ARUP

Federation of Small Businesses

Local Skills Improvement Plan for Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire

Statement of Engagement

Reference: Statement of Engagement Report

2.0 | 6 April 2023

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Job number 292879-00

Contents

Figures

Photographs

Appendices

1.   Introduction

1.1   Purpose of the report

The Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) has been appointed by the Department for Education as the designated Employer Representative Body to prepare a Local Skills Improvement Plan (hereafter referred to as "the LSIP") for the Nottingham, Derby, Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire area, covered by the D2N2 local enterprise partnership. Arup has been commissioned by the FSB to undertake engagement activities to seek feedback from local employers, training providers and strategic stakeholders to inform the LSIP. This report summarises the approach taken to engagement, the feedback gathered, and how evidence-based, actionable priorities have been developed to inform the LSIP.

LSIPs identify key priorities and changes needed in a designated area to make post-16 technical education or training more responsive and closely aligned to local labour market needs. LSIPs are informed by robust evidence, and meaningful dialogue between employers, training providers, and strategic stakeholders, including local enterprise partnerships (LEPs) and local authorities.

LSIPs are both a process and a plan for making provision more responsive to employers' skills needs. The process of developing the plan is as important as the LSIP itself. This is done by creating dialogue, and stronger and more dynamic relationships within the local skills system.

LSIPs differ from previous skills plans by giving employers a clear and strengthened role in shaping the local skills provision. It is recognised that substantial economic change and the skills needs of employers will play out in different ways across the county. Therefore, the LSIP for the D2N2 area will take a place-based approach to address the skills needs of local employers and economies within the geography. The LSIP will shape the future skills and local provision to ensure businesses and individuals have the skills they need to thrive and progress.

1.2   Report structure

This report is set out as follows:

- Section 2 reviews the statutory guidance for LSIPs and how the engagement and data collection activities are aligned with Government guidance.

- Section 3 describes the engagement approach and methodologies used to carry out the data collection and analysis.

- Section 4 outlines the feedback received and discusses the themes and key priorities for action.

- Section 5 provides a summary and conclusion of our findings.

Federation of Small Businesses   Local Skills Improvement Plan for Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire
Statement of Engagement Report

| 2.0 | 5 April 2023 | Ove Arup & Partners Limited   Statement of Engagement   Page 1

2. Policy and guidance

The engagement approach applied aligns with the Department for Education's (DfE) 'Statutory Guidance for the Development of a Local Skills Improvement Plan' (October 2022)[1]. DfE is overseeing and funding the development of LSIPs across the UK. LSIPs are a key part of achieving the aims set out in the 'Skills for Jobs' whitepaper[2], which sought to put employers more firmly at the heart of the skills system. National policy recognises that the coming decade will see substantial economic change. As the economy changes, so will the skills needs of employers, across sectors and geographies.

The process of developing, approving and implementing an LSIP is led by a locally designated employer representative body (ERB). For the D2N2 area, the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) was appointed as the ERB, during 2022.

The FSB is a non-profit and non-party political organisation, led by members, providing small businesses with services including advice, financial expertise, support and a powerful voice in national and regional government across the UK. The FSB, as the ERB, is responsible for engaging with employers, providers and other stakeholders to convene meaningful discussions to determine skills needs, and associated actionable priorities to address these.

LSIPs provide an opportunity for employers to express their skills needs and shape provision, and for providers to work with employers and others to improve skills provision to better meet identified local needs. The Skills and Post-16 Education Act 2022[3], places duties on specific providers of post-16 technical education or training to co-operate with the designated ERB and have regard to the LSIP, and associated guidance from the Secretary of State, when considering their post-16 technical education or training offer.

With respect to this duty, providers should have regard to and contribute to meeting local skills priorities alongside other aspects of their provision. Accountability is evidenced through subsequent Accountability Agreements that set out how providers will engaged with employers and responded to LSIPs. Certain providers may also have a duty to review how well the education or training provided by their respective institution meets local needs, and consider what action their institution might take to better address need.

A range of other national and local bodies and agencies can play an important role in supporting and facilitating the development and implementation of LSIPs as part of a collaborative process.

The statutory guidance outlines that LSIPs should:

- set out the key priorities and changes needed in a local area to make post-16 technical education or training more responsive and closely aligned to local labour market needs;

- represent an employer view of the skills most needed to support local economic growth;

- set out actionable priorities to better meet skills needs, that employers, providers and stakeholders in a local area can get behind;

- not attempt to cover the entirety of provision within an area but focus on the key changes and priorities;

- focus on a 3-year period and be reviewed and updated as appropriate during this time;

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[1] Local skills improvement plans - statutory guidance (publishing.service.gov.uk)

[2] Skills for Jobs: Lifelong Learning for Opportunity and Growth (publishing.service.gov.uk)

[3] Skills and Post-16 Education Act 2022 (legislation.gov.uk)

Federation of Small Businesses   Local Skills Improvement Plan for Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire
Statement of Engagement Report

| 2.0 | 5 April 2023 | Ove Arup & Partners Limited   Statement of Engagement   Page 2

- avoid making recommendations regarding national skills policy and focus on what can be done locally; and

- describe how skills required in relation to jobs that directly or indirectly support Net Zero targets, adaptation to Climate Change or meet other environmental goals have been considered.

Figure 1, taken from the relevant statutory guidance[1], outlines the process of creating an LSIP. The process of creating and implementing an LSIP is an iterative one and requires engagement from many different stakeholders in the region.
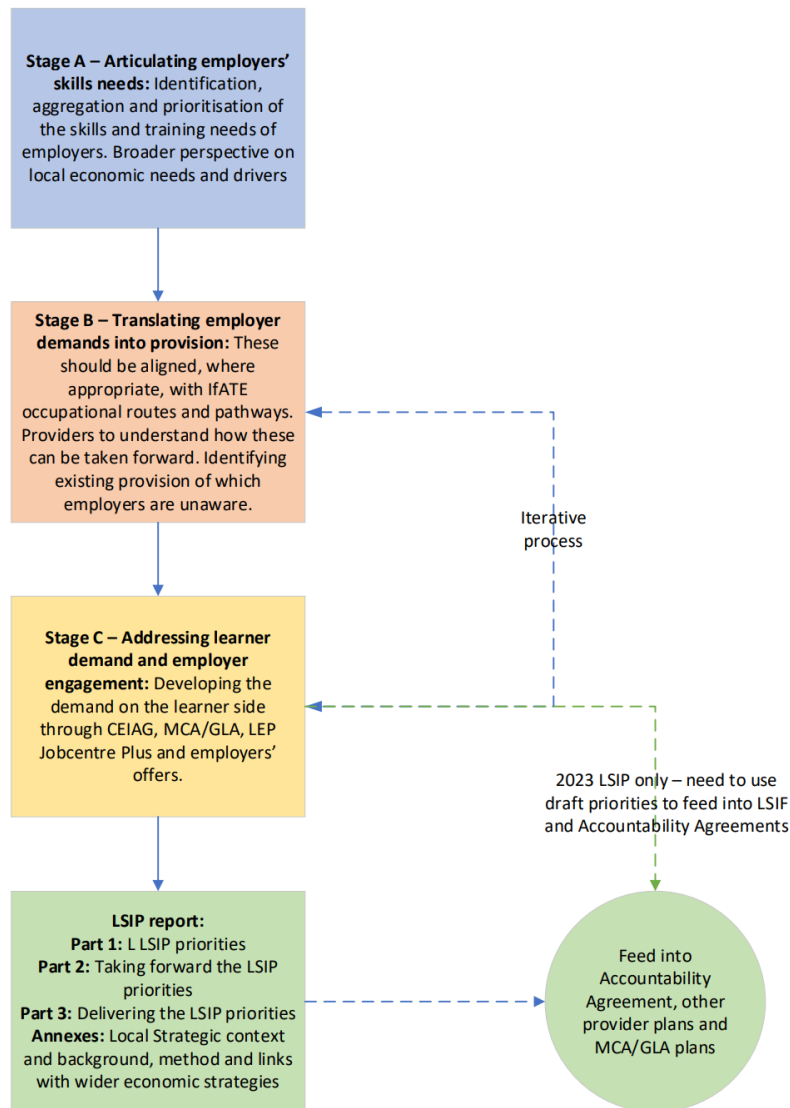
Figure 1 The LSIP process and report

In accordance with the statutory guidance[1], the engagement activities (described in Section 3), have enabled employers, training providers and strategic stakeholders to contribute to the identification of challenges and opportunities in the local skills system, to inform appropriate actionable priorities. Following the LSIP guidance, Section 4.3 of the report highlights the cross-cutting issues affecting employers.

Federation of Small Businesses

Statement of Engagement Report

| 2.0 | 5 April 2023 | Ove Arup & Partners Limited

Local Skills Improvement Plan for Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire

Statement of Engagement

Page 3

3.   Approach to engagement

3.1   Objectives

In accordance with the LSIP statutory guidance[1], a range of engagement activities were undertaken to gather stakeholder insights. The objectives of the engagement activities were as follows:

1. To enable employers, training providers and strategic stakeholders to contribute to the LSIP at a formative stage of the process, in accordance with their respective duties.

2. To deliver inclusive engagement and capture the views of stakeholders from different sectors and geographies.

3. To collect quantitative and qualitative data about the skills challenges and opportunities in the local area and develop actionable priorities to address these.

4. To identify actionable priorities to inform Accountability Agreements being developed by colleges.

5. To bring together employers, training providers and other stakeholders, developing and nurturing relationships and encouraging collaborative working to deliver the outcomes of the LSIP.

3.2   Engagement activities

A combination of the following four engagement activities were undertaken between **5 January and 17 March 2023:**

1. Online focus group sessions on 10, 11, 12 and 13 January.

2. In person focus group sessions on 25, 26, 27, 31 January; 8, 9, 28 February; and 3 March.

3. Online survey, running from 5 January to 20 February.

4. One to one interviews, held between 23 January and 17 March.

Sections 3.2.1 – 3.2.5 below describe the approach taken to each engagement activity.

3.2.1   Online surveys

Three online surveys were produced to target each of the following stakeholder groups: employers; training providers; and strategic stakeholders. The surveys contained a combination of open and closed questions to gather qualitative and quantitative information. The online surveys were made publicly available via Microsoft Forms and disseminated through the FSB's and the Steering Group's networks across the region. The surveys were structured into five sections:

- organisation details, including quantitative questions to gather background data on each participant and their organisation;

- skills supply and demand, to understand if and where soft and technical skills gaps exist;

- training provision, to gain an insight into the current training available and barriers and enablers to training;

- collaboration with others, to identify if and how employers, training providers and strategic stakeholders are working together to address challenges and opportunities; and

- drivers of change, to identify and seek to address socio-economic issues which may be affecting skills provision and employers.

Federation of Small Businesses   Local Skills Improvement Plan for Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire
Statement of Engagement Report

| 2.0 | 5 April 2023 | Ove Arup & Partners Limited   Statement of Engagement   Page 4

A copy of each survey is available in **Appendix A**. A total of 38 survey responses were received, comprised of 18 from employers, 16 from training providers, and 4 from strategic stakeholders.

3.2.2   Online focus groups

Four facilitated online focus group sessions were held via Microsoft Teams early in the engagement period to gather initial insights from employers, training providers, and strategic stakeholders in relation to:

- skills, capabilities and expertise requirements;

- recruitment and retention;

- training requirements; and

- socio-economic drivers of change.

A total of 28 stakeholders attended the sessions, which comprised of 20 employers and 8 training providers.

Attendees were split into virtual breakout rooms to facilitate focussed discussions on each topic. Feedback was recorded using the Miro interactive whiteboard tool. A copy of the Miro outputs are available in **Appendix B**.

Feedback gathered from the session was analysed early in the engagement period to identify emerging cross cutting themes, to inform the approach to subsequent in person focus group sessions. The following four emerging cross cutting themes were identified:

- work readiness and soft skills;

- digitalisation;

- recruitment and retention; and

- approach to training provision.

A summary of the cross-cutting themes and associated emerging findings is provided in **Appendix C**.

3.2.3   In person focus groups

Following the online focus group sessions, four in person sessions were held across the D2N2 area to capture feedback from different localities, as it is recognised that the economic landscape and business needs differ significantly across the region. Sessions were therefore conducted in Chesterfield, Derby, Mansfield, and Nottingham, for employers, training providers and strategic stakeholders.

To grow the level of employer engagement, following lower than desired participation early in the research period, three additional employer focussed sessions were held, in partnership with external organisations.

These sessions were:

- a dedicated session in Newark on 8 February, organised by Newark and Sherwood District Council to target local businesses;

- an agenda item as part of The Midlands Green Innovation Network's 'Skills for the Green Revolution' event on 9 February to target businesses in the low carbon and sustainable technology sector; and

- a dedicated session in Nottingham on 28 February hosted by B-Global, to target business representatives from the Black, Asian and ethnic minority community.

A subsequent session held by FSB, with a mix of employers, providers and stakeholders, inviting feedback on the emerging findings document was also held and comments have been anaylsed as an in person focus group for the purposes of this report.

A total of 87 participants attended the sessions, which comprised 33 employers, 34 training providers and 20 strategic stakeholders. This total includes participant attendance from the Arup facilitated focus group events[4].

During each session attendees were divided into breakout groups to facilitate focussed discussions around the emerging findings (referenced above) and associated actionable priorities. Where possible, breakout groups comprised of a combination of employers, training providers and strategic stakeholders from different sectors and geographies. The events also provided networking opportunities to enable stakeholders to meet, forge relationships and collaborate.

Photograph 1 Photographs taken during breakout sessions and presentations at the in person focus group events across the region

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[4] Arup facilitated events included sessions held in Derby, Chesterfield, Mansfield, Nottingham, Newark and with B-Global. The number of attendees from the Skills for the Green Revolution and FSB emerging findings presentation events could not be included in this report as Arup did not lead facilitation or collect the final attendance data. However, it is believed that approximately 85 people (in addition to to the 87 referenced above) attended these events and crucially the qualitative data collected during these events has been analysed and informed conclusions made in section 4.3 of this report and the accompanying actionable priorities list (see Appendix E).

Photograph 2 Photograph taken during breakout discussions at the 'Skills for the Green Revolution' employer event in Derby

3.2.4   Interviews

One to one interviews were held with 9 employers, 7 training providers and 4 strategic stakeholders, totalling 20 organisations. The interviews were conducted via a combination of Microsoft Teams and telephone, dependent on the interviewee's preference. For those interviews conducted via Microsoft Teams, the majority were recorded using the transcript function, with consent from interviewees.

The majority of interviews followed the structure of the online surveys described above, however others took a more conversational format providing the opportunity to delve into specific topics where necessary.

Where additional information was provided by stakeholders following their interview, this has been combined with feedback received during the interview.

3.2.5   Other engagement

In addition to the formal engagement activities described in sections 3.2.1-3.2.4 above, our team also attended the LSIP Steering Group meetings to ensure that members were kept updated and to seek their agreement at key milestones. Follow up engagement with Steering Group members also took place and where relevant, this feedback has formed part of the data analysed in this report.

3.2.6   Total participation

A raw total of **189 participants** were recorded to have contributed to the stakeholder engagement activities conducted by Arup, broken down as follows:

- 80 employers;

- 73 training providers; and

- 36 strategic stakeholders.

However this includes some participants who contributed to more than one engagement activity. With these instances omitted, the **residual total of individual participants is 162**, broken down as follows:

- 18 online focus group attendees;

- 37 online surveys respondents;

- 87 in-person focus groups attendees; and

- 20 telephone interviewees.

3.3   Data analysis

Feedback received from the focus group sessions, interviews and surveys has been compiled and a coding exercise undertaken to inform the subsequent analysis. The coding framework is provided in **Appendix D**. The analysis identified key issues and opportunities in the local skills system, which are presented in Section 4.

Federation of Small Businesses
Statement of Engagement Report
| 2.0 | 5 April 2023 | Ove Arup & Partners Limited

Local Skills Improvement Plan for Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire

Statement of Engagement

Page 8

4. Feedback

The following section sets out the feedback received from the engagement activities and the associated analysis, in terms of makeup of participants, key trends and reoccurring themes.

4.1 Participant overview

4.1.1 Geographic coverage

Figure 2 presents the spread of participants' premises across the D2N2 area. This demonstrates that the engagement activities captured participants with premises in all districts within the D2N2 area, including both urban and rural areas. Greater participation was seen from districts with a more urban geography including Nottingham city, Derby city, and Chesterfield. It is worth noting that some participants did not specify a particular district but instead referred to broader areas such as the Midlands or national coverage. For the purpose of the analysis, these references have been omitted from the map illustration below.
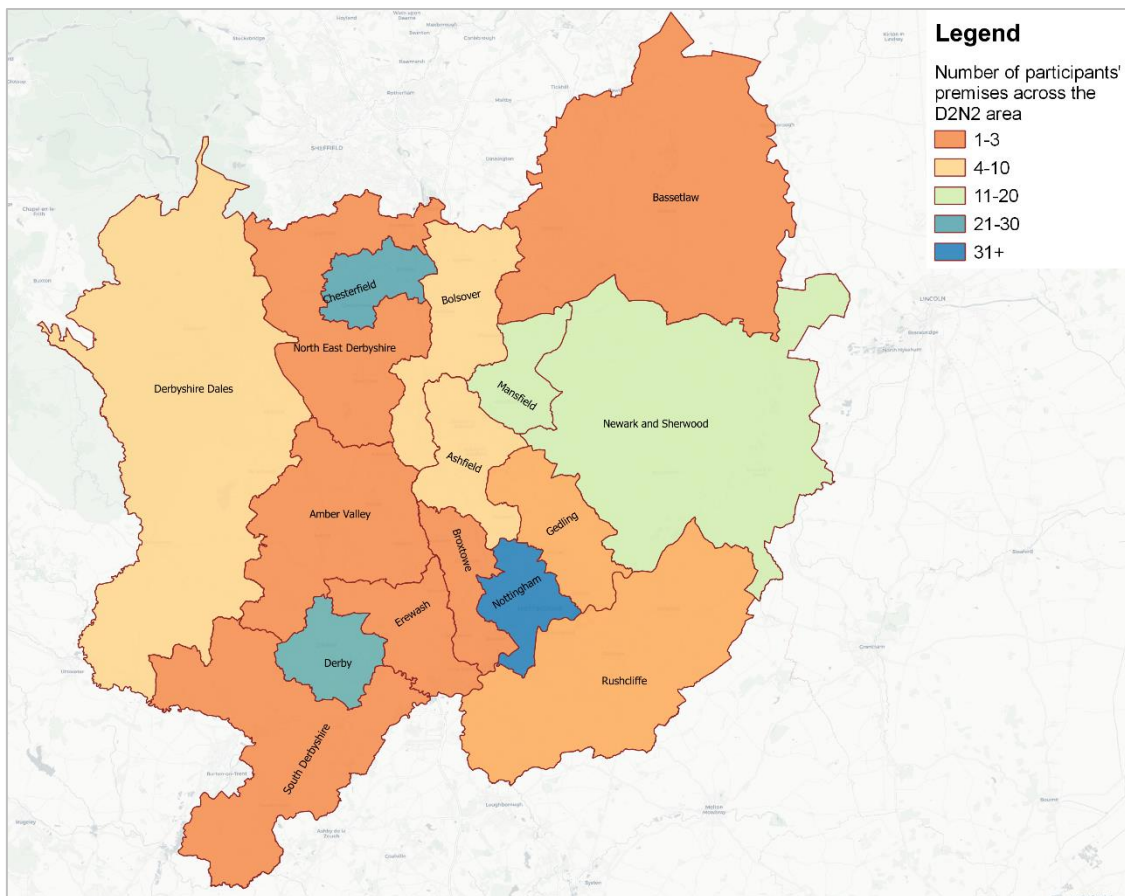
Figure 2 Location of participants' premises

4.1.2 Size

Figure 3 sets out the size of participants' businesses, based on their number of employees. This includes data provided by employers, training providers and strategic stakeholders. The pie chart demonstrates that the engagement activities captured a range of businesses, including small, medium-sized, and larger companies. The data shows that there was particularly good engagement from smaller and larger sized businesses.

