



# Local Skills Report

2022

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## Introduction

**This Local Skills Report has been published after two of the most tumultuous years for the global economy since the end of the Second World War. Despite the unprecedented hit here and around the world, the UK recovery is underway.**

There are, of course, all kinds of risks related to the continued presence of Covid-19 as well as to a range of possible economic uncertainties. The highly transmissible Omicron variant will slow recovery, although early indications suggest by not too much. Moreover, two years of strong economic growth is forecast for the UK, from bodies such as the Office of Budget Responsibility, the Bank of England and the National Institute for Economic and Social Research. Unemployment rose during the worst of the pandemic, but not nearly as much as might have been expected, thanks to the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS), known as furlough. As furlough ends, the anticipated strength of the recovery looks set to protect the UK from the spike in unemployment that might have been expected.

The threats facing the labour market on Berkshire can be grouped into five areas: labour shortages; skills shortages; wage stagnation; older workers leaving the labour market; and remote working. This means there may be fewer opportunities for Berkshire residents; another consideration is the economic consequences of the UK leaving the EU.

**This Local Skills Report identifies the priorities of the Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) for investment in employment and skills: these initiatives will maintain the competitiveness of Berkshire's economy, raise productivity and improve the wellbeing of the local population.**

The Skills Report should become a vital resource for local businesses, further and higher education institutions, skills support organisations, business organisations and Local Authorities. It aims to support our skills programmes with high-level and localised data as well as knowledge and solutions that will be of use for discussions about the skills agenda in Berkshire. Training providers and education settings can use this report to inform their curriculum planning. Businesses can use it to make informed workforce planning and decision-making; it will also help identify key areas for training and continuing professional development investment. ►

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In this update to the 2021 Skills Report, some of key developments are:

- An increase of 1.6% in employed working-age residents in Berkshire who hold positions in Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) major groups 1-3, which are typically associated with higher skill levels than the other SOC major groups – up from 57.4% in 2020 to 59% in 2021.
- The number of claimants in Berkshire rapidly increased in April 2020, which was likely caused by employers shedding workers in reaction to the 23rd of March 2020 lockdown and before the CJRS and Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS) measures were initiated. The likely impact of the CJRS and SEISS once initiated can be observed in how the initial increase in claimants flattened after April 2020, prior to a steady decrease in April 2021 as economic recovery began to burgeon.
- Across the area, claimant unemployment has fallen significantly from 30,290 in September 2020 to 22,625 in September 2021.
- There were over 18,000 unique job postings for remote roles over the past year in Berkshire. Adverts for remote vacancies shot up to 3,433 in March of 2021 and are currently sitting at a high over the last year of 3,909.

**Through Skills Capital Investment, the European Social Fund, Getting Building Fund and our local Careers and Enterprise Company programme, we have continued to invest in a diverse range of exciting and collaborative projects that will help us meet our goals.** The case studies highlighted in Chapter Seven demonstrate the strength of our partnerships, the innovative way we work and the positive impact of our work to secure talent pipelines for our key sectors.

While we continue to face many challenges, our work to identify and facilitate opportunities to grow our skills locally will help ensure that Berkshire and its people continue to thrive as we move past the pandemic and into the future. ♦

*Katharine Horler* *Alison Webster*

#### **Katharine Horler**

Chief Executive Adviza

Chair of the Thames  
Valley Berkshire Skills  
Advisory Panel

#### **Alison Webster**

Chief Executive

Thames Valley Berkshire LEP

**This report is accompanied by Annexes A and B, which are available to download from the Thames Valley Berkshire LEP website.**

**+1.6%**

Increase in working  
age residents who hold  
SOC positions

**£1.80**

Increase in nominal  
Gross Value Added  
per hour worked

**7,665**

Less claimants  
unemployment

**18,000+**

Unique job postings for  
remote roles over the  
past year

## About Skills Advisory Panels

**Thames Valley Berkshire LEP is a business-led organisation responsible for determining the key funding priorities to which Local Growth Funds and other public funds are invested in order to support economic growth in Berkshire. Over the last six years this has totalled £186m of investment in the area.**

Our [Recovery and Renewal Plan](#) for Berkshire, published in February 2021, identifies the priorities to rebuild our economy in three stages: renewal, recovery and growth. The report has three themes: Connected, Collaborative and Skilled, with foundational themes of Sustainable and Inclusive.

### The local context

As a key element of Thames Valley Berkshire LEP's Programme Group, the Skills Advisory Panel (SAP) leads on behalf of the Board on all matters relating to people.

The SAP is co-ordinated through the LEP's People & Skills Programme. This programme aims to give those already in the workforce opportunities for upskilling and progression and inspire the next generation and build aspirations and ambition. Read more about the LEP's [People & Skills Programme](#).

The SAP provides strategic direction for Skills, Education & Employment (SEE) in Berkshire. The primary role of the Skills Advisory Panel is to:

- bring together local employers and skills providers to pool knowledge on skills and labour market needs
- work together to understand and address key local challenges.

This includes understanding our immediate challenges and looking at what is required to help local areas adapt to future labour market changes and to grasp future opportunities. **By better understanding our challenges, the SAP can help colleges, universities and other providers deliver the skills required by employers, now and in the future.**

The Panel meets bi-monthly. Its members represent a broad range of groups and sectors, including Further Education (FE); Higher Education (HE); volunteering and community; employers; schools; Local Authorities, private training providers, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). ►

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**By better understanding our challenges, the SAP can help colleges, universities and other providers deliver the skills required by employers, now and in the future**

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## The national context

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

This second iteration of SAPs' Local Skills Report comes at a time when DfE is trailblazing new Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs) in eight areas of the country. Developed by Employer Representative Bodies, LSIPs are part of a suite of reforms launched in [DfE's Skills for Jobs White Paper](#) that aim to put employers more firmly at the heart of the skills system. An evaluation of the eight trailblazers will inform the national rollout of the programme.

In the meantime, and before LSIPs are rolled out across the country, it is DfE's intention that Skills Advisory Panels and this Local Skills Report should continue to influence the behaviour of local partners and feed intelligence to central government, including to sectoral focussed skills teams and the national-level Skills and Productivity Board (SPB).

The Department for Education (DfE) supports SAPs with grant funding, primarily to produce high-quality analysis of local labour markets and [Local Skills Reports](#). The Reports set out the local strengths and skills needs and how the SAP proposes its area addresses its key priorities. The Reports aim to influence local partners and feed intelligence to central government, including the national level [Skills and Productivity Board](#) (SPB).

## Local Skills Reports set out local skills strengths and needs and how each SAP will address its priorities

In January 2021, DfE published the white paper [\*\*DfE Skills for Jobs: Lifelong Learning for Opportunity and Growth\*\*](#). This set out a number of reforms aimed at putting employers more firmly at the heart of the skills system. The white paper outlined plans to test in 2021-22, in a small number of areas. Known as Local Skills Improvement Plans, they will be created by business representative organisations.

