71.05%
Numeracy and literacy	319	77.62%
Other (free text to add info)	21	5.11%



Appendix 1. Full LSIP Survey results (cont.) Essex Chambers of Commerce – LSIP Survey 2025/6

Q2 How would you rate the overall skills readiness of your current workforce for future industry changes?

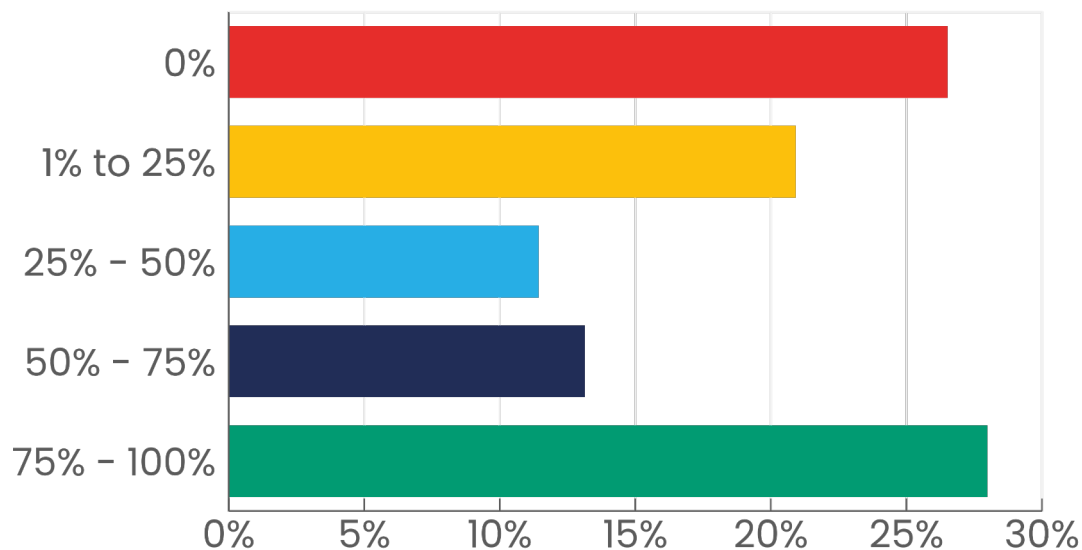
Answer	Responses	Response %
Very unprepared	3	0.73%
Unprepared	14	3.41%
Neutral	98	23.84%
Prepared	196	47.69%
Very prepared	100	24.33%



Appendix 1. Full LSIP Survey results (cont.) Essex Chambers of Commerce – LSIP Survey 2025/6

Q3 What percentage of your workforce has received external training in the past 12 months?

Answer	Responses	Response %
0%	109	26.52%
1% to 25%	86	20.92%
25% - 50%	47	11.44%
50% - 75%	54	13.14%
75% - 100%	115	27.98%



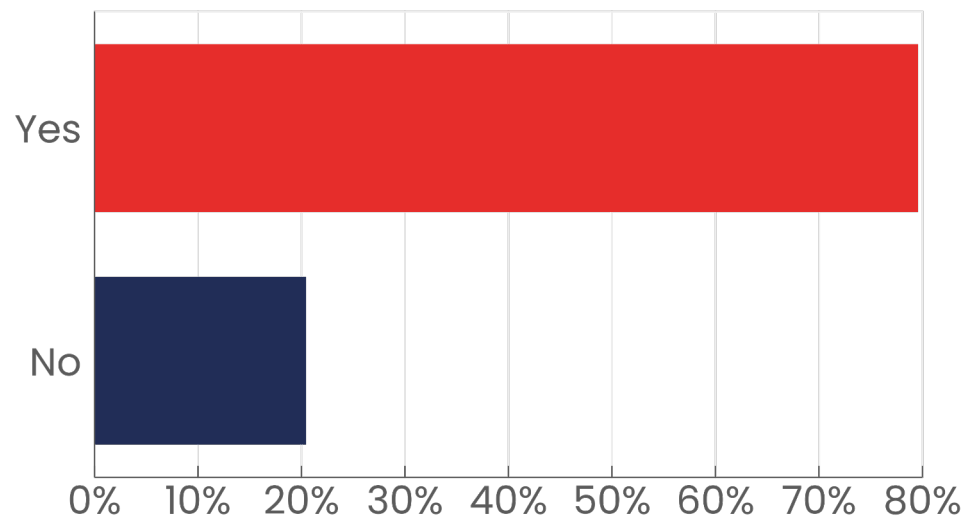


Appendix 1. Full LSIP Survey results (cont.)

Essex Chambers of Commerce – LSIP Survey 2025/6

Q4 Do you find it easy to find industry relevant training for your workforce?

Answer	Responses	Response %
Yes	327	79.56%
No	84	20.44%



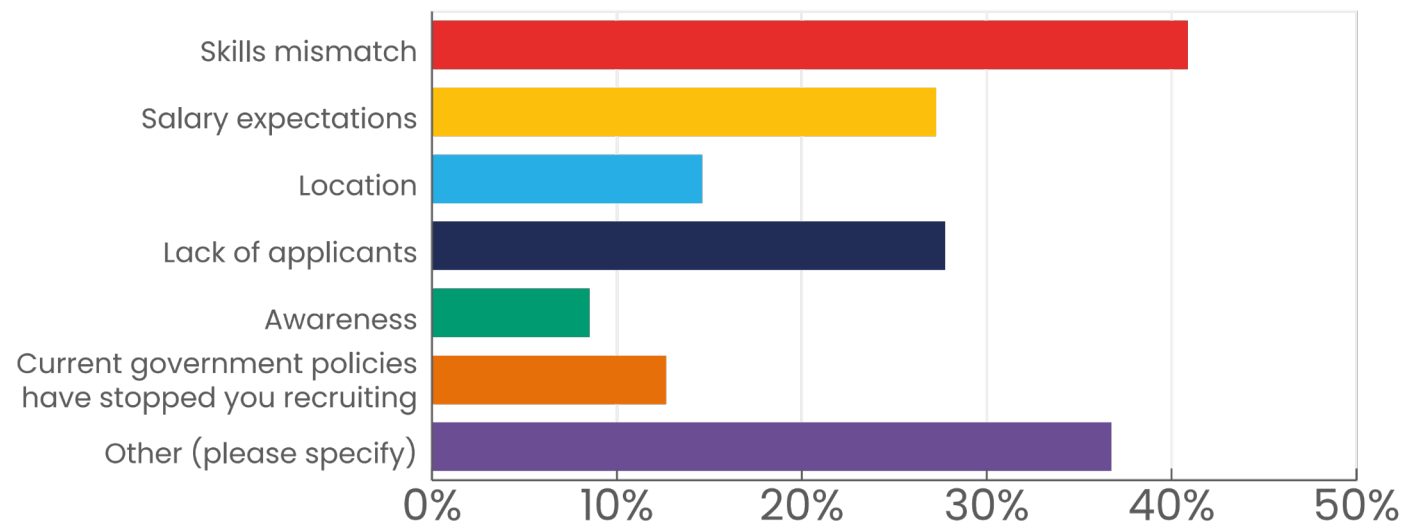


Appendix 1. Full LSIP Survey results (cont.)

Essex Chambers of Commerce – LSIP Survey 2025/6

Q5 What are the main barriers to successful recruitment in your sector?