Federation of Small Businesses

Statement of Engagement Report

| 2.0 | 5 April 2023 | Ove Arup & Partners Limited

Local Skills Improvement Plan for Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire

Statement of Engagement

Page 9

Number of Employees
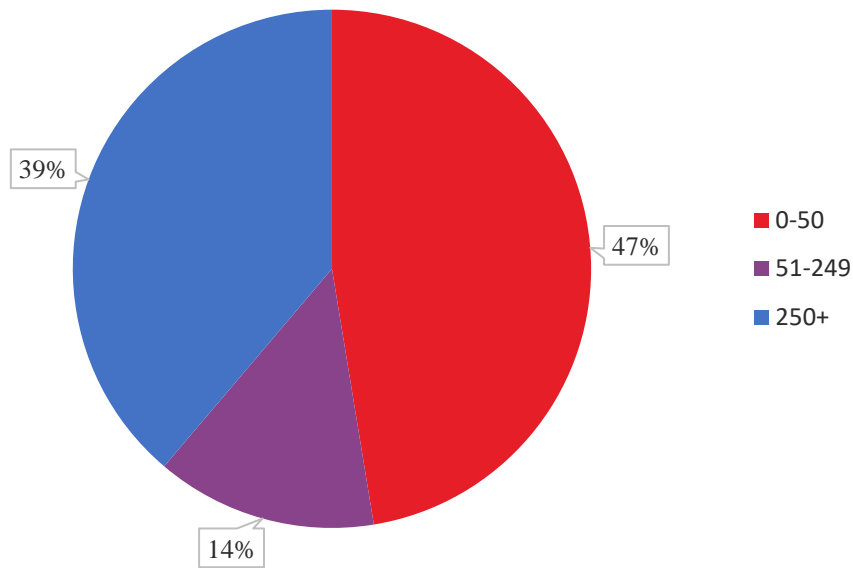
Figure 3 Size of participants' businesses

4.1.3 Participant category

As described in section 3.2.6, the engagement activities successfully captured **162 participants** from employer, training provider and strategic stakeholder organisations across the D2N2 area, as shown in **Figure 4** below.

Employer, Training Provider, and Strategic Stakeholder Split
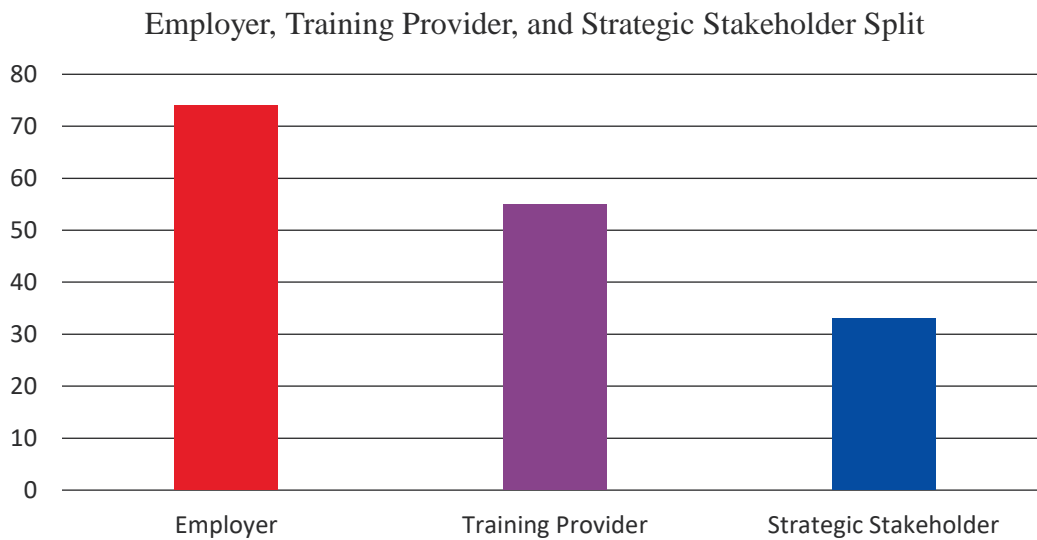
Figure 4 Employer, Training Provider and Strategic Stakeholder split

4.1.4 Sector

The engagement activities effectively captured participants from a diverse range of employment sectors, as depicted in **Figure 5**. This diverse representation allowed for a more inclusive and robust understanding of the skills challenges and opportunities present in the region.
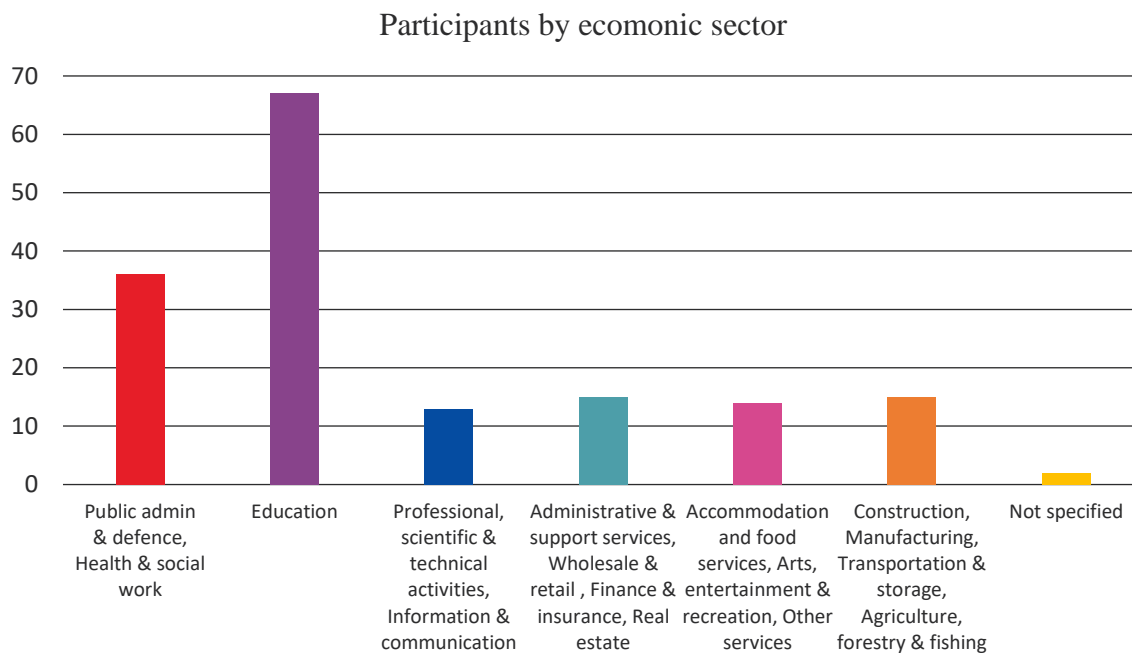
<p align="center">Figure 5 Participants by economic sector[5]</p>

4.2 Key trends

The following section provides an overview of the key trends that have emerged from feedback received, including in relation to skills gaps, training requirements and associated barriers, and collaboration amongst stakeholders.

4.2.1 Skills gaps

Feedback indicates that there is a considerable skills gap in the local workforce, with 43 out of 53 (81%) participants indicating a gap between their employees' skills and organisation's requirements. As demonstrated by **Figure 6** below.

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[5] Participants who identified themselves as training providers have been categorised under the 'Education' economic sector.

Is there a gap between your employees' skills and the skills required?
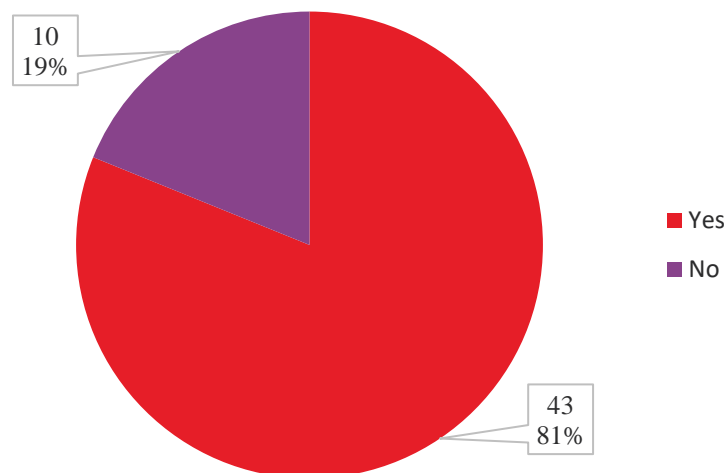
Figure 6 Skills gaps

The identified skills gaps are diverse and include a lack of work readiness skills in school leavers, digital and numeracy skills, specialist skills such as engineering, leadership skills, safety and security skills, face to face customer service skills, and green skills.

Feedback identified several areas for improvement in current training provision. This includes a need for more awareness of available courses and training opportunities, and career pathway advice. Respondents also identified the need for digital skills training, green skills training, work readiness skills and employability training, higher technical qualifications, and clearer pathways between further education and higher education and between different skills programmes. Addressing these gaps may require improved communication and awareness-raising efforts to ensure individuals know about the available training opportunities and courses.

The engagement also highlighted the different actions that organisations are taking to reduce skills gaps. These include in-house training, industrial placements, investing heavily in staff development, providing apprenticeships, running face-to-face sessions, work experience placements, and more. Additionally, participants noted the need for collaboration and coordination between training providers, and employers to ensure individuals can progress smoothly through different levels of education and training.

4.2.2 Training requirements and barriers

Figure 7 shows that 26 out of 29 (90%) respondents foresee changes to employers' training requirements in the next three years. This suggests that training providers and strategic stakeholders are aware of the need to adapt to the evolving job market and the changing skills requirements of the local economy.

Federation of Small Businesses
Statement of Engagement Report
| 2.0 | 5 April 2023 | Ove Arup & Partners Limited

Local Skills Improvement Plan for Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire

Statement of Engagement

Page 12

In the next 3 years, do you foresee any changes to employers'
training requirements?
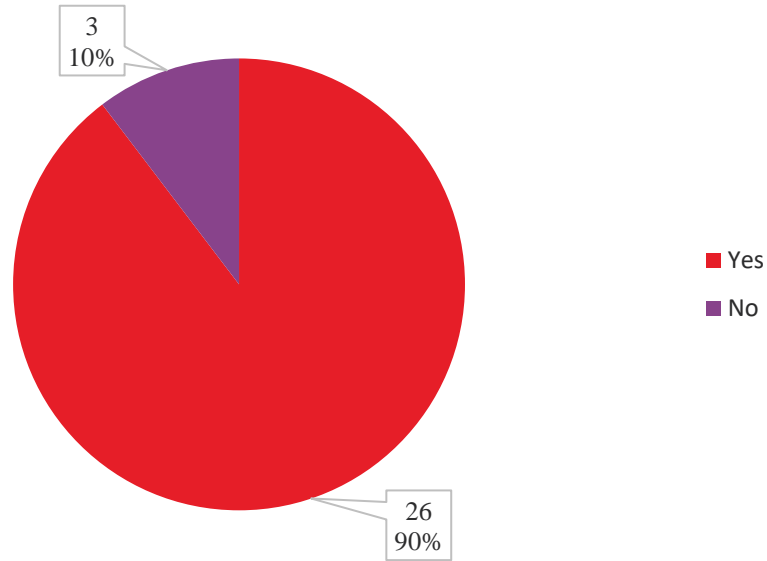
Figure 7 Changes to employers' training requirements

Most organisations foresee changes in their training requirements, with digital transformation and green skills being the main focus areas. As advanced technologies continue to revolutionise the skills system and the needs of employers, there is a greater demand for digital and green skills, focusing on emerging industries and job occupations that do not currently exist. Participants' responses suggest that there will be a need for upskilling within the current workforce as technologies continue to change.

The type of training that employees currently receive varies. However as shown in **Figure 8** below, job-specific training is understandably the most frequently delivered.

Federation of Small Businesses
Statement of Engagement Report

| 2.0 | 5 April 2023 | Ove Arup & Partners Limited

Local Skills Improvement Plan for Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire

Statement of Engagement

Page 13

Which categories of training do your employees receive?
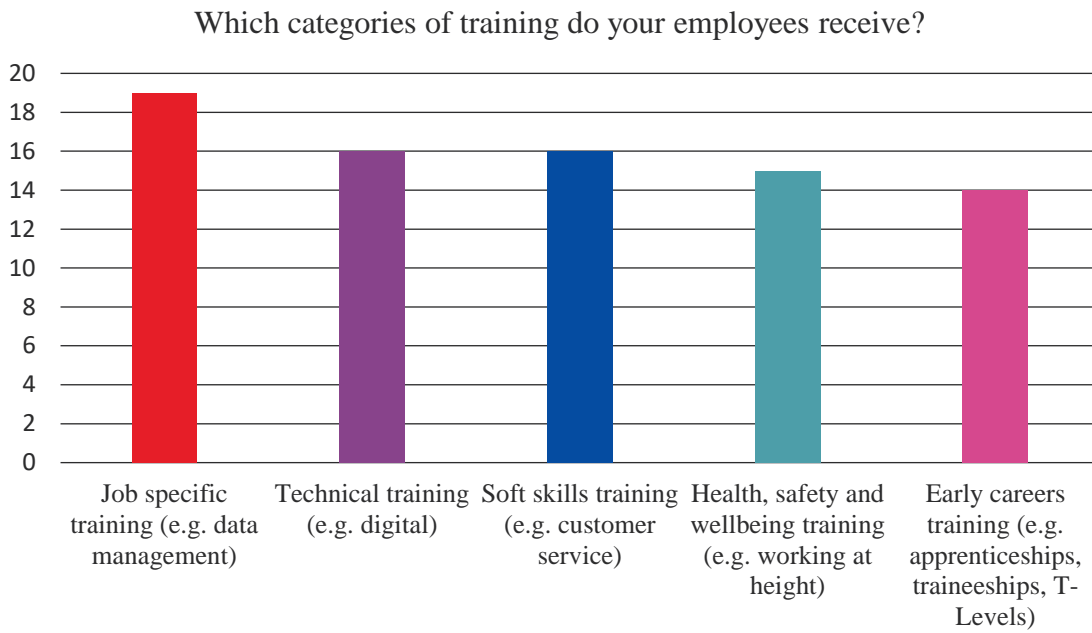
Figure 8 Type of training received by employees

Sixty percent of employers felt that there are barriers preventing them from offering more training, with the main obstacles being the inability to release staff and the high associated costs, as shown in **Figures 9 and 10** below.

Are there any barriers preventing employers from offering additional training?
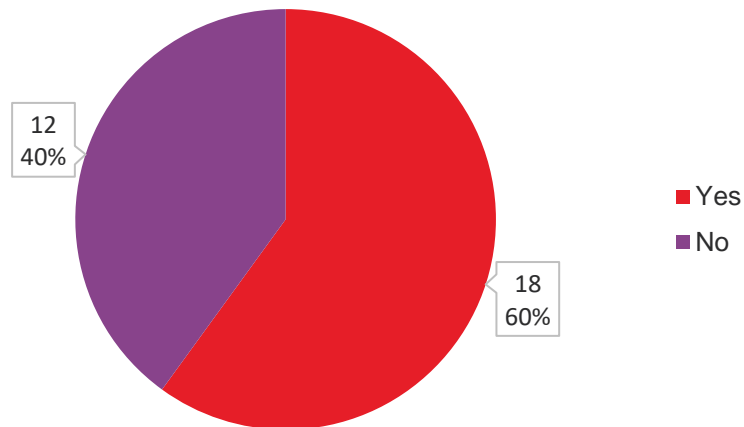
Figure 9 Existence of barriers to additional training

Federation of Small Businesses

Statement of Engagement Report

| 2.0 | 5 April 2023 | Ove Arup & Partners Limited

Local Skills Improvement Plan for Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire

Statement of Engagement

Page 14

Are there any barriers preventing employers from offering
additional training? Please select which barriers are applicable.

Figure 10 Nature of barriers preventing additional training

Respondents anticipate that the need for leadership training, digital skills and green skills will continue to grow in the next three years, reflecting the changing nature of the job market. To meet these emerging training requirements, employers may need to invest in in-house training or work closely with stakeholders to access appropriate training provisions.

4.2.3   Collaboration between training providers, employers and strategic stakeholders

Feedback demonstrates that there is indeed scope and a need for further collaboration amongst stakeholders regarding training and skills development. Participants highlighted a range of best practice for collaboration, including developing strategic relationships and partnerships between employers and training providers, working closely with schools, colleges, and universities to provide relevant course content and work placements, and joining forums and events to network and explore opportunities to work together.

Convening groups of employers and training providers who offer the same qualifications, apprenticeships, and training was also identified as a practical approach to sharing best practice and keeping up with any changes within respective sectors. Participants also emphasised the importance of providing insights to universities, enhancing graduates' employability, and offering internships and work placements to students.

Moreover, some participants suggested that it is essential to collaborate with community-based and voluntary organisations to provide training and support for individuals further from the job market. Participants also recommended creating an overarching body to check and challenge training provision across the geography and function as a conduit to employers.

Feedback from the survey highlighted several key measures that need to be taken to address skills gaps. These include supporting schools to develop skills frameworks that focus on life skills and engaging with small businesses to understand their future needs. Respondents emphasised the need for greater collaboration and problem-solving initiatives and less exam-oriented approaches.

4.3 Themes

The coding exercise undertaken on the qualitative feedback identified the following seven key cross-cutting themes; work readiness and soft skills; digitalisation; local socio-economic conditions; approach to training; retention and recruitment; sector specific issues and opportunities; and collaboration within skills system.

Figure 11 shows that 'Approach to training' was the most commonly referenced topic, followed by 'Sector specific issues and opportunities' and 'Work readiness and soft skills' equally.

Frequency of themes across all engagement activities
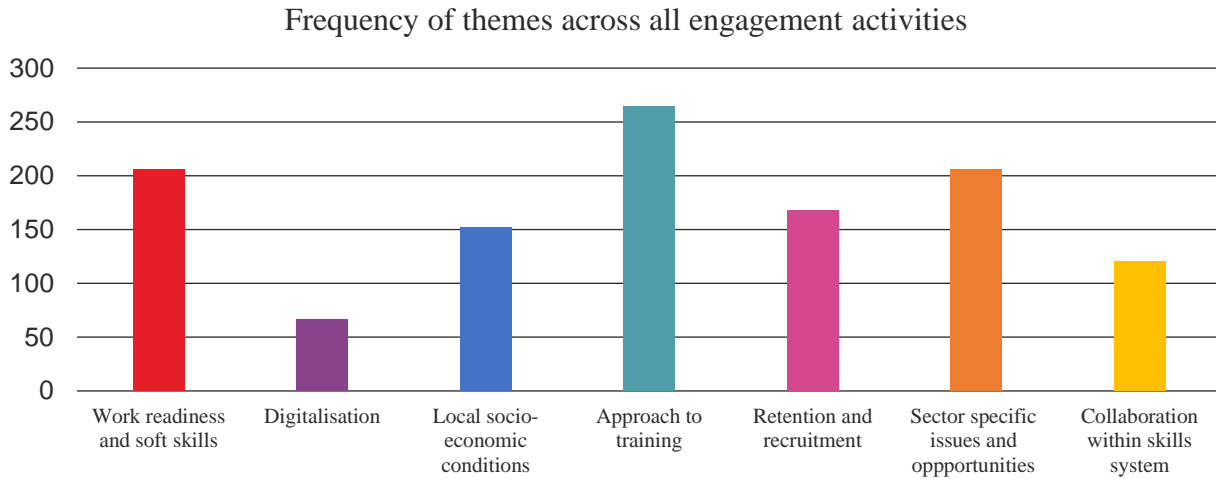
Figure 11 Frequency of themes coded

To allow the data to be analysed in greater detail, the seven themes displayed in **Figure 11** were informed by a sub-set of individual codes which each cover a specific topic. The codes and their scope are set out in the coding framework (see **Appendix D**). **Figure 12** provides an overview of the frequency that each code was applied.

Frequency of codes (per theme) across all engagement activities
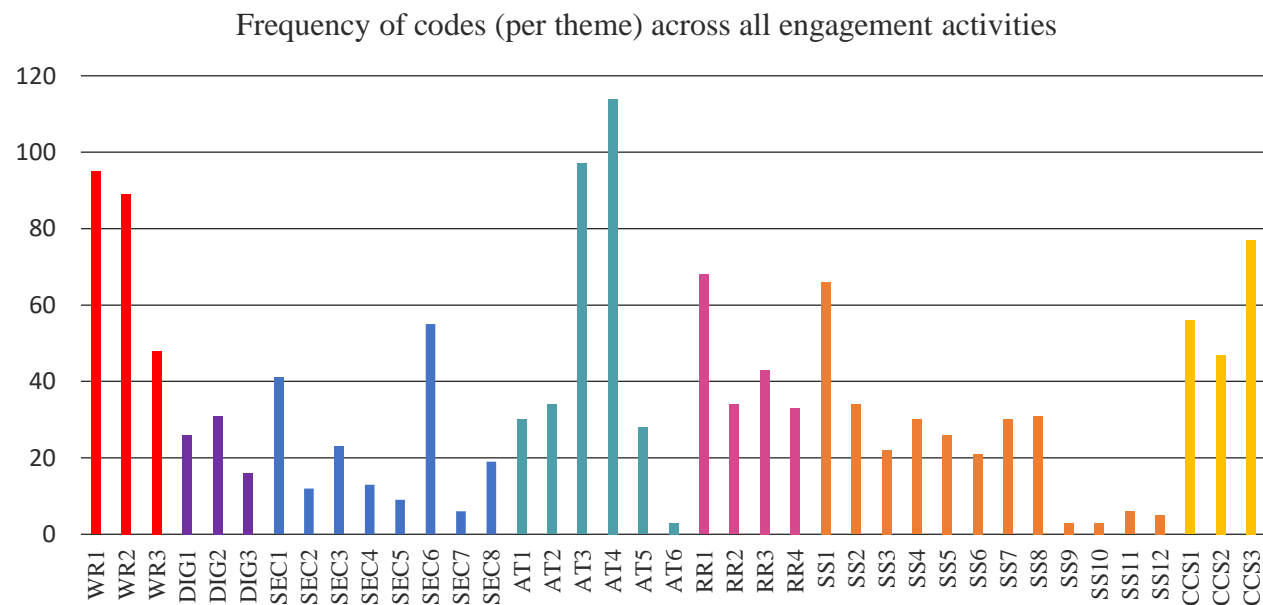
Figure 12 Frequency of individual codes

Sections 4.3.1 to 4.3.7 provide a summary of the issues and opportunities associated with each theme, as well as ideas regarding how to address these.