The white paper committed to build on the work of SAPs to date. SAPs and their Local Skills Reports will continue as the DfE trailblazes Local Skill Improvement Plans and until any potential changes are made to a SAP's remit and responsibilities. ♦

### Find out more

- [\*\*See how the SAP fits into the LEP's Programme Groups structure\*\*](#)
- [\*\*Read our Skills Priority Statement and find out more about the SAP's skills strategy\*\*](#)
- [\*\*See the membership of the SAP\*\*](#)

If you would like to get involved in our work, please contact Joanna Birrell  
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## The skills landscape in Berkshire

### Our skill strengths and needs

**Businesses are faced with labour shortages across a range of occupations, further heightened by a fall in the number of older workers in the labour market. An important employment story of the past two decades has been the rise in the proportion of older people still working.**

Remote working has been a lifeline for many during the pandemic. If homeworking is here to stay, this could lead to fewer opportunities for Berkshire residents as employers can source new staff from across the country, even across the globe.

These facets of the economy have a skills dimension; higher skilled employees command higher wages and can compete with candidates from outside Berkshire for remote jobs, but those with fewer skills could lose out. More education and training is needed if local employers lose older, more skilled workers. And if employers are paying premium wages in the face of labour shortages, they will want their workforce operating at maximum productivity levels. To do that, they must ensure that those workers are skilled.

### The local picture

- Berkshire has proportionately more working-age residents in occupational groups that are typically associated with higher skill levels than the English average
- Our region has proportionately fewer residents holding positions that are typically associated with lower to middle skill levels.
- Compared to England, there is a higher-than-average proportion of life science businesses in the LEP, a sector that is reporting skills shortages.
- The creative sector continues to grow with the establishment of Shinfield Studios and expansion of Bray Studios.
- Across Berkshire, claimant unemployment has fallen significantly from 30,290 in September 2020 to 22,625 in September 2021. Slough had 6.7% of its working age population claiming unemployment benefits in September 2021, down slightly from 8.4% in September 2020.

Of the 103,400 people who were economically inactive in Berkshire between July 2020 and June 2021, 24,900 stated that they wanted a job. As labour shortages become more evident, consideration will need to be given to supporting them into work.

### The impact of foreign owned business

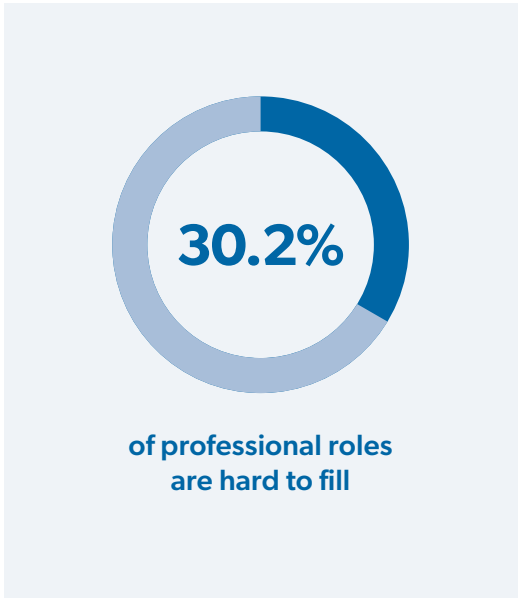
**In Berkshire, which has the highest concentration of foreign owned companies of all LEP areas, overseas-owned businesses generate 30% of local employment and 53% of local turnover.**

Nine per cent of Berkshire residents were employed in EU firms in 2019, compared to 24% in rest of the world firms, including significant numbers employed by US and Japanese companies.

**This seems to suggest that, despite our high number of foreign owned firms, Berkshire will not suffer more as a result of Brexit than other parts of the UK.**

That doesn't mean, of course, that a hit to long-term productivity of 4% will not be detrimental to Berkshire businesses and their workforces. Furthermore, one caveat needs to be added; there is a history of non-EU foreign owned firms coming to the UK because it offered the best of all worlds; flexible labour markets and access to the single European market. It may be, therefore, that non-EU firms are exporting more to the EU than other firms based in the UK but that this is hidden in the figures. If that is the case, there is a threat that in the medium to longer term, those firms will wish to relocate to mainland Europe in order to protect their European market. This is a threat, nothing more, at this stage. Japanese motor companies such as Nissan in the northeast show no sign of wishing to leave the UK, despite our no longer being a member of the EU. This threat must, however, be considered. ►

## Which roles are employers finding difficult to fill?



### Top 3 reasons why Berkshire employers struggle to recruit

Low number of applicants with the required skills



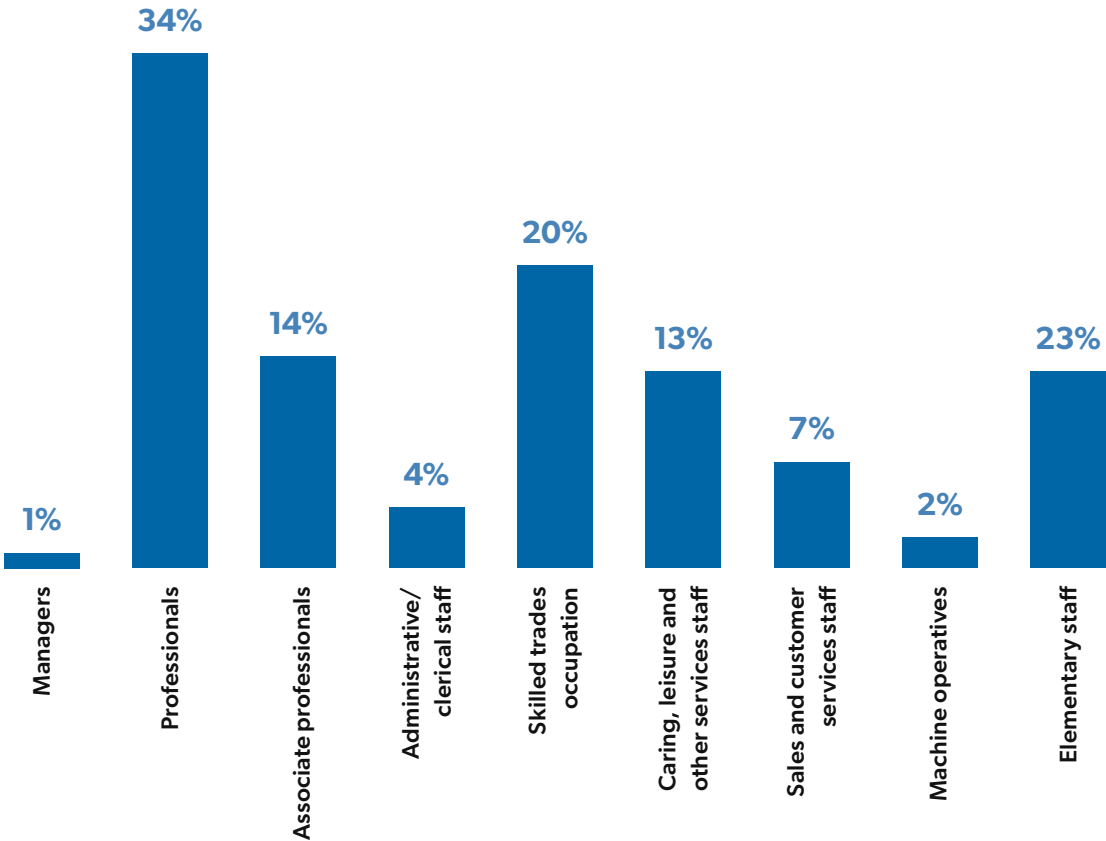
Not enough people interested in doing this type of job



Low number of applicants generally



### Incidence of skill-shortage vacancies by occupation in Berkshire





## Opportunities and challenges for growing sectors in Berkshire

### Adult social care

#### The opportunities

Adult social care continues to be a growing sector in Berkshire. It is an essential part of the economy creating employment and businesses.