Answer	Responses	Response %
Skills mismatch	168	40.88%
Salary expectations	112	27.25%
Location	60	14.60%
Lack of applicants	114	27.74%
Awareness	35	8.52%
Current government policies have stopped you recruiting	52	12.65%
Other (please specify)	151	36.74%

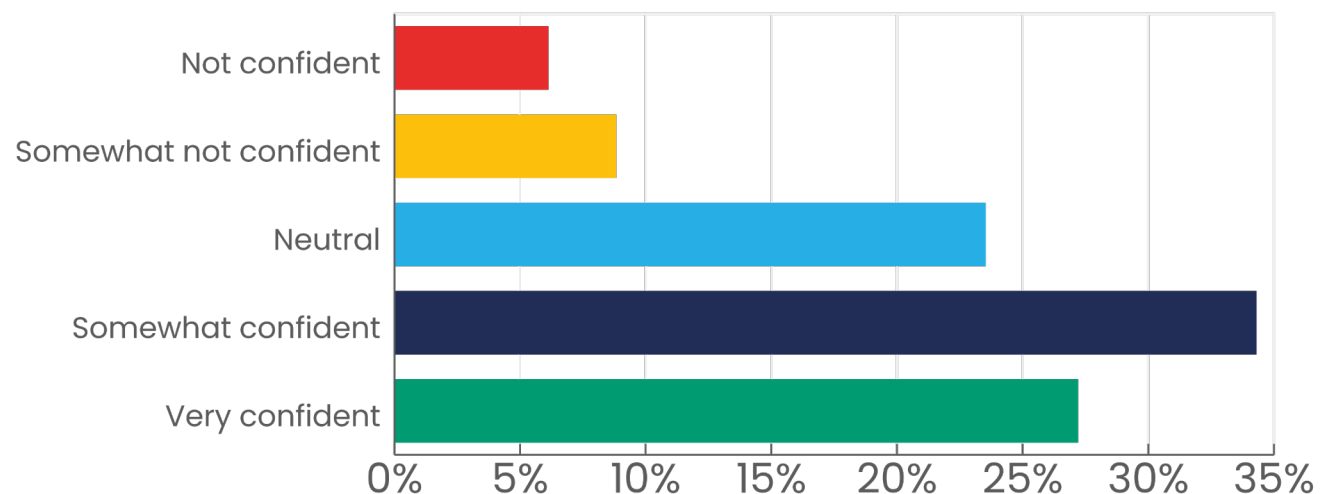




Appendix 1. Full LSIP Survey results (cont.) Essex Chambers of Commerce – LSIP Survey 2025/6

Q6 How confident are you in your ability to recruit the skills your business will need in the next 3–5 years?

Answer	Responses	Response %
Not confident	25	6.13%
Somewhat not confident	36	8.82%
Neutral	96	23.53%
Somewhat confident	140	34.31%
Very confident	111	27.21%



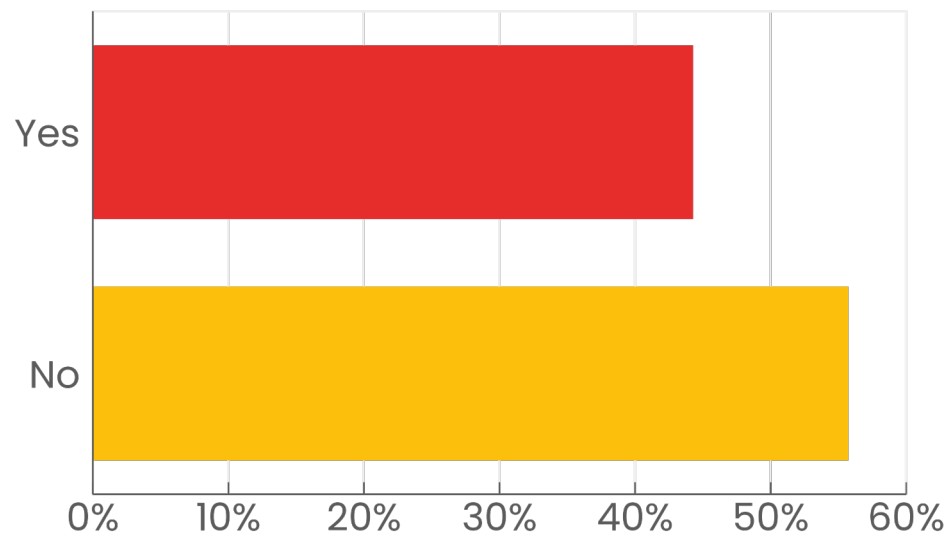


Appendix 1. Full LSIP Survey results (cont.)

Essex Chambers of Commerce – LSIP Survey 2025/6

Q7 Are you currently recruiting, or expect to in the next 6 months?

Answer	Responses	Response %
Yes	182	44.28%
No	229	55.72%

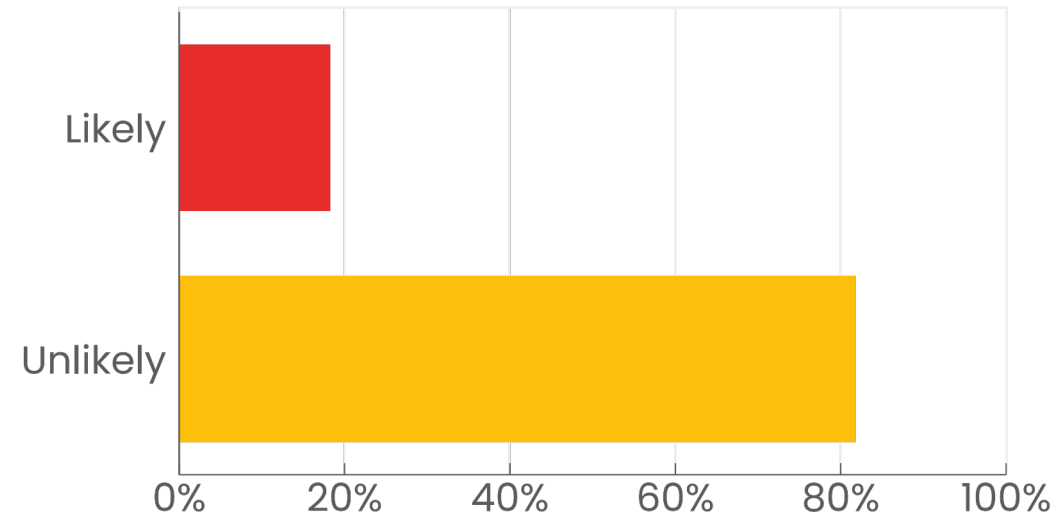


Appendix 1. Full LSIP Survey results (cont.)

Essex Chambers of Commerce – LSIP Survey 2025/6

Q8 How likely are you to recruit a 16-18 year old Apprentice within the next 6-12 months?

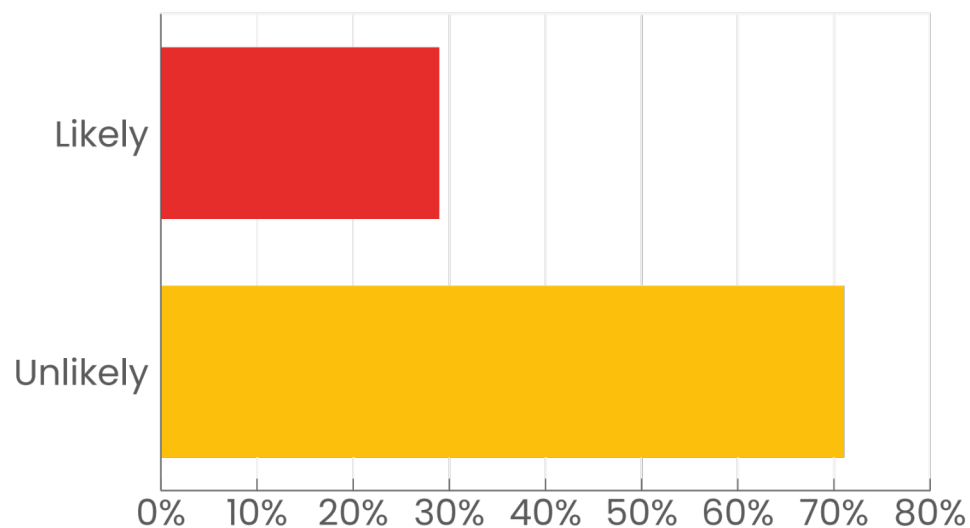
Answer	Responses	Response %
Likely	75	18.25%
Unlikely	336	81.75%



Appendix 1. Full LSIP Survey results (cont.) Essex Chambers of Commerce – LSIP Survey 2025/6

Q9 How likely are you to recruit an apprentice older than 18 in the next 6–12 months?

