South East Midlands
Local Skills Report
January 2022

SEMLEP
South East Midlands
Local Enterprise Partnership

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Chapter one
Foreword

This Local Skills Report provides an overview of the skills and labour market landscape and strategy within the South East Midlands, an area comprising Bedford, Central Bedfordshire, Luton, Milton Keynes, North and West Northamptonshire.

As seen right across the UK, the combination of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and the UK leaving the EU, has had an impact on the local economy, people and communities in the South East Midlands.

In the SEMLEP area, impact has manifested in a variety of challenges including business contraction, rapid growth and changes in the labour market. Examples include the impact on Luton Airport where operations ceased virtually overnight and logistics, where major job vacancy growth was created for warehouse staff, HGV and delivery drivers. Such measures have led to consumers and businesses adapting to changes, without detailed planning. The longer-term consequence of such change presently remains unknown.

The SEMLEP area has historically demonstrated strong economic growth and it is forecasted will continue to do so.

The main employment sectors remain:
- Logistics and supply chains
- Retail
- Health and Social Care
- Business and Admin support
- Education
- Manufacturing
- Construction

Recovery

In the main, job vacancies have recovered quickly across the area with slower rates of recovery for Luton and Central Bedfordshire, due to the impact of Luton Airport and the local economy dependent on it, combined with shifts in occupational groups with need.

Our aims of the South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership have not changed. We remain determined to build an inclusive talent pipeline of people with the attributes and skills required for our modern, dynamic, and competitive economy. Our activities facilitate an integrated and employer-led approach to skills development, provision and labour market information. The Skills Strategy and action plan for lifelong skills development is predicated on challenging under-representation, working with businesses, organisations, educators, agencies and local authorities.

SEMLEP, through the Skills Advisory Panel plays its part in working towards everyone having the skills which will allow them to get good jobs, both now and in the future. Working collaboratively with local authorities, local Further Education Colleges (CoSEM Group), Universities (SEMU), the South-Central Institute of Technology and our network of VCSE and independent training providers, we are well positioned to shape a coherent and strategically aligned skills offer across the area.

At a practical level the Skills Advisory Panel has oversight of the extent to which the LEP works through skills sector forums and employer engagement to:

- Determine required skills needs, attainment provision and capacity requirements, both now and in the future,
- Disseminate Labour Market Information and signpost and facilitate effective employer engagement with educators
- Support school and college staff to embed employer-driven core skills and competencies into the curriculum, promoting awareness and showcasing activity that inspires and raises aspirations towards careers in showcase and other high growth sectors
- Signpost provision and pathways for continuous personal development, upskilling, re-skilling and developing leadership skills

This activity supports individuals and the local economy's resilience to technological and demographic change.

The Skills Advisory panel has a key role to ensure that employers needs are at the heart of the system so that education and training leads to jobs that can improve productivity and fill skills gaps. This is what the LEP does so well. In addition to the excellent employer engagement and research-led focus show-cased by our universities we know that our colleges have a unique ability to connect employers to learners. Furthermore, they have technical facilities and industry expertise that businesses, especially small ones, may not otherwise be able to access. We have exciting plans to create skills hubs in colleges which could position us well to encourage our colleges to put forward proposals to Government to establish pathfinder College Business Centres concentrating on local priority sectors.

Of course, the talent pipeline doesn't start after school and SEMLEP will continue its excellent work with the Careers Enterprise Company to drive employer engagement within schools. Clear and trusted information, advice and guidance for careers and education choices is fundamental and we want careers education and guidance to be embedded in the life of every school and college. Over 95% of schools and colleges in the SEMLEP region are committed to the Gatsby benchmarks, compared to 80% nationwide and we will continue to develop our network of Enterprise Advisors, building on the success of Careers Hub Luton.

There is an agreement among board members that a new approach is needed to meet the areas recovery strategy, to strengthen the pathway through which we can work together as one to tackle some of the challenges we now face.

Pat Brennan-Barrett
Principal and CEO of Northampton College
MA. SEN, Dip SpLD, PGCE
Chair of the SEMLEP Skills Advisory Panel

Chapter two
Skills Advisory Panel - Introduction

Skills Advisory Panels: the national context

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

This second iteration of SAPs' Local Skills Reports comes at a time when DfE is Trailblazing new Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs), in eight areas of the country. Developed by Employer Representative Bodies, LSIPs are part of a suite of reforms launched in DfE's "Skills for Jobs" White Paper that aim to put employers more firmly at the heart of the skills system. An evaluation of the eight Trailblazers will inform the national roll out of the programme. In the meantime, and before LSIPs are rolled out across the country, it is DfE's intention that Skills Advisory Panels and this Local Skills Report should continue to influence the behaviour of local partners and feed intelligence to central government, including to sectoral focussed skills teams and the national-level Skills and Productivity Board (SPB).

Skills Advisory Panels: South East Midlands

The SEMLEP Skills Advisory Panel (SAP) task is to oversee the SEMLEP Skills Strategy, contributing to the Local Industrial Strategy.

The South East Midlands comprises 6 local authority areas across an economic geography that includes Bedfordshire, Luton, Milton Keynes and Northamptonshire.

The objectives of the SAP are to develop and review skills strategy through employer driven labour market information (LMI) derived from data analysis, research and consultation with employers, sector bodies and educators to:
- Remove discrepancies between the skills and attainment needed by employers and those held by individuals
- Inform, inspire and raise aspirations of the talent pipeline
- Enable people into employment and those within employment to progress
- Deliver through employer led engagement, best practice and innovation
- Align provision, facilities and activity with employer needs
- Guide stakeholders through informed labour market information
- Coordinate, facilitate and simplify engagement for all

The SAP operates under delegations from the SEMLEP Board and full terms of reference can be found here.

Meetings are held quarterly, and the SAP is chaired by Pat Brennan-Barrett, Principal at Northampton College.

The structure and flow of information to and from the SAP is shown below:
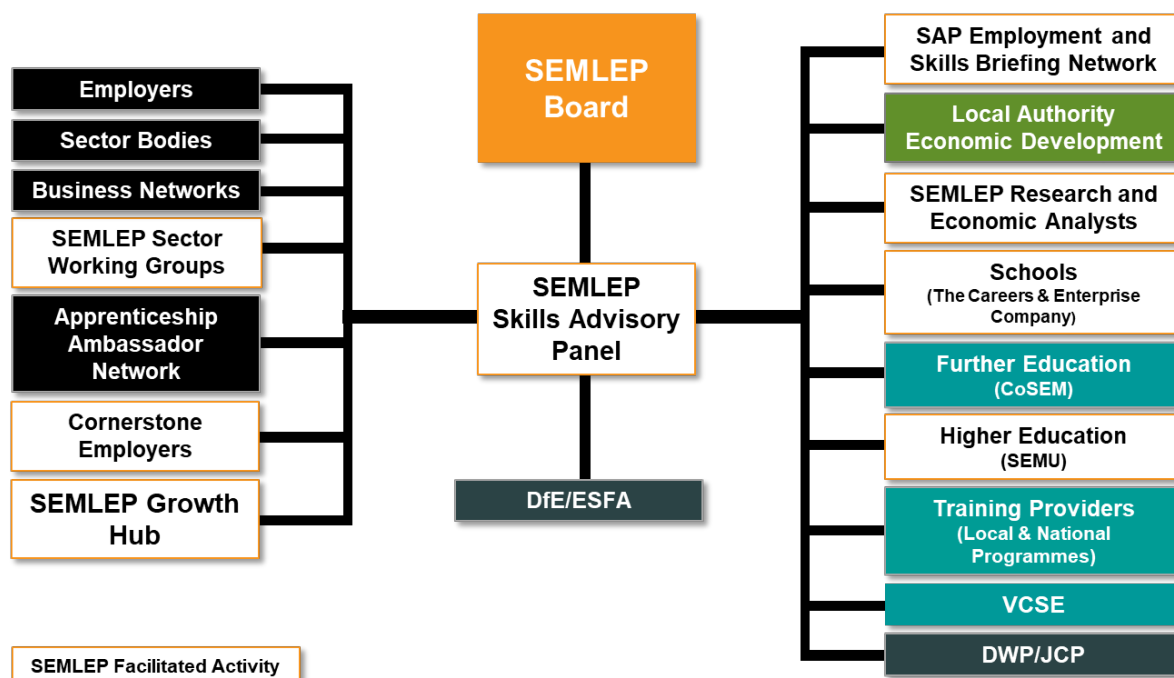
Currently the membership comprises:

Chair	Pat Brennan Barrett
Private Sector	Julian Winch
Private Sector	Paul Andrews
Private Sector	Richard Osborne
Private Sector	Rob Lewis
Private Sector	Sharon Ghuila
Private Sector	Allison Cook/Charlotte Round
SEND schools	Sheralee Webb
Job Centre Plus/DWP	Sharron Ireland
VCSE	Tony Knaggs
Higher Education	Professor Rebecca Bunting
Higher Education	Simon Tindall
Further Education	Gill Worgan
Independent Training Providers	Anna Morrison
Local Authority/Adult Education Budget Holder	Debbie Poole-Hunt
Local Authority - Central Bedfordshire	Anna Bosworth
Local Authority - West Northamptonshire	Stuart Timmiss
Local Authority - Milton Keynes	Lewis Campbell
Local Authority - Bedford	Eleanor Karklas
Local Authority - Luton	Jodie Yandall
Local Authority – North Northamptonshire	Ian Achurch
SEMLEP Growth Hub	Richard Cook

SEMLEP Employment and Skills Manager	Paul Thompson
Private Sector - Construction	Vacant
Private Sector - Logistics	TBC
Private Sector - Health	TBC
Secondary Schools	TBC
ESFA	Vacant

Contact information:

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Chapter three
Skills, strengths and needs

This chapter outlines the employment, education and training provision capacity and the learner pipeline moving towards the occupational groups.