There continues to be a large amount of job opportunities in Berkshire within this sector. [Skills for Care](#) reported that since March 2021 employers cite the opening up of the wider economy has having an adverse affect on retention, with many stating that recruitment and retention are more difficult than before the pandemic.

#### Sector Challenges

- There are high vacancy rates across the sector, particularly in Slough which has vacancy rates of 13%.
- High turnover rates exacerbate the number of vacancies; Slough being the most impacted with turnover rates of 36%.
- The percentage of staff with relevant qualifications varies from 31% in Wokingham to 52% in RBWM.
- From the start of 2021 there was a continued increase in unique job postings through until May 2021, where they fell steadily until August, where they returned to May levels. Over the next three months the numbers rose month-on-month, reaching a new peak in October.
- Our data is consistent with national data which is showing that the largest quarterly increase in vacancy numbers was in human health and social work activities, which increased by 26,000 (15.2%).

[Data source](#)

### Haulage and logistics

#### The opportunities

With excellent road links and the M4 running through the region, Berkshire is an excellent location for logistics. Online retail spend is increasing: forecasts have been revised up over the past 18-months and operators have brought forward their e-commerce growth strategies.

There are 20,748 jobs in transportation and storage across Berkshire, with the largest concentrations in Slough and Reading.

#### Sector Info

- Primary job titles being recruited for since the start of 2020 are warehouse operatives and delivery drivers with the most sought skills being in warehousing. The main recruiters in the sector are Tesco and Amazon, both of which have logistics centres in the area.
- Job postings in the sector increased between February 2021 to April 2021 and then remained steady. There was a peak in November 2021 but this has returned to a more consistent demand. ▶



Ruchindra Gunasekara | Unsplash

## Digital and technology

### The opportunities

We are well placed to capitalise on changes to the digital landscape. With 68,691 digital technology specialists (more than twice the national average), Berkshire is recognised as a leading digital cluster outside London. The sector continues to be a key element of the local economy, estimated to contribute approximately £10bn in annual turnover to Britain's entire tech economy, valued at a total of £161bn by the Financial Times.

We have the highest concentration of programmers and developers in the UK, supported by a highly skilled local workforce. Tech workers in Berkshire are trained in specialisms such as data analytics, Cloud computing, data centres, cybersecurity, telecommunications and enterprise software.

Covid-19 has accelerated digital transformation by an average of seven years and data shows that this shift is here to stay.

### Sector challenges

- Unique jobs postings in the digital tech sector took a sharp upturn in February 2021 before beginning a steady decline in May of the same year, before returning to February levels in August.
- Job postings then shot back up almost immediately, reaching a new peak in November 2021.
- Since the start of 2021, the primary roles featured in postings are: programmers and software development professionals, information technology and telecommunications professionals n.e.c and IT specialist managers.
- The Learning and Work Institute has found that the number of young people taking IT subjects at GCSE has dropped 40% since 2015.

## Construction including buildings and retrofit

### The opportunities

There will be increased demand for construction skills in Berkshire due to the pipeline of planned work across Thames Valley Berkshire over the next five years, including more than £6bn for housing developments and more than £1.7bn planned for commercial developments.

Our endeavours to meet sustainability targets provide new opportunities. Analysis of a Local Government Association report on the jobs required for a net zero economy in England shows that the emerging skills gaps in Berkshire will focus on the following areas:

- Low carbon electricity
- Low carbon heat
- Low carbon services

### Sector challenges

There has been a steady reduction in unique job postings for construction-related roles since May 2021 following an initial boom at the start of the year.

Since the start of 2020, primary job titles being recruited for Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) labourers, quantity surveyors and electricians.

According to the Engineering and Construction Industry Training Board (CITB), key challenges to 2025 for this sector include:

- an ageing workforce – and only 14% is under the age of 29.
- 53% of respondents reported facing difficulties in recruitment and these are only likely to be exacerbated by the current labour market.
- The CITB 5 year outlook for the South East shows that the sector is forecasting growth over the coming 12 months, some of this has been as a result of work that had been paused during lockdown ♦

## Our strategy

**Skills policy is vital for economic development, in Berkshire as in the rest of the UK. Earlier in this report, we set out the skills which will need to be the focus for employers and key stakeholders, as well as for Berkshire itself, in the coming years.**

In March 2021 we released our first Skills Report, which was based on the ambitious proposals set out in our [Recovery and Renewal Plan](#), published in February 2021, and responded to the latest government skills policy developments. In this second skills report, we aim to develop our action plan so we seize all opportunities to maintain the competitiveness of the Berkshire economy, raise productivity and improve the wellbeing of our residents.

### Government Skills Policy

This Skills Report has been considered in the context of recent national skills and employment policy developments which has focused on apprenticeships and technical education.

#### Skills for Jobs: Lifelong Learning for opportunity and growth

In January 2021, the government published its White Paper, [Skills for Jobs: lifelong learning for opportunity and growth](#). This aims to put employers at the heart of the vocational education and training system. The paper brings together a number of government education policies and seeks to bring parity between the further and higher education sectors. Central to the white paper is a focus on post-16 skills and further education. These are cornerstones of the 'Build Back Better' and 'Levelling Up' agendas, thereby focusing on jobs and growth, as well as skills. The paper also sets out plans to develop a lifetime skills guarantee for all citizens as well as reforming the funding of post 18 learning provision.

The Lifetime Skills Guarantee offers adults the opportunity to retrain in later life, helping them to gain in-demand skills and open up further job opportunities. This includes the chance for adults without a full level 3 qualification (A-level equivalent) to gain one for free in a range of sectors including engineering, health and accountancy. Meanwhile, Skills Bootcamps – free, flexible courses of 12-16 weeks – are giving adults the opportunity to build up sector-specific skills and fast-track to an interview with a local employer. The aim of the Lifelong Loan Entitlement is to facilitate flexible study for adults and young people over their lifetime.

A key element of government policy is the focus on apprenticeships. A key aspect of the apprenticeship policy was the apprenticeship levy, introduced in April 2017. This sees employers with a wage bill of over £3 million pay 0.5% of their annual pay bill into the levy. The aim was to increase the quality of UK apprenticeships and the quality of new apprenticeships, and encourage employer spending on training.

In Berkshire, employers have historically been less likely to employ apprentices than employers elsewhere in the country. National research by the CIPD shows that fewer than a third of levy-paying employers say it has led them to increase the amount they spend on training; it is calling for the apprenticeship levy to be replaced with a broader training levy. Apprenticeships and broader training have a key role to play in ensuring that future labour supply issues do not restrict the economic potential of Berkshire. ►

## Berkshire's skills landscape

While Berkshire is strongly placed to bounce back after the pandemic, due to our strength in highly skilled, knowledge-based industries, Berkshire faces other challenges. Our population is ageing more quickly than the national average, with the proportion aged over 65 growing by 75 per cent over two decades. This situation could create a challenge if it becomes a long-term trend. At the same time, in the next five years we expect 7.4% of the local population to enter the labour market, higher than the UK average, so these factors may, at least to a degree, cancel each other out.