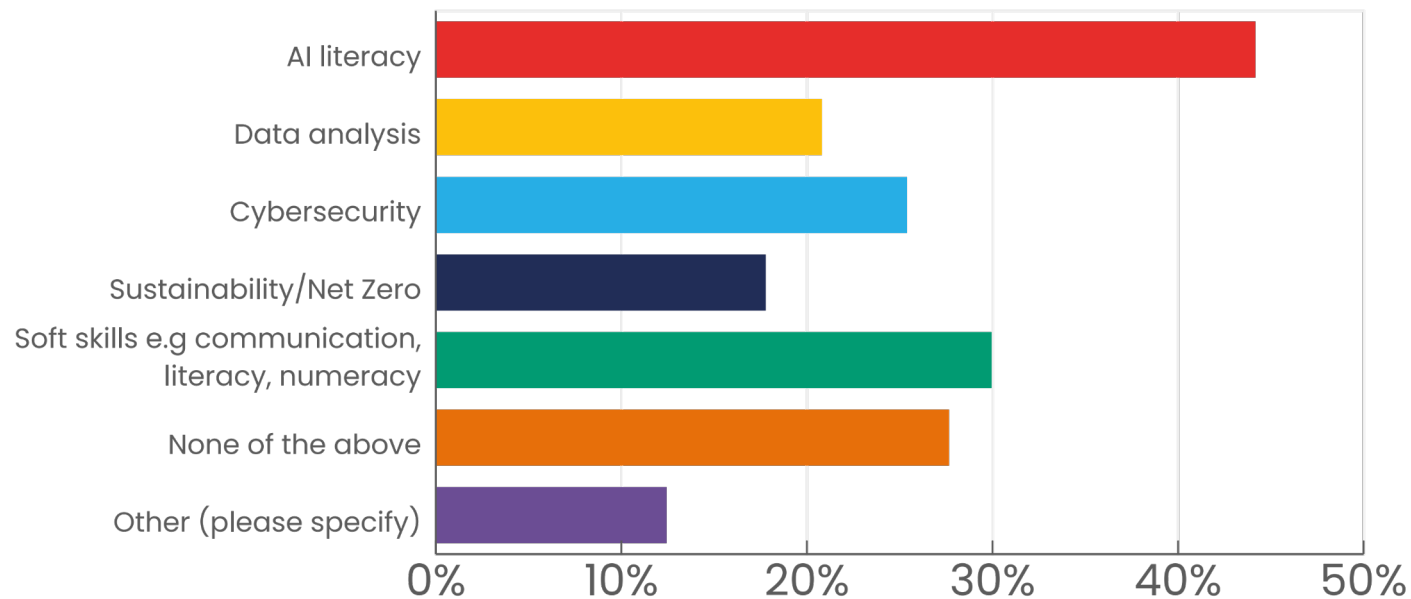
Answer	Responses	Response %
Likely	119	28.95%
Unlikely	292	71.05%



Appendix 1. Full LSIP Survey results (cont.) Essex Chambers of Commerce – LSIP Survey 2025/6

Q10 Which emerging skills do you anticipate needing more of in the next 3–5 years?

Answer	Responses	Response %
AI literacy	174	44.16%
Data analysis	82	20.81%
Cybersecurity	100	25.38%
Sustainability/ Net Zero	70	17.77%
Soft skills e.g communication, literacy, numeracy	118	29.95%
None of the above	109	27.66%
Other (please specify)	49	12.44%

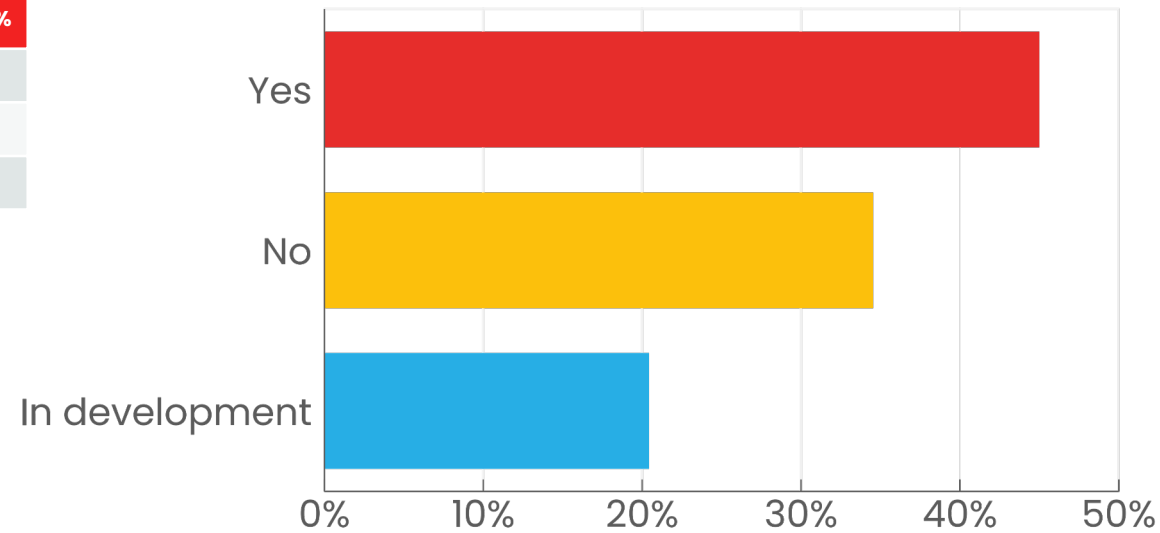


Appendix 1. Full LSIP Survey results (cont.)

Essex Chambers of Commerce – LSIP Survey 2025/6

Q11 Do you have a strategy in place to identify and develop future skills within your workforce?

Answer	Responses	Response %
Yes	185	45.01%
No	142	34.55%
In development	84	20.44%



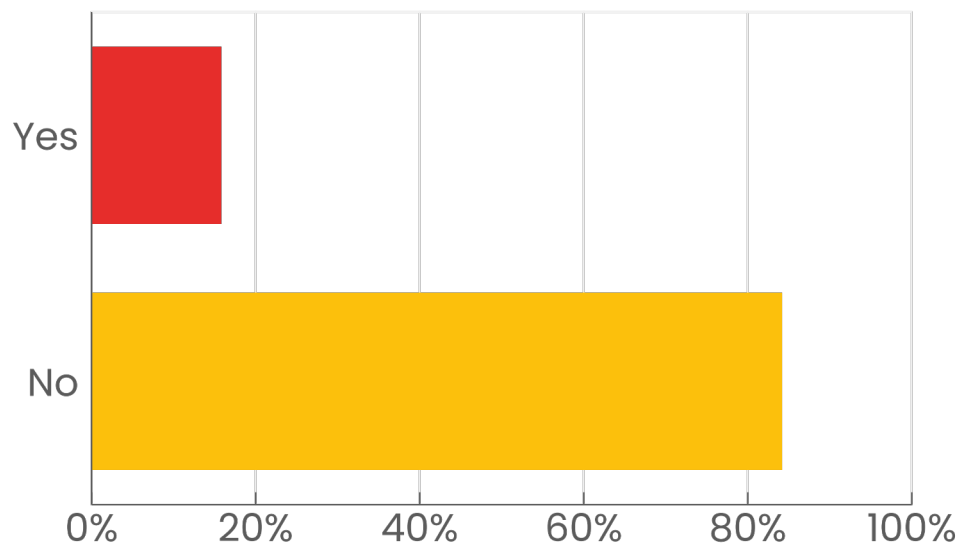


Appendix 1. Full LSIP Survey results (cont.)

Essex Chambers of Commerce – LSIP Survey 2025/6

Q12 Would you like help with this?

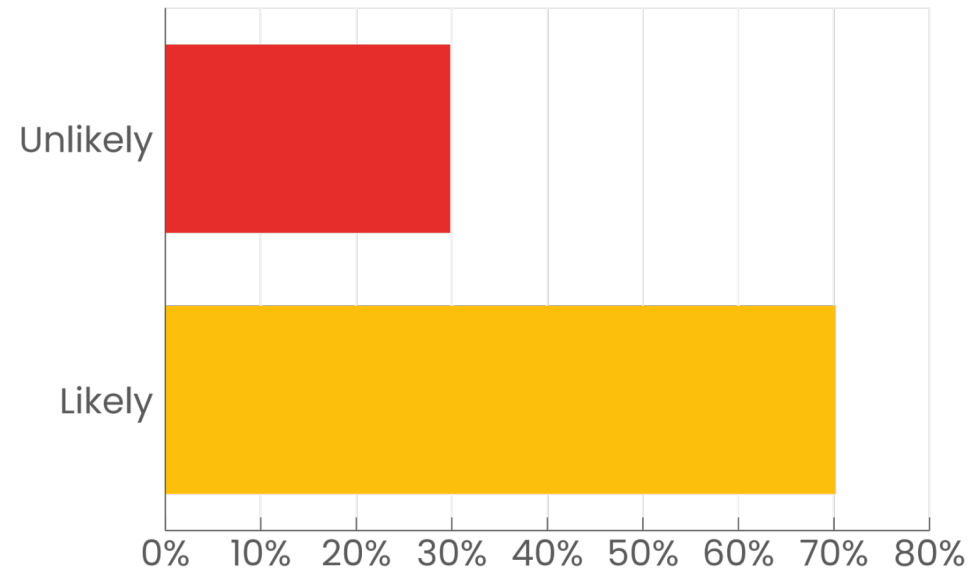
Answer	Responses	Response %
Yes	65	15.82%
No	346	84.18%



Appendix 1. Full LSIP Survey results (cont.) Essex Chambers of Commerce – LSIP Survey 2025/6

Q13 How likely are you to invest in reskilling or upskilling your current employees in the next 12 months?