Employment within sectors as defined by SEMLEP within the South East Midlands are:

Employment in South East Midlands by SEMLEP Defined Sectors (Based on 4 Digit SIC Codes) 2020
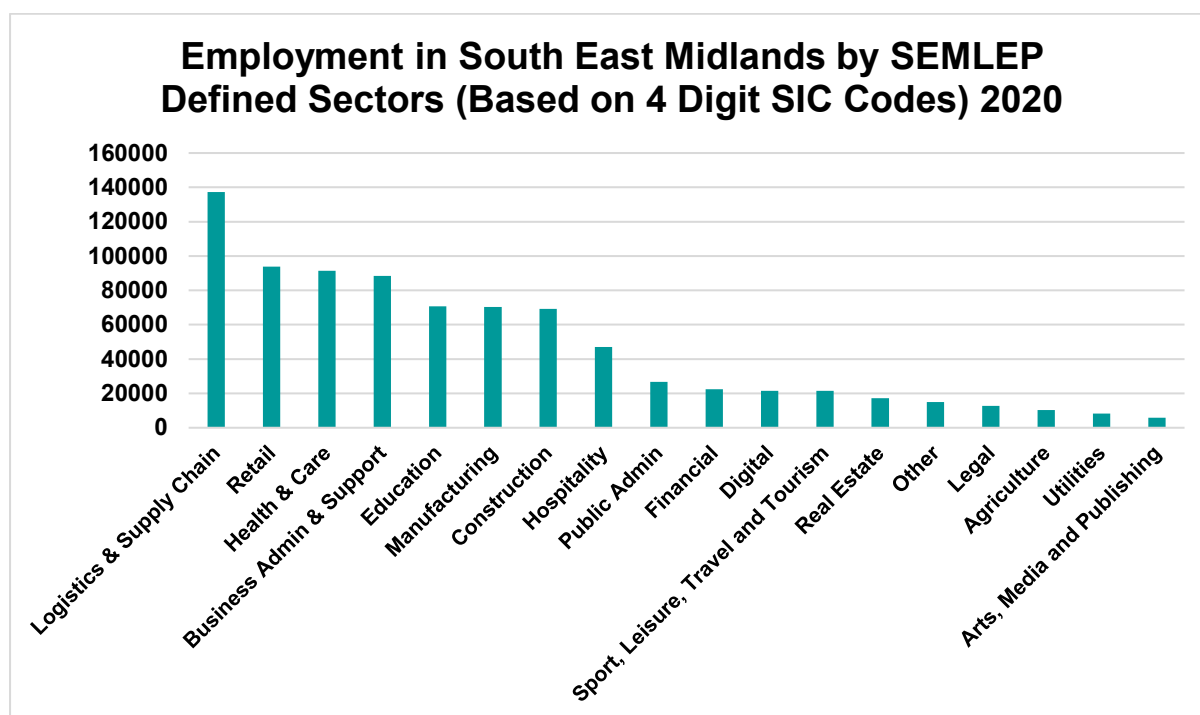
Source: Business Register and Employment Survey, (Based on 4 Digit SIC2007 Codes): ONS, 2020

The impact of covid-19

The slowdown of the economy resulted in an increase in the number of job seeking claimants increase by a factor of 2.6 in August 2020 compared to January 2020, falling to 1.8 in November 2021. This is higher than the national increase for England at 1.6.

Numbers rose to a peak of 65,085 and have fallen to 46,818 in November 2021 with impact felt most in the order of Luton, West Northamptonshire, Milton Keynes, North Northamptonshire, Central Bedfordshire and Bedford.

The highest increases have been in the age ranges of 25-49 and +50, but claimant counts are reducing for all ages and genders at time of print.

Job vacancies have recovered quickly, and Autumn 2021 has seen numbers at their highest since 2017/18.

However, the pace of recovery varies across the South East Midlands with the claimant:vacancy ratio remaining high in Luton and Central Bedfordshire, and Milton Keynes and West Northamptonshire below national averages due to the impact of the enforced slow recovery of the economy around Luton Airport and mismatch of skills held by claimants and those required for the high levels of vacancies in the occupational groups for logistics specific, business operations, digital, manufacturing and health.

Claimants and Vacancies vs Pre Covid-19
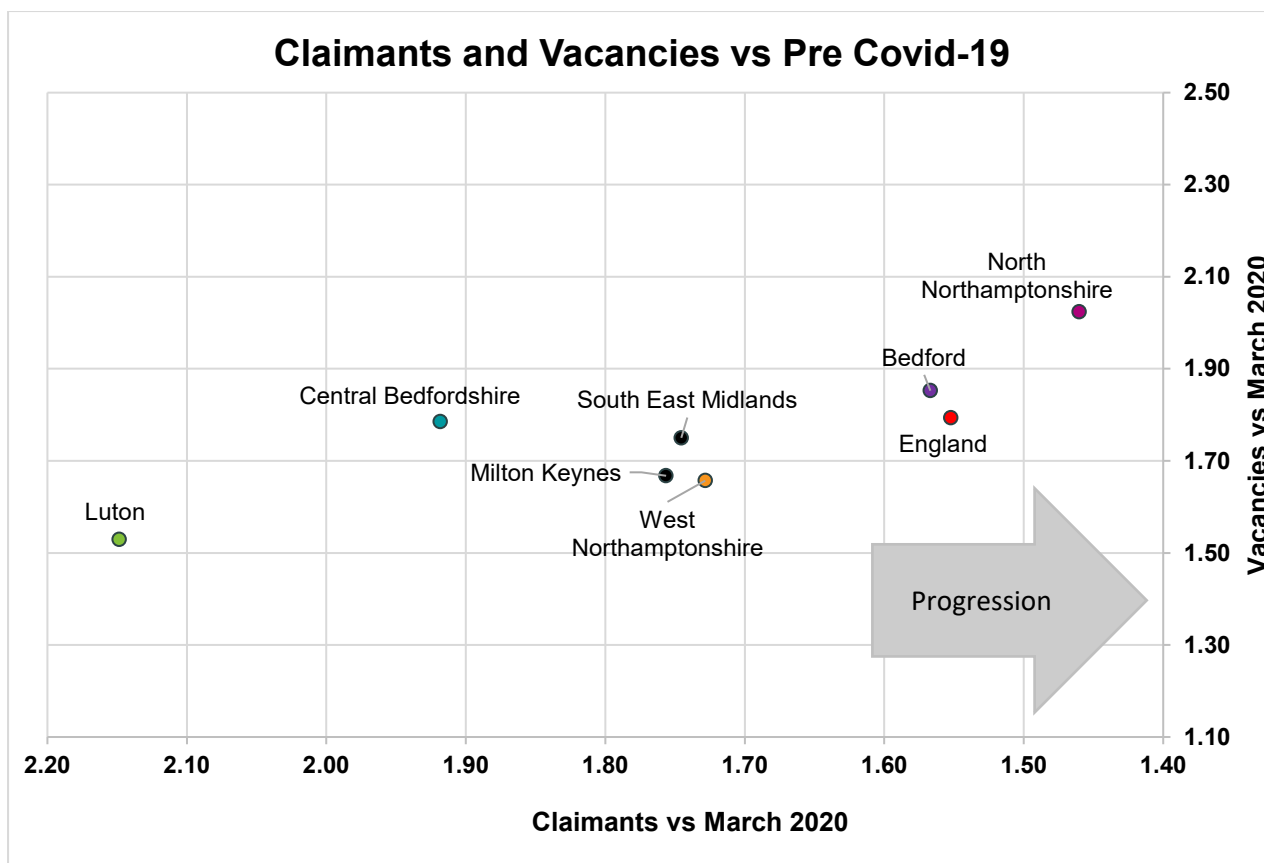
Source: Claimant count, JSA and National Insurance credits plus Universal Credit principally for the reason of being unemployed, ONS, November 2021 and Labour Insight (Burning Glass Technologies)

Supply and demand

SEMLEP primarily maps the skills demands for occupational groups as opposed to sectors, allowing a more direct review of the pipeline of learners, provision and consideration of occupations that are transferable and feature in many sectors.