Another challenge is the UK's withdrawal from the EU. Recent research has suggested that two of Berkshire's hubs – Slough and Reading – are among the five UK cities at greatest risk in the post-Brexit landscape.

Skills can be very specific, but future employers will also need so-called 'essential skills' too. The need for skills such as emotional intelligence, innovation, problem solving and communication is sharper than ever. We need to build adaptability and resilience to thrive during Covid-19's aftershocks and beyond.

## Berkshire's skills strategy

**Our focus over the next 12 months as we continue to deal with the challenges of Covid-19 is to:**

- support the developing and growing sectors such as life sciences, digital and creative
- promote those sectors experiencing labour shortages such as health and social care, logistics and hospitality
- support the build back of an even better Berkshire with higher productivity across the economy
- encourage employers to widen participation in the labour market to counter the challenges of those who are choosing to leave the labour market
- inspire the next generation and build aspiration and ambition

Increasing workforce skills will see Berkshire through the Covid-19 pandemic and out the other side. We must retain our focus on meeting the needs for skills. There are significant skills shortages in the region, particularly in STEAM roles such as accounting and finance, and digital tech. Employers also struggle to recruit and retain skilled people in areas such as life sciences, health and social care, and transport and distribution – sectors that are predicted to grow.

We must also ensure we support residents to develop skills in sectors identified as having skills needs in the future, such as arts and entertainment and professional services such as finance. ►

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**Local employers told Thames Valley Berkshire LEP that the specialist skills they found most difficult to access in the local labour market were digital technology, engineering, customer service and analytics skills. The top generic skills mentioned were communication, leadership and work ethic.**

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## Cross cutting skills priorities

Chapter Three demonstrated Berkshire's many strengths, in terms of our high quality and highly qualified workforce, our strengths in high productivity sectors such as life sciences and digital tech and our specialist educators. Inevitably, some Berkshire residents fall through the gaps. It is important, in moving past Covid-19, that we become even stronger and more inclusive.

Chapter Three also showed current and future skill needs in advanced and specialist digital tech skills, labour intensive skills, middle-level skills and health and social care skills. **We remain mindful that the continued automation of mainstream tasks will also put a premium on skills such as problem solving, communication and interpersonal skills. This can mean that the career routes of today are more complex than those of the past.** Our careers service and our Further Education (FE) sector must meet these new demands.

- We will ensure that our economy is both inclusive and sustainable, so that Berkshire can offer opportunities to all and that we can play our part in the move towards a net zero economy. Improving educational opportunities and addressing pay inequalities are crucial if we are to achieve those goals.
- We will actively support the delivery of skills infrastructure projects in Berkshire that raise the quality of the FE estate in Berkshire, to ensure they have high-quality facilities and industry-standard equipment.
- We will enhance careers, education, advice and guidance for our young people through the continued expansion of the [Berkshire Careers Hub](#).
- We will seek to influence employers to increase the number of people in 'good work' and to address the gender pay gap in Berkshire to increase productivity for our local employers by enabling them to attract the best employees. ►

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in moving past  
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## COVID-19 recovery and renewal skills priorities

We know that our younger workforce is vulnerable following the Covid-19 pandemic, and that future recruitment challenges could significantly affect job entry roles for young people. We will continue to work with our local training providers to develop the essential and technical skills of our young people to enhance their employability skills through two specific projects:

- the Berkshire Education Employment Partnership programme, a £1.1m European Social Fund (ESF) programme
- the Industry Educator Programme, also funded by the ESF. This will support small and medium-sized enterprises in the area to work with FE Colleges to deliver an employer-led and industry-relevant curriculum.

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**The decline of the high street, exacerbated by Covid-19, and the rise of online retail necessitates a focus on developing transferable skills**

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## Sector priorities

Our analysis highlights a need to increase the supply of people with advanced or specialist IT skills. We are also keen to avoid a digital divide between those with higher and lower IT skills. We will continue to work with projects such as The Curious Lounge and the Reading Hub of the Bletchley Park Institute of Digital Technology (IoT), which focus on addressing digital skills needs. We will also seek additional opportunities to work with other FE and Higher Education (HE) providers to develop further IoT hubs in Berkshire that respond to the needs of employers in emerging and growth sectors.

As the economic consequences of Covid-19 have fallen disproportionately on young people, women and lower skilled workers, we will work with partners including the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and local education training providers to tailor skills and training provision for those most impacted by the economic fallout from Covid-19.

Many women and lower skilled workers are employed in sectors such as hospitality and retail. The decline of the high street, exacerbated by Covid-19, and the rise of online retail necessitates a focus on developing transferable skills, while encouraging lifelong learning in resilient and recoverable sectors such as hospitality. ♦



## Our Skills Action Plan

Our [Recovery and Renewal Plan](#) sets out the actions that we will undertake with wide range of partners including businesses, Local Authorities, support organisations and other anchor institutions to protect and rebuild our economy. We remain vigilant to current threats facing the labour market in Berkshire and have reviewed and adapted our action plan to ensure that we can respond to these challenges, in particular regarding labour shortages, skills shortages, workers leaving the labour market and the impact of remote working on Berkshire residents.

Our three stages are:

- Recovery – immediate
- Renewal – 6 to 18 months
- Growth – 2 to 5 years

### Skills priorities and next steps

As with previous iterations of the [Skills Priority Statement](#) as well as the 2021 Skills Report, Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) will use this report to direct discretionary funding including Skills Capital funding for employment and skills projects, influence the curriculum of local education and training providers and inform those providing career guidance of the opportunities in the local labour market.

Our stated priorities are to grow the economy, raise productivity and improve the wellbeing of residents. We will continue to deploy funding for skills projects that align with the economic evidence drawn from this Skills Report and the Recovery and Renewal Plan and, in particular, their skills conclusions. This means a focus on key sectors across Berkshire, as well as support for our priorities around inclusivity and sustainability. Our Skills Summit, which took place in July 2021 considered the skills needs of our priority sectors. A notable requirement among many sectors was for 'soft skills', such as problem-solving and communication skills.

#### Support older workers

While we must attract, train and retain the brightest and best talent, we must not solely focus on rising talent. The ageing population and extended working lives are also likely to impact on how people work, how skills are kept up to date and how skills are most effectively utilised. By working together, we can ensure that Berkshire remains resilient in the face of current and forthcoming challenges and is well positioned to capitalise on future opportunities.

There will be continued development and promotion of our skills and employment portal, [Berkshire Opportunities](#), which tackles the employment and skills challenges brought about by Covid-19. The portal enables residents to search local vacancies, apprenticeships and learning opportunities in real time and highlights sectors and organisations that are urgently recruiting. Post pandemic, the portal will highlight our growth areas.