Answer	Responses	Response %
Unlikely	122	29.83%
Likely	287	70.17%



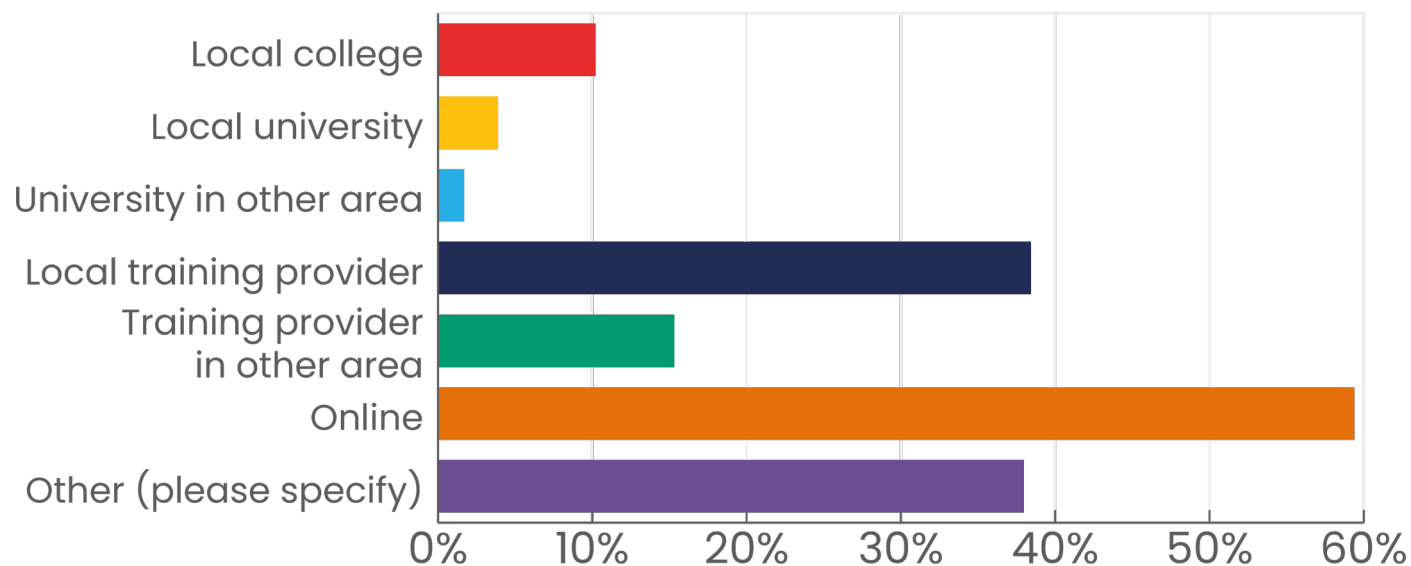


Appendix 1. Full LSIP Survey results (cont.)

Essex Chambers of Commerce – LSIP Survey 2025/6

Q14 Where do you tend to go for your training?

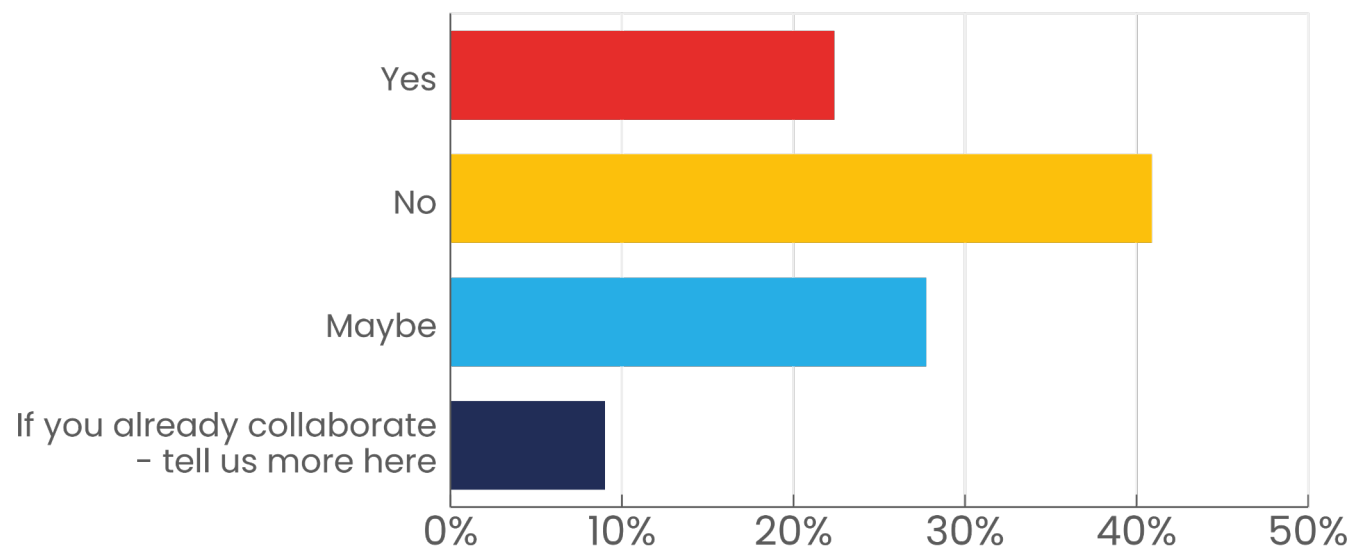
Answer	Responses	Response %
Local college	42	10.22%
Local university	16	3.89%
University in other area	7	1.70%
Local training provider	158	38.44%
Training provider in other area	63	15.33%
Online	244	59.37%
Other (please specify)	156	37.96%



Appendix 1. Full LSIP Survey results (cont.) Essex Chambers of Commerce – LSIP Survey 2025/6

Q15 Would you be interested in collaborating with local education providers or training organisations to shape future talent pipelines?

Answer	Responses	Response %
Yes	92	22.38%
No	168	40.88%
Maybe	114	27.74%
If you already collaborate – tell us more here	37	9.00%