Current job vacancies within the SEMLEP defined sectors by the main occupational groups for each are listed below including indicators for:

- Employment trends
- Job vacancy trends
- Job vacancy numbers by occupational group for one year to 30 November 2021
- Growth of job vacancies compared to one year to March 2020, i.e., pre Covid-19
- Pathway and provision availability and capacity for the occupational groups
- The pipeline of the number of learners within the occupational groups
- Top 10 job occupations listed in the vacancies for the sector

The colour coding is defined as:

Urgent Attention Required
Attention Required
Review Required
Good Performance

Logistics and Supply Chain

Employment trend	Increasing
Job vacancy trend	Increasing

Top 10 job vacancies
Labourer / Material Handler
Warehouse / Inventory Associate
Office / Administrative Assistant
Delivery Driver
HGV / LGV Class 1 Driver
HGV / LGV Class 2 Driver
Customer Service Representative
Production Worker
Forklift / Pallet Jack Operator
Project Manager

	Job Vacancies		Supply/Demand	
Occupational Group	November 2021	Increase compared to March 2020	Pathway Provision/ Capacity	Learner Pipeline Numbers
Logistics Specific	15787	87%	🟥	🟥
Business Operations	7168	39%	🟩	🟩
Sales	1998	30%	🟩	🟩
Digital	1866	50%	🟩	🟧
Engineering	1511	6%	🟩	🟧
Financial	1138	20%	🟩	🟩
Security/Cleaning	767	64%	⬜	⬜
Construction	498	28%	🟩	🟧
Auto Service	290	-3%	🟩	🟩

Observations:
- Growth sector.
- Labour shortages, magnified by loss of some EU workforce.
- High shortages for warehouse staff and drivers at all levels.
- Private sector has responded with establishment of training pathways.
- Skills Bootcamps for HGV/LGV drivers now coming on line.
- Local authorities and FE colleges increasing provision.
- Requires development of talent pipeline towards the sector within education.

Retail

Employment trend	Decreasing
Job vacancy trend	Increasing

Top 10 job vacancies
Retail Sales Associate
Retail Store Manager / Supervisor
Customer Service Representative
Sales Assistant
Account Manager / Representative
Labourer / Material Handler
Project Manager
Warehouse / Inventory Associate
Office / Administrative Assistant
Security Officer

	Job Vacancies		Supply/Demand	
Occupational Group	November 2021	Increase compared to March 2020	Pathway Provision/ Capacity	Learner Pipeline Numbers
Business Operations	3286	10%	🟩	🟩
Retail Specific	2153	2%	🟩	🟩
Sales	2028	12%	🟩	🟩
Security/Cleaning	942	109%	🟩	🟩
Digital	887	12%	🟩	🟧
Financial	700	-9%	🟩	🟩
Engineering	385	-8%	🟩	🟧

Observations:
- Hardest hit sector due the impact of Covid-19.
- Some labour shortages now being identified following cessation of furlough scheme.
- Online purchasing and automation impacting staffing needs.

Health and Care

Employment trend	Increasing
Job vacancy trend	Increasing

Top 10 job vacancies
Registered General Nurse (RGN)
Caregiver/Personal Care Aide
Care assistant
Physician
Nursing Assistant/Healthcare Asst
Office / Administrative Assistant
Healthcare Manager
Psychologist
Occupational Therapist
Nurse Practitioner

Occupational Group	Job Vacancies		Supply/Demand	
	November 2021	Increase compared to March 2020	Pathway Provision/ Capacity	Learner Pipeline Numbers
Health Specific	12359	31%		
Care Specific	5139	66%		
Business Operations	2632	47%		
Social Services	616	48%		
Childcare	415	11%		
Digital	364	46%		
Food/Catering	342	52%		
Sales	323	41%		
Security/Cleaning	269	35%		

Observations:
- Recruitment remained strong during Covid-19 period and is growing.
- Care sector labour shortages magnified by loss of some EU workforce.
- Staffing shortages continue for nurses and demand for psychologists has increased.
- Online purchasing and automation impacting staffing needs.
- Requires development of talent pipeline towards the sector within education and local partnerships are taking the initiative.

Business Administration and Support

Employment trend	Decreasing
Job vacancy trend	Increasing

Top 10 job vacancies
Recruiter
Interpreter / Translator
Office / Administrative Assistant
Account Manager / Representative
Customer Service Representative
Project Manager
Software Developer / Engineer
Sales Manager
Sales Representative
Sales Assistant

Occupational Group	Job Vacancies		Supply/Demand	
	November 2021	Increase compared to March 2020	Pathway Provision/ Capacity	Learner Pipeline Numbers
Business Operations	2732	13%		
Logistics Specific	702	20%		
Digital	588	11%		
Sales	563	13%		
Food/Catering	354	27%		
Engineering	345	39%		
Security/Cleaning	284	65%		
Financial	247	31%		

Observations:
- Job vacancy falling due the impact of Covid-19 and increase use of digital and AI.
- Return to work has highlighted some lower skill administration roles labour shortages with the loss of some EU workforce.
- Labour shortages in specialist areas such as procurement and human resources.

Education

Employment trend	Level
Job vacancy trend	Increasing

Top 10 job vacancies
Teaching Assistant
Tutor
Primary School Teacher
University Lecturer
Secondary School Teacher
Nursery nurses, assts, playworkers
Science Teacher
Maths Teacher
Office / Administrative Assistant
English / Language Arts Teacher

	Job Vacancies		Supply/Demand	
Occupational Group	November 2021	Increase compared to March 2020	Pathway Provision/ Capacity	Learner Pipeline Numbers
Education Specific	8049	5%		
Business Operations	943	28%		
Childcare	628	30%		
Digital	282	21%		
Health	202	63%		
Financial	160	70%		
Security/Cleaning	133	183%		
Sales	132	16%		
Engineering	117	4%		

Observations:
- Job vacancy remain stable during Covid-19 period.
- Shift in the recruitment of teaching staff from teachers to teaching assistants.
- FE colleges report difficulties in recruiting and retaining tutors due to a competitive labour market with salaries increasing in the private sector.
- Considerable investment in FE estate for digital, construction, engineering and manufacturing and new schools driven by increasing population.

Manufacturing

Employment trend	Decreasing
Job vacancy trend	Increasing

Top 10 job vacancies
Production Worker
Welder / Solderer
Maintenance Technician
Mechanical Engineer
Utilities Technician
Sales Manager
Project Manager
CNC Operator
Production Plant Manager
Software Developer / Engineer

	Job Vacancies		Supply/Demand	
Occupational Group	November 2021	Increase compared to March 2020	Pathway Provision/ Capacity	Learner Pipeline Numbers
Manuf. Specific	4809	29%		
Engineering	3341	-10%		
Business Operations	2781	25%		
Sales	1151	18%		
Logistics Specific	1137	52%		
Digital	1037	12%		
Financial	938	4%		
Construction	656	4%		
Food/Catering	59	-22%		

Observations:
- Growth in food manufacturing, decrease in most other manufacturing.
- Labour shortages, magnified by loss of some EU workforce.
- Production workers required to have increased technical skills to maintain equipment.
- Leaving the EU increased need for business operations roles and languages.

Construction

Employment trend	increasing
Job vacancy trend	Increasing

Top 10 job vacancies
Carpenter
Plumber
Construction Helper / Worker
Brick / Stone Mason
HVAC Mechanic / Installer
Civil Engineer
Construction Manager
Office / Administrative Assistant
Customer Service Representative
Labourer / Material Handler

Occupational Group	Job Vacancies		Supply/Demand	
	November 2021	Increase compared to March 2020	Pathway Provision/ Capacity	Learner Pipeline Numbers
Construction Specific	1594	55%		
Business Operations	510	12%		
Engineering	334	2%		
Logistics Specific	283	2%		
Sales	214	-15%		
Manufacturing	197	-4%		
Digital	150	2%		
Financial	125	-10%		
Utilities	88	47%		

Observations:
- Growth sector, especially for micro and small businesses.
- Labour shortages, magnified by loss of some EU workforce.
- High shortages for trades, supervisors/managers and engineers.
- Local authorities and FE colleges increasing provision including a new Modern Methods of Construction facility at Bedford College.
- Requires development of talent pipeline towards the sector within education.