Federation of Small Businesses

Statement of Engagement Report

| 2.0 | 5 April 2023 | Ove Arup & Partners Limited

Local Skills Improvement Plan for Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire

Statement of Engagement

Page 16

4.3.1 Work readiness and soft skills

Work readiness and soft skills theme breakdown
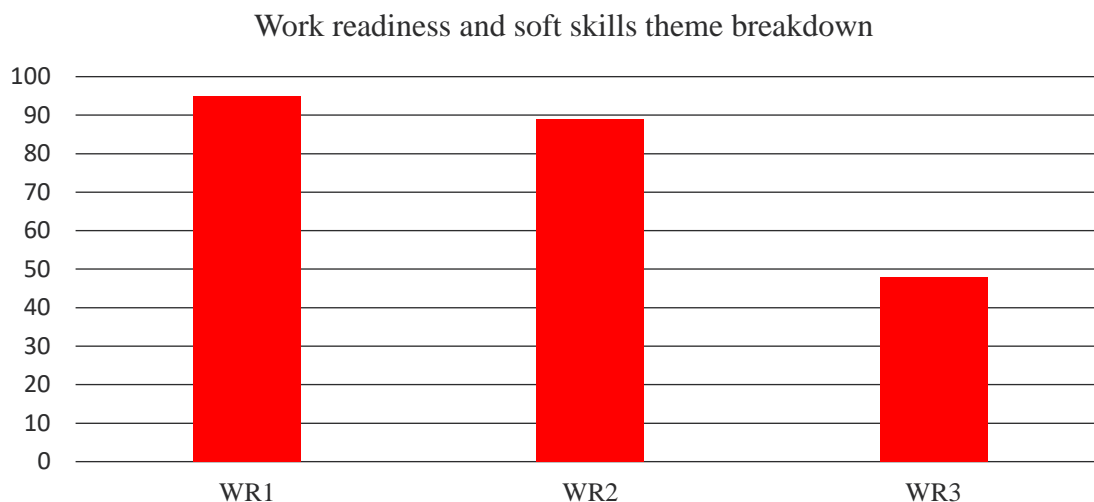
Figure 13 Breakdown of the work readiness and soft skills theme

Code	Name of Code
WR1	Soft skills and employability skills are lacking and required
WR2	School leavers are not work ready and have a lack of opportunity to gain these skills and experience
WR3	Discrepancy between candidate expectations and employer expectations

The 'Work readiness and soft skills' theme was one of the most frequently raised throughout the engagement activities, across the geography. As **Figure 13** shows, WR1 was the most frequently raised topic in the work readiness category. Code WR1 addresses the perception that soft and employability skills are lacking in potential candidates, particularly young people, and that these skills are highly required and valued by employers when seeking new recruits. This demonstrates that a gap exists between the soft/employability skills possessed by those entering the workforce and those required by employers. Participants frequently noted that the following soft skills were generally poor and lacking amongst people beginning their careers:

- written and verbal communication skills;
- confidence and social skills;
- understanding of one's own transferable skills; and
- a basic level of english, maths and IT skills.

Along with other soft skills such as:

- basic life skills;
- problem solving and decision making;
- strategic thinking;
- time management;
- resilience and adaptability; and

Federation of Small Businesses
Statement of Engagement Report

Local Skills Improvement Plan for Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire

| 2.0 | 5 April 2023 | Ove Arup & Partners Limited

Statement of Engagement

Page 17

- self-esteem.

A general nervousness about approaching social situations or professional environments was linked to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly on young people. When recruiting, many employers noted that there is a lack of essential business knowledge, professionalism, and employability skills (such as interview practice and CV writing skills) amongst the candidate pool.

Where the feedback was centred around school leavers, it was generally acknowledged that many are not work ready due to the lack of opportunity to engage with the world of work from a young age. This sub-theme is categorised under code WR2 and found that young people have unrealistic attitudes to work, and that there are opportunities for schools and parents/care givers to further help prepare young people for their future careers.

The following issues were also frequently raised:

- productivity is low in young people and attitudes towards work and careers is poor or unrealistic as many have an individualistic approach to work;

- lack of awareness and knowledge sharing about career path opportunities present in the local area in certain sectors, for both students and their parents/care givers;

- a reduced number of young people are partaking in work experience or part time jobs (e.g. "Saturday jobs", a paper round etc.) than in previous generations, possibly a consequence of working patterns post-pandemic;

- a rigid school curriculum (pre-16) which is focused around exams and does not enable young people to explore opportunities in work-related training and creative thinking;

- employability skills are taught to varying extents in different educational situations (e.g. those who attend private schools may be better educated in employability than those who don't); and

- not pursuing a traditionally academic pathway is perceived as a failure and schools generally advocate for many students to continue through to A Level and University study, as it is a prestigious and familiar route to teachers, rather than explore other career paths.

A general feeling that there is a discrepancy between candidate and employer expectations is covered by code WR3. Whilst this code was not raised as frequently, it demonstrates that employees and candidates can have very different expectations of work, when compared to their employers. The following scenarios were noted:

- employees having high salary expectations which may be disproportionate to the amount of skill or work required;

- employees being reluctant to engage in hard work;

- employers expecting 16-year-olds to be work ready, however the individuals cannot be expected to be work ready without sufficient guidance or experience of the workplace;

- employers' requirements not being well understood by training providers and learners;

- employers wanting specific work experience without being willing to offer it to students; and

- employers not trusting new recruits, especially when working from home.

To what extent this issue is due to candidates having unreasonable expectations versus employers having unreasonable expectations and/or not adapting to societal and technological changes, was questioned.

Federation of Small Businesses
Statement of Engagement Report

| 2.0 | 5 April 2023 | Ove Arup & Partners Limited

Local Skills Improvement Plan for Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire

Statement of Engagement

Page 18

4.3.2 Digitalisation

Digitalisation theme breakdown
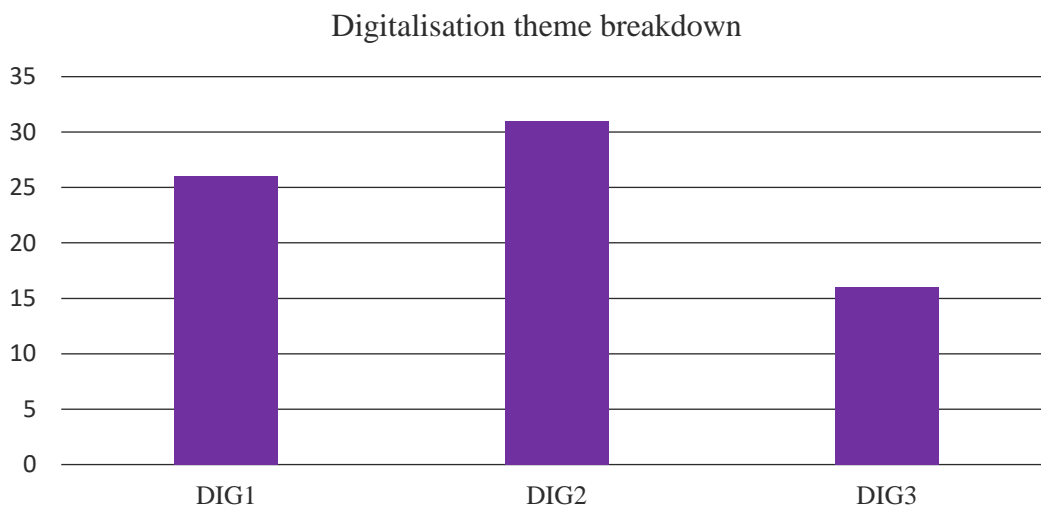
Figure 14 Breakdown of the digitalisation theme

Code	Name of Code
DIG1	Evolving digital space and training requirements
DIG2	Basic digital skills required
DIG3	Digital skills gap between younger and older persons

The 'Digitalisation' theme was the least frequently raised theme throughout the data collection. However, the topic of digitalisation was raised throughout the engagement activities and therefore remains an important consideration in development of the LSIP. For example, digitalisation is rising to the top of the agenda in Mansfield. Mansfield is looking to produce a digital strategy with West Nottinghamshire College, to help everybody achieve a certain level of digital competency, although this is constrained, particularly in this area, by the challenges caused by many socio-economic drivers.

Code DIG1 reflected instances where participants raised the need for training to respond to, and keep up, with the evolving digital landscape across many, if not all, sectors. Similarly, training providers reported that they struggled to provide up-to-date courses on skills within this continuously evolving space. Participants noted that digitalisation of the economy is impacting and will continue to change the nature of jobs and day-to-day business. As this space is continuously evolving and innovating in terms of technology, computer literacy and incorporation into businesses, it was acknowledged that upskilling of current employees is and will remain important. Some discussions around digital skills focused on the differing definitions of 'digital' and the blurred lines between what are understood to be "digital" skills versus "technical" skills, and the varying level of skills required for different roles.

Digital skills were acknowledged as particularly important skills required by employees, and potentially lacking amongst some demographics within the working population. It was also widely reported that digital skills of employees are not at the level required by employers. The DIG2 code was most frequently applied within the digitalisation theme, and was used to identify instances where participants noted a skills gap in people's basic digital skills. This specifically included references to:

- Microsoft Office (particularly Excel), and an assumption that all young people have this baseline knowledge;

- employee's knowledge of their organisations' internal integrated systems;

Federation of Small Businesses
Statement of Engagement Report

| 2.0 | 5 April 2023 | Ove Arup & Partners Limited

Local Skills Improvement Plan for Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire

Statement of Engagement

Page 19

- general computer literacy; and

- cyber and data security awareness.

During the in person focus group sessions, many participants noted that young people are lacking basic digital skills (such as Microsoft Office) and discussed where digital learning sits within the pre-16 school curriculum. Although there is an assumption that the younger generation, who may have grown up with modern technology, are technically savvy, often employers and training providers find generally that young people are lacking professional digital skills. It was suggested that more attention should be given to digital within the school curriculum, as an essential life and employability skill. The digital skills which may be used in one's personal life (such as Tik-Tok, Instagram, eBay etc.) and professional life (such as Microsoft Office, including structuring a Word document, creating a professional PowerPoint Presentation, using Teams and manipulating an Excel spreadsheet etc.), are very different and it is professional digital skills that are perceived to be lacking amongst, mostly, new entrants. However, some noted that this may be an overgeneralisation in the geography and that young people's digital competency varies significantly.

The DIG3 code was used to reflect perspectives on the relationship between digital skills and age. For example, younger and older persons were perceived to possess different types of digital skills. Younger employees tend to have digital skills related to social media use and marketing, whilst more mature employees may have knowledge of Windows systems. It was acknowledged that there is a need to upskill older persons in digital skills, which presents an opportunity to close the gap through reverse mentoring and knowledge sharing across age groups.

It was perceived by participants that there is a reluctance of older employees to upskill themselves in digital skills due to a lack of confidence in navigating technology. It was recognised at the Newark and Sherwood event particularly that it is not necessarily true that 'older persons' are less digitally able, but that it may be to do with those who have not previously had to engage with technology in their job. This has been seen especially since the pandemic, as those who have never had to use digital skills in their career may have been forced to incorporate digital technology into their job within a short space of time, thus realising they do not possess the necessary skillset to complete simple digital tasks or operate digitalised systems.

4.3.3   Local socio-economic conditions

Local socio-economic conditions theme breakdown
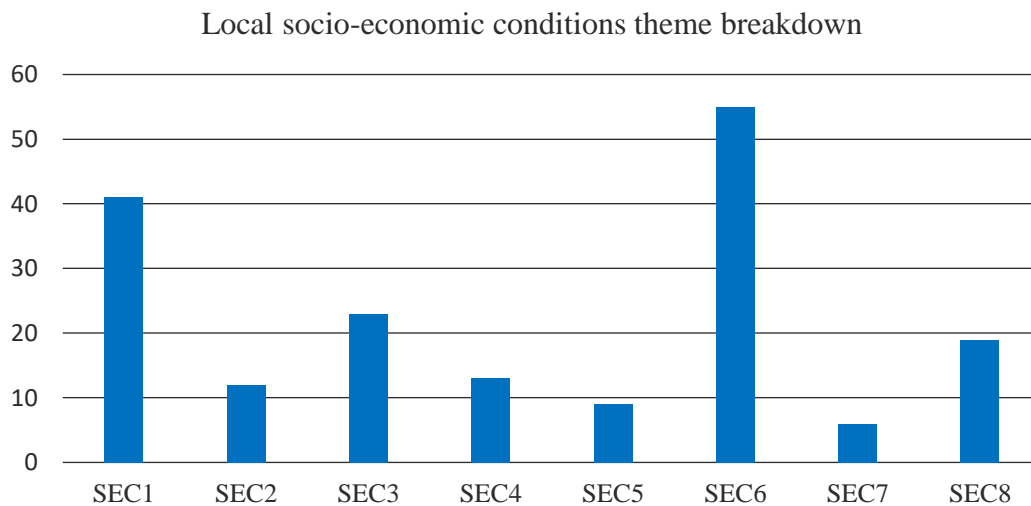
Figure 15 Breakdown of the local socio-economic conditions theme

Federation of Small Businesses
Statement of Engagement Report

| 2.0 | 5 April 2023 | Ove Arup & Partners Limited

Local Skills Improvement Plan for Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire

Statement of Engagement

Page 20

Code	Name of Code
SEC1	Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic
SEC2	Ageing population
SEC3	Mental health
SEC4	The green agenda
SEC5	Impact of Brexit
SEC6	Socio-economic inequalities amongst learners, employees and unemployed persons
SEC7	Current political climate in the UK
SEC8	Current economic challenges for businesses

Certain socio-economic drivers were raised by participants as being influential in relation to skills provision and access to training across the geography. Codes SEC1 to SEC8 were used to highlight the socio-economic conditions which were perceived to be most influential locally.

Code SEC1 reflected feedback relating to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and was the most frequently applied code within this theme. The issues raised included:

- soft skills having declined rapidly since the pandemic as, young people especially, have had limited social experiences (particularly within a professional environment);

- anxiety around, or reluctance to engage in face-to-face interaction and communication;

- a preference for working from home, which presents challenges for both new recruits entering the workplace and their managers;

- the generation entering the workforce may have missed out on the opportunity to engage in face-to-face work experience and learning by osmosis or on the job;

- people choosing to change their career path which has led to a skills loss for some businesses; and

- mature workers leaving the workforce entirely following the pandemic and not returning to work, or retraining.

SEC6 was the second most frequently applied code within this theme, and identified feedback relating to socio-economic inequalities amongst learners, employees and unemployed individuals. The following issues were frequently raised:

- the current cost of living crisis, and individuals being unable to afford necessities (such as fuel, heating, clothing and food);

- poor access to public transport (especially the lack of east to west connections across the region affecting connections to Newark and Sherwood and communities in rural Derbyshire), which forms a barrier to people being able to travel to and from the workplace, training facilities, work experience placements or job interviews;

- those who do not have access to, or are unable to operate digital platforms to access training, are at a disadvantage (this is still an issue experienced by rural communities);

Federation of Small Businesses
Statement of Engagement Report

| 2.0 | 5 April 2023 | Ove Arup & Partners Limited

Local Skills Improvement Plan for Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire

Statement of Engagement

Page 21

- lack of awareness or ability to address basic hygiene and presentability, which aren't taught as compulsory life skills at school;

- young or unemployed individuals are more likely to gain access to work experience or be exposed to careers advice if they come from a privilege background, for example a household with two working parents or a private education;

- low employability for migrants, disabled people, neurodivergent people, those with health conditions and older persons; and

- an individual's background or level of deprivation which can create barriers to engagement with education and work.

Within SEC6, many systematic injustices presented in society were noted. This included calls for:

- more gender and race equality, i.e. BAME and female representatives in the workplace;

- inclusive recruitment and training;

- workplaces to better accommodate women's requirements; and,

- the language used in workplaces to be accessible to all, regardless of a person's background.

Additionally, social mobility was elicited as a key issue in North Nottinghamshire, but hybrid working was perceived to bring new possibilities, as young people who grow up here see an opportunity to work in a city. However, some young people in this area don't recognise the opportunities available to them.

It was acknowledged that more needs to be done, particularly in Newark and Sherwood, to help disadvantaged people access job opportunitie,s as they may face various barriers such as access to the internet, language and cultural barriers, disadvantaged backgrounds etc.

Code SEC3, which addressed mental health, was also a common topic amongst respondents. This code identified the following issues:

- a general nervousness and fear about the workplace across the population, but especially in young people;

- low self-esteem and high levels of anxiety, preventing learners and employees from completing courses or attending work;

- learners and employees leaving the workplace or learning due to mental health conditions; and

- not enough capacity for specialist mental health support, as the NHS mental health service is perceived to be over capacity e.g. a lack of resourcing in the Child & Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) was noted to be a particular issue in Mansfield.

Confidence and poor mental health was an issue discussed in length at events in Chesterfield and Mansfield, especially concerning people with additional needs (NEETS). This can create barriers to people securing interviews, being successful in interviews/ applications or even being able to turn up to the workplace. In response, it was suggested that some employers need to be more socially inclusive and better understand mental health challenges for young people.

Application of code SEC8 'Economic climate for businesses' demonstrates that small businesses are perceived to be struggling to engage employees in training due to the rising cost of doing business. This is reflective of the current economic climate in the UK, and it was noted that organisations are taking steps to respond to this by looking at more efficient practices. This not only affects the cost of providing training but also the cost of recruiting. A common observation made was that some small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are struggling to survive, although it was also noted that some employers may look to invest in upskilling existing employees rather than recruiting, as it may be more cost effective.

Federation of Small Businesses   Local Skills Improvement Plan for Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire
Statement of Engagement Report

| 2.0 | 5 April 2023 | Ove Arup & Partners Limited   Statement of Engagement   Page 22

Whilst codes SEC2 'Ageing population', SEC4 'The green agenda', SEC5 'Impact of Brexit' and SEC7 'Current political climate' were less frequently applied within this theme, they were still noted as important socio-economic conditions influencing skills provision and priorities in the local area. The following issues were noted:

- Challenges associated with the financial cost of an ageing population.

- An onus on training providers to address the green agenda through training given that funding is being provided by the Government, however this is not necessarily reflected in job opportunities. The term 'green' is overused and undefined, and students are not always aware of the opportunities that exist within this sector. It was raised in Chesterfield that the push in the green agenda by the Government is not reflective of the local job market and therefore greater flexibility is required locally to respond to the needs of businesses in Chesterfield. Furthermore, it was suggested that employers in Nottingham city are not currently or widely requiring skills in green technology.

- The talent pool is smaller since the UK left the European Union (EU), possibly due to the change in immigration rules which cause difficulties when seeking out candidates with the right skills. It is felt to be costly to hire people from EU countries in comparison to the situation before the Brexit deal.

- Strikes taking place across public sectors, calling for pay rises, have deterred people from joining workforces. Sectors such as education (universities and colleges) and health and social care are suffering, causing shortages in the workforce and demotivation amongst staff.

Within SEC7 'Current political climate', the opportunities that the devolution deal in the geography may pose for the skills agenda was frequently referred to.