We will continue to work with local stakeholders to ensure that European Social Funds (which will continue in the short-term) are maximised to support those residents furthest from the labour market to boost their skills and employment opportunities. Short term skills actions, identified in the 'resilience' section of our Recovery and Renewal Plan, include establishing an apprenticeship hub and enhancing the employability skills of young people. These actions are designed to offer a springboard into longer term, high skill, rewarding work. Our Skills Action Plan, detailed below, takes forward the long-term, growth priorities of our Recovery and Renewal Plan.

We will continue to develop the scope of the [Berkshire Observatory](#) to ensure it provides labour market and skills analysis to inform the Skills Advisory Panel and local providers and stakeholders as they develop their programmes and curriculum. In addition, we will undertake detailed analysis on the impact of Covid-19 in particular sectors to identify priorities for action by sector. ►

### Develop life sciences talent

Feedback from our Skills Summit highlighted a demand for the development of the next generation of talent, alongside the development of skills within organisations. The life sciences sector sought diverse thinking styles within organisations, highlighting the role of education in developing curiosity and collaborative skills among students. The sector also sought the more flexible applications of apprenticeships and T-levels.

### A diverse tech sector

Feedback from the Skills Summit made the case for both a culture of lifelong learning and for diversity. The point of diversity is often missed, in that the digital sector needs talent from different backgrounds and experiences in order to solve problems and innovate. Digital stakeholders also argued that collaboration is key – employers wished to reach out to education providers to help shape the curriculum to ensure their needs are met. Digital employers offered to provide more science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) ambassadors as role models, as well as work experience and placements.

### Extend creative capacity

Berkshire's burgeoning creative sector has very specific skills needs. Shinfield Studios in Wokingham is set to offer 18 new purpose-built sound stages, with Disney as its first client, therefore screen skills will be in great demand. Once complete, Shinfield Studios expects to generate total investment to the UK economy of around £60 million each year. The screen industries – film, television (including children's, unscripted and high-end), VFX (visual effects), animation and games – provide jobs such as those in visual effects, as well as in the construction of the sets themselves. Those construction roles require many skills similar to the more recognisable construction industry, but in a specialised version (builders may, for example, be required to build an authentic wall from the Roman Empire, or from Medieval England). Alongside those very specific skills, creative industry employers also highlight the need for soft skills, such as organisational and team-working skills among junior staff.

### Support young people

Helping young people to make informed career decisions is a key element of our work with the Careers and Enterprise Company. We recognise that preparing young people for the workplace is key to long term productivity and to ensure the competitiveness of the Berkshire economy.

### Build sustainability skills

The urgency of the climate threat and the need for 'green' skills is now well understood. Our Recovery and Renewal Plan stressed the importance of a 'Sustainable Berkshire'. Feedback from our net zero roundtables showed that decarbonisation needs to be embedded into every job role in every organisation. This creates a massive upskilling challenge for the entire workforce. Again, alongside technical skills to adapt to emerging technologies, soft skills such as higher order thinking, communication and collaboration are required, to enable necessary innovation.

The LEP has invested £1.69 million in a range of capital projects in the Further Education sector with the aim of promoting state-of-the-art training facilities for green skills. This includes £400,000 in a Sustainable Engineering Solutions Laboratory in Slough, £250,000 in a similar laboratory in Maidenhead, £475,000 in a renewable resources training centre in Newbury, and £130,000 in an electric and hybrid vehicles training centre in Reading.

### Widen participation

In line with our ambitions for both 'Skilled Berkshire' and 'Inclusive Berkshire', we are also seeking to support Skills Capital applications that enable skills provision in support of those furthest from the labour market. While evidence from the Labour Force Survey in the final quarter of 2021 shows a sharp fall in unemployment and continued rise in employment, economic inactivity has also increased this quarter. This is driven by ill health and early retirement. The Institute of Employment Studies has argued that any new plan for jobs needs to be matched with a plan for participation, to help those out of work with the support they need to get into work. This applies particularly to people with health conditions, older people, parents and disadvantaged young people.

### Create an inclusive Berkshire

We will continue to actively engage with a wide range of organisations in different sectors across the region to ensure everyone in Berkshire can thrive as the world changes. Our aim is to work with partners and key stakeholders in Berkshire to prepare the workforce of tomorrow, both new entrants and those already in the labour market. ►



## 1 Grow and evolve the supply of people with higher-level skills

**Aim: To meet skills demand and drive up productivity in Berkshire particularly in those skills shortage areas and developing sectors.**

How we can achieve this	Key partners
Better align learning supply with Berkshire's current and future skill needs to meet skills shortages and recruitment difficulties. These include areas such as health and social work and professional services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thames Valley Berkshire LEP</li> <li>• FE providers</li> </ul>
Encourage greater collaboration between local businesses and between businesses and HEIs to strengthen the pipeline of people with higher-level technical, managerial and entrepreneurial skills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thames Valley Berkshire LEP</li> <li>• University of Reading</li> <li>• Employers</li> </ul>
Promote the wealth of local higher-level job opportunities to young people within schools, colleges and higher education institutions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thames Valley Berkshire LEP</li> <li>• Careers Guidance professionals</li> <li>• Careers and Enterprise Company</li> </ul>
Develop further IoT hubs in Berkshire that respond to the needs of employers in emerging and growth sectors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employers</li> <li>• FE Colleges</li> </ul>

## 2 Better alignment of learning supply and current and future skills needs

**Aim: To meet skills shortages and recruitment difficulties.**

How we can achieve this	Key partners
Map current and planned further education provision against the needs of the local economy, considering key sectors such as health and social work, professional services and information technology.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thames Valley Berkshire LEP</li> <li>• FE providers</li> <li>• Training providers</li> </ul>
Help young people make informed career decisions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Careers and Enterprise Company</li> <li>• National Careers Service</li> <li>• Careers Leaders</li> </ul>

### 3 Raise the demand for skills

**Aim: To ensure that businesses maximise their potential and employees don't get left behind.**

How we can achieve this	Key partners
Promote and support joint employer training initiatives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business representative organisations</li> <li>• Employers</li> <li>• Education providers</li> </ul>
Advocate for adult learning and development, particularly in relation to in-work progression and improving digital and basic skills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education providers</li> <li>• Local Authorities</li> <li>• DWP</li> </ul>
Promote management and leadership training and development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business Growth Hub</li> <li>• Education providers</li> <li>• Employers</li> </ul>

### 4 Increase the number of people in 'good work'

**Aim: To ensure that everyone benefits from a thriving Berkshire economy.**

How we can achieve this	Key partners
Advocate for 'good jobs' and highlight best-practice employers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business Growth Hub</li> <li>• Thames Valley Berkshire LEP</li> </ul>
Support projects that aim to reduce gender gaps within the labour market.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DWP</li> <li>• Local ESF projects</li> <li>• Local Authorities</li> </ul>
Work with key employers to ensure local residents take advantage of 'good jobs' and apprenticeships in sectors experiencing recruitment difficulties.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thames Valley Berkshire LEP</li> <li>• Employers</li> <li>• Business Growth Hub</li> <li>• Business representative organisations</li> </ul>