Hospitality

Employment trend	Stable
Job vacancy trend	Increasing

Top 10 job vacancies
Chef
Food Service Team Member
Waiter/Waitress
Bartender
Kitchen Staff
Receptionist
Restaurant/Service Supervisor
Maid/Housekeeping Staff
Restaurant/Food Service Manager
General cleaner

Occupational Group	Job Vacancies		Supply/Demand	
	November 2021	Increase compared to March 2020	Pathway Provision/ Capacity	Learner Pipeline Numbers
Food/Accommodation	2983	4%		
Business Operations	806	-6%		
Logistics Specific	418	67%		
Security/Cleaning	316	56%		
Digital	297	82%		
Sales	234	4%		
Financial	159	-2%		
Engineering	143	36%		
Retail	142	1%		

Observations:
- One of the hardest hit sectors during the slowdown, with the temporary closure of Luton Airport having had a major impact.
- Some labour shortages now being identified magnified by loss of some EU workforce following cessation of furlough scheme including chefs and front of house.

Financial

Employment trend	Stable
Job vacancy trend	Increasing

Top 10 job vacancies
Customer Service Representative
Office / Administrative Assistant
Software Developer / Engineer
Insurance Sales Agent
Account Manager / Representative
Data / Data Mining Analyst
Financial Manager
Accountant
Auditor
Bookkeeper / Accounting Clerk

Occupational Group	Job Vacancies		Supply/Demand	
	November 2021	Increase compared to March 2020	Pathway Provision/ Capacity	Learner Pipeline Numbers
Financial Specific	1112	44%		
Business Operations	1012	27%		
Digital	640	65%		
Sales	434	34%		
Retail	70	46%		
Legal	42	62%		
Security/Cleaning	29	-41%		

Observations:
- Job vacancy stable during the impact period of Covid-19.
- Labour shortages remain for accountants and bookkeeping with these occupations remaining in the top 25 vacancies from pre Covid-19.

Digital

Employment trend	Increasing
Job vacancy trend	Increasing

Top 10 job vacancies
Software Developer / Engineer
Computer Support Specialist
Customer Service Representative
Sales Representative
Account Manager / Representative
Office / Administrative Assistant
Project Manager
Web Developer
Sales Assistant
Marketing Manager

Occupational Group	Job Vacancies		Supply/Demand	
	November 2021	Increase compared to March 2020	Pathway Provision/ Capacity	Learner Pipeline Numbers
Digital	702	68%		
Business Operations	542	7%		
Sales	326	72%		
Financial	68	-15%		
Legal	12	-8%		

Observations:
- Growth sector, especially for medium scale up businesses.
- High shortages for software developer/engineers and computer support specialists.
- Local authorities and FE colleges increasing provision including the South-Central Institute of Technology, digital facility at Northampton College and initial apprenticeships from MK:U.
- Requires further development of talent pipeline towards the sector within education.

The increasing need for 'employability skills'

During the preparation of this report, consultation with stakeholders stressed the increasing need and shift of focus towards 'employability skills' in the recruitment and development of people into and within the workforce.

A full definition of 'employability skills' can be found in Annex B and comprises:

- Basic skills
- Attitudes and behaviours
- Core competencies

- Technical/vocational skills
- Qualifications and certification

Within these digital skills have increasing importance, comprising:

- Basic (basic skills)
- Digital literacy (core competency)
- Specialist digital skills (technical/vocational skills)

The development of and evidence of these skills is essential for recruitment and again highlighted in the SEMLEP Business Survey 2021.

Strengths and development

A summary of the South East Midlands strengths and areas for development is below.

| Strengths	Development for needs
Local stakeholder partnerships including those with employers, local authorities, local and national programme providers, Colleges South East Midlands and South East Midlands Universities. Employment and Skills Briefings to inform delivery and provision within the SEM.	**Need to increase the talent pipeline of people** entering occupational groups with opportunities and needs: - Logistics and supply chain - Construction - Manufacturing - Engineering - Digital - Health and Care
High performing Further Education facilities aligned to employer needs through capital investment, employer engagement and 'live' labour market information for: - Manufacturing and engineering - Digital - Construction - Business operations	**Development and promotion of relevant, accessible pathways into occupational groups with need** both now and in the future such as local bootcamps and modular education for: - Logistics - STEM and digital related - Green Economy Use employer engagement to keep provision up to date and relevant.
Relevant, accessible Higher Education through University of Bedfordshire, University of Northampton, Cranfield University and The Open University.	**Review of pre 16 education** to ensure focus on the development of relevant basic skills such as numeracy, literacy and spoken English, core competencies, attitudes and behaviours.
Increased embedding of careers in the curriculum within schools with more employer engagement with provision and guidance aligned to employer needs and opportunity.	**Focal points across the SEM for employers** to engage with the wide range of providers, provision and pathways for recruitment, upskilling/reskilling and development of the talent pipeline.
High youth population and younger demographic within the workforce than national averages.	**Increase and promote Higher Education pathways in Milton Keynes** through new MK:U and existing universities.

Chapter four
Skills Strategy

The ambitions of the SEMLEP Skills Strategy are to:
- Support alignment of provision, facilities and activity with employer needs
- Remove discrepancies between the skills and attainment needed by employers and those held by individuals
- Inform, inspire and raise aspirations of the talent pipeline
- Enable people into employment and those within employment to progress
- Deliver through employer led engagement, best practice and innovation
- Guide stakeholders through informed labour market information
- Coordinate, facilitate and simplify engagement for all stakeholders

The SEMLEP Skills Strategy comprises 5 skill categories and cross cutting themes, aligned to the employment lifecycle as per the diagram below.
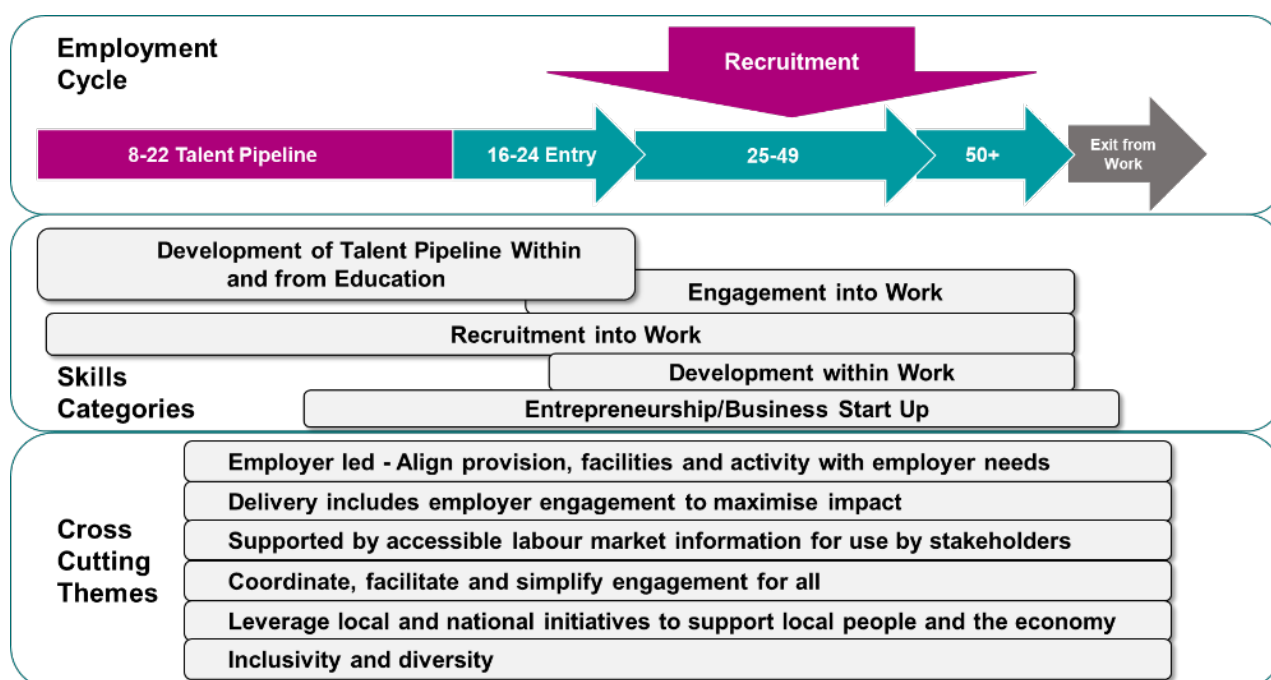
- **Development of the Talent Pipeline within and from Education** - Ensuring all young people understand what career opportunities exist, develop core competencies, attitudes and behaviours and engage with relevant pathways aligned to the needs of employers.
- **Engagement with Work** - Ensuring adults understand the labour market, develop employability skills, engage with relevant pathways and are assisted to overcome any barriers to work.
- **Recruitment to Work** - Ensuring that employers are aware and engage with pathways to occupations with need and that they support inclusivity and diversity and provide fair terms and conditions for work.
- **Development within Work** - Ensuring people progress and develop within work, promoting life-long learning, skills development and contribute to improving productivity.
- **Entrepreneurship/Business Start Up** - The use of entrepreneurship to develop skills and sustainable business growth.