4.3.4   Approach to training

Approach to training theme breakdown
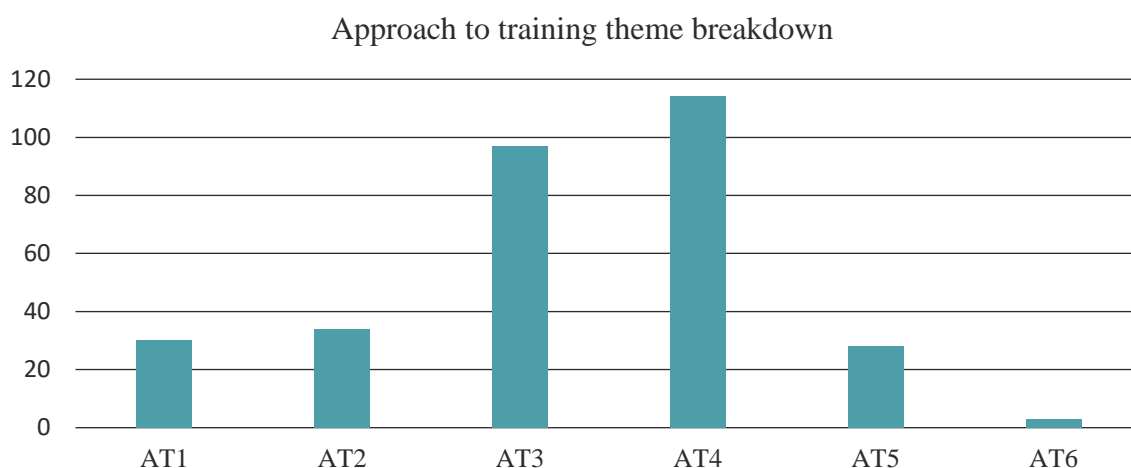
Figure 16 Breakdown of the Approach to training theme

Code	Name of Code
AT1	Opportunities associated with apprenticeships and vocational qualifications
AT2	Challenges associated with apprenticeships and vocational qualifications
AT3	Capacity and capability constraints to delivering training (for both training providers and employers)
AT4	Future training opportunities
AT5	Work readiness-relevant training

AT6	Recognition of social value

The opportunities and challenges associated with training provisions form the most frequently coded theme throughout all engagement undertaken. As a broad subject, covering all training provision across the geography, this theme focused on the Opportunities (AT1) and Challenges (AT2) associated with apprenticeships and vocational qualifications specifically, Capacity and capability constraints to delivering training (AT3) and Future training opportunities (AT4) more generally. Work readiness-relvant training, a significant theme documented in Section 4.3.1, was also reflected in this theme under code AT5, as well as the need for Recognition of social value through training under code AT6.

Code AT2 coded challenges associated with apprenticeships and vocational qualifications. Commonly noted or discussed challenges included:

- the funding model and lack of flexibility of apprenticeships which limits apprenticeship opportunities;

- variable quality and depth of apprenticeships offered with some being are far more beneficial than others;

- the remaining stigma surrounding apprenticeships, compared to university education, and young people not being aware of apprenticeship opportunities. although understanding and knowledge amongst young people and their parent generation is steadily growing;

- pre-16 education providers' preference for students to go to sixth form and university, rather than engaging with a vocational course;

- poor incentives for individuals to commence apprenticeships and follow them through to completion of end point assessments;

- poor culture of retaining apprentices in the workplace (i.e. once they finish their course and qualify for a higher wage);

- the assumption that apprenticeships are exclusively for young people and not mature workers wanting to upskill or change career path;

- college courses having to teach Level 2 Maths and English to those who have failed previously which may deter some candidates from continuing their course (particularly expressed by representatives from Burton and South Derbyshire College, and West Nottinghamshire College);

- some well attended courses do not reflect the current occupational landscape and job opportunities available in certain sectors, for example e-sports courses; and

- a shortage of skilled tutors and lack of funding for industry-aligned education exacerbate the skills gap.

Addionally, employers in the manufacturing industry expressed concerns that college courses do not adequately prepare students for practical requirements of the workplace. Concerns include that the classroom environment does not represent real-world challenges and opportunities of more practical engineering skills in the industry, leaving students lacking hands-on experience and exposure to the latest technologies.

In response, AT1 coded comments relating to possible opportunities for the provision of apprenticeships and vocational courses. Suggestions included:

Federation of Small Businesses
Statement of Engagement Report

Local Skills Improvement Plan for Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire

| 2.0 | 5 April 2023 | Ove Arup & Partners Limited

Statement of Engagement

Page 24

- encouraging apprenticeships or placements on vocational courses that enable individuals to earn while they learn, and become equipped with practical skills and knowledge for a particular job, whilst gaining workplace experience;

- embedding the teaching of soft and work readiness skills into vocational courses;

- integrating the teaching of english and maths more seamlessly into vocational courses to equip learners with skills specific to their future job role;

- making the Apprenticeship Levy more accessible to small businesses (e.g. accreditation training providers), rather than limiting it to universities;

- using the Apprenticeship Levy to support funding for companies that train staff at a managerial level;

- good practice examples of apprenticeships exist and should be learnt from e.g. reasonable pay and flexible working arrangements that align with apprentices' learning schedules;

- partnering with organisations to recruit apprentices;

- encouraging supported internships/ apprenticeships and exploring quasi-apprenticeships (e.g. which allow 2 days of paid employment, 1 day of unpaid employment and 2 days of college release per week); and

- rethinking work placements so that the focus on experience and exposure to a business/ workplace is maximised e.g. 4.5 days working in a business and 0.5 days at college, rather than the other way round.

The second most frequently applied code within the Approach to training theme was AT3 which identified the capacity and capability constraints to delivering training, both for the training provider and employer. Limitations associated with existing funding streams was widely noted as a challenge to providing and engaging with training, whether it be restricting training providers' ability to offer certain programmes or small organisations' capacity to enable employees to engage in training due to various factors such as time and resource constraints. Where some small businesses are not eligible for Government funding, a challenge to addressing skills gaps is presented. Other documented barriers for both the employer and provider include:

- accessibility of training as a barrier (e.g. language barrier; difficulty with communications when registering for courses; training providers not engaging effectively with potential learners, personal commitments etc.).

- a rigid funding application process which limits training provision and opportunities, especially for small businesses who may not qualify for the criteria that is not set with SMEs in mind;

- the funding application process is also lengthy and has a negative impact on people's employment, leading to a lack of people progressing with the training application process; and

- training providers can only run courses which have a critical mass of learners interested, which prevents certain skills that employers require from being provided in the geography.

Although many challenges to training provision were expressed during the engagement activities, AT4, which coded future opportunities and trends for training, was the most frequently applied code within this theme. Opportunities regularly identified by participants are outlined in the list below.

- There may be a preference for a specific format or delivery method for training programmes, such as online learning or in-person classes. The flexibility of hybrid delivery may provide opportunities to reach a wider population who could not previously engage.

Federation of Small Businesses
Statement of Engagement Report

| 2.0 | 5 April 2023 | Ove Arup & Partners Limited

Local Skills Improvement Plan for Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire

Statement of Engagement

Page 25

- Training providers recruiting learners through partner referrals and local community links to expand the reach of their programmes.

- Training providers offering management training for local employers and working with them in relation to their workforce development planning, management of expectations and recruitment practices.

- Providing employers with training and development opportunities to grow their employees' skills and knowledge.

- Specific training catering for supply chains, SMEs and existing staff.

- A growing preference, from an employer perspective, for shorter courses to provide employees with the required skills at speed, particularly in sustainable technologies, and not require long periods of time to be taken away from the workplace.

Additionally, there was a specific requirement across participants, especially employers, for more work readiness focused training courses to be offered. Code AT5, Work readiness-relevant training, was used to document the identified need to embed the training of soft skills (such as communication, punctuality, work attitude, interpersonal skills, self-esteem, professional conduct, collaboration etc) further into the school curriculum and vocational courses, apprenticeships and any work-related training programmes to equip school leavers and learners with essential skills. Signposting to existing initiatives related to work readiness was also raised as an important requirement across the region in response to the large skills gap identified regarding work readiness (see Section 4.3.1). Embedding the teaching of work readiness and soft skills into vocational and training courses should be given greater importance, ideally at every stage/ level of the education system to prepare and manage people's expectations of work.

AT6, Recognition of social value, was not a popular code, however it is an important reminder of the need for organisations to acknowledge and deliver social value. Few participants identified a need to respond to a skills shortage around procurement and understanding of how social value could be used through projects to impact their local areas. It was noted that organisations should consider social value by exploring how they can engage with the skills agenda and give back to the community, thus generating positive impacts and adding value to their work and influence locally. This principle closely aligns with the expressed need for greater collaboration within the skills system in order to maximise the impact to local communities. Therefore, there is an opportunity to increase general awareness and understanding of social value through specific training.

Federation of Small Businesses   Local Skills Improvement Plan for Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire
Statement of Engagement Report

| 2.0 | 5 April 2023 | Ove Arup & Partners Limited   Statement of Engagement   Page 26

Retention and recruitment theme breakdown
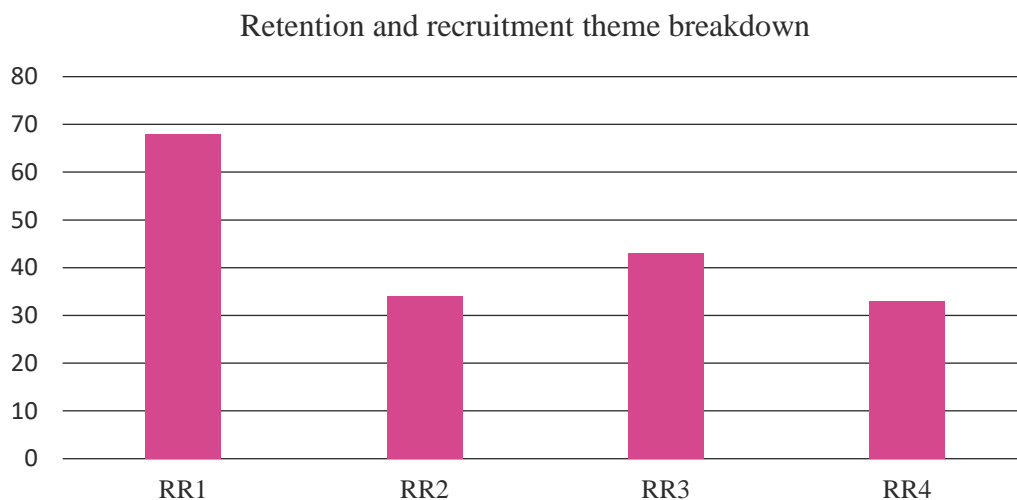
Figure 17 Breakdown of the retention and recruitment theme

Code	Name of Code
RR1	Issues associated with competitive employee benefit packages and working conditions for retaining employees
RR2	Issues associated with a small pool of candidates to fill vacancies
RR3	Exploring untapped potential
RR4	Improvements to recruitment processes

Recruitment and retention of employees has been raised as a consistent issue across the geography. Code RR1, the most common code within this theme, reflects participants' perceptions of retention issues, specifically referring to the competition they face from other organisations which causes employees to leave. Competition relating to the salary and overall benefits package that can be feasibly offered by SMEs is a barrier to them retaining skilled workers. The benefits package has been noted to include:

- salary;

- flexible working patterns;

- a good workplace culture;

- a preferable location;

- good working conditions;

- compensation packages; and

- career progression opportunities.

Small businesses report of instances where they have lost staff to multinationals, including situations where this was because their packages were more attractive, and they were able to offer a higher wage. The cost of recruiting was also mentioned as a barrier to obtaining a skilled workforce, and participants noted that women especially, are leaving jobs for other specific benefits elsewhere. RR1 was the most frequently applied code within this theme, which reflects that the cost to recruiting and retaining staff is a significant issue for small businesses.

Code RR2 reflects the perception that there is a small pool of candidates available to fill vacancies in the region. Across the geography, small businesses are finding it hard to recruit employees. Organisations reported that this is either due to not knowing when and how to grow their business and take on employees, or there are not enough individuals with the right skills and attitude to fill the vacancies. Job applications either do not attract the expected response rate or are applied for by unsuitable candidates. This was linked to:

- a lack of awareness amongst potential candidates of sector specific opportunities;

- candidates being discouraged to engage with job opportunities due to poorly pitched job advertisements or overcomplicated recruitment processes; and

- candidates not recognising or having confidence in the value of their own skills set and therefore not applying for a job they may be suited to.

In the Newark and Sherwood district, training providers acknowledged that they had experienced a lack of uptake in training for certain sector specific jobs, such as computer science, engineering, and early years care. Another issue coded under RR2, and expressed most notably across Newark and Sherwood, Chesterfield and Mansfield, was the challenge associated with retaining talent in the geography, as other towns and cities across the county may be more attractive to trained persons, especially graduates (18-25 year olds). The importance of businesses nurturing young, bright candidates to retain them within Newark was noted. However, competition with larger businesses, more attractive places to live and uncompetitive salaries also play a part in this drain of talent.

Code RR3 was applied to identify untapped potential in terms of possible candidates to fill vacancies. Groups that were identified included:

- older persons returning to the workforce and retraining after early retirement;

- technical specialists, particularly in manual jobs, becoming teachers when their job becomes too physically demanding (e.g. commercial electricians);

- disabled people to encourage greater inclusivity in the workplace;

- those returning from long-term absence or childcare leave;

- ex-military personnel due to the transferability of their skills;

- those who come from disadvantaged backgrounds, migrants or minority communities who may struggle to access job opportunities; and

- existing staff by recognising their transferable skills.

Participants recognised a need for mature employees to retrain rather than retire, and understand the valuable transferable skills they possess. Training must recognise the importance of lifelong upskilling and learning especially for older persons, unemployed individuals, those in roles which are becoming redundant etc, as the notion of having only one career throughout your life is changing. There is a difference between how employers and training providers should support people in the beginning of their career, and those who are seeking to retrain or re-enter the workplace.

RR4, Improvements to recruitment processes, code identified the need for more flexible approaches to recruitment. Some participants noted that the perceived lack of engagement with job advertisements and interviews may not be the issue, but that the recruitment process itself may be preventing people.

It was suggested that organisations could rethink their current models of recruitment to attract more employees. Some suggestions included:

- focusing on a candidate's CV rather than forms;

Federation of Small Businesses
Statement of Engagement Report

Local Skills Improvement Plan for Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire

| 2.0 | 5 April 2023 | Ove Arup & Partners Limited

Statement of Engagement

Page 28

- conducting interviews in informal spaces to relax the interviewee;

- taking a phased approach to recruitment;

- adapting interviews to specific candidates and being more welcoming and accommodating;

- increasing inclusivity by showing representative interview panels; and

- ensuring people understand the value of the roles they are applying for and selling the job role to candidates.

It was acknowledged, particularly in Newark and Sherwood, that recruitment processes need to be more targeted to desired candidates particularly given the reach of online recruitment (such as recruitment websites), as not all applicants are necessary suited or interested in the role when they apply via these means.

Creativity in the approach to recruitment was specified as a requirement, as many current models are struggling to harbour the level of recruits needed, especially in specific sectors such as health and social care where the job application process is often outdated and generic across a wide range of roles. Thus, participants in this sector identified that there appears to be interest in healthcare roles, but there is less engagement with associated recruitment processes.

It was reported that organisations in Chesterfield are working on more accessible recruitment, adapting the process to reduce onus on the candidate and attract people to more roles. This has included promoting success stories in the area to engage young people e.g. 'Made in Chesterfield'.

4.3.6 Sector specific issues and opportunities

Sector specific issues and opprtunities theme breakdown
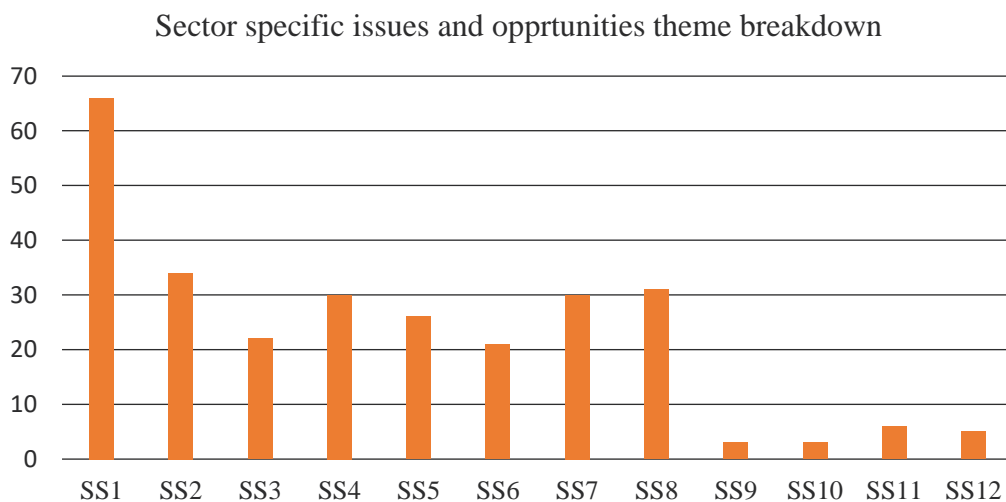
Figure 18 Breakdown of the sector specific issues and opportunities theme

Code	Name of Code
SS1	Digital sector
SS2	Low carbon and sustainable technology sector
SS3	Hospitality sector
SS4	Health and social care sector
SS5	Construction sector
SS6	Engineering sector

SS7	Business administration and support sector
SS8	Teaching sector
SS9	Creative industry sector
SS10	Agricultural sector
SS11	Logistics sector
SS12	Manufacturing sector

This theme identified those sectors where there are specific issues and opportunities which should be addressed through the LSIP. Each code represents a different sector. **Figure 18** shows that code SS1'Digital sector', is the sector with the most issues or opportunities, followed by SS2 'Low carbon and sustainable technology sector', and SS8 'Teaching sector'.

4.3.6.1 Digital sector

Code SS1 references the general observation that there is a shortage of skills in the digital sector and the challenges faced in recruiting employees with appropriate digital skills. Employers stated that they are increasingly seeking general and specialist digital skills, due to the importance of technology in the modern workplace, and evolving technologies within many sectors. Skills such as programming, dataset analysis, digital marketing, social media and graphic design etc. are required within the geography, and are predicted to continue to be in demand as the digital sector evolves. Some colleges reported a lack of take up in certain digital courses, for example, the design side of digital courses are popular but the programming side is not. A huge deficit in computer science staff in colleges was reported as a challenge when trying to encourage students to follow a career path in this sector, as the resources aren't available to provide the service.

4.3.6.2 Low carbon and sustainable technology sector

The low carbon and sustainable technology sector is also predicted to grow significantly, and some jobs that currently exist, will not exist in the future and many new jobs will be created. It was acknowledged that recruiting people who have expertise in this sector is becoming more important to support businesses in many industries, leading to a growing demand for employees with relevant skills and experience. This sector is therefore perceived to require:

- low carbon and sustainable technology skills to be embedded within training, for example within the construction and engineering sectors;

- people to have climate literacy, a general awareness and a willingness to accommodate a low carbon way of living, working, designing and thinking about their lifestyle and work;

- low carbon and sustainable technology knowledge to be taught more as part of a range of training or and vocational skills courses (including at GCSE level);

- upskilling of the current workforce with relevant skills, across many industries, as technologies evolve; and

- creativity and challenge of the status quo, especially amongst young people who enter the workplace with up-to-date knowledge.

Notwithstanding this, it is recognised that SMEs are already constrained, leading to a lack of resource to focus on sustainability. There is however a need to expedite delivery of these skills, especially through vocational courses in this sector.

Other sectors which were discussed, but less frequently, were the Business administration and support sector (SS7), Construction sector (SS5), Hospitality sector (SS3) and Health and social care sector (SS4). The main issues and opportunities within these sectors that were expressed by participants are summarised below.

- **Business administration and support roles** require technical skills such as data analysis, accounting, and project management. Additional management skills such as financial management, customer management, change management, regulation and legislation awareness etc. are also required. There is no Level 2 apprenticeship in business administration and generally colleges struggle to fill associated courses.

- **Construction** industries require technical skills such as carpentry, electrical work, plumbing, and health and safety training. A lack of interest and understanding of the breadth of roles and career paths available in the sector provides a challenge to recruitment and retention of employees. Specialists in health and safety training, and bricklaying tutors are particularly in demand. Construction was noted to be very well subscribed at colleges and therefore some struggle to accommodate the demand. But this sector sees a high level of dropouts from Level 1 and Level 2 courses.

- **Hospitality** businesses require technical skills such as food preparation, cooking, and customer service. Recruitment, and especially retention are particularly large issues for this sector as people do not see associated jobs as being able to offer a fulfilling career path, beyond a low wage. Consequently, this sector suffers from a high turnover of employees. There is a need to explain the opportunities available in this sector to increase interest in managerial roles for example.

- **Health and social care** industries require technical skills such as patient care, medical procedures, mental health care and healthcare administration. Recruitment and retention is a challenge for this sector due to the nature of the work, often low pay levels and a lack of understanding of scope of jobs available. Additionally, the job application process is often outdated and generic across a wide range of roles. The recruitment of care sector staff was noted as a particular challenge in North Nottinghamshire communities. Participants suggested that low engagement with this sector, in terms of recruitment in some roles, is due to outdated recruitment methods, perceived low pay and poor working conditions.

Other less frequently applied codes represented comments and discussions surrounding the Engineering sector (SS06), Logistics sector (SS11), Manufacturing sector (SS12), Agricultural sector (SS10) and Creative industry sector (SS9). The main issues and opportunities within these sectors that were expressed by participants are summarised below.

- **Engineering** businesses require technical skills such as mechanical engineering, electrical engineering, and computer-aided design; **logistics** businesses require technical skills in jobs related to transportation, storage, warehousing and couriering; and **manufacturing** businesses require a range of production and processing skills. These industries were reported to suffer from stereotyping, a lack of understanding of the breadth of career paths and low diversity amongst the workforce. Crucially technician roles are difficult to fill as it was suggested that education is equipping young people in these sectors with managerial skills. Additionally, the training available for these sector specific skills were reported to not always align with the employers' skills requirements and the irregular shift patterns of these workers. SMEs in these sectors struggle to support and connect with the colleges who provide the required training, as they face competition from their multinational competitors and colleges face challenges in recruiting specialist staff. The issues experienced by these sectors were felt heavily in areas such as Newark and Sherwood and Ashfield.