## 5 Support those furthest from the labour market into work

**Aim: To increase inclusion and enhance wellbeing of the population.**

How we can achieve this	Key partners
Support projects that help young people and adults furthest from the labour market take their first step into/back into employment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DWP</li> <li>• Local Authorities</li> </ul>
Make full use of Berkshire Opportunities, our skills and employment portal, to address the employment and skills challenges of those struggling to find work after the Covid-19 pandemic.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thames Valley Berkshire LEP</li> <li>• DWP</li> <li>• Local Authorities</li> <li>• Education providers</li> <li>• Careers guidance professionals</li> <li>• Careers and Enterprise Company</li> </ul>
Maximise the use of European Social Funds to support those furthest from the labour market.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thames Valley Berkshire LEP</li> <li>• DWP</li> <li>• The National Lottery</li> <li>• ESFA</li> </ul>
Where appropriate, target interventions in areas of Berkshire with the highest levels of deprivation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thames Valley Berkshire LEP</li> <li>• Local Authorities</li> <li>• Housing Associations</li> </ul>
Tailor skills and training provision for those most impacted by the economic fallout from Covid-19, with a focus on developing transferable skills and encouraging lifelong learning in resilient sectors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education providers</li> <li>• DWP</li> </ul>

## Our progress to date

**In all our activity, we work closely with employers, education and skills providers and other stakeholders to ensure the most effective outcomes.**

Since we established our Skills Advisory Panel, we have set out a number of priorities to help ensure a more resilient economy in Berkshire. Our strategic direction for our People & Skills Programme (Skills, Education & Employment or SEE) influences the delivery of the actions and programmes outlined in this chapter, including our latest responses to Covid-19 recovery and renewal.

### Progress to date in our priority areas

#### We are supporting those furthest from the labour market into work

**These projects are helping help young people and adults furthest from the labour market to take their first step into or back into employment or education.**

- The **West Berkshire Training Consortium (WBTC)** has upgraded its software and digital infrastructure through the WBTC Digital Connection project. This enables the training provider to better support those learning functional English and Maths skills. It will also facilitate better mentoring to students who can also benefit from real time learning. So far, the project has had a dramatic impact on the number of learners engaging in the English and Maths courses.

#### 📈 229 learners supported with functional English and Maths skills

- Our **Berkshire Community Grants Programme** provides grants of between £5,000 and £20,000 for small projects, led by citizens' groups, voluntary and third sector organisations that help people to acquire skills needed to progress towards employment.

#### 📈 63 skills-focused organisations awarded grants so far

- The **Skills Support for the Unemployed** programme looks to support those people who are unemployed or economically inactive who are looking to upskill to move into work.

#### 📈 399 economically inactive people upskilled to 30 November 2021.

- The new dedicated **Health Sciences Centre** at Berkshire College of Agriculture (BCA) will support young learners with special educational needs who require adaptations to the environment. The Centre will develop skills in health and social with a focus on dementia care.

#### 📈 49 learners equipped with key health and care skills

- Funding for the **Smile Hospitality Centre** has provided high quality skills and employment support provision and work experience to unemployed adults to improve their chances of securing employment within the hospitality sector.
- The **Addressing Barriers To Work & Promoting Self-Employment** programme in eastern Berkshire supports those furthest from the labour market to improve skills and increase confidence to enter and sustain employment or self-employment. It covers the Slough, RBWM and Bracknell Local Authority areas.

#### 📈 400 people upskilled by 30 November 2021.

- Through the **Supporting NEETs** programme, we provide on-going support and mentoring for young people who are at risk of disengaging post-16.

#### 📈 141 young people engaged by 30 November 2021.

## We are increasing the number of people in good work

We are raising aspirations and enabling young people and residents to develop concrete skills that will be of use to find good work in the future.

The **SATRO mobile construction classroom** works in schools teaching BTEC Level 1 in Construction to 14-16-year-olds and engaging students who find mainstream education difficult.

📈 **200 young people have been engaged.**

- The **HealthReach mobile classroom** helps students to develop valuable health sector skills that will enable them to progress to employment.

📈 **More than 12,258 students engaged in STEM awareness activities to date. The programme is adapting to reach students online.**

- Our **skills support for the workforce** ESF project aims to provide participants with the opportunity to develop the skills that will enable them to progress in employment.

📈 **138 people participated by 30 November 2021.**

“**This is what vocational education should be!**”

Assistant Head July 2021

## We are growing and evolving the supply of people with higher level skills to meet future demand

To help meet skills demand and drive productivity in Berkshire, we have invested in cutting-edge training provision at a number of FE and HE sites across Berkshire. These include:

- The **University College Centre at Newbury College** has attracted key investments from local business to expanded its higher education provision. This enables more young talent to remain in Berkshire while they study university-level qualifications and gain vital skills. Students enrolling at the UC are able to build upon their professional development up to postgraduate qualifications, through partnerships with Bucks New University and the University of Northampton. Degrees and other higher-level qualifications are offered in the key sectors of Business & Finance, Leadership & Management, Digital Technologies, Engineering, Graphic Design, Health & Social Care, and Children's Development & Learning.

📈 **110 new learners supported**

- A dedicated **Higher Education Centre at Langley College** to increase HE provision for a number of sector subject areas including digital technology, engineering and science and construction.

📈 **207 new learners supported so far.**

- The **Windsor College Digital Technology Skills Centre**.

📈 **72 learners have already benefited.**

- The **Langley College Electric and Hybrid Vehicle Training Centre**

📈 **83 new learners supported.**

- The **Applied Science Unit at Reading College**. The renovation of a dated laboratory to encourage increased uptake in new and existing science courses. The new lab will provide specialist facilities, and there is a possibility to create an exhibition area to inspire school pupils.

📈 **129 new learners**

- A **Digital Hub in Reading as part of the Bletchley Park Institute of Technology**

We are also:

- Creating a hub for **Electric / Hybrid Vehicle Skills at Reading College**.
- Supporting growth in **land-based and agri-tech skills at Berkshire College of Agriculture**.
- Creating a new **Pharma and Life Sciences Lab and a Care Skills Centre at Bracknell College**.
- Investing in upskilling for the sustainable economy at **Bracknell and Wokingham College**. ▶

### We are aligning learning supply with Berkshire's current and future skills needs to meet skills shortages and recruitment

- We are working with education providers in Berkshire to **inform and develop the curriculum through our economic and labour market analysis**.
- We support partnerships between our education providers and employers and key stakeholders to increase skills provision in key areas, examples include
  - the **Applied Science Centre at Reading College** which is working with some of our key local life sciences companies such as RSSL and Syngenta.
  - the **BCA Health and Social Care Centre** supporting local care providers with a particular focus on developing skills to support those with dementia.
- Launched in November 2019, **The Reading Digital Skills Hub – the Curious Lounge** is responding to the digital skills needs of local employers. The project has seen 370m<sup>2</sup> of empty office space in Reading centre used as state-of-the-art training space for the digital sector. The space is used by a wide range of organisations to deliver training and to provide information, advice and guidance for example as a Youth Hub.
- A **Care Skills Training Centre at Reading College** has created new training facilities for the health care sector, in collaboration with Royal Berkshire Hospital. It includes new training areas which simulate hospital environments and emergency care scenarios. This will increase capacity for training for health and care occupations and encourage more people to choose a career in health and care.