The priorities of focus for 2022 are:

Skills Category	Priorities	Rationale

Development of the Talent Pipeline within and from Education	Develop awareness in young people, parents/carers and teaching staff of the opportunities and need in occupational groups.	• Need to increase the talent pipeline of people entering occupational groups with opportunities and needs:
		  • Logistics and supply chain
		  • Construction
		  • Manufacturing
		  • Engineering
		  • Digital
		  • Health and Care
		• Ensure focus on the development of relevant basic skills such as numeracy, literacy and spoken English, core competencies, attitudes and behaviours.
		• Increase and promote Higher Education pathways in Milton Keynes through MK:U and existing universities.

	Embed careers education into secondary school curriculum for English, Maths, STEM and Digital.	
	Inspire and raise the aspirations of young people	
	Development of basic numeracy, literacy and digital skills, pre-16	
	Development of employability skills.	
	Increasing the number of young people with technical/vocational skills.	
	Access to qualified careers advisers.	
	Increase employers offering entry into work, work experience/placement including T-Levels and higher education.	
	Grow employer engagement within education.	

Engagement into Work	Provide awareness for individuals where to get support and guidance.	• Need to increase the talent pipeline of people entering occupational groups with opportunities and needs including reskilling and upskilling for:
		  • Logistics and supply chain
		  • Construction
		  • Manufacturing
		  • Engineering
		  • Digital
		  • Health and Care
		• Development and promotion of relevant, accessible pathways into occupational groups with need now and in the future for:
		  • Logistics
		  • STEM and digital related
		  • Green Economy

	Accessible one to one careers guidance for all.	
	Providing understanding of the pathways for individuals into occupations with need.	
	First steps - Assistance for individuals to gain experience of work and entry into learning.	
	Development of basic skills.	
	Travel support to work.	
	Support of childcare for single parents and low-income families.	

Skills Category	Priorities	Rationale
Recruitment into Work	Development of capacity of relevant provision pathways for individuals into occupations with need.	• Focal points across the SEM for employers to engage with the wide range of providers, provision and pathways for recruitment. • Development and promotion of relevant, accessible pathways into occupational groups with need now. • Increase and promote Higher Education pathways in Milton Keynes through MK:U and existing universities.
	Awareness for businesses and organisations where to get support and guidance.	
	Promotion to employers of provision pathways into occupational groups/sectors with need.	
	Fair terms and conditions.	
	Supporting reengagement with work.	
	Supporting inclusivity and diversity.	

Development within the Workforce
 	
(up-skilling and re-skilling)
	Encourage investment in the development of the workforce.	• Focal points across the SEM for employers to engage with the wide range of providers, provision and pathways for upskilling/reskilling.
		• Development and promotion of relevant, accessible pathways for occupational groups with need both now and the future for:
		  • Logistics
		  • STEM and digital related
		  • Green Economy
		• Increase and promote Higher Education pathways in Milton Keynes through MK:U and existing universities.

	Development of basic skills.	
	Raise employer awareness of training provision.	
	Development of training provision and capacity to match needs of employers both in content and accessibility.	
Entrepreneurship/ Business Start Up	Experiencing enterprise education within education.	• Ensure focus on the development of relevant core competencies, attitudes and behaviours.

Chapter five
Skills Action Plan

The Skills Action Plan summarises the actions against each Skill Priority and includes the cohort it is aimed at supporting, contributing partners/stakeholders, SEMLEP and the SAP role, a proposed timeframe subject to availability of resources and measures of impact.

Within the Skills Action Plan references are made to 'occupational groups/sectors with need' and 'those with barriers to work' which are defined as:

Occupational Groups/Sectors with Need

- Logistics and supply chain
- Construction
- Manufacturing
- Engineering
- Digital
- Health and Care
- Some roles within Business Operations and Management

Those with Barriers to Work

Cohorts including:

- People within areas of high social deprivation (Wellingborough, Corby, Kettering, Northampton, Luton)
- Households on a single income with dependent children
- People with disabilities, mental and physical health conditions or learning difficulties
- Ethnic groups (definition in Annex B)
- Returners to work with caring responsibilities
- Some people aged 50 or over with low levels of transferable and digital skills
- Individuals who are homeless or in temporary accommodation
- Ex-Offenders

Abbreviations

JCP – Job Centre Plus
NCS – National Careers Service
FE – Further Education
SCIoT – South Central Institute of Technology
HE – Higher Education
STEM – Science, Technology, Engineering, Maths
CEC – Careers and Enterprise Company
EC – Enterprise Coordinator
CoSEM - Colleges South East Midlands
SEMU – South East Midlands Universities

Action	Activity	Target Cohort	Partners and Stakeholders	SEMLEP/SAP Responsibility	Timeframe	How measured?
Development of the Talent Pipeline Within and from Education						
Develop awareness in young people, parents /carers and teaching staff of the opportunities and need in occupational groups.	• Introductory activity to SEM, the labour market and employability skills. • Accessible 'live' labour market information. • CPD for labour market information for teaching staff. • Presentations to young people, parents and carers for labour market information.	Ages 8 to 19 Teaching staff Parents/carers	School careers leaders Head Teachers CEC	• Commissioning and distribution of an introductory video and lesson plans. • Collation, hosting and presentation of labour market information to cohorts.	Ongoing	• Number of students and schools engaged in activity • Quotients of learners in occupational groups
Embed careers education into secondary school curriculum for English, Maths, STEM and Digital	• Seek commitment from head teachers. • Promote My Learning, My Future and other CEC relevant resources. • Develop and promote 'Connective Learning' themed co-curricular model. • Drive employer engagement for the above.	Ages 11-19	Head Teachers School careers leaders CEC STEM Ambassadors Computing Hub FE Colleges/SCIoT Universities VCSE Employers	• Promote as part of roll-out of Careers Hub South East Midlands in each local authority area. • Develop Cornerstone Employers in each local authority area. • Partner schools, colleges, universities and VCSE to develop 'Connective Learning' resources.	Commitment from head teachers for July 2022. Some activity ongoing.	• Gatsby Benchmark 4 • Destinations KS5
Development of basic numeracy, literacy and digital skills pre-16	• Promote employer engagement with young people to highlight the relevance of English and maths together with digital literacy. • Seek commitment from head teachers. • Promote My Learning, My Future and other CEC relevant resources.	Ages 11-16	Head Teachers School careers leaders CEC STEM Ambassadors Employers	• Promote as part of roll-out of Careers Hub South East Midlands. • Guidance to Careers Leaders through ECs. • Sign posting of best practice and teaching resources. • Promote and facilitate employer engagement and work with	Commitment from head teachers for July 2022. Some activity ongoing.	• Gatsby Benchmarks 4 • Attainment KS4
Inspire and raise the aspirations of young people	• Seek commitment from head teachers to use careers as a tool for inspiration and raising aspirations. • Promote the adoption of high impact employer engagement activities in schools and colleges. • Promote My Learning, My Future and other CEC relevant resources. • Drive employer engagement for the above. • Additional focus on underrepresented ethnic groups, genders, abilities and areas of social deprivation.	Ages 11 to 19 SEND cohorts	Head Teachers School careers leaders CEC STEM Ambassadors Computing Hub FE Colleges Universities ASK/JCP VCSE Employers	• Promote as part of roll-out of Careers Hub South East Midlands. • Guidance to Careers Leaders through ECs. • Sign posting of best practice and teaching resources. • SEND Community of Practice. • Provide 'Real Role Models' and LMI for use by partners and stakeholders. • Promote and facilitate employer engagement	Commitment from head teachers for July 2022.	• Gatsby Benchmarks 2,3,4,5,6,7. • Attainment KS4 and 5 • Destinations KS5