- **Agricultural, forestry and fishing** businesses require skills in farming of animals and crops, and fishing and aquaculture. It was identified that there are a lack of horticultural skills in the region and a need for horticultural training provision and facilities.

- **Arts, entertainment and recreational** businesses require skills for jobs in creative arts and entertainment, library archives and museums, and sports activities and amusement. It was noted that these industries have suffered since the pandemic.

4.3.7 Collaboration within the local skills system

Collaboration within the local skills system theme breakdown
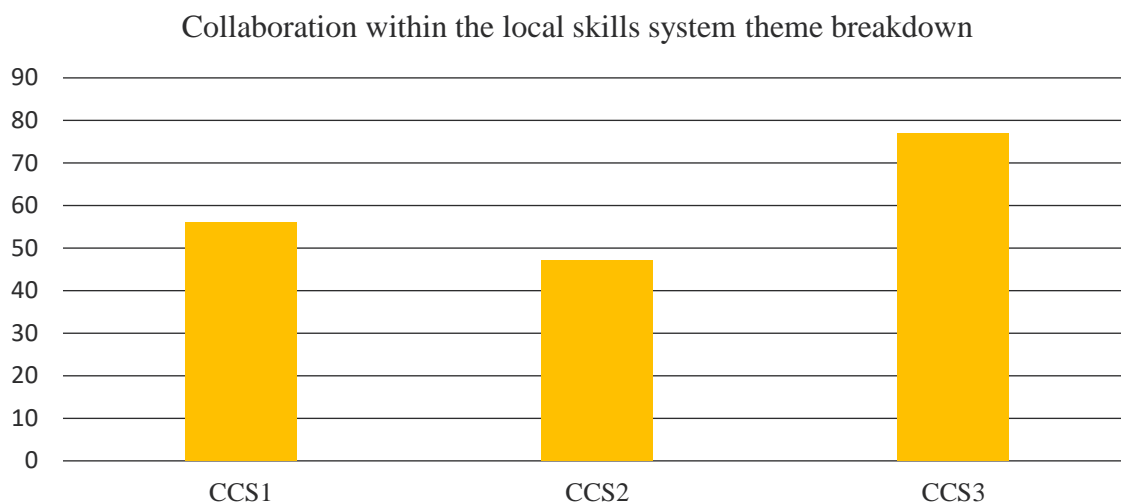
Figure 19 Breakdown of the collaboration theme

Code	Name of Code
CSS1	Greater collaboration between employers, training providers and strategic stakeholders is required
CSS2	Opportunity for more employer engagement
CSS3	Opportunities for greater collaboration within the local skills system

It was widely acknowledged by participants that there is a need for greater collaboration between employers, training providers, and strategic stakeholders within the local skills system to address skills gaps and ensure that training programmes are aligned with the needs of the economy. Where this opinion was expressed, code CSS1 was applied and is shown as the most frequently used code within this cross-cutting theme. This code was used to identify specific references to the need for collaboration between stakeholder groups. Feedback from participants noted that:

- there are gaps in the skills system that hinder the provision of effective training, and collaboration and partnership working could help to address these gaps and improve the skills system;

- SMEs' voices are undervalued amongst the landscape and employers should be considered when shaping a training programme and funding opportunities;

- businesses are working in silos without enough transparency in terms of how skills enhancement could be achieved;

- colleges and universities need incentives to develop fit-for-purpose new courses, for example shared risks and subsidies to assist with the cost of curriculum development; and

Federation of Small Businesses

Statement of Engagement Report

| 2.0 | 5 April 2023 | Ove Arup & Partners Limited

Local Skills Improvement Plan for Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire

Statement of Engagement

Page 32

- all parties (especially Government departments) need to be more open to different approaches and initiatives.

Code CSS2 captured instances where more employer engagement within the skills system was specifically requested. Overall, many training providers experienced a lack of employer engagement, and requested that more employers are willing to collaborate, to improve the effectiveness and content of training programmes to ensure they are more closely aligned with job market need.

However, concerns about the capacity of employers to engage in the skills system was raised in response, and regarded as a challenge, especially for self-owned/microbusinesses. Many employers face challenges in recruiting and retaining skilled workers, and they may not have the resources or expertise to engage with the skills system effectively. There is also a need to simplify the process for employers, and to clarify the support and funding available as this is a major constraint to engaging in training.

Some participants suggested that previous initiatives have struggled with employer engagement, and past experiences have deterred employers from further engaging. For example, Bolsover District Council reported that businesses may be distrusting and intimidated by local authorities, which reveals the need for the council to better engage with businesses on a case by case basis.

It was suggested that training providers and strategic stakeholders should work to support employers in engaging with the skills system and accessing the resources they need to develop their workforce. But it was acknowledged that there are mutual benefits to be gained through collaboration. Employers noted that they should also be more proactive and accurate in articulating their skills needs to training providers and stakeholders. For example, there is a specific need for local employers to support teaching and training institutions in sectors such as manufacturing and engineering.

It was recognised that best practice examples of good collaboration between stakeholders within the skills system exist, however it was noted that more could be done to share this and useful skills information, tools and resources that are present throughout the geography. Code CCS3 was the most used code within this cross-cutting theme, and identified opportunities for greater collaboration within the local skills system. Some opportunities suggested included:

- employers becoming strategic partners of a university or college to ensure required soft skills are reflected in their courses;

- an online tool that allows all relevant stakeholders and local businesses to access geography specific knowledge and resources for training and upskilling;

- more sharing platforms and events that are engaging and accessible, for example an online lunchtime talk for stakeholders to come together;

- collaboration between local councils and businesses on a case-by-case basis; and

- learning from existing employer networking groups such as those in Mansfield and Ashfield.

Feedback recognised that many good resources for training and best practice examples of collaboration within the skills system exist and, in some cases, there is no need to 'reinvent the wheel' where initiatives are working. However, it was demonstrated that there is a need to collate all relevant resources into a cohesive and shared resource which would allow all stakeholders to access and disseminate information about training, best practice, the local employer landscape etc., as many people are unaware of what help and networks are already in existence. This needs to be simple and accessible to all, especially small businesses.

Generally, greater collaboration would be viewed by participants as valuable, but some noted that significant efforts from schools, colleges and universities to address skills gaps are already seen across the geography and should not be overshadowed by employers' requirements, which may not necessarily be what is needed to address skills gaps.

4.4 Actionable priorities

The feedback received contained a number of ideas and recommendations for how the issues and opportunities identified could be addressed. These ideas and recommendations were extracted, and then refined by FSB (through engagement with the Steering Group) to shape draft actionable priorities. The draft actionable priorities are set out in **Appendix E** and will be used to inform training providers' Accountability Agreements and taken forward in the LSIP.

Federation of Small Businesses

Statement of Engagement Report

| 2.0 | 5 April 2023 | Ove Arup & Partners Limited

Local Skills Improvement Plan for Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire

Statement of Engagement

Page 34

5.   Conclusion

The engagement activities have successfully responded to the 'Statutory Guidance for the Development of a LSIP'[1] and captured feedback from key stakeholders across the skills system in Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire. An unrestricted approach has allowed stakeholders to openly share issues and opportunities they experience or foresee, without limitation. This has enabled the identification of recoccuring themes which have in turn informed actionable priorities which will be taken forward in Accountability Agreements and the LSIP. Importantly, the engagement has been an opportunity to bring together employers, training providers and strategic stakeholders and seek consensus on key priorities which they can drive forward through continued collaboration and partnership working.

The objectives set out for the LSIP engagement activities have been achieved in the following ways:

1. Employers, training providers, and strategic stakeholders have been empowered to contribute to shaping the LSIP, at a formative stage of the process. This collaborative approach has fostered a sense of ownership and responsibility among stakeholders.

2. The inclusive engagement undertaken has successfully captured stakeholders' views from across sectors and geographies, culminating in a comprehensive understanding of key priorities for the local skills system over the next three years.

3. A combination of quantitative and qualitative data was collected which enabled stakeholders to share issues and opportunities, as well as ideas regarding how to address these. These recommendations have been used to shape actionable priorities that will be pivotal in informing future decision-making and resource allocation.

4. The actionable priorities developed utilising feedback from the engagement process will provide a solid foundation for training providers to develop their Accountability Agreements. These agreements will ensure that education and training responds to the LSIP's objectives and addresses the identified skills gaps and opportunities in the local skills system.

5. The engagement activities have fostered relationships and encouraged further collaborative working amongst employers, training providers, and strategic stakeholders. This collaborative approach is essential in delivering the outcomes of the LSIP, as it ensures that all parties are working together towards a common goal and leveraging their collective resources and expertise.

The feedback identified several key focus areas for the skills system over the three year lifespan of the LSIP.This includes recognition of a skills gap between employee skills and employer's requirements. There is a particular need to improve work readiness and soft skills, which are valued and required by employers, through dedicated training provision. There is also a particular need for training provision to respond to the continuing digitalisation of the economy and address the skills gap in basic digital skills, including computer literacy and use of Microsoft Office along with widening the breadth of exposure to use of technologies and computer skills, so that those entering the workplace have adaptability and confidence to grow their learning.

Feedback demonstrates that specific focus is also needed in the following sectors to bridge skills gaps and ensure that education and training programmes are aligned and respond to the evolving needs:

- digital sector;

- low carbon and sustainable technology sector;

- hospitality sector;

- health and social care sector;

- construction sector;

- engineering sector;

- business administration and support sector;

- teaching sector;

- creative industry sector;

- agricultural sector;

- logistics sector; and

- manufacturing sector.

Sector-specific issues and opportunities must be addressed by developing targeted initiatives and resources for each sector, particularly in the digital and low carbon and sustainable technology sectors, which have been identified as having the most growth potential.

Whilst the research noted several capacity and capability constraints that training providers and employers face in delivering training, it also highlighted multiple opportunities to enhance provision in the future. This includes a potential to transition to shorter bursts of training and development of specific training for supply chains and SMEs. Tailored and flexible training programmes are essential to ensure they cater to the diverse needs of employers and learners, emphasising digital skills and work readiness-relevant training, which have been identified as critical areas for workforce development.

Feedback demonstrates that local socio-economic conditions have exacerbated challenges within the skills system. For example, COVID-19 has negatively impacted the development of soft skills, and resulted in employees making career changes or choosing to leave employment entirely. Socio-economic inequalities amongst learners, employees and unemployed individuals also continue to pose barriers to accessing education and employment.

Recruitment and retention of employees is a consistent challenge across the geography, which is symptomatic of the cost of recruitment, outdated approaches to recruitment, a small candidate pool within the area, and competive benefits packages encouraging individuals to move to other organisations. However, the engagement identified a series of demographic groups that have significant potential to further engage in the labour market to address these challenges. This includes older persons, disabled people, ex-military personnel, those returning from long-term absence or childcare leave, and those from disadvantaged backgrounds, migrants or minority communities.

Feedback also demonstrates that there is already positive collaboration and a wealth of initiatives and resources available within the geography, but that often there is a lack of awareness from employers, employees and learners of the support on offer. The focus is therefore on supplementing and promoting the assets that already exist, rather than reinventing the wheel. By fostering strong partnerships, sharing best practice, and engaging in transparent communication, the region can strengthen its overall skills ecosystem, better prepare learners for employment, and contribute to economic growth and development in the long term.

Federation of Small Businesses
Statement of Engagement Report

| 2.0 | 5 April 2023 | Ove Arup & Partners Limited

Local Skills Improvement Plan for Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire

Statement of Engagement

Page 36

6. Appendices

Appendix A – Online Surveys

Introduction page for all surveys:

fsb
Experts in Business

Local Skills Improvement Plan for Nottinghamshire & Derbyshire

Introduction

On behalf of the Department for Education, the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) is preparing a Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) for Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire. By working with local employers, training providers and other stakeholders, the LSIP will identify the key changes needed to make post-16 technical education and training more closely aligned with the skills needs of local employers and the economy.

Stakeholders will be invited to contribute to the LSIP through online surveys, telephone interviews and focus group sessions, hosted by our consultants Arup. All feedback received will be considered to inform the final LSIP, which will be published in summer 2023.

To identify actionable priorities, it is important that we gather inputs from stakeholders across the region, and therefore we would be grateful if you could please complete the following survey by **5pm on Sunday 19th February 2023**. We anticipate that the survey will take approximately 30 minutes to complete.

If you have additional skills insights that you'd like to share, then please visit FSB's LSIP website https://www.fsb.org.uk/local-skills-improvement-plans.html or contact Natalie Gasson-McKinley via email natalie.gasson-mckinley@fsb.org.uk

You can respond to the survey in your capacity as an:

- Employer
- Training provider – *including Further Education Colleges, Sixth Form Colleges, Higher Education Institutions, and Independent Training Providers, that deliver English funded post-16 technical education or training in England.*
- Strategic partner – *including local authorities, local enterprise partnerships, schools, 16-19 academies, centres of innovation, Jobcentre Plus network, and Career, Education, Information Advice and Guidance providers.*

Note: once you have begun the survey, you do not have to complete it in a set amount of time. You can revisit your survey submission at any time as long as the tab is not closed. But your response will not be recorded until you press the **submit** button on your chosen survey, after completing all required questions. You can then close the tab.

Please click the SUBMIT button below to choose which survey you want to complete (links are provided on the next page).

Federation of Small Businesses
Statement of Engagement Report

Local Skills Improvement Plan for Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire

| 2.0 | 5 April 2023 | Ove Arup & Partners Limited

Statement of Engagement

Page 37

Employer Survey:

Employer Survey - Local Skills Improvement Plan Nottinghamshire & Derbyshire ⅌

fsb⅜

Online Survey for Employers

Please note:

- Required questions are marked with an asterisk (*).
- We recognise there will be different skills requirements for entry level employees and more experienced employees and therefore we ask that you please reflect this in your responses, where applicable.
- Any information you provide will be treated in accordance with GDPR 2018, and will only be used by the FSB and our suppliers to inform development of the LSIP for Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire. Data will be stored securely and will not be shared with any third parties.

Section 1	...

Part 1 – Your organisation

1. Organisation name *

Enter your answer

2. Employee name *

Enter your answer

3. Employee job title *

Enter your answer

Federation of Small Businesses
Statement of Engagement Report

| 2.0 | 5 April 2023 | Ove Arup & Partners Limited

Local Skills Improvement Plan for Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire

Statement of Engagement

Page 38

4. Employee email *

Enter your answer

5. District(s) that your premises are located within *

Enter your answer

6. Number of employees *

◯ 0-50

◯ 51-100

◯ 101-150

◯ 151-200

◯ 201-250

◯ 250+

7. Which industry/sector does your organisation primarily operate within? *
Please tick one box that best describes your organisation

◯ Agriculture, forestry and fishing

◯ Mining and quarrying

◯ Manufacturing

◯ Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply

◯ Water supply; sewerage, waste management and remediation activities

◯ Construction

◯ Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles

- ○ Transportation and storage
- ○ Accommodation and food service activities
- ○ Information and communication
- ○ Financial and insurance activities
- ○ Real estate activities
- ○ Professional, scientific and technical activities
- ○ Administrative and support service activities
- ○ Public administration and defence; compulsory social security
- ○ Education
- ○ Human health and social work activities
- ○ Arts, entertainment and recreation
- ○ Other service activities
- ○ Voluntary and community sector
- ○ Sports, fitness and leisure

Federation of Small Businesses
Statement of Engagement Report

Local Skills Improvement Plan for Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire

| 2.0 | 5 April 2023 | Ove Arup & Partners Limited

Statement of Engagement

Page 40

Part 2 – Skills, capabilities and expertise required

8. What soft skills will be most required by your organisation over the next 3 years? *

Examples include leadership, team working, written communication, verbal communication, non-specialist digital skills, customer service etc.

Enter your answer

9. What technical skills will be most required by your organisation over the next 3 years? *

Examples include specialist digital skills, data analysis, financial management, graphic design etc.

Enter your answer

10. Do you consider there to be a gap between skills that your employees have and the skills your organisation requires? *

◯ Yes

◯ No

11. If yes, in what area are these skills gaps and what action(s) has your organisation taken and/or intend to take to reduce skills gaps in your workforce?

Enter your answer

Federation of Small Businesses
Statement of Engagement Report

Local Skills Improvement Plan for Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire

| 2.0 | 5 April 2023 | Ove Arup & Partners Limited

Statement of Engagement

Page 41

Part 3 – Skills recruitment and retention

12. How do you currently approach workforce planning, for example in relation to staff retention, retiring employees, migrant workforce, etc?
    *

    Enter your answer

13. What is your current staff turnover rate?

    Enter your answer

14. What do you consider to be the persistent barriers in staff retention? *

    Enter your answer

15. In the next 3 years do you expect the number of your employees to (a) increase, (b) decrease or (c) stay the same? *

    ◯ Increase

    ◯ Decrease

    ◯ Stay the same

16. How do you recruit your employees? *

Enter your answer

17. What are the key challenges you face in recruiting employees with the right skills sets?

Enter your answer

18. If you answered the question above, do you have any programmes / policies in place that help your organisation address these challenges?

E.g. work experience, T-Level placements, etc.

Enter your answer

19. What do you consider to be the largest barriers to work readiness? *

Enter your answer

20. Do you have any vacancies that are difficult to fill because you cannot find people with the right skills set? *

◯ Yes

◯ No

21. If yes, please provide details of how many vacancies, the type of roles and skills requirements.

> Enter your answer

Part 4 – Training strategy

22. Does your organisation have an established training plan?
    *

    ○ Yes

    ○ No

23. Does your organisation have an allocated training budget? *

    ○ Yes

    ○ No

24. How frequently do you offer training to your employees?
    *

    If other, please specify

    ○ Weekly

    ○ Monthly

    ○ Quarterly

    ○ Annually

    ○ Other

25. Please select which categories of training your employees receive. *

If other, please specify

- [ ] Job specific training (e.g. data management)

- [ ] Technical training (e.g. digital)

- [ ] Soft skills training (e.g. customer service)

- [ ] Health, safety and wellbeing training (e.g. working at height)

- [ ] Early careers training (e.g. apprenticeships, traineeships, T-Levels)

- [ ] Other

26. How is the training that you offer to your employees provided? *

- ( ) Provided internally by your organisation

- ( ) Provided by external organisations

- ( ) A combination of internally and externally

27. If you offer external training, which of the following organisations do you work with to provide training to your employees? *

If other, please specify

- [ ] Government services (e.g. National Apprenticeship Service)

- [ ] Business representative bodies (e.g. East Midlands Chamber of Commerce or FSB)

- [ ] Local authorities

- [ ] Business networks and forums (e.g. Nottingham Partners)

- [ ] Further Education Colleges

- [ ] Schools / academies

- [ ] Universities and other Higher Education Institutions

- [ ] Private skills providers / training companies

- [ ] D2N2 Local Enterprise Partnership

Federation of Small Businesses   Local Skills Improvement Plan for Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire
Statement of Engagement Report

| 2.0 | 5 April 2023 | Ove Arup & Partners Limited   Statement of Engagement   Page 45

☐ Centres of Innovation

☐ Jobcentre Plus network

☐ Career, education, information advice and guidance providers

☐ Commercial regulatory bodies

☐ Professional institutes

☐ Other

28. If you do not currently work with training providers or other stakeholders to provide training for your employees, please explain the reason for this, and whether there is consideration to do so in the future. *

Enter your answer

29. Do you consider the training (internal/external) provided to your employees to be fit for purpose? *

◯ Yes

◯ No

30. If no, please specify required improvements.

Enter your answer

Federation of Small Businesses
Statement of Engagement Report
| 2.0 | 5 April 2023 | Ove Arup & Partners Limited

Local Skills Improvement Plan for Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire

Statement of Engagement

Page 46

31. Do you consider that your employees require additional training? *

   ◯ Yes

   ◯ No

32. If yes, please specify the type of training required.

Enter your answer

33. Are there any barriers preventing you from offering additional training? *

   ◯ Yes

   ◯ No

34. If yes, please select which barriers are applicable.
If other, please specify

☐ Unable to release staff

☐ Training is too expensive

☐ Training is too difficult to access or attend

☐ Unable to find appropriate training provision in Nottinghamshire or Derbyshire

☐ Unable to identify skills needed

☐ Other

35. If you answered the question above, how do you think the barrier(s) identified could be addressed?

Enter your answer

Federation of Small Businesses   Local Skills Improvement Plan for Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire
Statement of Engagement Report

| 2.0 | 5 April 2023 | Ove Arup & Partners Limited   Statement of Engagement   Page 47

36. Do you feel there is scope for further collaboration between employers, training providers and strategic organisations in relation to training provision and skills development? *

◯ Yes

◯ No

37. If yes, please provide any best practice examples or ideas of what best practice would look like.

Enter your answer

Section 5   ...