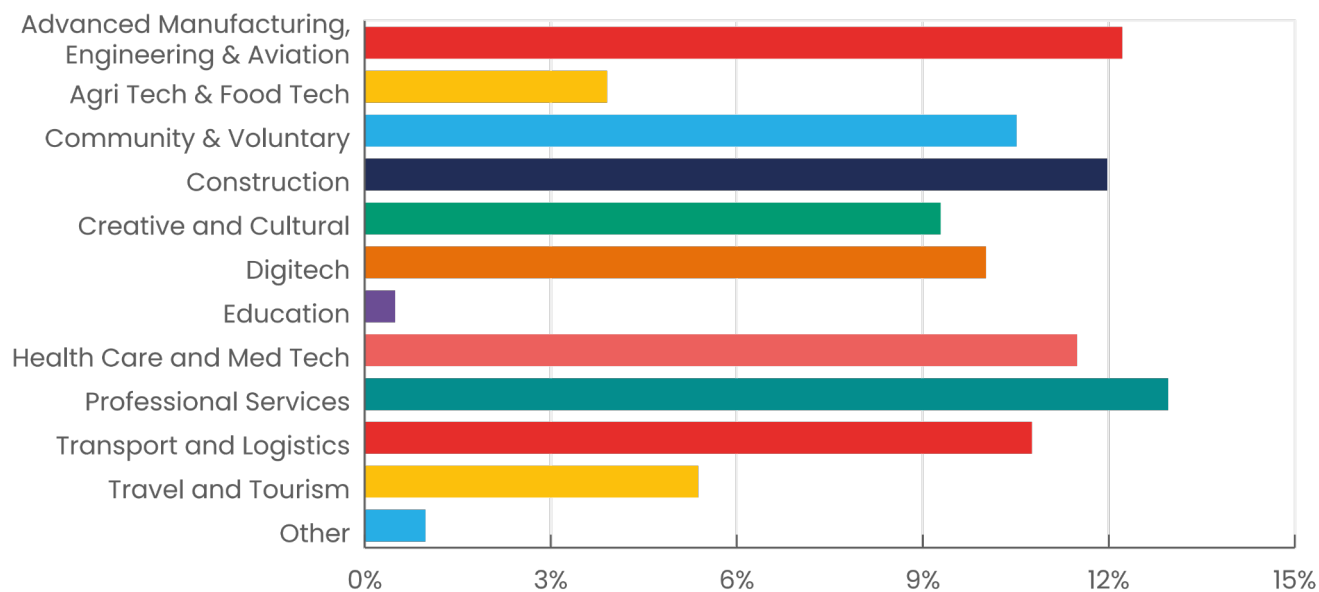




Appendix 1. Full LSIP Survey results (cont.) Essex Chambers of Commerce – LSIP Survey 2025/6

Q16 What sector best describes your organisation

Answer	Responses	Response %
Advanced Manufacturing, Engineering & Aviation	50	12.22%
Agri Tech & Food Tech	16	3.91%
Community & Voluntary	43	10.51%
Construction	49	11.98%
Creative and Cultural	38	9.29%
Digitech	41	10.02%
Education	2	0.49%
Health Care and Med Tech	47	11.49%
Professional Services	53	12.96%
Transport and Logistics	44	10.76%
Travel and Tourism	22	5.38%
Other	4	0.98%



Appendix 2. LSIP Sector roundtables and key feedback

Sector roundtable / date	Key feedback	Key feedback
Professional Services – held at First Intuition – 16th Oct 25 and 26th February 26	Skills Becoming More Critical (Past 1–2 Years) Digital & AI Skills • Growing adoption of AI, especially among younger staff; older workers often lack digital confidence. Uncanny AI marketing, or that clearly made by AI increases hesitancy. • Critical thinking and analytical skills are increasingly important for assessing AI-generated content. AI already impacts entry-level roles. AI Policies & Data Use • Many organisations lack AI policies or have banned AI due to GDPR concerns. Staff need training in data-use decision-making more than technical capability. Foundational Digital Skills Still Weak • Even as AI grows, gaps remain in Excel, Outlook, and other basic tools. Communication and client interaction remain essential human skills. Young People’s Digital Capabilities • Despite being strong on social media, young people often lack workplace digital skills (e.g., Microsoft Office). Resilience, adaptability, and independence are also lacking. Skills Needed in the Next 1–3 Years Resilience, Leadership & Emotional Intelligence • Growing stress in the workplace increases the need for conflict management, leadership, and emotional intelligence skills. Managers often lack the emotional capacity to handle difficult interactions. Modular, Short Training Interventions • Employers prefer shorter, targeted learning opportunities due to time pressures and low retention from long, intensive courses. Ebbinghaus’ forgetting curve was referenced. Life Skills Decline • Schools’ academic focus leaves gaps in life skills (e.g. financial literacy). Parents’ protective behaviours may limit independence. Employability Expectations • Employers often assume candidates have digital skills, resilience, and critical thinking, even though many do not. Unclear who should be responsible for building these skills (schools vs. employers).	Identifying & Tackling Skills Shortages Limited Long-term Planning • Businesses often focus on short-term skills needs and lack awareness of funding, including apprenticeship levy options. Modular, affordable training is preferred. Self-directed Learning & Professional Skills Gaps • Many rely on managers for informal training. • Weaknesses persist in email and telephone etiquette. Age Bias & Workforce Dynamics • Employers value traits associated with older workers; remote working has shifted expectations and engagement. Younger workers may develop skills more slowly in remote environments. Potential Solutions Discussed Work Experience & Employer Engagement • Organisations encouraged to offer work experience or challenge-based tasks to develop young people’s skills. Careers Hub can coordinate connections between schools and businesses. Collaboration & Relationship-building • Building relationships is key for a sustainable skills ecosystem. Schools already run mock interviews and industry days—there is potential to centralise these efforts. Training Must Be Short & Flexible • Professional services emphasise that training needs to reflect tight budgets and limited time. Schools cannot cover all industry-specific training; employers must help shape solutions.

Appendix 2. LSIP Sector roundtables and key feedback (cont.)

Sector roundtable / date	Key feedback	Key feedback
Voluntary and Community Sector hosted by- Active Essex – 22nd Oct 25	Skills Gaps & Barriers • Digital skills are a major gap, especially among older jobseekers who fear engaging with IT and lack confidence using devices like smartphones. This affects employability, benefits access, and independence. • Management and conflict-handling skills are increasingly needed, with many staff lacking confidence or training. This has led to rising conflict and anxiety-related sick leave. • Media, HR, and data/analytics skills are needed to demonstrate impact, lobby for funding, and manage internal issues. Training Provision Challenges • Current adult skills funding is too rigid and tied to FE colleges, which lack agility to meet sector needs. • Training availability does not match real organisational needs, and many programmes are poorly tailored to voluntary sector realities. • Time, confidence, and capacity issues prevent individuals from engaging with training—even when free or low-cost options exist. Voluntary Sector Workforce Issues • Volunteers often come from passion, not business backgrounds, leading to gaps in leadership, management, and strategic skills. • Organisations struggle to recruit due to funding shortages, limiting their ability to hire skilled staff. • The sector lacks clear career pathways, making long-term development difficult.	Potential Solutions Discussed • Modular and accredited qualifications could offer more flexible learning, but fear of exams is still a barrier. • Shared funding and collective bids could help the sector access training, expertise, and resources more cost-effectively. • Pooling expertise could also help with health & safety, policies, risk assessments, and GDPR, which can be costly if done individually. • Work experience and youth engagement could build long-term pipelines into the sector. • Better signposting to existing training would help, as the issue is often awareness, rather than lack of providers. Strategic Considerations • The group discussed the role of the new devolved county authority, stressing that future commissioning must reflect the realities faced by voluntary sector organisations. • Possible creation of a county council-led voluntary alliance to coordinate opportunities, training, and messaging across the sector. • Volunteering is becoming more important as a pathway to work, increasing pressure on organisations to provide structured support and skills development.

Appendix 2. LSIP Sector roundtables and key feedback (cont.)

Sector roundtable / date	Key feedback	Key feedback
Health and Social Care – Thurrock Adult Community College – 24th Oct 25	Critical Skills Needed in the Last 1–2 Years - Resilience, mindset, and emotional intelligence have become increasingly important due to cost-of-living pressures, mental-health challenges, and reduced staffing. - Communication and empathy, especially among younger people, are vital—technical skills can be taught more easily than interpersonal skills. - Leadership and management skills are increasingly needed, partly due to generational differences in workplace attitudes. - Public myths that the sector is “unqualified work” remain a significant barrier; career progression and skill value are often misunderstood. Barriers to Participation & Qualification - Fear of exams and functional skills (maths and English) discourages people from training or apprenticeships. Modular, workplace-based approaches may help. - Candidates often only get functional skills help after years of failure, making it a late and ineffective intervention. Future Skills Needed in the Next 1–3 Years - The ageing workforce makes succession planning a priority. - Small care providers struggle to offer career progression or develop future leaders. - Sector-specific modular leadership training may be more effective than broad qualifications. - Young staff need stronger independence and confidence, which ties back to foundational maths and English skills.	Tackling Current Skills Shortages - A shift toward non-qualification-based training may open new progression routes and reduce fear of failure. - More tailored CPD, especially for early-years and SEND support, is needed due to increasing care demands from parents. - Better signposting and networking could boost training uptake and reduce costs. Impact of Technology & Industry Trends - The sector remains highly people-centred; AI is not expected to replace roles but can support processes. - Workers struggle with digital literacy, especially around bespoke systems, GDPR, and secure use of technology. - Young people trust AI, but critical thinking and governance are essential. - The sector is still “digitally dinosauric”—systems are inconsistent and largely paper-based, preventing collaboration. - Change needs to be managed in bitesize, non-overwhelming steps, especially for an older workforce. Solutions and Opportunities Identified - Use case studies, work-experience stories, and promotional videos to improve the sector’s reputation. - Collaboration across the sector could create shared pathways for progression and reduce staff loss. - Under-16 education should become more vocational, reducing reliance on GCSE success metrics and changing perceptions of the sector. - Better management training could support empowered, skilled leaders capable of building strong teams. - Work experience remains crucial for attracting new entrants and showcasing transferable skills.