Development of employability skills	• Seek commitment from head teachers. • Promote My Learning, My Future and other CEC relevant resources. • Develop and promote 'Connective Learning' themed co-curricular model. • Drive employer engagement for the above. • Focus on the development and evidence gathering of core competencies, attitudes and behaviours. • Activity to include work placements, work experience, T Levels, internships, supported internships, employability days and social/public enterprise activity.	Ages 11 to 24 SEND cohorts	Head Teachers School careers leaders CEC STEM Ambassadors FE Colleges Universities ASK/JCP Provision providers VCSE Employers	• Promote as part of roll-out of Careers Hub South East Midlands in each local authority area. • Guidance to Careers Leaders through ECs. • Sign posting of best practice and teaching resources. • SEND Community of Practice. • Promote and facilitate employer engagement	Ongoing	• Gatsby Benchmarks 3,5,6, • SEMLEP Business Survey
Increasing the number of young people with technical/vocational skills	• Promotion of technical and vocational pathways with focus on opportunities within occupational groups with need. • Focus on traineeships, apprenticeships, supported apprenticeships, T Levels and higher education.	Ages 11-19, Parents/carers Teaching staff	Head Teachers School careers leaders STEM Ambassadors FE Colleges Universities ASK/JCP VCSE Employers	• Collation, hosting and presentation of labour market information to cohorts. • Guidance to Careers Leaders through ECs. • Sign posting of best practice and teaching resources. • SEND Community of Practice. • Promote and facilitate employer engagement	Ongoing	• Gatsby Benchmarks 2,3,5,7,8. • Quotients of learners in occupational groups. • Learner achievements • Destinations KS4
Access to qualified careers advisers	• Qualified careers advisers accessible for one-to-one guidance for all young people aged 13-24 across the South East Midlands	Ages 13-24	National Careers Service, Job Centre Plus DfE Local Authorities, Provision providers	• Review of coverage to date • Report and proposals	Review of resource and capacity to be completed by December 2022.	• Gatsby Benchmark 8
Increase employers offering entry into work, work experience/placement places, including those for T-Levels, further and higher education	• Seek commitment from head teachers. • Promotion of the recruitment of young people using apprenticeships, traineeships and supported internships, work placements for T-Levels, work experience for A-Level students, internships for HE, level 4 and 5 pathways.	Head teachers Employers	Head Teachers School careers leaders STEM Ambassadors FE Colleges Universities Provision providers Business networks Employers	• Promote as part of roll-out of Careers Hub South East Midlands in each local authority area. • Guidance to Careers Leaders through ECs. • Sign posting of best practice and teaching resources. • SEND Community of Practice. • Promote and facilitate employer engagement	Ongoing	• Gatsby Benchmark 6 • Participation numbers of employers and people in national schemes and pathways locally • SEMLEP Business Survey

Action	Activity	Target Cohort	Partners and Stakeholders	SEMLEP/SAP Responsibility	Timeframe	How measured?
Engagement into Work						
Provide awareness for individuals where to get support and guidance	• Promote 'First Point of Contact' and support information for individuals through local media, social media and press and via partners. This includes National Skills Fund and Levelling Up initiatives.	Claimants Risk of redundancy Career change Barriers to work	Local Authorities National programmes Local training providers JCP VCSE FE & HE	• Encourage collaboration through Employment and Skills Briefing • Collate and publish directory of support • Promote directory on social media and local press	February 2022 with review every 12 months	• Claimant numbers • Claimant:Vacancies
Accessible one to one careers guidance for all	• Promote one-to-one support. • Inform providers of current labour market needs. • Community Grants to support small local providers for targeted cohorts.	Claimants Risk of redundancy Career change Barriers to work	Local Authorities National programmes Local training providers JCP VCSE Further Education	• Provide latest labour market information to providers through Employment and Skills Briefing • Collate and publish directory of one-to-one support • Promote directory and inform via Employment and Skills Briefing • Final round of Community Grants	February 2022 with review every 12 months	• Claimant numbers • Claimant:Vacancies
Providing understanding of the pathways for individuals into occupations with need	• Promote pathways into occupational groups with need including those to upskill/reskill. • Leverage opportunities presented through National Skills Fund and Levelling Up initiatives.	Claimants Risk of redundancy Career change Barriers to work	Local Authorities National programmes Local training providers JCP VCSE FE & HE	• Collate and publish directory of pathways to occupational groups • Promote directory and inform via Employment and Skills Briefing	February 2022 with review every 12 months	• Claimant numbers • Claimant:Vacancies
First steps – Assistance for individuals to gain experience of work and entry into learning	• Work experience for those needing to develop confidence in the workplace leading to employment including volunteering. • Encouragement of 'soft' entry programmes to engage people with learning. • Promotion to employers.	Barriers to work	Local Authorities National programmes Local training providers JCP VCSE Further Education	• Collate and publish directory of pathways to occupational groups • Promote directory and inform via Employment and Skills Briefing • Final round of Community Grants • Promote to employers via SEMLEP Growth Hub and partners	February 2022 with review every 12 months	• Participation numbers • Claimant numbers • Claimant:Vacancies
Development of basic skills	• Programmes to support the development of literacy, numeracy, English as a Second Language (ESOL), basic digital skills and digital literacy.	Barriers to work	Local Authorities National programmes Local training providers JCP VCSE Further Education	• Collate and publish directory of pathways to occupational groups • Promote directory and inform via Employment and Skills Briefing • Final round of Community Grants	February 2022 with review every 12 months	• Participation numbers • Claimant numbers • Claimant:Vacancies
Support for travel to work	• Subsidising or full support for the cost of travel through JCP flexible support fund. • Expansion of schemes such as https://wheelstowork.net/ and car sharing.	Barriers to work	Local Authorities National programmes JCP VCSE	• Collate and publish directory of support available	March 2022	• Publish and feedback
Support of childcare for single parents and low-income families	• Subsidising or full support for the cost of childcare. • Promotion of support by employers	Barriers to work	Local Authorities National programmes JCP VCSE	• Collate and publish directory of support available	March 2022	• Publish and feedback

Action	Activity	Target Cohort	Partners and Stakeholders	SEMLEP/SAP Responsibility	Timeframe	How measured?
Recruitment into Work						
Development of capacity of relevant provision pathways for individuals into occupations with need	• Provide labour market information and employer feedback to providers to inform provision provided • Delivery of Getting Building Fund capital projects. • Leverage and promote opportunities presented through National Skills Fund and Levelling Up initiatives.	Employers Programme providers JCP VCSE FE & HE Local Authorities	Employers Business networks Local Authorities National programmes Local training providers JCP VCSE FE & HE	• Provide latest labour market information via Employment and Skills Briefing, CoSEM and SEMU. • Oversee project delivery of Getting Building Fund capital projects for Barnfield College, MK:U and Bedford College (Modern Methods of Construction). • Membership on LA boards	Ongoing	• Project delivery • Learner starts/ achievements
Awareness for businesses and organisations where to get support and guidance	• Promote support information for employers through Growth Hub, social media and via partners. This includes National Skills Fund and Levelling Up initiatives. • Support Strategic Development Fund Skills Hub MK project at Milton Keynes • Provide focal points for one stop engagement across SEM	Employers Business networks	Employers Business networks Local Authorities National programmes Local training providers JCP VCSE FE & HE	• Collate and publish directory of support on Growth Hub website • Promote directory through newsletter, social media and via partners • Encourage collaboration through Employment and Skills Briefing • Work with FE colleges to establish Skills Hubs across the area	Ongoing	• Employment numbers • Employer engagement rates
Promotion to employers of pathways into occupational groups/ sectors with need	• Promote pathways into occupational groups with need including those to upskill/reskill. • Leverage and promote opportunities presented through National Skills Fund and Levelling Up initiatives.	Employers Business networks	Employers Business networks Local Authorities National programmes Local training providers JCP VCSE FE & HE	• Create and promote use of Skills Toolkit for employers through Growth Hub and partners • Promote directory through newsletter, social media and via partners	Ongoing	• Employment numbers • Employer engagement rates • SEMLEP Business Survey
Promotion of fair terms and conditions	• Providing clarity of salary ranges locally for occupations in demand & best practice for flexible working	Employers Business networks	Employers Business networks Local Authorities	• Review of advertised salary for occupations with high levels of recruiting. Publish data annually. • Promote through Growth Hub, newsletter and via partners	Start in April 2022 subject to resourcing	• SEMLEP Business Survey
Supporting reengagement with work	• Promotion of programmes and best practice to employers that support a variety of cohorts such as parents, ex armed forces, carers, long term illness, ex-offenders, etc into work.	Employers Business networks	Employers Business networks Local Authorities	• Promote as part of Skills Toolkit • Capture and promote best practice and case studies.	Start in April 2022 subject to resourcing	• SEMLEP Business Survey
Supporting inclusivity and diversity	• Promotion of employment for all in occupational groups/sectors with lower diverse participation. • Leverage national programmes such as Disability Confident, Access to Work and BITC resources.	Employers Business networks	Employers Business networks Local Authorities	• Promote as part of Skills Toolkit • Promote SEMLEP SEND CoP activity • Capture and promote best practice and case studies.	Start in April 2022 subject to resourcing	• Participation numbers • Employment rates