Part 5 – Drivers of change

38. Please select which key socio-economic drivers have or will impact the skills required for your organisation over the next 3 years.
*

- [ ] Digitalisation

- [ ] Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire's target to achieve net zero by 2050

- [ ] Recovery from COVID-19 (including changes to working practices)

- [ ] Cost of living crisis

- [ ] Energy crisis

- [ ] Health inequalities

- [ ] Ageing population

- [ ] Changing migration rules

- [ ] Social mobility

- [ ] Wage rates

- [ ] Employment prospects for disabled people

- [ ] Level of qualification

39. For the key socio-economic drivers you have selected, please provide details of how your organisation has/will address these matters. *

Enter your answer

Federation of Small Businesses
Statement of Engagement Report
| 2.0 | 5 April 2023 | Ove Arup & Partners Limited

Local Skills Improvement Plan for Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire

Statement of Engagement
Page 49

Training Provider survey:

Training Provider Survey - Local Skills Improvement Plan Nottinghamshire & Derbyshire

Online Survey for Training Providers

Please note:

- Required questions are marked with an asterisk (*).
- We recognise there will be different skills requirements for entry level employees and more experienced employees and therefore we ask that you please reflect this in your responses, where applicable.
- Any information you provide will be treated in accordance with GDPR 2018, and will only be used by the FSB and our suppliers to inform development of the LSIP for Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire. Data will be stored securely and will not be shared with any third parties.

Section 1   ···

Part 1 – Your organisation

1. Organisation name *

Enter your answer

2. Employee name *

Enter your answer

3. Employee job title *

Enter your answer

4. Employee email *

Enter your answer

5. District(s) that your premises are located within *

Enter your answer

6. Number of employees *

◯ 0-50

◯ 51-100

◯ 101-150

◯ 151-200

◯ 201-250

◯ 250+

7. Which category of training institution does your organisation belong to? *
If other, please specify

☐ Further Education College

☐ Sixth Form College

☐ Independent Training Provider

☐ Higher Education Institution

☐ Other

Federation of Small Businesses
Statement of Engagement Report

Local Skills Improvement Plan for Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire

| 2.0 | 5 April 2023 | Ove Arup & Partners Limited

Statement of Engagement

Page 51

Part 2 – Training provision

8. Please provide a summary of what training your organisation currently provides (in terms of specialisms, geography, courses, level of qualification etc.)?
   *

   Enter your answer

9. Does your organisation provide training in softer skills sets? *

   For example, leadership, team working, written communication, verbal communication, non-specialist digital skills, customer service etc.

   ○ Yes

   ○ No

10. If yes, please provide details.

    Enter your answer

11. How many people does your organisation train? (Enrolment figure per year) *

    Enter your answer

12. How does your organisation recruit learners?
    *

    Enter your answer

13. What do you consider to be the largest barriers to work readiness? *

Enter your answer

14. In the next 3 years, do you foresee any changes in training requirements from employers? *

◯ Yes

◯ No

15. If yes, please provide details.

Enter your answer

16. Does your organisation offer management training for local employers? *

◯ Yes

◯ No

17. If yes, please provide details.

Enter your answer

18. Does your organisation work with local employers in relation to their workforce development planning? *

○ Yes

○ No

19. If yes, please provide details.

> Enter your answer

Section 3   ...

Part 3 – Skills supply and demand

20. What soft skills will be most required by the businesses / sectors that your organisation works with, over the next 3 years? *

Examples include leadership, team working, written communication, verbal communication, non-specialist digital skills, customer service etc.

> Enter your answer

21. What technical skills will be most required by the businesses / sectors that your organisation works with, over the next 3 years? *

Examples include specialist digital skills, data analysis, financial management, graphic design etc.

> Enter your answer

Federation of Small Businesses   Local Skills Improvement Plan for Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire
Statement of Engagement Report
| 2.0 | 5 April 2023 | Ove Arup & Partners Limited   Statement of Engagement   Page 54

22. Do you consider there to be a gap between skills required by employers and the skills developed through training provision in Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire? *

◯ Yes

◯ No

23. If yes, please specify the skills gaps and what action(s) has your organisation already taken to address the skills gaps, and what action does your organisation intend to take going forward?

Enter your answer

24. What are the key enablers to supplying the required skills? *

Enter your answer

25. What are the barriers to supplying the required skills? *

Enter your answer

Section 4   ...

Part 4 – Collaboration with other training providers, employers and local stakeholders

26. How does your organisation work with other training providers, employers and stakeholders in relation to training provision? *

Enter your answer

27. Do you feel there is scope for further collaboration between training providers, employers and strategic organisations? If so, what would best practice look like?
*

Enter your answer

Section 5   ...

Part 5 – Drivers of change

28. Please select which key socio-economic drivers have or will impact the skills required for businesses over the next 3 years, and where applicable, please provide details of how your organisation has/will address these matters.
*

Federation of Small Businesses   Local Skills Improvement Plan for Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire
Statement of Engagement Report

| 2.0 | 5 April 2023 | Ove Arup & Partners Limited   Statement of Engagement   Page 56

☐ Digitalisation

☐ Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire's target to achieve net zero by 2050

☐ Recovery from COVID-19 (including changes to working practices)

☐ Cost of living crisis

☐ Energy crisis

☐ Health inequalities

☐ Ageing population

☐ Changing migration rules

☐ Social mobility

☐ Wage rates

☐ Employment prospects for disabled people

☐ Level of qualification

29. For the key socio-economic drivers you have selected, please provide details of how your organisation has/will address these matters. *

Enter your answer

Strategic Stakeholder survey:

Stakeholder Survey - Local Skills Improvement Plan Nottinghamshire & Derbyshire

Online Survey for Strategic Stakeholders

Please note:

- Required questions are marked with an asterisk (*).
- We recognise there will be different skills requirements for entry level employees and more experienced employees and therefore we ask that you please reflect this in your responses, where applicable.
- Any information you provide will be treated in accordance with GDPR 2018, and will only be used by the FSB and our suppliers to inform development of the LSIP for Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire. Data will be stored securely and will not be shared with any third parties.

Section 1	...

Part 1 – Your organisation

1. Organisation name *

> Enter your answer

2. Employee name *

> Enter your answer

3. Employee job title *

> Enter your answer

4. Employee email *

Enter your answer

5. District(s) that your premises are located within *

Enter your answer

6. Number of employees *

◯ 0-50

◯ 51-100

◯ 101-150

◯ 151-200

◯ 201-250

◯ 250+

7. Which industry/sector does your organisation primarily operate within? *

Please tick one box that best describes your organisation

◯ Agriculture, forestry and fishing

◯ Mining and quarrying

◯ Manufacturing

◯ Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply

◯ Water supply; sewerage, waste management and remediation activities

◯ Construction

◯ Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles

◯ Transportation and storage

◯ Accommodation and food service activities

Federation of Small Businesses
Statement of Engagement Report
| 2.0 | 5 April 2023 | Ove Arup & Partners Limited   Local Skills Improvement Plan for Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire

Statement of Engagement   Page 59

○ Information and communication

○ Financial and insurance activities

○ Real estate activities

○ Professional, scientific and technical activities

○ Administrative and support service activities

○ Public administration and defence; compulsory social security

○ Education

○ Human health and social work activities

○ Arts, entertainment and recreation

○ Other service activities

○ Voluntary and community sector

○ Sports, fitness and leisure

Section 2   ...

Part 2 – Skills supply and demand

8. What soft skills will be most required by the businesses / sectors that your organisation works with, over the next 3 years? *

   Examples include leadership, team working, written communication, verbal communication, non-specialist digital skills, customer service etc.

   Enter your answer

9. What technical skills will be most required by the businesses / sectors that your organisation works with, over the next 3 years? *

   Examples include specialist digital skills, data analysis, financial management, graphic design etc.

   Enter your answer

10. Do you consider there to be a gap between skills required by employers and the skills developed through training provision in Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire? *

　　◯　Yes

　　◯　No

11. If yes, please specify the skills gaps.

> Enter your answer

12. What are the key enablers to supplying the required skills?
　　　*

> Enter your answer

13. What are the key barriers to supplying the required skills? *

> Enter your answer

14. Have you received any insight from businesses and/or training providers in relation to how organisations such as yours can support in the delivery of skills requirements?

　　If so, please provide details.

　　If not, would this insight be helpful? *

> Enter your answer

Part 3 – Training provision

16. What do you consider to be the top 3 gaps in current training provision, needed to meet local businesses' requirements? *

Enter your answer

17. In the next 3 years, do you foresee any changes to employers' training requirements? *

◯ Yes

◯ No

18. If yes, please provide details.

Enter your answer

19. What do you consider to be the largest barriers to work readiness? *

Enter your answer

20. *

For example, leadership, team working, written communication, verbal communication, non-specialist digital skills, customer service etc.

	1	2	3	4	5
	○	○	○	○	○

21. Please provide your reasoning.
    *

> Enter your answer

Part 4 – Collaboration amongst employers, training providers and other stakeholders

22. How does your organisation work with other strategic organisations, training providers and employers in relation to skills development? *

> Enter your answer

23. Do you feel there is scope for further collaboration between strategic organisations, training providers and employers? If so, do you have any best practice examples or ideas of what best practice would look like? *

> Enter your answer

Part 5 – Drivers of change

24. Please select which key socio-economic drivers have or will impact the skills required for businesses over the next 3 years, and where applicable, please provide details of how your organisation has/will address these matters.
    *

    ☐ Digitalisation

    ☐ Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire's target to achieve net zero by 2050

    ☐ Recovery from COVID-19 (including changes to working practices)

    ☐ Cost of living crisis

    ☐ Energy crisis

    ☐ Health inequalities

    ☐ Ageing population

    ☐ Changing migration rules

    ☐ Social mobility

    ☐ Wage rates

    ☐ Employment prospects for disabled people

    ☐ Level of qualification

25. For the key socio-economic drivers you have selected, please provide details of how your organisation has/will address these matters. *

    Enter your answer

Appendix B – Miro Boards

Online Focus Group 1 – 10 January 2023

1. Skills, capabilities and expertise requirements

Which skills gaps do you currently have? ➤	What action have you already taken to reduce skills gaps/ what actions will you make?
Tutors CustomerService Hospitality Talent attraction Digital skills Quantity Surveyors Project Managers Graduates Diversity (females)	████████ Going into schools working with year 9 and onwards promoting apprenticeships ████████ Lots of different companies doing the same kinds of engagement and would be good to unit the tools and have one route

1. Skills, capabilities and expertise requirements

Which skills gaps do you currently have?	What action have you already taken to reduce skills gaps/ what actions will you make?
██████ - Ageing workforce Skills gap - due to training availability and pathways into engineering are convoluted - system is broken and requires change not training manufacturers anymore	

██████ - MD of Tyler Brothers 'TyBro' specialist engineering company - fabrication and assembly - c. 1914

██████ Bolsover DC, district support and BD - sit on partnership skills team

██████ skills plan for Mansfield

2. Skills recruitment and retention

What do you consider to be the persistent barriers to staff retention, and how do you think these challenges would be best addressed?

██████ 80% retention. Need to focus on the supply chain. How large companies can encourage their SME supply chain to get involved

██████ Incentives and abilities to keep up with other organisations pay and the benefits. Wellness and HR incentives

██████ Visibility and upskilling of colleagues in SMEs. Looking beyond the day to day.

██████ Social value how businesses can engage with the skills agenda and giving back to the community. Generating the good for the community.

Empowering colleagues. ROad map to success

3. Training requirements

Are there any barriers preventing you from offering more training?	How could these barriers be overcome?

■ apprentice levy pot, restrictive on what you can use it on. Flexible on what type of training it could be used on. Pot more flexible

■ Recruiting apprentices are really important, E spends all of her apprenticeship pot but N only spends less than 50%

■ Digital training barriers.

Being work ready massive skills gap

Assumption that children are already skilled NL

Allowing the apprenticeship levy to be used on other training requirements - NL

Having technical boot camps and providing training for those who haven't attended uni

Shorter training instead of these longer apprenticeships allowing a wider variety of people to join the workforce

4. Drivers of change

How has/will your organisation addressed any changes to skills requirements in response to the following socio-economic drivers

Drivers	How have/will you address it	Possible other drivers of change
Digitalisation	▮ already doing, covid pushed to do more digital things. Brining together all digital knowledge into one place. Investing into young people. ▮ Digital transformation - transform the level of techincal capabilities - investing in early careers (in place since 2020)	Skills Gaps Diversity Gender
Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire's target to achieve net zero by 2050	▮ - not currently ▮ government funding and therefore all bids focus on this. Green agenda must be embedded on all training.	Cost of living crisis -
Recovery from Covid-19	Lack of preparation of kids in school, unprepared for the workplace. Impacted on their social skills. Lost confidence and social skills.	

Health inequalities

■ - Barrier of dealing with people with mental health issues

■ - Company providing for employees health and wellbeing benefits. i.e. flu jabs and health insurance

Ageing population

HGV/construction - young people not wanting to go into these professions. People are retiering earlier. People in their mid to late 50s

Changing migration rules

■ - Since brexit employer has to pay the visa for each graduate. average 8k.

5. Feedback

Additional comments and feedback

- Digitalisation
- School leavers not being ready for the workforce
- Impacts of cost of living crisis
- Future workforce - Completely different jobs and skills needed for the next generation
- Green agenda and sustainability
- Appropriate training available - higher levels need level 4 and above

Consider recurring themes and suggestions

- Connections between employers and training providers and education providers is not joined up
- Disconnect between the schools and employers and pushing uni over apprenticeships and training - NL
- Schools not making students aware of the different pathways and the opportunities i.e. living rural but working remotely in a city
- Larger employers supporting SMEs to attend events and upskilling the supply chain and providing them with training.

2. Skills recruitment and retention

What do you consider to be the persistent barriers to staff retention, and how do you think these challenges would be best addressed?

██ people leaving for a higher salary. Looking for a lot of digital skills, in high demand which will come with a premium, partcularly early career perspective, but across the board

employment figures are rising but lowest pool of unemployed people since 1974

People move for double salary

██ MDC - large issue lots of vacancies across the board.

solution - look for transferable skills.

Need to address mental health and long term barriers before thinking about employment. Much longer route than before last 2 years

██ - hard to recruit into hospitality. People don't want to do unsociable hours. E.g. restaurant without chef

What are the key challenges you face in recruiting employees with the right skills sets, and how do you think these challenges would be best addressed?

▮ - Digital skills is a key one - are we training with enough depth,

need to be more exposure to digital skills in schools - seems to be very traditional - needs to be a greater part of the education. IT should be a life skill

Social enterprise come PLC - refer to Codefirstgirls model - focus on females in employment 2 routes:
1- non technical grads - have training for tech jobs
2- career swtichers - free training for those who are going back to training e.g. after family life . Other initiatives don't go far enough for required digital skills - need more higher skilled digital skills.

There are lots of skills bootcamps but they are basic digital skills.

Experian training to grow apprentices - children are ill prepared coming out of school - is this a result of COVID? e.g. 9-5 working day

3. Training requirements

Are there any barriers preventing you from offering more training?	How could these barriers be overcome?
This issued is echoed with apprenticeships - need to look at how to provide the support, to allow the 20% off the job. Explaining the impacts if they don't invest in training, e.g. people leaving for salary increases.	

▮ no issues for their organisation, but there are barriers for SMEs - barriers are access to fundng, capability to release employees for training

Cyclic issues around illness, unable to complete training due to impacts on the front line .

Lack of freedom and capacity.

can result in break in learning - and

use opportunity to engage with large employers and contracting authorities to make allowances for on the job training. Difficulty in sparing the time to engage in initiatives such as this. Opportunity to bid for future contracts.

evidence how you are upskilling your colleagues time. take similar approach to social value

need to force hand to engage with the agenda.

Apprenticeship standards have mostly been written by employers - how best to get retrofit for different types of organisation. Need to go back to curriculm

Do you seek support from any training providers or other stakeholders in the loc skills system to provide training for your workforce?

Yes

Best practices and challenges

▮ - would welcome insight as to whether businesses do contact the council to seek support? e.g. in instances where there is no time to engage

There is a barrier between the council and businesses, businesses may be distrusting and intimidated by Council. Need to work with businesses on a case by case basis

Council have just been awarded UKSPF about to launch grants for start ups, business support hyperlocal for Bolsover businesses , also looking at tourism businesses - looking to issue grants over next 2 years

explaoning ramifcations if you don't engage e.g. wont receive funding

4. Drivers of change

How has/will your organisation addressed any changes to skills requirements in response to the following socio-economic drivers

Drivers	How have/will you address it	Possible oth[...] drivers of c[...]
Digitalisation		
Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire's target to achieve net zero by 2050		
Recovery from Covid-19		
Cost of living crisis		
Energy Crisis		
Health inequalities		
Ageing population		

■ - Digitalisation - coming to the top of the agenda, Mansfield is looking to produce a digital strategy, using best practice from West Notts college everybody is expected to have a certain level of digital competency

There is an expectation that young people have the required digital skills. but programmes are different etc

■ -feel these challenges reflect Mansfield as an entire district

Issue of covid-19 returning to work is an ongoing conundrum - a lot over 50s have left work.

■ - from a business support perspective, this reflects the issues and these are the types of issues that Bolsover DC will be looking to support with grants

important that we are mindful of preparing people to take on digital roles of the future - preparing people for this.

Changing migration rules	
social mobility	Social mobility is a key issue in North Nottinghamshire, hybrid working will bring opportunities. Young people wouldn't have previously thought about going to work in a city but now its an opportunity. Don't imagine a lot of young people understand the opportunities in this regard.

Mansfield was in the 20% most deprived |
| wage rates | |
| employment prospects for disabled people | |

Do you seek support from any training providers or other stakeholders in the local skills system to provide training for your workforce?

Yes

No

▇ - Using apprenticeships and putting more senior people in apprenticeships. Deliver internal training and more senior level training being sought by individuals

1. Skills, capabilities and expertise requirements

Which skills gaps do you currently have?	What action have you already taken to reduce skills gaps/ what actions will you make?

■ - Digital technological skills gaps. More mature people in business less digitally skilled. Prior to lock down NTU were going to run a 1-1 course.

Reverse mentoring? outsourcing encouraged - From covid remote working now more accepted and encouraged. Work experience now available remotely.

Learning from the tourism industry in Stratford?

■ Open evenings attracted parents and their kids looking at post 16 and also kids coming with no ideas. Children being held back by parents due to funding/money issues. Muting the children's dreams and aspirations.

■ - Struggle with practical work. Transport to and from work. Hospitality not seen as a respected business and therefore harder to recruit.

■ Showing people progression and the transferable skills. However, still hard to recruit at the lower levels. Influence of parents not respecting the industry.

advocating hospitality as a career path at early grades

■ a partnership to keep and recruit those that join as a part time job.

■ - The way we engage people impacts how they view the sector and the roles available. Giving them hands on experience and creating a vibrant and attractive experience, help to bust the stereotypes.

■ Hotel takeover - students went and took over/shadowed roles, following this a number now work in the hotel and changed their ambitions based off of this experience. Possibly recreate this? Could be done in multiple sectors

■ - Helping parents to build the soft skills of their children and help prepare them for work.

■ - Pre covid there was a shortage of chefs and hospitality. Even worse following on from Covid. People are having to be skilled up, no one coming in at the higher levels. In Notts city work placements not being put in, students restricted on what they can do. A good entry level business for those not in employment or training. Struggle for the industry to be taken seriously

■ Demand from young people for hospitality roles is small. A lot of young peoples experience is of a part time job and is usually a poor experience. A hard sell to attract bright young people into hospitality. Important to embrace them and develop and train those who go into management roles.

■ - Retention impacted by the lack of people coming into the sector. Less people = longer hours cycle. Industry is changing but the stigma is still there.

■ - Struggling for resourcing and need to go to schools to try and find someone who might want to join, hard to work out a return on that. About saying to the parents this is where you start and this is where you can go. Career oathways

How do you think skills needs within your organisation will change over the next 3 years?

■ - sociability of young people is no longer there. Lacking social skills - these skills are as important as academic skills. Knock on impact of Covid. Via email/social media good but missing during the interview. Preparedness for work of young people.

■ - significantly higher turnover. More difficult to train the staff and give them the skills. As people can train with in work it will be easier however currently turnover too high.

■ - Soft skills are missing among young people. They find it difficult to take critique and direction.

2. Skills recruitment and retention

What do you consider to be the persistent barriers to staff retention, and how do you think these challenges would be best addressed?

High turnover in hospitality

■ - Hospitality has not been great at retaining people. Not enough time looking at the overall package and how people are managed. Pressures in recruitment has meant behaviours which are undesirable have been accepted. With in the industry have a transient workforce is not a downfall, but historically too many people have been lost. The best examples of companies have good communication, help people fulfil aspirations, make employees feel included. Younger people don't want to feel like they're being treated differently

■ - So many opportunities out there and outstrip the number of people looking for jobs 'grass is always greener on the other side'. More opportunity to change jobs for better money/benefits. Unemployment figures mask the real figures. A solution - look at people who are inactive to join the workforce.
TWL - Tricky from a hospitality point of view. A generational issue within families. Opportunity with older people in the work force, could we encourage people over 60 to come back to work? Not caused by Brexit.