Appendix 2. LSIP Sector roundtables and key feedback (cont.)

Sector roundtable / date	Key feedback	Key feedback
Agri Tech and horticulture – Writtle College – 13th Nov 25	Skills Gaps and Workforce Challenges - Significant skills shortages exist across the AgriTech and horticulture sectors, with around 14% of skilled roles vacant. - Employers struggle to attract both young talent and experienced labour, especially in specialist roles such as harvesters, spray operators, and agronomy. - The sector suffers from poor public perception: seen as low-skill, low-pay, and physically demanding, despite growing needs for technical, digital and robotics-related skills. - Businesses lack the capacity to teach essential soft skills (e.g., communication, reliability, confidence); these are expected to be learned earlier in education. Disconnect Between Education and Industry - Colleges report challenges ensuring that curricula match real industry skills, especially regarding equipment and workplace readiness. - Soft skills, self-management, confidence, and workplace behaviours are highlighted as major gaps among young people. - Apprenticeships often fail because students don't understand the realities of the work; many leave early due to misaligned expectations. - Concerns raised over maths and English requirements in apprenticeships, especially for learners with special educational needs. - The dominance of exam-based learning limits development of practical and vocational skills. Industry Needs and Training Requirement - Strong demand for technical, digital, and sector-specific skills—including 3D modelling, stock control, robotics, and business communication. - Businesses need more work-ready individuals who can handle customer engagement, understand equipment, and adapt to unstructured or outdoor work environments. - Employers emphasise the value of practical skills over formal qualifications when hiring.	Structural and Policy Issues - The LSIP is key for shaping future training provision and informing government policy. - Devolution in Essex will shift more responsibility onto the region, with a predicted £30m skills budget for the future mayor. - Apprenticeship funding for adults (19+) will change, placing more onus on businesses to invest in training. Cultural and Generational Factors - Many young people lack exposure to outdoor environments; some enter ecological or horticultural roles without basic environmental knowledge (e.g., identifying common trees). - Participants debated whether society is failing to build independence and resilience in young people. - Adults also face challenges: shifting job markets requires constant adaptation and digital literacy. Role of AI and Technology - AI is increasingly used across AgriTech businesses, but cannot replace foundational soft skills. - The sector expects rapid technological advancement, highlighting the need for continual collaboration with LSIP to stay ahead of change. Proposed Solutions and Good Practice - Work experience, industry placements, and early exposure to sector careers can improve understanding and enthusiasm. - Boot camps, pre-apprenticeship assessments, and pressure testing could help ensure candidates understand job realities. - Employer forums (e.g., Writtle's Advisory Panel) are effective for shaping curricula. - Engagement activities like skills festivals can spark early interest among school students. - Encouraging more business involvement in education helps align training with real employer needs.

Appendix 2. LSIP Sector roundtables and key feedback (cont.)

Sector roundtable / date	Key feedback	Key feedback
Construction – New City College – 18th Nov 25	Current Skill Needs & Challenges (Last 1–2 Years) Transferable skills & upskilling difficulties - Increased importance of transferable skills and better understanding of apprenticeship levies; £1.6bn went unspent last year. Levy utilisation - Businesses report large amounts of unspent levy, e.g., £400k in one case. Apprenticeship numbers do grow when levy is proactively managed. Barriers to apprenticeship uptake - Maths and English requirements deter mature learners. Contextualised learning could help but still requires baseline skills. Job readiness & mentoring issues - Older staff often lack mentoring capability; younger staff lack resilience and job readiness. This amplifies skill gaps. Anticipated Needs (Next 1–3 Years) Resilience and generational skills gaps - Both older and younger workers lack the resilience or teaching/learning skills needed to transfer knowledge effectively. Pressures on middle management - Growing numbers of accidental managers, often without formal qualifications, causing systemic issues. Need for targeted, modular training - Modular training and pinpointed interventions preferred over lengthy programmes. SME engagement difficulties - SMEs struggle to internally develop skills and engage consistently with providers. Possible solution: Tier 1 contractors mandating management training within supply chains.	Technology & Workforce Trends Digital and AI adoption - Technology is advancing well, but there are concerns about over-reliance and job displacement. AI is primarily used for design/office support. Tech requirements on site - Augmented reality and new technologies are increasing the hardware/software capability expectations for site staff. Training providers adapting - Providers must tailor AI training to differing systems; some businesses create their own accredited training. Key Takeaways for LSIP 2026–2029 - Strengthen management and mentoring capability across the sector. - Expand modular, targeted training solutions. - Improve utilisation of apprenticeship levies. - Bridge generational differences through resilience training. - Adapt training to rapid technological change (AR, AI, digital tools). - Ensure Tier 1-led, supply chain-wide commitment to workforce development. - Enhance SME engagement strategies. - Consider the impact of devolution and secure long-term commitment to skills development.

Appendix 2. LSIP Sector roundtables and key feedback (cont.)

Sector roundtable / date	Key feedback
Visitor Economy (travel & tourism) – Visit Essex – 14th Jan 26	Skills Gaps: • Communication (verbal & written), digital marketing, customer service, resilience. • Management and leadership skills across all age groups. • Confidence, teamwork, and initiative among young workers. Technology & Digital Needs: • Social media, Google Ads, EPOS systems, ticketing. • AI potential noted, but basic digital literacy remains a barrier. Infrastructure Issues: • Rural transport and housing costs hinder recruitment. Industry Perception: • Entry-level roles are seen as temporary; need to promote career pathways. Recruitment & Seasonality: • Annualized contracts for flexibility. • Zero-hour contracts (concerns over potential removal). • Seasonal work promoted as beneficial for those with care responsibilities.

Appendix 2. LSIP Sector roundtables and key feedback (cont.)

Sector roundtable / date	Key feedback	Key feedback
Digitech – Chelmsford College – 28th Jan 26	Emerging Priorities: AI, Digital Skills & Governance - AI has rapidly become a dominant skills priority across all sectors, surpassing earlier LSIP focuses on digitisation. - Businesses need training on when AI is trustworthy, safe usage, and governance, as technological acceleration has outpaced policy formation. - Employers often fear falling behind if they don't adopt AI, causing either avoidance or overuse. - Basic digital skills must be secured before individuals can use AI effectively. - Limited corporate adoption makes it hard to establish clear industry-wide policies. Skills & Education Challenges - Education must focus on underlying capabilities, like critical thinking, problem-solving, and resilience—not on specific tools (which quickly become outdated). - UK is reportedly the only country seeing a decline in jobs due to AI, increasing pressure on workforce skills. - Digital standards evolve so fast that courses become outdated by completion. - Students increasingly rely on AI, assuming “AI will do it,” reducing independence and resilience. - Young people struggle with critical thinking due to algorithmic content, social media influence and clickbait culture. - There is concern about early engagement with AI via video generation and safety issues.	AI Adoption & Change Management - AI tools are intentionally addictive and designed to reward usage; their best use is accelerating learning. - Introducing AI into teaching raises concerns about losing the human element, values, and safeguarding. - Core skills areas identified: change management, digital literacy, critical thinking, and ensuring flexibility as AI rapidly evolves. Employer Engagement & Barriers - Employers remain hesitant to engage with young people, citing insurance, experience and cost concerns. - SMEs struggle most, needing clearer communication about benefits and simpler language. - Employers often expect work-ready recruits, but colleges cannot meet expectations without employer engagement shaping provision. - Businesses face broader pressures (NI, business rates, minimum wage), which overshadow skills development discussions. Overarching Themes - Critical thinking, digital literacy, resilience, and AI awareness are essential future skills. - Human-centred approaches must balance with tech adoption. - Stronger governance, clearer policy, and more collaboration between employers and providers are needed. - AI is a tool—not a fix—and requires foundational skills to be effective.