Action	Activity	Target Cohort	Partners and Stakeholders	SEMLEP/SAP Responsibility	Timeframe	How measured?
Development within the Workforce (up-skilling and re-skilling)						
Encourage investment in time for the development of the workforce	• Highlight benefits in terms of improved productivity, staff retention, etc.	Employers Business networks	Employers Business networks Local Authorities	• SEMLEP Growth Hub webinars and evidence of impact as part of Skills Toolkit. • Promote directory through newsletter, social media and via partners	Ongoing	• Participation numbers • SEMLEP Business Survey
Development of basic skills	• Promotion of provision for developing literacy, numeracy, basic digital, digital literacy and support for ESOL such as National Numeracy Challenge, National Skills Fund and Levelling Up initiatives • Delivery of Getting Building Fund capital projects	Employers Business networks	Employers Business networks Local Authorities National programmes Local training providers JCP VCSE FE	• Collate and publish directory of support on Growth Hub website • Promote directory through newsletter, social media and via partners • Oversee project delivery of Getting Building Fund capital project for Bedford College AI Maths and English Learning Platform.	Ongoing	• Participation numbers • SEMLEP Business Survey
Raise employer awareness of training provision	• Promote activity to employers through Growth Hub, social media and via partners. This includes National Skills Fund and Levelling Up initiatives. • Support Strategic Development Fund Skills Hub MK project at Milton Keynes • Provide focal points for one stop engagement across SEM	Employers Business networks	Employers Business networks Local Authorities National programmes Local training providers JCP VCSE FE & HE	• Collate and publish directory of support on Growth Hub website • Promote directory through newsletter, social media and via partners • Encourage collaboration through Employment and Skills Briefing • Work with FE colleges to establish Skills Hubs across the area	Ongoing	• Employment numbers • Employer engagement rates
Development of training provision to match needs of employers both in content and accessibility	• Provide labour market information and employer feedback to providers to inform provision provided • Delivery of Getting Building Fund capital projects. • Leverage and promote opportunities presented through National Skills Fund and Levelling Up initiatives.	Employers Programme providers JCP VCSE FE & HE Local Authorities	Employers Business networks Local Authorities National programmes Local training providers JCP VCSE FE & HE	• Provide latest labour market information via Employment and Skills Briefing, CoSEM and SEMU. • Oversee project delivery of Getting Building Fund capital projects for Barnfield College, MK:U and Bedford College (Modern Methods of Construction). • Membership on LA boards	Ongoing	• Project delivery • Learner starts/ achievements
Entrepreneurship/Business Start Up						
Experiencing entrepreneurship within education	• High impact employer engagement activities with schools, further and higher education to develop and apply core competencies, attitudes and behaviours through social/public enterprise activity.	Ages 14 to 24	Head Teachers School careers leaders FE Colleges Universities Provision providers Business networks Employers	• Promote as part of roll-out of Careers Hub South East Midlands in each local authority area. • Guidance to Careers Leaders • Sign post best practice/ resources. • Promote and facilitate employer engagement	Ongoing	Gatsby Benchmark 5

Chapter six
Assessment of Progress

Progress from the Local Skills Report 2021

Below is the summary of the progress against the Action Plan from the Local Skills Report 2021. Green indicates an improvement, grey need for improvement.

Development of the Talent Pipeline Within and from Education

Gatsby Benchmarks - A framework of 8 guidelines that define the best careers provision in secondary schools/colleges.

Gatsby Benchmarks (% average per school/college)	2019/20	2021/22 YTD
GBM1 A stable careers programme	85	90
GBM2 Learning from labour market information	85	88
GBM3 Addressing the needs of each pupil	87	92
GBM4 Linking curriculum learning to careers	85	91
GBM5 Encounters with employers and employees	84	81
GBM6 Experiences of workplaces	76	70
GBM7 Encounters with further and higher education	82	83
GBM8 Personal guidance	75	84

Quotient of learner starts for Further Education and Apprenticeships

Occupational Groups	2019/20	2020/21
Business Operations and Management	7.7	7.5
Construction	1.4	1.3
Digital	1.0	0.8
Education	1.3	1.5
Engineering and Manufacturing	2.3	1.5
Health and Care	3.4	6.8
Logistics (specific to logistics)	0.9	0.7

Percentage of key stage 4 pupils achieving grade 4+ in English and maths

Area	English		Maths	
	2019/20	2020/21	2019/20	2020/21
England	80.7	81.7	75.3	75.9
Bedford	79.1	79.4	72.4	73.8
Central Bedfordshire	79.9	80.4	75.3	
Luton	75.7	76.6	70.4	69.5
Milton Keynes	77.8	80.7	71.5	73.7
Northamptonshire	79.2		73.9	
North Northamptonshire		78.8		73.1
West Northamptonshire		82.7		

Note: Indicators are versus national average and latest grading was through assessment.

SEMLEP Business Survey

Question	2019	2021
Business perceptions - Quality of Schools/Colleges - positive and neutral response	90%	91%

Which groups, or in what ways, do you actively offer work experience and/or employer engagement?	2019	2021
School student age 11-13 (Year 7 to 9)	2%	1%
School students age 14-16 (Year 10 to 12)	19%	13%
School/College students age 17-19	3%	22%
Further or Higher Education Students age 19-24	8%	7%
Traineeships	1%	2%
Internships	1%	1%
No engagement conducted	74%	62%

Engagement into Work

Claimants

JSA and National Insurance credits plus Universal Credit principally for the reason of being unemployed	2020	2021	Variance
Total number	61470	46815	-24%
Male 16-24	6500	4380	-33%
Male 25-49	20435	15685	-23%
Male 50+	8440	6500	-23%
Female 16-24	4470	2870	-36%
Female 25-49	14910	12385	-17%
Female 50+	6735	5000	-26%
England Number	2225535	1650820	-26%

SEMLEP Business Survey

What have been the main causes of having hard to fill vacancies?	2019	2021
Low number of applicants with the required skills	44%	49%
Low number of applicants with the required attitude, motivation or personality	26%	28%
Lack of qualifications the company demands	15%	20%
Lack of work experience the company demands	17%	14%

Recruitment into Work

SEMLEP Business Survey

Have you found any skills difficult to obtain when recruiting staff in the last 12 months?	2019	2021
None	48%	45%
Job specific skills	18%	26%
Technical or practical skills	20%	20%
Other	8%	17%
Communication skills	8%	4%
Managerial Skills	4%	4%
General employability	7%	3%
Numeracy	4%	3%
Customer Service skills	4%	3%
Literacy	4%	2%
Digital skills	6%	1%
Sales and Marketing	6%	1%
Problem solving skills	4%	1%

Why have you found these skills difficult to obtain?	2019	2021
Poor quality applicants generally	37%	45%
Low quantity of applicants available	41%	43%
General lack of skills in available workforce	54%	25%
People applying for jobs they are not suited to	31%	11%
Lack of work ready college/further education leavers	16%	10%
Reduction in the availability of EU applicants	-	6%
Lack of work ready school leavers	19%	5%
Lack of work ready university higher education leavers	9%	3%
What actions have you taken to increase skills?	**2019**	**2021**
Not applicable - no skills gaps	66%	33%
Offering in-house training & development	19%	28%
Not doing anything	6%	16%
Outsourcing training & development / working with independent training providers	10%	15%
Engaging with colleges	3%	7%
Providing on-line/remote training and support to staff	-	6%
Investing in apprenticeships	3%	5%
Engaging with universities	1%	2%
Engaging with schools	2%	1%
Working with job centre plus	-	1%
Apprenticeships	**2019**	**2021**
Do you employ anyone on an apprenticeship programme currently? - Yes	12%	10%
Do you or would you consider taking on an apprentice? - Yes	41%	41%

Inclusivity and Diversity - Employability Rates

Gender	2020	Jul 2020-Jun 2021
Male	69.0	65.1
Female	60.4	57.6
Ethnic Groups	**2020**	**Jul 2020-Jun 2021**
Mixed ethnic group	70.8	46.1
Indians	80.0	78.5
Pakistanis/Bangladeshis	55.2	56.9
Black or black British	74.1	71.7
Other ethnic group	70.8	75.1
White	81.3	77.9
Disability	**2020**	**Jul 2020-Jun 2021**
EA core or work-limiting disabled	63.1	58.7
EA core disabled	62.2	57.2
Work-limiting disabled	56.3	49.3
Not EA core or work-limiting disabled	82.9	80.3

Development within the Workforce (upskilling and reskilling)

SEMLEP Business Survey

Do you have skills gaps in your existing workforce, if so, in which areas?	2019	2021
None	82%	82%
Technical or practical skills	5%	5%
Why do you think there are skills gaps amongst your existing workforce?	**2019**	**2021**
Lack of appropriate training or courses	25%	24%
Existing staff not seeking upskilling	18%	18%
Lack of investment in staff training and development	5%	11%
Impact of Covid-19 pandemic on levels of training we have been able to provide	0%	8%
Reduction in number of EU workers	0%	7%
Insufficient budget to provide training courses	12%	4%
No workforce development plan	0%	4%
Inflexible times/durations for training or courses	4%	3%

Entrepreneurship/Business Start Up

Enterprise Births and Deaths	2019	2020
Business birth rate	14%	12%
Business death rate	13%	12%

Business Counts - employment band	2020	2021
Micro (0 to 9)	69,745	71,000
Small (10 to 49)	5,790	5,835

Skills Advisory Panel

The SAP is a Board Sub-Committee with delegated decision-making responsibility.

Northampton College Principal, Pat Brennan-Barrett was appointed the new chair of the SAP in May 2021. Membership also changed to reflect the changing employment and skills landscape and to enhance the representation of employers, local authorities, further and higher education providers.