📈 50 new learners to date.

### We are bringing together employers, schools and colleges to inspire young people

- The **Berkshire Education and Employment Partnership** project provides support and co-ordination linking local employers with schools, colleges, and young people to provide inspirational experiences of the world of work and to ensure that young people can make informed education and careers choices.
- The **Industry Educator Programme** will support education providers including FE Colleges, Independent Training Providers, HE institutions, schools and other learning providers who are located within the Thames Valley Berkshire LEP area to increase the industry relevance of their skills and education provision.
- 📈 By 31 October 2021, 42 SMEs were engaged with the project supported by 118 teachers and employees from SMEs; a total of 618 students have been supported.
- Our **Enterprise Advisor Network** develops effective employer engagement plans and draw on existing local business networks. Working with the **Careers & Enterprise Company (CEC)**, a nationwide, employer-led organisation we are engaging volunteer Enterprise Advisers to work one-to-one with school and college leaders.
- 📈 We won funding to test the hypothesis that: *teachers who spend time in industry, result in higher quality, meaningful curriculum encounters for their students and both gain deeper understanding of their subject.*
- 📈 **Inspiration Beyond The Classroom** will work with approx. 20 teachers from 8-10 schools across Berkshire. These teachers will engage in industry placements, work shadowing, industry visits, projects with local businesses to help address the local skills shortage in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Maths industries.
- 📈 We are working with 58 schools and 59 Enterprise Advisors. ▶

## Our plan supports greater skills provision across Berkshire at all levels, prioritising those skills we need immediately and for the future

### We are responding to Covid-19 with our partners

**The strong working relationships built by the SAP and wider LEP and its partners have proved invaluable in responding to the Covid-19 pandemic.**

The creation of the [Berkshire Opportunities](#) portal is an example of our excellent partnership working. It is funded by Thames Valley Berkshire LEP in conjunction with the six Berkshire Local Authorities, the five Berkshire Further Education Colleges and The Careers and Enterprise Company. In response to Covid-19's devastating impact on the local economy, the LEP rapidly launched, a free online portal Berkshire Opportunities. It supports job seekers in their immediate career, training and education goals and will have a positive impact on Berkshire's skills and development landscape for years to come. Locals can find out about jobs, apprenticeships, further education and post-16 courses as well as local career pathways.

The portal has helped our residents to make informed career decisions and supported them through the employment and skills challenges they face as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. In the past 12 months, 7096 jobs were applied for via the site.

The approach to skills provision outlined by the SAP in the Recovery and Renewal Plan is one of the pathways to Berkshire's recovery and renewal in the post-Covid-19 era. **Our training and upskilling activities will help ensure that Berkshire is resilient in the face of challenges such as an ageing population or the increasing automation of job roles.**

The actions in the Recovery and Renewal Plan, outlined in the previous chapter, mirror the collaborative and responsive approach exemplified by the SAP. The plan supports greater skills provision across Berkshire at all levels, prioritising those skills we need immediately and for the future. **The vision is wide – to ensure no one is left behind. ♦**



## Hands-on inspiration for future health workers

### Berkshire Care Skills Training Centre suites

“Working in partnership with colleges is very important to us, as we need to recruit new talent all the time. We have staff shortages in areas such as nursing and midwifery and this partnership is a key area to help us develop the pipeline of new talent for the Trust.”

Nicola Morgan, Learning & Development Manager at Frimley Health NHS Foundation Trust

**A pioneering initiative between the healthcare and education sectors to embed and accelerate care skills in future NHS key workers has flourished, resulting in even more employers and learners engaged across Berkshire over the past two years.**

In 2020 the Care Skills Training Centre at Reading College was launched as a partnership between the Activate Learning Education Trust and the Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust to transform the way students and professionals gain health and social care skills.

The success of the partnership – which created one of the UK’s best industry-standard facilities of its kind – has inspired a second facility at Bracknell and Wokingham College. In 2021, Activate Learning Education Trust collaborated with Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, Frimley Health NHS Foundation Trust, Health Education England, and Skills for Care to deliver an equally cutting-edge learning suite. Both training centres have continued to enjoy success following £430,000 of Skills Capital Investment from Thames Valley Berkshire LEP.

In recent years, healthcare recruitment has been a struggle. The partnership between Activate Learning and NHS

partners will ensure the development of students who are ready to step out of the training facilities and into a work setting. The investment of NHS Trusts has been vital in ensuring the suites are fit for purpose and will accelerate student learning.

The positive impact of the two training centre suites continues. The involvement of NHS providers in supporting co-creation and co-delivery of the curriculum at Reading saw **Activate Learning** being nominated in the Employer Engagement category in the Tes Awards 2021. Awareness of the impressive facilities, combined with positive sentiment for our NHS services as a result of the global pandemic, mean the Colleges are seeing a significant boost in applications. There were 125 learners on healthcare programmes across both settings in 2021 while recent open have generated a significant number of applications and interest. ►

We’ve learnt the skills we need in the care suite so, whenever we go on placement, we feel more prepared. It’s really helped us to prepare for what we need to do in the workplace.

Erin Hicks,  
Level 2 Health student at Reading College



© Activate Learning



## Supporting skills for the future

### The Curious Lounge

“The course provided such a supportive and creative learning environment. A lot of the information was very new to most people, but we were all given the encouragement we needed so we never felt out of our depth and all our goals were achievable.”

Digital Gum student

**The Curious Lounge, a city centre alternative to home-working or the serviced office, is collaborating with employers to upskill locals and helping them secure quality work and better futures.**

CityFibre, the UK's largest Full Fibre platform, is an active supporter of Digital Gum, a four-week programme held at The Curious Lounge. Aiming to enhance the digital skills of people experiencing unemployment, the programme gives locals vital skills to get back into the workplace.

With a pledge to enhance digital inclusion, CityFibre is a sponsor of the Study Zone and funds places on the Digital Gum programme. AND Digital is another active supporter of Digital Gum; the Reading tech firm, which works with organisations to accelerate their digital delivery, has recently employed two students from Digital Gum for the roles of business analyst and UX/UI designer.

Learners at The Curious Lounge, just two minutes from Reading railway station, include those in low income and/or insecure work as well as people who are 40+, women, from disadvantaged areas, and the BAME community. The programmes are open to all but especially to the unemployed and economically inactive, as well as those who are not currently working in the digital tech sector but looking to change career.

As part of the Digital Gum programme, students work on real-life Berkshire-based projects and must develop a presentation to showcase their new skills at the end of the four weeks.

Starting March 2022, the Lounge will be running a course for 18-24-year-olds covering project management, marketing, sales, digital, data, and more. Delivered by mentors from local businesses who use the skills every day, this course will give students the chance to understand far more than just theory. The Lounge will then work with local employers to find work for these young people. ►



## A sustainable strategy for tackling the skills gap

### Newbury College Renewables Centre

“As an electrical student, the Renewables Centre gives us the opportunity to explore new and developing technologies in renewable energies that relate to my course. The Centre has also given us an opportunity to speak to employers in various different disciplines in the trade who have shown keen interest in providing work experience and employment opportunities for myself and a number of peers.”