■ - Two cohorts who could help this problem - Disabled young people and looked after children. Both groups could provide labour for these sectors struggling to recruit, needs investment but has big returns and make massive local economic impact.

■ - TWL - Speak to local colleges about the opportunities to employ disabled people and those from struggling backgrounds.

3. Training requirements

■ - soft skills, worst jobs - WH provides help with putting CVs together and interview practice. A collective approach to address these issues. Providing training to both SMEs and those on internships. Helping SMEs utilise their interns to the best of their abilities. Collectively we need to take the opportunities to address these problems. We should and need to look more into helping to get young disabled adults into work. Transport to and from work is an issue.

Are there any barriers preventing you from offering more training?	How could these barriers be overcome?

■ - Financial element, bringing in external training can help upskill in areas such as time and business management - are there any funds available for this. JT - Some local authorities do provide grants

■ - apprentice 20% off the job - can be flexible over the working week, can work well.

■ - finding trainers for engineering, electrics, plumbing is very difficult - have permanent vacancies - this means people cannot access these apprenticeships. This is where partnership working can help fill the gap.

■ - Renew and recover programme. Aimed at any small business all free. AC to send details. Running till 2025

■ - offering 14 week programmes covering a range of digital skills.

■ - Challenge is training offer is very complicated, for SMEs to understand where to go is difficult. Need a single view point where businesses can find trusted providers.

■ - Social Value - we need more collective training. Need a cohort to deliver the training in house. Hotel groups would bring these cohorts together to deliver this training. Challenges are shared by businesses.

Federation of Small Businesses
Statement of Engagement Report
| 2.0 | 5 April 2023 | Ove Arup & Partners Limited   Statement of Engagement   Page 77

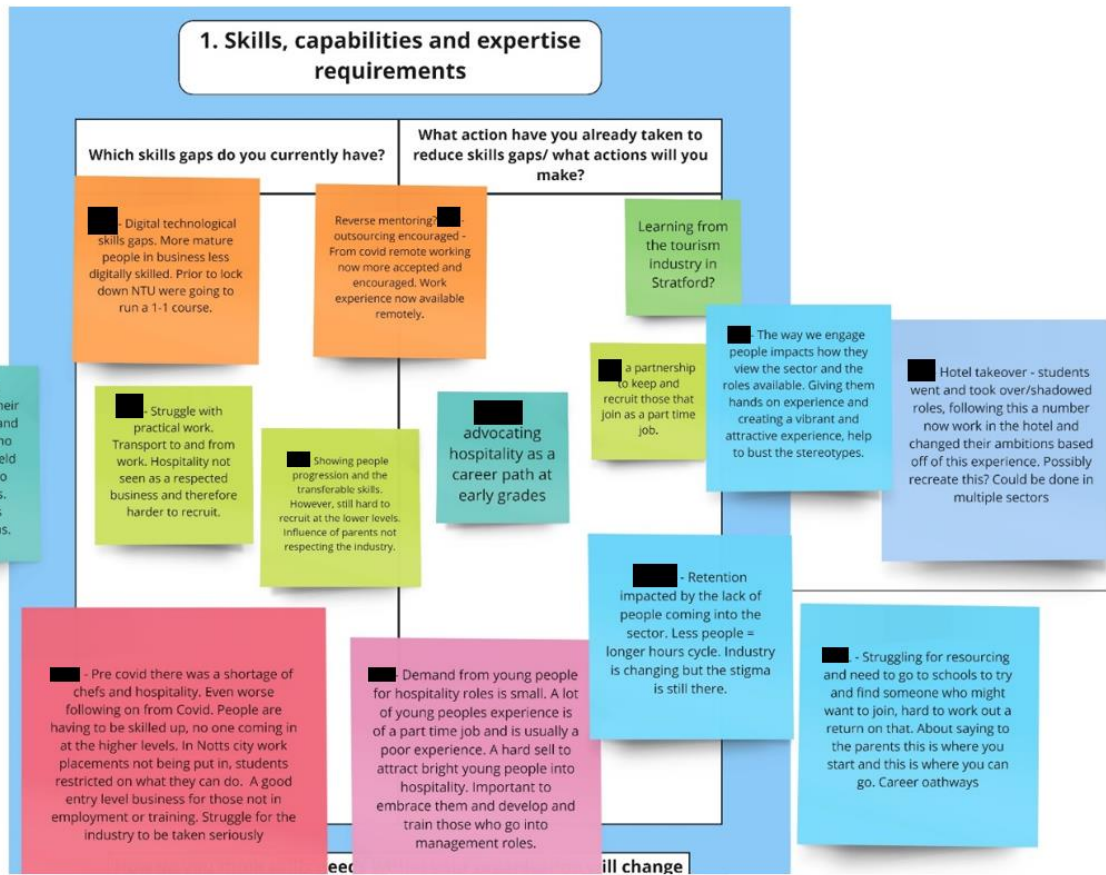Local Skills Improvement Plan for Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire

4. Drivers of change

How has/will your organisation addressed any changes to skills requirements in response to the following socio-economic drivers

- Social media as an instant marketing tool to advertise your business. An opportunity for hospitality to take advantage of this. Younger people have an eye for how this can be done well.

Drivers	How have/will you address it	Possible other drivers of change
Digitalisation	■ - Using apprenticeships and putting more senior people in apprenticeships. Deliver internal training and more senior level training being sought by individuals ■ 2 way digital learning (internal)	■ Appropriate recruitment - does industry need to adapt? i.e. video applications over handwritten ■ PWC interview done online - can be done in their own time, pre recorded interview. Designing processes that make young people comfortable. Ability for young people to try new things and expand no longer exists
Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire's target to achieve net zero by 2050	■ - What economic benefit will this bring to the local businesses? What does this mean for local businesses? Reduction in accessibility to the city centre has impact on the businesses within the city.	
employment prospects for disabled people	■ - Now more opportunities however missing the links to put these people into these roles and opportunities	
Recovery from Covid-19	■ - Post covid kids don't have the soft and social skills, more anxiety in young people.	
Cost of living crisis	■ - Impacting hospitality, skilled pool getting smaller as more people forced to leave.	
Energy Crisis	■ - Working with a company with a mini turbine operates horizontally not vertically. Fitted to HGVs to recharge batteries - We have the technology, need to move quicker on certain issues such as the energy crisis.	■ - North notts said they wouldn't look at students as they had no experience, cuts during covid meant that the skilled workforce had been cut
Health inequalities		
Ageing population	■ - Could the older generation be encouraged to come back to work? Filling smaller roles/part time roles untapped market. AC - encouraging people who no longer want to be on the tools to come back and teach	
Changing migration rules	■ applying for a license so they are able to recruit from abroad. Government not addressed this issue, lack of realism of what it means to the economy.	

Federation of Small Businesses
Statement of Engagement Report

| 2.0 | 5 April 2023 | Ove Arup & Partners Limited

Local Skills Improvement Plan for Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire

Statement of Engagement

Page 78

Intervention at a younger age to build social and soft skills

itional comments and feed

Embracing all abilities and helping them get into work and lining up how this could be done

Advocating career paths

Consider recurring themes and suggestions

Federation of Small Businesses
Statement of Engagement Report

Local Skills Improvement Plan for Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire

| 2.0 | 5 April 2023 | Ove Arup & Partners Limited

Statement of Engagement

Page 79

1. Skills, capabilities and expertise requirements

Which skills gaps do you currently have?	What action have you already taken to reduce skills gaps/ what actions will you make?
■ - Funding and delivery (entreprenure) and organising of funding. Identifying products which could be sold, fear within the sector to ask for money for the training being delivered.	■ - Specific training being delivered, training and tea - 45 min session. Facilitating skills, team skills, self care, business skills, sales skills...
■ -Functional skills, need local training providers to deliver functional skills training. Digital skills. Clinical engineering - recruitment difficult due to private sector competition.	■ - Making staff aware of the training providers and courses available to staff (particularly functional skills)
■ - digital skills sets, specific IT roles, data analysis roles. Competition with private sector. Functional skills, commercial awareness. Skills gap less an issue - recruiting the big issue, getting the volume of people into the organisation.	■ - employee programmes and incentives. Felxi working. Trainee - tutor programme.
■ - Need for high quality training providers and tutors/teachers. Business and sales in an ethical way.	

How do you think skills needs within your organisation will change over the next 3 years?

■ - older workforce. Not enough young people coming into the sector and a lot of people leaving the sector. Encouraging people to come into this sector. Small pool of suitably qualified people.

■ - Adaptability and creativity and flexibility. Sectors moving at pace and need to keep up and adapt to the market.

■ - Multi-skilled workforce - growth of previously small departments (public health) responding to change, adapting at speed to a rapidly changing political and socioeconomic environment.

■ - Adaptability, pulling in people from other areas of the business to support. Green agenda - next 3 years - the green skills, new skills which will be required within the workforce.

2. Skills recruitment and retention

What do you consider to be the persistent barriers to staff retention, and how do you think these challenges would be best addressed?

■ - Pay affordability. Non for profits cannot compete with big corporates with salaries. Going to become increasingly hard.

■ - Pay. Pressure to not only recruit but also retain. Difficult to see a way through, as much to do with the size of the workforce as inflation. Older people opting out of the workforce, like other employers recruiting and retaining is difficult. Knock on effect on other services and businesses.

Pay a large factor to retention. Cost of living crisis, people moving to best paid jobs.

■ - being flexible becoming increasingly important to people. People reluctant to come into a physical office. Attitudes to work has changed since covid, work fitting into our lives not our lives revolving around work. People moving to other jobs/sectors where they can work from home full time. This is not always viable.

What are the key challenges you face in recruiting employees with the right skills sets, and how do you think these challenges would be best addressed?

- something
- something
- something
- something

Key Challenges

Princess Trust partnership

New ways of recruiting

(MP) Need to work in partnership

Difficulty filling in applications

(JR) Identify USP
- making places more attractive to work
- Day off for Birthday
- Paid leave
- Being flexible to peoples needs

3. Training requirements

Are there any barriers preventing you from offering more training?	How could these barriers be overcome?

■ - Biggest barrier is affordability. Training first to be cut during budget cuts. Free training is available but employers unaware

■ - As well as budget the time to train the teaching staff and time to deliver the training. How can we chunk training into short bite time pieces. Building skills over a longer time frame rather than long course delivered in one go.

■ - Further education college offer extensive training. Ensuring once the person is in the workplace they will have the relevant skills - focusing on providing digital and functional skills. How can we prepare the workforce for changes in society/political.

■ - promotion of free training courses to employers

Do you seek support from any training providers or other stakeholders in the local skills system to provide training for your workforce?

Yes	No

■ - Local providers - Nott college, local universities. Working with them in partnership is key along with them being local. It is convenient (Green Agenda), but also supports the local economy. Having conversations with those partners and finding out what you require and what they can deliver and coming to an agreement.

■ - Apprenticeship Levy. Accessing learning providers within the local community/local partnerships - local economic support. A net benefit.

■ - Providing on site training to employers for free of charge. Training for staff is done online through a training package.

Would you in the future?

Federation of Small Businesses
Statement of Engagement Report

| 2.0 | 5 April 2023 | Ove Arup & Partners Limited

Local Skills Improvement Plan for Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire

Statement of Engagement

Page 82

4. Drivers of change

How has/will your organisation addressed any changes to skills requirements in response to the following socio-economic drivers

- 18 month plan of how to move to teams and become more digital. Concerns and resistance. Covid hit and over a few weeks everyone had to move to a digital platform. Not everyone comfortable from day one. But because people had to do it they did it. Forced into becoming digital, without covid likely to have to encourage people to use teams and work from home. Be mindful that sometimes barriers are not always as big as they seem. How you bring about change when there doesn't feel the need for change.

Drivers	How have/will you address it	Possible other drivers of change
Digitalisation	- A big challenge, sector becoming increasingly digital. An unwillingness of people to engage with digital tools. - A fear (certain demographic), not wanting to change. A huge amount of self learning, finding the balance, finding courses which support people but also allow for self development and self learning	
Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire's target to achieve net zero by 2050		
Recovery from Covid-19	- less about skills more about culture - team working, look at how we deal with other ways of working.	
Health inequalities		- Greater understanding of where the shortages are. Lower levels of expertise struggling to recruit the most. In a new demographic, finding new ways of working and new roles, are the jobs the right jobs? No quick fix.
Ageing population	- Big issues nationally and internationally. Demographics against employers, heading to an ageing population. Working population decreasing. Pressure will continue and get worse.	

- theme through all - how do we address those further from the labour market - inactive people - 50+, those with health issue. How do we address the barriers, skills agenda alone will not address the barriers. How do we create wrap around services, which link with the skills agenda and can address where we have these recruitment needs.

employment prospects for disabled people		
Level of qualifications	- Diverse region - high proportion of young people leaving school with no qualifications, need to address basic skills within deprived areas. specific sectors within the D2N2 region and different focuses, and specific skills needs.	

- struggle with the level of qualifications, the entry requirements to some jobs are too high, candidates are practically able but do not hit the entry requirements. Supported internships allow candidates to prove to employers their ability to do those jobs. Worked with employers to show them how to engage with people with SEN i.e. walking interviews

5. Feedback

- Video CVs - employers and recruiters said this had helped reduced barriers.

Additional comments and feedback

- Preparing young people for the world of work - need to be engaged throughout school and university to help young people feel prepared for the world of work, and the types of softer and interpersonal skills needed. A huge transition from education to employment and young people need support with this transition.

- Some big issues - events in the last two or three years have turbo charged these challenges. Now we need to think about moving forward. Demographics a key driver (no easy solution).

Consider recurring themes and suggestio

- This is the main thing is trying to do, through exposure to a range of employers through interviews, talks. offered everyone on the call the opportunity to become an employers that helps with these softer skills sessions.

1. Skills, capabilities and expertise requirements

Which skills gaps exist?

What are the barriers to supplying the required skills?

- Decline in the hospitality sector recruitment - people leaving due to covid/economy. Post covid people don't see the career progression/don't want the unsociable hours. Possible emerging gap when things return to normal. Share Katies email with relevant others.

- Care sector. post brexit - struggle to recruit. Enthusiasm, employability and readiness to work. Disruption due to covid has ruined enthusiasm to come to work, working from home has made people nervous to come in. Some students more digitally able due to covid, need to look at blended learning environments.

- Difficult to engage with learning due to previous negative experiences. Working in partnership to engage these people. Non accredited course can help do this. sell the concept of engaging in learning. Building people up, encourage them into further courses and education. Linking into the progression and pathways

- Struggle to finding the people to fill these skills gaps. Recruitment. Salary a key driver to this issue.

- Recognise the setting in which training is delivered. Not everyone has equal access to the equipment needed for remote training. Cannot assume people have the technology at home to continue further study. Need employer buy in to support the delivery of lower level training.

- English and Maths continues to be a struggle a barrier for people entering the work place specifically apprenticeships (fall out from covid).
- Mental health, more learners leaving learning and the workplace due to mental health.
- Early years - economy enabler if this sector isn't working it impacts others (this sector is struggling)
- Cost of living and salary competition. People taking lower skilled roles because they are better paid, stopping them progressing.

- Issue in North Notts communities with Care sector. Digital skills - not at the level needed i.e. ability to manipulate spreadsheets. People think they are more digitally skilled than they are.

- Gaps in higher level skills. A large number of adults in north notts communities where basic social and employability skills (Entry and level 1 qualifications) are needed to help get them into the employability market. If the region is to level up they must be incorporated. Work preparedness.

- Technical skills - Green and renewables, lacking engineers. Lacking in both the people to fill these roles and the training courses related to this need. Business admin skills - customer service, clerical roles - apprenticeship standard. Soft skills - dip over recent years in lack in confidence - having to do a lot more in confidence building than previously. Mentoring (internally) has helped address these issues regarding building confidence and softer skills.

- Basic ITT skills at entry level required and developed more specialist skills. Two separate skills sets. (readiness and job requirement)

- Three levels of digital skills
1. Very limited
2. Basic IT skills but not business applicable (basic microsoft)
3. More advanced digital skills

- People moving up and recognising their own transferable skills. Need confidence to understand how their skills could be transferred and applied and help them move up the ladder. Difficult for employers to released employees for training time. Self directed learning good for the employee but difficult for the employer.

- Care skills required, if people are unable to put their children into good quality and affordable child care it has a knock on for the rest of the economy.

What actions have your organisations already taken to reduce the skills gaps and what actions do you intent to take going forward?

- Found an increase in technical capability of students following on from the pandemic. Now better prepared to understand and deliver the digital training of each applicant/employee. Digital assessment to understand what the students have and what they can access. Students can borrow digital equipment.

- Key provider to multiply (adults 19+ low level maths) running till 2025. Increased esole provision, providing maths and IT skills to people who have just arrived in the county from overseas. Move to online delivery due to the pandemic, providing now both in person and online options which has allowed more people to access. Pathways to health and social care, fundamentally will help the economy to work better. A similar project to multiply needed for English skills.

- Free breakfast on a Friday, wrap around social care (16-19) Blended learning opportunities, practical and theoretical. Embedding soft skills and English and maths across all courses. Work specifically with employers to tailor programmes to meet the skills they need, challenge getting a cohort big enough to fill these courses. Gathering similar sectors together to provide a practical course. Management training/data analysis training providing companies with information to make decisions.

- co-design courses with local employers to sense check the provision of training. Since covid noticed demand for non accredited courses, have now expanded more taster and introductory sessions, employers more willing to release people for these sessions. More remote training and delivery of closed cohorts delivering to a companies employees only a tailored day.

- All courses to include softer and social skills so they are better prepared to access jobs and enter the workplace. Cost of living crisis - supporting both physically (food provisions) and mentally.

- loaning of digital tools to allow people to access online training. Enable access to mobile broadband and all digital connectivity. Providing travel and lunch, encourages people to come and join in with training during these difficult times. Skills needs / Gap different - co-design with employers is key to enhancing skills gap analysis and enhance training needs analysis and making sure the two are aligned.

- introduction of T levels. Funding for higher level technical courses is being changed. Uptake of T levels is mixed across sectors.

- Gap in apprenticeship level 2 admin related standard.

- Current and future way post 16 skills landscape operates, not user friendly, a full time job to stay on top of constantly changing policy and complexity of funding. Limited with what training providers can do, a need to try and maintain simple practices for both employers, candidates and parents. System is fundamentally broken

- Investment into training mental health first aiders for learners.

- This topic constantly comes up in meetings with employers and providers. The funding needs to be simplified. The apprenticeship system for employers is not fit for purpose. It is a barrier for smaller businesses.

- Training providing landscape changing.

- Transport links to get people to the training courses. Across all the areas operating in. Public transport lacking. Specifically for rural communities. From town to town (bus and train lacking)

- Newark and sherwood area transport lacking people cannot get to the available jobs. Remote working opportunities, however there is a need to have an understanding of the employment environment, this is particularly important for younger people entering the workplace for the first time.

- Broadband issues within rural areas (barrier to online working/training) IT techs leave college to go to remote jobs - specific to certain skills)

- Funding coming to an end

- If the people in the organisations find the funding difficult to understand the employers will and this will put them off.

- particularly for SMEs. Easier to not go through the apprenticeship route.

3. Training requirements

Who do your organisations currently engage with in relation to training provision and skills development?	How could employers and training providers work closer together?
■ - mainly work with SMEs - some larger (Notts Hospital). Working collaboratively with D2N2. Work closely with local colleges. Polex adult community education services (Sue Pember). Ayup - represents independent training providers and some employer representations.	■ - Amazon, employer networks Ashfield and Mansfield 2020. A great collaborative network. Mansfield and Ashfield employment groups. **Holex valuable in lobbying. SM happy to carry forward views to this group.**
■ - Work with other FE colleges (7 across geography) Bid for funding together. Increasingly important going forward work with the district council (towns fund) and work with Nottingham trent uni. D2n2 a collaborative group.	■ - Need more employer representatives. Sometimes difficult to get employers involved and sharing their views on the skills gaps. Problem regarding training providers tools to support employers due to complex rules. It isnt free due to the time associated cost to the businesses. Need to make it simpler. A generational change needed.

Federation of Small Businesses
Statement of Engagement Report
| 2.0 | 5 April 2023 | Ove Arup & Partners Limited

Local Skills Improvement Plan for Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire

Statement of Engagement
Page 86

Changing migration rules		
social mobility		
wage rates		
employment prospects for disabled people		
Level of qualifications		

■ - Breakdown in mental health. Filling these short term gaps, the courses to address this can be very expensive, however they are extremely valuable. Need to plug this gap. **Speak to LA's about the opportunities to address this.**

■ - D2n2 public sector compact. Small employer engagement tricky, need to acknowledge what do we mean by employers being at the heart of it, what do employers actually want? How much active involvement do employers want.