Appendix 2. LSIP Sector roundtables and key feedback (cont.)

Sector roundtable / date	Key feedback	Key feedback
Construction – Colchester Institute – 30th Jan 26	National & Local Context - Government investment of £600m over 4 years into construction skills, including funding for Technical Excellence Colleges, bootcamps, apprenticeships, industry placements and college construction courses. - Significant local infrastructure and housing developments planned across Essex (e.g., Colchester City Council's 1,290 annual homes, Tendring's 1,034). Emerging Priorities in Construction Digital & AI Skills - AI and data analysis are increasingly essential for technical and managerial roles. Diversity & Modern Leadership - Industry still faces major diversity barriers. Inclusive leadership and culture are key to retention. Social Value Pressures - Tier 1 contractors are pushing social value requirements (e.g., apprenticeships, T Levels, placements) down the supply chain. SMEs struggle with: - Financial constraints. - Short-term contracts. - Lack of resources. - Difficulty planning multi-year apprenticeships. Ideas discussed: - Shared apprenticeships across employers. - Tier 1s employing apprentices directly. - Better alignment between what bids require and what SMEs can deliver. Skills, Curriculum & Training Reform - Need for short, flexible, industry-responsive courses, especially for workers with transferable skills. - FE courses overly focused on domestic construction despite industry demand being primarily commercial. - Emphasis on more employer collaboration and live-project CPD for tutors.	Capacity & Training Development Colchester Institute expanding physical training capacity, including: - Sustainable Construction Innovation Centre. - Retrofit house on campus. - New groundworks facility with Lynch Plant Hire. - Converting blocks into more construction space. Workforce Challenges 41% of the sector expected to retire by 2030. Creates pressure on skills, social value delivery, and workplace culture. - SMEs face low profit margins, costs of training, and volatile workloads, making long-term planning difficult. Modular Training & Funding Needs - Modular, flexible training gaining momentum; could become future qualifications. Collaboration & Culture Change - Industry long recognises the need for better collaboration but rarely acts on it. - Using experienced, near-retirement staff to support training and CPD could bridge skills gaps. Overarching Conclusion The group agreed on the need for: - More flexible, industry-responsive training. - Stronger employer–college collaboration. - Better alignment between procurement and social value requirements. - Enhanced leadership, diversity, and digital readiness across the sector.

Appendix 2. LSIP Sector roundtables and key feedback (cont.)

Sector roundtable / date	Key feedback	Key feedback
Health and Med Tech – USP College – 27th Feb 26	Workforce shortages & career expectations - NHS shortages are now driven more by lack of people wanting clinical roles than by skills gaps. Traditional routes aren't attracting enough people (e.g., nursing, dispensing). - Young people often find long-term career paths difficult to visualise (“you can do this in 10 years” feels unrealistic). - Level 2 Healthcare Support Worker routes have helped early entry. Realism and expectations - Students lack experience and realistic understanding of roles; mindset and awareness matter more than qualifications (70% mindset / 30% qualification). - Employers must avoid glossing over the hard parts of jobs; realism is essential. Access and inclusion - Need to avoid forgetting Level 1 learners, who often become the essential workforce but have the highest support needs. - Higher achievers are often targeted for NHS outreach events, leaving foundation learners excluded. - Neurodiverse young people need expectations set clearly and literally. Early Education, Career Awareness & Parental Influence - Career excitement needs to start early (around age 14) before learners become NEET. - Parents must be engaged, not just learners; one-day interventions aren't enough to shift aspirations. - There is concern that young people must fail first before receiving help. - Need more flexible, modular routes because committing to a 3–7 year pathway at 18 is daunting. Apprenticeships, Funding & Qualification Issues - NHS trusts like ESSNEFT are strongly impacted by funding changes, especially for degree apprenticeships like Medical Doctor. The “jump-off” points in apprenticeships are beneficial. - Concerns about V Levels replacing BTECs and reducing holistic, hands-on learning. - Loss of funding and alternatives is reducing support for learners who need different education pathways.	Adult Workforce, Preventative Care & Structural Barriers - Allied health professionals emphasise prevention and supporting long-term unemployed adults through full processes, not isolated interventions. - There's difficulty hiring for roles where skills exist but job openings don't match, causing a disconnect between training and actual labour market needs. Technology, Digital Skills & SME Challenges Rising digital skill expectations - Significant shortage of digital coders identified by local councils. 98% of Essex employers are SMEs, meaning staff must often wear multiple hats including digital proficiency as a standard expectation. - Digital change can intimidate staff; onboarding processes matter. Major technology transitions - NHS trusts have invested heavily in training for new digital systems, including trust-wide two-day training and decommissioning several old systems. SME training culture - SMEs react to immediate needs but struggle to invest in long-term skills development. They often want someone “ready now,” shutting out new entrants. Essential Skills: Maths, English, ESOL & Leadership - Maths, English, and ESOL are still important to the sector, as falling behind even briefly can have lasting impact. - Functional skills aren't mandatory unless required for progression, but are offered. Leadership training exists but lacks accredited qualifications due to levy restrictions. Understanding Qualification Levels - Discussion of how qualification levels are marketed to students versus how employers view them — they don't always directly align.

Appendix 2. LSIP Sector roundtables and key feedback (cont.)

Sector roundtable / date	Key feedback	Key feedback
Manufacturing – Harlow College – 5th March 26	Context: UK Manufacturing & Skills Challenges - Manufacturing generates £220bn and 3 million jobs, yet faces a major skills deficit with 50,000 vacancies and gaps in AI and automation readiness. - Nearly half of manufacturers say education doesn't reflect real work environments, contributing to mismatched skills. - Perception issues persist: technical/vocational training and apprenticeships lack prestige and are often seen as "second class" compared with university. - Broader system concerns include 1 million NEETs (700k graduates), raising questions about education-to-employment pathways. Structural & Policy Challenges - Industrial Strategy misalignment: Skills plans are created by policymakers with insufficient industry exposure. - Funding pressures: Skills funding is £1bn lower than in 2010; £800m of levy funds are taken by the Treasury before use. - Devolution of skills to local Mayors will significantly reshape regional delivery—changes already visible in areas like Greater Manchester. Employer Insights & Shared Challenges SME-specific issues - SME employees must "wear multiple hats," creating demand for broad skillsets, but training availability rarely matches operational timescales. - High costs and difficulty accessing bespoke training limit upskilling. Training & skills shortages - Major shortages across manufacturing, electronics (PCB), software engineering, and automation, requiring multi-disciplinary engineering skills. - Apprentices often arrive with weak foundational skills due to school-level bias against vocational routes. Employer-education collaboration - Several examples of successful co-designed training, including bespoke machining courses and equipment brought on-site to employers. - Providers emphasize pressures to remain agile, meet Ofsted expectations, and align with the LSIP.	Themes From the Roundtable Flexibility & Modular Learning - Strong consensus that training must become modular, stackable, and flexible. - The forthcoming Lifelong Learning Entitlement will enable short, credit-based Level 4–6 courses at multiple entry points per year. Communication & Engagement Problems - Employers often do not understand levies, funding streams, or growth schemes, which reduces engagement. - Calls for centralised communication and better signposting to prevent duplication and confusion. "One Simple Reform" Suggestions (Common Themes) Across attendees, several consistent reform priorities emerged: Simplicity - Simplify funding systems, engagement routes, and communication channels. Flexibility - Modular apprenticeships and flexible levy usage, including concurrent qualifications. Better Foundations - Strengthen essential skills and academic basics for apprentices before starting. Stronger Early Exposure - Increase visibility of manufacturing careers through primary school outreach. Destigmatisation - Elevate the status of apprenticeships and technical routes. Improved coordination - Align government funding timescales and simplify engagement mechanisms.

Appendix 3. Skills for Care- Greater Essex Adult Social Care Sector Focus 2024-25

Adult social care is the largest sector in England, offering a rewarding and progressive career for the 1.6 million care professionals who provide care and support to the most vulnerable every day. The sector spans 42,000 different care services, within 19,000 organisations, and contributes £77.8 billion to the economy in England and £2.3 billion within this LSIP footprint.

Within the Greater Essex LSIP geography, adult social care continues to be one of the largest occupation sectors but also faces ongoing and considerable challenges within the current labour market.