Newbury College student

**Opened in September 2021, the Renewables Centre Newbury College offers an employer-informed curriculum that will help us meet our net zero goals.**

Local employers in the housebuilding, heating, plumbing and specialist renewables sectors highlighted the need for a supply of workers with core skills in engineering, materials science, heating and plumbing systems. It is important that they also possess the capability to work on renewable technologies such as biomass, solar PV and air source heat pumps.

The college responded to this local need by bidding for Capital Grants from Thames Valley Berkshire LEP. The LEP invested £450,000 into the new centre in order to equip talented students to with the engineering and construction skills that will help to reduce our impact on the environment.

Working closely with a number of employers, Newbury College developed a forward-thinking curriculum to help students become readily employable when they leave education. Feltham Construction, a large construction company in the Thames Valley committed to meeting key environmental policies and low carbon targets by 2025, is one of the employers informing and enhancing the offering at Newbury College. Professionals from the firm visit the college to help the students better understand environmentally friendly construction.

The company also provides work placements and internships. The results of these partnerships with employers is a cohort of students who can easily join the dots between the theory and application so they can smoothly enter the world of work. ►



“The development and implementation of the Renewables Centre has enabled us to collaborate with the current learners at the College and will in turn encourage work placements and experience. This will help fill the gaps in the current workforce, while directly being involved in helping shape and upskill the future workforce.”

James Bull,  
Managing Director of HBS New Energies

## Merging the worlds of learning and earning

### Industry Specialist Teaching & Knowledge Exchange Project

Local SMEs are directly engaging with learners and teaching staff in order to boost skills provision through a range of activities including teacher placements, project-based learning and masterclasses.

Known as the Industry Specialist Teaching & Knowledge Exchange Project, the three-year ESF programme launched in January 2021 with partners from Windsor Forest Colleges Group, Newbury College and UTC Reading and Activate Learning's Technology faculty.

Berkshire-based SMEs in the technology, digital, engineering and construction sectors are working with students and teachers. The aim is to bridge the gap between the needs of STEAM industries and the FE curriculum while meeting future skills demands.

## The appliance of science

### Science Units at Reading College and Bracknell and Wokingham College

Since January 2021, students at the Applied Science Unit at Reading College have been learning workplace skills directly from professionals.

Professionals from Syngenta worked with students to undertake a chemistry solubility project at home. Syngenta produced the materials, including a short video, to support the project. Reading Scientific Services also delivered an employer-led project on food fraud. A third project has looked at how to develop new drugs which is very topical in present times.

Syngenta and Reading Scientific Services have joined Activate Learning's faculty advisory board and will provide on-going support for curriculum development for the new Pharma Life Science unit which is due to open at Bracknell and Wokingham College before the end of 2021.

## The building blocks for a better future

### SATRO's mobile classrooms

An inspirational Construction programme is fostering inclusion and helping to fill the skills gap in Berkshire schools with funding from Thames Valley Berkshire LEP.

A collaboration between educational charity SATRO and the Shanly Foundation, the BTEC Level 1 Construction programme is aimed at giving disadvantaged students solid skills while raising their aspirations.

Kitted out with tools, equipment and training materials, SATRO's fleet of vans serve as mobile construction classrooms to deliver practical the hands-on construction training. SATRO's seventh and latest van was funded by Thames Valley Berkshire LEP. A two-year Certificate programme at Furze Platt School in Maidenhead is already seeing results. Taylor, pictured, completed his Certificate in July 2020 before undertaking a Brickwork apprenticeship. He has kept in touch with his tutor, Kevin, who inspired him to continue into the construction industry. Taylor recently sent this photo (inset) with the comment "Now building extension walls by myself!"

The Deputy Head of another Shanly-sponsored school programme said: "The SATRO construction course offers students real currency and enables them to succeed practically, setting them up as desirable candidates to progress onto college courses and apprenticeships. This is what vocational education should be!" ♦





## Looking to the future

**The past 24 months have been challenging for everyone in Berkshire and we know that building skills will be key to ensuring Berkshire continues to thrive as we recover from Covid-19. This Skills Report outlines how the Skills Advisory Panel has created a collaborative platform where stakeholders from local government, industry, the education sector and civil society can work together to enhance the skills and employment landscape. ►**

As we look towards post-Covid-19 recovery, it's important to remember we live in a world of flux. Emerging markets are shaking the foundations of developed economies and we face demographic and technological challenges. Our ageing population means we can imagine careers of more than sixty years, in workplaces where skills need constant updating. Technological breakthroughs such as artificial intelligence (AI) are rewriting the norms of our economies and societies.

In such a world, our skills needs will also change dramatically. Our historic desire for more and greater cognitive skills will be counterbalanced with a need for intuitive skills – the ability to solve problems that do not follow a predictive, linear pattern – and emotional skills, such as empathy, relationship-building and resilience.

**Although there is much to do in order to overcome current and future challenges, Berkshire is well placed to continue to excel in the coming years.**

We have a solid foundation on which to base all future activity. We have seen how listening to – and working with – our stakeholders creates tangible and positive impact. **Collaboration is key to building skills right across Berkshire to ensure that no one is left behind as we go into a period of recovery and renewal.**

We value research and will continue to create a strong evidence base that will provide valuable knowledge for all our stakeholders. We will continue to share our research in relevant and engaging ways in order to maximise the reach and impact of these insights.

While we work at a local level, our activity has a direct impact on the national skills and employment landscape. Our alignment with national skills priorities means that, as we move forwards, we all have an opportunity to create a better Berkshire while also helping to shape a nation that can compete on a global stage and is well placed to overcome future challenges.

The Skills Advisory Panel will continue to forge strong, productive links between stakeholders. There is a strong culture of listening in the SAP, and a respect for the experience and knowledge found right across our networks. We invite Berkshire employers to proactively influence the skills agenda to ensure that skills provision addresses the current and future needs of industry.

**Through our collaborative activities, we will continue to support and enable the provision of high-level technical skills and offer those residents furthest from the job market opportunities to develop their skills and find 'good' work'.** We will continue to strive for excellence in further education by investing in the development of curricula and educational facilities that mirror the latest industry standards. We will continue to enhance the number of learning pathways available to young people through, for example, greater support of apprenticeships, traineeships and T levels.

For employers, collaboration with the SAP is an effective way to secure a future pipeline of talent. Education and skills providers can work with us to help influence skills provision and engage with exciting and relevant projects from their early stages.

We are building more platforms for collaboration. Businesses will receive more guidance through the Business Growth Hub. Our Careers Hub and Enterprise Advisor Network along with programmes such as the Berkshire Education and Employment Partnership and the Industry Educator will ensure that we continue to connect employers with local talent.

We are already seeing the positive impact of our immediate recovery and renewal activity through, for example, the Berkshire Opportunities skills and employment portal. A focus on innovations that meet real-world needs depends on collaboration. This approach has been the basis of our success to date and continued stakeholder collaboration will ensure Berkshire continues to thrive in a rapidly changing world.

**We actively welcome new collaborators in our endeavours to ensure Berkshire continues to thrive. If you'd like to be involved, please [get in touch](#).** ♦

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#### Connect with us

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