■ - D2n2 has a higher level of adults with no/limited qualifications than the rest of the region. Olterton, stapleton and other parts of Nottingham that can be as high as 1/3 of adults having no qualifications. We need to ensure whatever we do adults have the opportunities and basic level of training. People don't want to work towards level 2 qualifications as it doesn't improve their salary, need something to incentivise and encourage people to do the lower level qualifications. Need to explain the progression and pathways to people.

■ - need functional skills at the same level.

■ - opportunities to be more experimental. Work with food banks - start a course helping people to learn how to budget, giving people £10 morrison vouchers. Teaching people to cook on a budget - finish the course awarded with an air fryer/slow cooker. Need to do this in a collective and co-ordinated way, encourage people to make the short term commitment.

Appendix C – Emerging Findings Document

Local Skills Improvement Plan for Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire - Federation of Small Businesses

Emerging findings from engagement with employers, training providers and strategic stakeholders

The table below provides a summary of the emerging findings from our engagement to date, and associated questions which will be raised during the focus group sessions.

Cross cutting theme	Context	Emerging best practice and potential interventions	Focus group questions
Work readiness and soft skills	<u>Trends</u> • **School leavers are not considered to be 'work ready'**, in relation to their expectation of working life, confidence levels, social skills and english, maths and digital abilities. Intervention is needed at a younger age to develop these skills. • In **north Nottinghamshire**, a large number of **adults do not have basic social and employability skills**. • There is **a general lack of confidence and nervousness across the population**, exacerbated by the	• Provide mentoring in relation to soft skills. • All training courses to address soft skills. • Provide CV writing and interview support. • Provide support to parents to help them in developing their children's soft skills and prepare them for work.	1. Do you agree with the emerging findings? If not, please specify any additions or revisions required. 2. Please identify two SMART actionable priorities to address the issues and opportunities related to work readiness and development of

Work readiness and soft skills	pandemic. In response, training providers are investing more time in confidence building. • There is a **need for individuals to recognise their transferable skills, and to utilise these** to move up the career ladder. • **Mental health is a significant issue, with more learners/ employees departing learning/ the workplace as a result**. • The **Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire geography has a higher level of adults with no/ limited qualifications, when compared to the wider region**. There is a need to **provide a base level of training for all adults (including english and maths).** • **There is a poor incentive for individuals to work towards level 2 qualifications as they will not see a salary increase as a result**. There is a need to incentivise and encourage individuals to progress lower-level qualifications through explaining the development opportunities.	• Invest in mental health first aider training to support learners and employees. • Offer blended learning which address theoretical, practical and digital elements, to respond to different strengths. • Apply the 'Multiply' model which supports adults aged 19+ with their maths skills. Opportunity to develop an equivalent model for english skills. • Provide social care support as part of training courses, e.g. transport and food. • Incentivise training with practical support e.g. food vouchers/cooking appliances provided on completion. • Provide advice in relation to practical matters as part of training courses e.g. budgeting. • Undertake a digital assessment at the outset of training courses to understand what access learners have to IT equipment. Enable learners to borrow IT equipment.	soft skills within the local skills system.

| Work readiness and soft skills | **There is a need for tailored training for older persons**, e.g. in relation to digital skills. **There are inequalities in the geography in relation to IT equipment and broadband** to permit remote working. **There is poor public transport in some areas**, particularly rural areas and Newark and Sherwood. As a result of the cost-of-living crisis **there is a need to support individuals physically (e.g. with food) and mentally**. <u>Opportunities</u> The **ability to work remotely in some sectors** (where access to technology allows), **offers opportunities for young people that didn't previously exist.** This will help with social mobility, including in North Nottinghamshire where this is a key issue. Promisingly, **there has been increased demand for training providers to deliver non-accredited courses**, since the pandemic. | | |

Digitalisation	Trends		
	The digital space is continually evolving and employers can find it difficult to keep up. **Some employers struggle to appoint digital leaders to drive the agenda** within their organisation.	• Establish reverse mentoring programmes in relation to digital skills.	1. Do you agree with the emerging findings? If not, please specify any additions or revisions required.
	There are **three levels of digital skills**:	• Mansfield District Council is producing a 'Digital Strategy' using best practice from West Nottinghamshire College.	2. Please identify two SMART actionable priorities to assist employers and training providers in responding to digitalisation.
	1. Very limited skills		
	2. Basic skills (required for work readiness)	• Nottingham Trent University was considering establishing a one-to-one digital skills course prior to the pandemic.	
	3. Advanced skills (tailored to job requirements)		
	Digital skills are not at the level required by employers. It is considered that older persons are often less digitally skilled.	• Adapt the recruitment process to reflect digitalisation e.g. job applications and CVs in video format, walking interviews etc.	
	There are significant gaps in skills relating to digital, and integrated technology within organisations, including in relation to operation of their respective IT systems.		
	Skills bootcamps often focus on basic digital skills only.		
	There is a need for greater onus on digital skills in schools.		

Digitalisation	Opportunities • There has been an **increase in the technical capability of students as a result of the pandemic, which can be utilised by employers**, including in relation to social media and digital marketing.		
Recruitment and retention of employees, (including training providers)	Trends • Suggestion that **skills gaps are not the main issue. Instead, the main issue is recruitment** to fill current vacancies. There is currently the **smallest unemployment pool since 1974**. • **Recruitment of individuals with the right skills set is a consistent issue, with salary competition being a key driver**. • There is currently **a high staff turnover** which limits the opportunity to train and develop employees. • Small to medium sized enterprises **(SME) are more constrained in terms of incentives they can offer to encourage staff retention.** Larger businesses can provide better incentives and **therefore individuals are leaving SMEs for bigger organisations.**	• Adopt supported internships, allowing candidates to prove their abilities, in instances where they may not meet the entry requirements for roles. • Employers to commit to recruiting those that join on a part-time basis as an incentive. • Employers to host open evenings which welcome candidates and their parents. • Employers to utilise available support programmes and funding programmes including the 'Renew and Reform Programme' which is available for free to small businesses until 2025.	1. Do you agree with the emerging findings? If not, please specify any additions or revisions required. 2. Please identify two SMART actionable priorities to help employers and training providers to improve the recruitment and retention of their employees.

| Recruitment and retention of employees, (including training providers) | • Individuals are **moving to roles with flexibility (including where they can work from home)**, however this is not viable for all sectors/employers.

• **Entry requirements for some roles are too high**, making them difficult to recruit for.

• **The cost-of-living crisis and competitive salaries has resulted in individuals taking roles requiring lower skill levels because they are better paid**, preventing them from progressing in their career path.

• **Encouraging individuals to return to work following the pandemic is an ongoing challenge**, with significant people aged over 50 having left employment.

Sector specific trends

Digital

• There is a **shortage of skills in the digital and computer science sector**.

• **People are leaving for higher salaries**. Whilst this trend is across the board, it is particularly evident in early careers. | | |

Recruitment and retention of employees, (including training providers)	• There is an aging workforce, **with not enough people coming into the sector**, and many people leaving. *Engineering* • There is **a lack of people to fill engineering roles and deliver associated training** courses. • **There is an ageing workforce** in the engineering sector. • It is **considered there is a focus on training for management roles rather than production roles.** *Construction* • **Younger people no longer aspire to work in the sector and people are retiring earlier** (mid to late 50s). *Low carbon and renewable energy* • There is a **lack of people to fill roles and deliver associated training** courses. • There is appetite from employers to understand **what the target for achieving net zero by 2050 will mean for local businesses**, including in terms of economic benefit.		

Recruitment and retention of employees, (including training providers)	• It is felt that **once the green agenda is in place, there will be new skill requirements, and potentially new roles and associated training**. Employers will need to adapt and seek support from other areas of their business. *Business administrative skills* • There is **a gap in business administrative skills such as customer service and clerical roles**, including at apprenticeship level (level 2). *Hospitality* • **Before the pandemic there was already a shortage of hospitality staff (including chefs), but this has been exacerbated** as a result of the pandemic, economic climate, and a lack of respect for the sector. • **There is a high turnover of staff** in the hospitality sector, and **the cost-of-living is contributing to this, causing people to leave**. • **Employers are required to apply for a licence and pay for visas to permit recruitment of employees from abroad**.	*Hospitality* • Opportunity to take learning from the tourism industry in Stratford-upon-Avon. • Opportunity to take learning from hospitality employers leading the way in terms of practicing good communication with employees and supporting employees to fulfil their aspirations. • Opportunity for training providers to offer practical work experience including through initiatives such as a 'hotel takeover'. This has been adopted by West Nottinghamshire College and they have seen a change in students' ambitions as a result. This could be applied across multiple sectors.	

Recruitment and retention of employees, (including training providers)	• The sector hasn't always been effective in retaining staff, in part because **there is not enough emphasis put on the overall employment package and management.**
	
	• It is particularly difficult to recruit for lower-level roles within the sector for the following reasons:
	
	    o **individuals do not see the career progression opportunities;**
	
	    o there is a **reluctance to work the hours required;**
	
	    o there is a cyclic pattern whereby **less people are joining the sector, which results in longer working hours for existing employees; and**
	
	    •
	
	    o there is a legacy of young people having a part-time hospitality role in the past, and **having a bad experience which prevents them from continuing in the sector.**
	
	• There is a **need to demonstrate and advocate the career progression opportunities in the hospitality sector,**		

Recruitment and retention			

of employees, (including training providers)	**and transferrable skills which can be developed** through associated roles.		
	• **It is important to nurture and develop staff** in the hospitality sector.		
	Health and social care		
	• **Employers are struggling to recruit in the care sector**, including as a result of Brexit. This is particularly an issue in North Nottinghamshire.		
	• There is a **need to establish career pathways** for the health and social care sector.		
	Teaching		
	• There are **shortages of academic and vocational teachers, and teaching assistants**.		
	Opportunities		
	• There is a poor understanding of the potential of those who are inactive in the employment market, who could be reengaged and make a significant impact on the economy including:		
	○ older persons (e.g. those over 60 years old who have left work) – could adopt smaller/part-time roles		

	o disabled people – currently there is not sufficient support available o looked after children o those leaving jobs - who could go into teaching in their respective sector • Some **employers are focussing on growing their workforce through apprenticeships and work experience placements**.		
Approach to training provision	<u>Trends</u> • **The post-16 skills system is continually changing, which makes it difficult for training providers, and particularly employers, to navigate it and respond accordingly**. There is a need to keep practices and funding mechanisms simple. • **There is already good collaboration amongst training providers within the geography. However, more engagement is needed between training providers and employers.** There is also a need to understand how much engagement employers would like/can accommodate. • **It is felt there is a disconnect between schools and employers in the**	• Offer reverse mentoring. • Offer remote work experience placements (where appropriate, ensuring that candidates receive sufficient support). • Support employers in utilising their interns to the best of their abilities. • Better utilise opportunities provided by apprenticeships, e.g. putting more senior people into apprenticeships. • Develop strong and transparent relationships between training providers and employers to identify	1. Do you agree with the emerging findings? If not, please specify any additions or revisions required. 2. Please identify two SMART actionable priorities to support employers and training providers in delivering the required training.

	geography, with some schools still largely advocating traditional university pathways rather than apprenticeships.	skills gaps and help employers to address challenges.
Approach to training provision	• It is felt that the apprenticeship system is not fit for employers' purposes, and is a barrier for adoption by SMEs. • It is felt that if the apprenticeship levy funding were more flexible, employers could maximise the associated opportunities and use the funding on other types of required training. • There is **a need for more collective training within the local skills system**. • There has been a **notable shift in required skills in response to remote working. However, it is felt there is sometimes a lack of clarity from employers in terms of their requirements of employees**. • **Negative past experiences of learning prevent individuals from engaging in training**. In response, there is a need to promote and encourage further learning. • **Employers face funding constraints and can find it difficult to release staff for training**.	• Training providers to co-design courses with local employers to ensure training provision is sufficient. Convene similar sectors to ensure there is sufficient demand for new training courses. • Encourage employees to share learning from training courses with their colleagues to assist with knowledge transfer. • Apply the 'Code First Girls' model which focusses on supporting females into employment in the following ways: a) to provide non-technical graduates with technical training; or b) to provide free training for those who are going back to learning. • Opportunity to engage with large employers and contracting authorities (e.g. local authorities) to

| Approach to training provision | **There can be a perceived lack of freedom and capacity for employees to undertake training**. There can be cyclic issues whereby **employees are unable to complete training due to illness associated with their day to day role**. This can result in individuals taking a break from learning. **Some employers do not provide formal training** but offer regular check-ins with the Human Resource department and line managers, and establish incentive programmes including acknowledging the 'rising stars'. **Some employers do not like committing their staff to long training courses**. If the courses were made shorter or combined, they may be more attractive to employers and employees. **There is a need to ensure employers are aware of the risks of not investing in training for their staff**, which includes individuals leaving. **Some employers are unaware of the free training available**. | make sufficient allowances for on the job training. Contracting authorities could use procurement as an opportunity to stipulate training requirements for employees (similar to the approach taken to delivering social value through contracts). Opportunity to focus on the supply chain and for larger employers to support the SMEs they appoint, to upskill their employees. Establish a single source of information where employers can find trusted training courses. Establish a forum where employers/training providers can share best practice, common trends and sector updates. | |

Approach to training provision	• **Local authorities have been awarded UK Shared Prosperity Funding which could be utilised by employers**. There is a need to ensure employers are aware of the ramifications of not engaging with such initiatives, e.g. not receiving the funding available. • It is felt there is **a need for local authorities to work with businesses on a case-by-case basis to provide support**. • There are **gaps in knowledge in relation to respective industries' regulations which they must accord with**, for example in relation to health and safety. • **Some employers don't possess the industrial knowledge and experience of their sector**. For example, an engineering teacher without first-hand experience of an engineering role. Sector specific training requirements *Engineering* • There is **insufficient training available** in engineering. • **Career pathways are convoluted**. *Construction*		

Approach to training provision	- There is **a lack of training providers for electrics and plumbing**. This impacts the ability of employers to provide apprenticeships. *Low carbon and renewable energy* - It is felt that **once the green agenda is in place, there will be new skill requirements, and potentially new roles and associated training**. Employers will need to adapt and seek support from other areas of their business. *Business administrative skills* **There is a gap in business administrative skills such as customer service and clerical roles**, including at apprenticeship level (level 2). *Hospitality* **Individuals appointed in the hospitality sector need to be trained, as candidates are not coming in directly at senior positions.** **There is a lack of work placements for hospitality roles in Nottingham**, which restricts students' learning.		

	Teaching • There is **a need for a focus on teacher training.**		

Appendix D – Coding Framework

Work readiness and soft skills theme:

WR1 – Soft skills and employability skills are lacking and required

WR2 – School leavers not work ready and have a lack of opportunity to gain these skills and experience

WR3 – Discrepancy between candidate expectations and employer expectations

Digitalisation theme:

DIG1 – Evolving digital space and training requirements

DIG2 – Basic digital skills required

DIG3 – Digital skills gap between younger and older persons

Socio-economic conditions theme:

SEC1 – Impact of Covid-19

SEC2 – Ageing population

SEC3 – Mental health

SEC4 – Green agenda

SEC5 – Impact of Brexit

SEC6 – Socio-economic inequalities amongst learners, employees and unemployed persons

SEC7 – Political climate

SEC8 – Economic climate for businesses

Approach to training theme:

AT1 – Opportunities associated with apprenticeships and vocational qualifications

AT2 – Challenges associated with apprenticeships and vocational qualifications

AT3 – Capacity and capability constraints to delivering training (for both training providers and employers)

AT4 – Future training opportunities

AT5 – Work readiness-relevant training

AT6 – Recognition of social value

Retention and recruitment theme:

RR1 – Competitive employee benefit packages and working conditions

RR2 – Small pool of candidates to fill vacancies

RR3 – Exploring untapped potential

RR4 – Improving recruitment processes

Sector specific issues and opportunities theme:

SS1 – Digital

SS2 – Low carbon and sustainable technology sector

SS3 – Hospitality

SS4 – Health and Social Care

SS5 – Construction

SS6 – Engineering

SS7 – Business administration and support

SS8 – Teaching

SS9 – Creative industries

SS10 – Agriculture

SS11 – Logistics

SS12 – Manufacturing

Collaboration within the skills system theme:

CSS1 – Greater collaboration between employers, training providers and strategic stakeholders required

CSS2 – Opportunity for more employer engagement

CSS3 – Opportunities for greater collaboration within the local skills system

Appendix E – Draft Actionable Priorities

Digitalisation

Employer feedback summary	Draft actionable priority
• Training to upgrade digital literacy skills. To meet the demands of the job market, individuals need to focus on improving their baseline digital literacy, especially in commonly used professional software such as Microsoft Office Suite (Word, PowerPoint, Excel) and email presentations.	1. Promote and communicate (and develop if necessary) the area's existing digital skills offer to employers more widely and work with colleges and ITPs (in consultation with D2N2 LEP, BROs and/or similar partners) to assess the effectiveness.
• Digital skills integration in education. Education should provide digital skills as a key component of courses to keep pace with the rapidly changing digital landscape. This should emphasise understanding the logic and processes behind the software and practical application. Each course should have a digital aspect to help individuals comprehensively understand digital tools and how they can be applied in various settings.	2. Integrate a digital component into relevant post-16 vocational programmes, apprenticeships and AEB vocational courses, where not already present (including the new Essential Digital skills qualifications)

Low carbon and sustainable technology

Employer feedback summary	Draft actionable priority
• Basic climate literacy and understanding needs to be improved for both Students in the education system and places of work.	3. Develop and implement industry-specific "Achieving Net Zero" online/workshop-based programmes for staff and managers. These would be available to all sectors, but priorities would be agriculture and environment, business and administration, construction, engineering and manufacturing, and transport and logistics.

Work readiness and soft skills

Employer Feedback Summary	Draft actionable priority
• More pre-16 engagement and skills development. Targeting young people, to teach basic employability skills that they can focus on work readiness. The aim is also to make young people more aware of the vocational routes to work rather than being funnelled into academia, e.g., university isn't for everyone, but many students aren't aware of the career paths available in technical training/jobs.	4. Explore the voluntary implementation of "Skill builder" or a similar essential skills system (could be internal) in pre-16 and post-16 education.
• Employers to offer more work experience opportunities to equip people with the skills specific sectors need.	5. Develop collaborative work between colleges and employers to offer new or extended placements for all vocational courses, including those where placements are not mandatory.
• Providers should engage with employers to develop a soft skills/employability skills framework. In addtion, there is a need for work readiness to be quantified/ unified. • Need for criteria or framework for colleges and training providers to work from. Different institutions have their own, but it needs to be agreed/uniform across Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire. This criterion can be worked into assessments to create a baseline knowledge of soft skills amongst those entering the workplace, e.g. a soft skills certificate that is standardised across the region.	6. Develop and implement a common employability/essential skills framework for all AEB and Boot Camp programmes. 7. Develop and implement an essential skills short course programme for employed staff.

Collaboration within the local skills system

• **Employer Feedback Summary**	• **Draft actionable priority**
• The region's seven FE colleges should work together to bid for funding. This collaboration will be increasingly important going forward, including work with the district council (towns fund) and work with the region's universities, D2N2 LEP and key partners.	8. Explore/increase collaborative bidding and delivery partnership with the region's FE colleges, universities, and key partners.
• Co-designing of courses with local employers to sense check the provision of training, e.g., myth-busting around construction and engineering roles,	9. Actively review employer standards with employers when negative feedback is received. Work with them to articulate what (if anything) is wrong/missing or needs to be added.) Providers can add content locally and report content for removal to IFATE but removal from a standard locally is not possible.
• Support closer industry teacher collaboration, including secondments from industry and shared industrial teaching support across provision where there are shortages in specialist staff and where the industry is changing rapidly.	10. Develop a collaborative initiative to increase the supply of teachers/trainers in priority occupations and review/improve their training if needed. An area approach could be advantageous.
• Changes to employers' approach to recruitment are required to make it easier to recruit those furthest from the market and marginalised groups. Job adverts need to be more inclusive and accessible.	11. Develop recruitment and retention packs and/or workshops for employers, especially SMEs, to aid in broadening candidate search.
• A skills hub/centre within the geography. This would be a place to go (physically) where you can be directed to the training you/your business needs. • Establishing a one-stop shop for upskilling can provide many services that anyone can access at any stage of their career e.g., helping small businesses to grow, people to find work, seeking employability advice, holding business events, lectures on topics affecting small businesses etc. • An online community that could also be formed in conjunction with the LSIP could be a place where the good work that has already been happening across the geography is stored (e.g., D2N2 careers hub).	12. Further develop the Careers Hub and similar services and communicate their existence more widely.
• Work could be done by local authorities to understand social value commitments. For example, major projects often have large social value commitments around contractors and suppliers hiring apprentices, but how are training providers	13. Assess the extent of current social value agreements in public procurement and work collaboratively with Local Authorities to develop further and share knowledge with employers.

linked into this to understand the need, pipeline etc.	