Skills for Care data estimates that of the 44,000 filled posts in adult social care in this LSIP footprint, on average 55% of the workforce do not have a recognised qualification and over 33% of registered managers of care services do not have the recommended Level 5 qualification for their role.

The direct care workforce which is comprised of roles such as care worker and support worker, average only 55% completion of Care Certificate Standards which forms part of the essential knowledge and competency required within adult social care roles. In some parts of Greater Essex, only 16% of the direct care workforce have attained a Level 2 qualification and Apprenticeships within adult social care have dropped by 75% nationally since 2016.

Further demand for adult social care continues to grow against a backdrop of high turnover and vacancy rates. With an ageing population and an increase in complex care needs, projections show that by 2040 the workforce will need to grow by an estimated 40%, to approximately 67,000 in this LSIP footprint. This comes at a time when changes to international recruitment pipelines and the emergence of new initiatives around domestic recruitment put further pressure on care employers to explore talent pools that historically are difficult to attract in to adult social care. Young people who make up just 6% of the direct care workforce are the most likely to leave their role within the first 3 months, and men, who are underrepresented in the current workforce with only 22% working in the care sector, are just two of the talent pools the sector struggle to recruit and retain.

In order to provide a recognised focus on the key priorities for the sector, in 2024, Skills for Care, as the Strategic Workforce Body for Adult Social Care, developed and launched in collaboration with the sector and key stakeholders, the first Workforce Strategy for Adult Social Care*, with a lens on the key elements of Attract and Retain, Train and Transform.

The upskilling of the existing workforce and more recruitment and training of new care professionals to meet current and future demand remains an ongoing and increasing challenge, with digital and technology, leadership and management, business and specialist skills training in high demand.

Recognition as a foundation sector by Skills England, and one that can underpin growth sectors, is an important milestone for adult social care, along with its ability to play a crucial role in the implementation of the new health agenda, if it is able to attract, recruit and retain people with the right skills and values within local communities. Data Source: Skills for Care Workforce Intelligence 2024-24 Local area comparison Source: *Skills for Care Adult Social Care Workforce Strategy Home - A Workforce Strategy for Adult Social Care in England.

Appendix 4: Information on growth and Skills needs from Stansted Airport (MAG)

► London Stansted Airport

London Stansted Airport is thriving and expanding. It is the **UK's fourth largest airport** by passenger traffic and the **East of England's largest single-site employer**, creating a wide range of career opportunities.

Between 2025 and 2040, passenger numbers at London Stansted are projected to **increase by 65%**. To enable this expansion, Manchester Airports Group (MAG) has committed to a 20-year sustainable growth plan, which will create an additional **4,500 jobs on site**.



Appendix 4: Information on growth and Skills needs from Stansted Airport (MAG) (cont.)

► Growth Opportunity

London Stansted Airport Profile & Growth Opportunity



12,000

Workers On Site



200

Businesses On Site

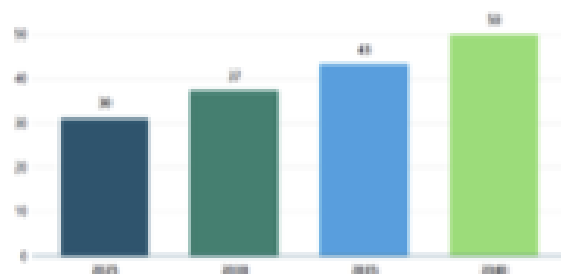


+4,500

New jobs Projected

London Stansted Airport Passenger Numbers

Forecast million passengers per annum (mppa)



+65%
Forecast Growth
2025-2040*

Source: (L) MAG London Stansted Airport; (R) gov.uk

London Stansted Airport Profile & Growth Opportunity



500,000

Jobs Supported



4.2bn

Contribution to UK GDP*



+2.3%

Projected Growth p.a.

Airport Growth Plans



Appendix 4: Information on growth and Skills needs from Stansted Airport (MAG) (cont.)

► Unlocking the growth

To deliver aviation growth and its benefits, significant workforce and skills constraints must be addressed.

At London Stansted, recruiting skilled workers is often a challenge. The airport is located in a rural area with near-full employment, which means labour supply is restricted.

As a consequence, there are consistently between 400 and 600 job vacancies on the airport site and the number of vacancies is expected to rise significantly as the airport expands.



Appendix 4: Information on growth and Skills needs from Stansted Airport (MAG) (cont.)

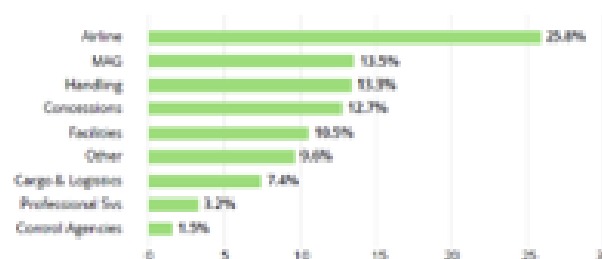
► Addressing skills shortages

Training new, skilled personnel is a priority and Stansted Airport College (STAC) is at the heart of the solution.

Demand from prospective students is clear, more than **2,500 young people** visited Stansted Airport college in 2024-25 and there is a recognised gap in FE provision in the area surrounding London Stansted.

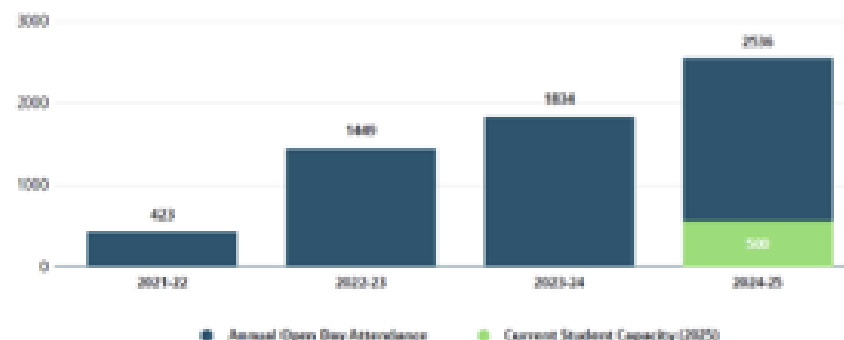
Expanding the college will be key to supporting growth and satisfying growing demand for skilled professionals at London Stansted Airport.

London Stansted Airport Site – Workforce Profile



400-600
Typical On-site
Job Vacancies

STAC – Candidate Interest & Current Capacity





Appendix 5: Statistics on workplaces (including leadership and management) provided by Wellity Global

HSE data shows that 964,000 workers experienced work-related stress, depression or anxiety in 2024/25, up from 776,000 in 2023/24. This represents a 24.2% year-on-year increase. Over the same period, working days lost rose from 16.4 million to 22.1 million (+34.8%). Stress, depression and anxiety account for 52% of all work-related ill health cases and 62% of working days lost due to work-related ill health. For SMEs, where capacity is often lean and leadership roles are stretched, this level of impact has clear implications for operational continuity, productivity and growth potential.

The drivers of this risk sit within everyday management practice. HSE's framework for preventing work-related stress identifies six core psychosocial risk factors: demands, control, support, relationships, role and change. These are shaped not by policy alone, but by how managers lead on a day-to-day basis, including how work is designed, how change is communicated, how supportive environments are created, and how individuals are enabled to perform at their best.

Evidence cited in the Thriving at Work review found that a targeted manager mental health training programme was associated with a return of up to £9.98 for every £1 invested, primarily through reduced sickness absence. Wider evidence also indicates that workplace mental health interventions are associated with improvements in productivity, retention and employee engagement, reinforcing that investment in leadership capability can act as a lever for organisational performance.

However, a capability gap remains. CIPD data shows that only 29% of organisations provide training for line managers to support mental health, despite higher levels of confidence and capability where training is in place. This gap is particularly relevant for SMEs, where many leaders are “accidental managers” who have progressed based on technical expertise rather than formal people management training.

Regulatory expectations are evolving and the HSE's 2025–2026 business plan identifies the prevention of work-related ill health, including stress, as a priority, with a focus on practical action. Where employers fail to do so, consequences may include enforcement action such as Improvement Notices, potential prosecution, and cost recovery. This reinforces the need to equip managers with the skills and confidence to identify, assess and manage psychosocial risks effectively in day-to-day practice



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