The Skills Advisory Panel is represented within working groups and boards to help decision making throughout the SEM. These groups include:

- CoSEM – Further education and Institute of Technology college principals
- SEMU – Higher education vice chancellors and operational working groups
- Local authority employment and skills strategy groups
- Local authority adult education budget boards
- Employment and Skills Briefing
- Careers leaders and head teacher groups including Careers Hub Luton
- Strategic Development Fund – Milton Keynes College

The SEMLEP Employment and Skills Manager and Data Analysts provide labour market information to inform strategy, funding calls, performance indicators, partner activity and careers information and guidance in schools and colleges.

Local Growth Fund

The Government awarded a total of £265million Local Growth Fund (LGF) to the SEMLEP area from 2015 to March 2022 for capital projects to support growth including education and training facilities. The SEMLEP Board has responsibility for the fund.

A total investment of £37,600,000 has been made for projects related to skills, pathways and education, the projects being:

- Bedford College, Advanced Engineering Centre
- Central Bedfordshire College, Engineering and Construction Skills Centre
- Cranfield University, Forensic Institute
- Mark Rutherford School, STEM centre of excellence hub
- Milton Keynes Hospital, Academic Centre
- MK:U
- Moulton College, Food & Drink Innovation Centre
- Northampton College, Advanced Construction Engineering Centre
- Northampton College, Daventry Campus
- Northampton College, Digital Academy
- Northampton College, Test and Training Centre
- Tresham College (Bedford College Group), Wellingborough Campus Renewal Project
- YMCA, Milton Keynes

An evaluation of the LGF was conducted in July 2021 the summary being:

- Over 5,529 jobs have been created.
- 5,523 learners have been trained/are in training to date.
- On completion of training, it is estimated that this will contribute £5.9m locally per annum to the local economy.
- 484 apprentices have started their training to date.
- Upon completion of their apprenticeships, it is estimated that the potential increase in productivity will be £3.8m for the SEM economy per annum.
- By 2030, 8,989 learners and 1,363 apprentices will have been trained/be in training.

More details can be found at https://www.semlep.com/local-growth-fund/.

Getting Building Fund

Work continues the delivery of the SEMLEP managed Getting Building Fund:

- **Barnfield/West Herts College**: Construction is well underway for redevelopment of the college's New Bedford Road campus in Luton. This will provide a new modern 6,000 sqm further education facility, creating learning space better suited to modern courses including digital, engineering and logistics. It will also rationalise the existing estate and provide land for 110 new family homes.
- **MK:U**: Start Up to Scale Up Programme: An innovation Hub in Milton Keynes, known as the Smart City Living Lab (SCLL), will provide education and support to scale start-up businesses. This will focus on smart city technologies including robotics, virtual reality, digital twinning, sensor technology, intelligent infrastructure, autonomous vehicles, drones, and advanced communications.
- **Modern Methods of Construction** (MMC): Bedford College's facilities have been updated to enable it to start teaching Modern Methods of Construction (MMC), with a new curriculum and the redevelopment of the existing construction teaching facility. [Project completed in October 2021](#).
- **Artificial Intelligence Maths and English Learning Platform**: A new learning platform which has been designed to improve the achievement rate of learners undertaking Maths and English qualifications, improve the digital skills and improve teacher efficiency and wellbeing. [Project completed in May 2021](#).
- **The Bedford Green Technology & Innovation Park**: Bedford Borough Council is creating a green energy park at a former landfill site to deliver low carbon, clean energy generation technologies and encourage others to reduce carbon emissions, adopt innovative technologies and improve air quality. The project will provide an education and training resource through partnership working with the University of Bedfordshire, Cranfield University and local colleges and generate more construction jobs locally and stimulate the local job market in the growing energy technology sector. The project is due to be completed in early 2022.

More information at https://www.semlep.com/getting-building-fund/.

Community Grants

During 2021 and 2022, grants have been made available to support people whose employment has been affected because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The programme offers voluntary, community and social enterprises (VCSE) grants of between £10,000 to £20,000 to deliver employability skills projects, helping vulnerable members of the community get back into work or training.

The aim of the programme was to support people to develop new skills, confidence and gain experience, defining their careers, whilst unlocking further employment growth locally.

Each call was aimed at specific cohorts identified as needing support from the SAP research.

As of 1/1/2022, 906 people have been supported.

More information at www.semlep.com/communuty-grants/.

Information and Awareness

The collaboration and channel of communication the Employment and Skills Covid-19 Response Working Group provided has been developed to widen participation and both the SEMLEP Skills Forum and Local Authority Skills groups have been integrated with it as SAP Employment and Skills Briefings.

The briefings are held monthly and include that latest labour market information, partner and Government updates, employer and occupational group feedback and an open forum for members to highlight challenges, programmes and calls for action/support.

SEMLEP continues to maintain directories of support for local and national initiatives for:
- First points of contact for individuals www.semlep.com/finding-a-job
- Support for the 6 cohorts and needs www.semlep.com/employment-and-skills-support
- Employer support and online training www.semlepgrowthhub.com/resources

Promotion of directories has been through local press, social media, podcasts, TV and radio along with distribution via stakeholders.

A new Skills Toolkit has been produced to help the Growth Hub Business Advisers, inward investment team, partners and employers understand the complex and fast changing provision and support in the area focused on:

- Employing People and Filling Vacancies
- Upskilling/Reskilling Employees
- Developing a Talent Pipeline
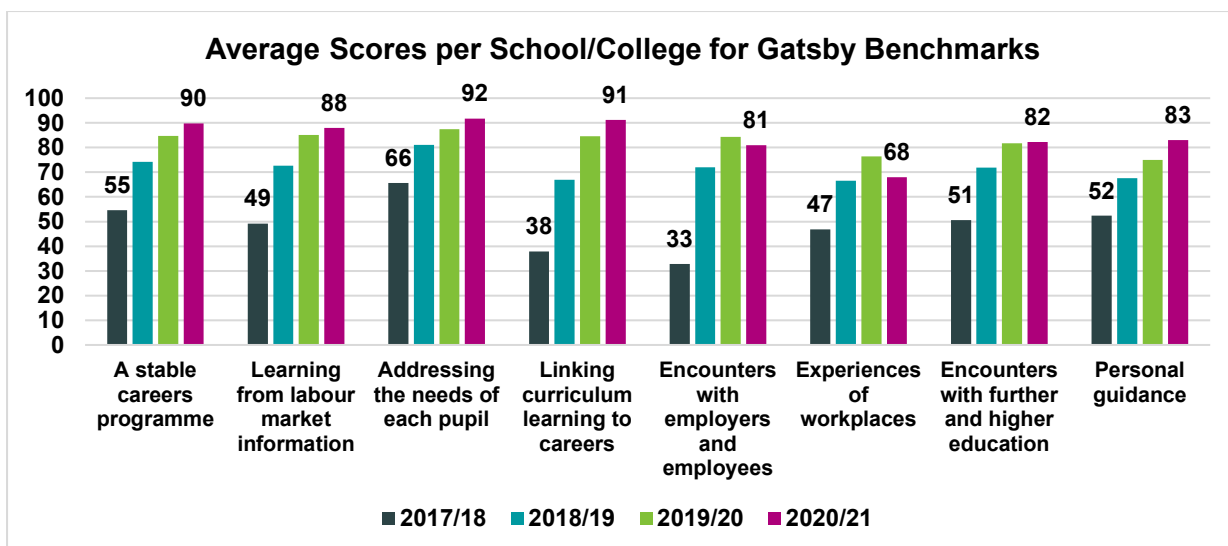
Development of the Talent Pipeline

The impact of Covid-19 and the reduction of the number of Enterprise Coordinators within the area has proved particularly challenging with our work within schools and colleges, part funded and supported by The Careers and Enterprise Company (CEC) during 2021.

Despite these challenges progress has been made through the work of Careers Hub Luton, Enterprise Coordinator engagement with careers leaders and the initial phases of a larger Careers Hub in the area.

Gatsby Benchmarks

The average Gatsby Benchmarks scores for schools and colleges increased from 84% to 85% despite reduction in those impacted by the restrictions of Covid-10 for GBM5 encounters with employers and employees (84% to 81%) and GBM6 experiences of workplaces (76% to 68%).

Current results outperform the national averages except for personal guidance and so this and renewing employer engagement are areas for development for 2022.

Average Scores per School/College for Gatsby Benchmarks

Benchmark	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
A stable careers programme	55	74	84	90
Learning from labour market information	49	72	85	88
Addressing the needs of each pupil	66	81	87	92
Linking curriculum learning to careers	38	67	84	91
Encounters with employers and employees	33	71	84	81
Experiences of workplaces	47	66	76	68
Encounters with further and higher education	51	71	81	82
Personal guidance	52	67	75	83

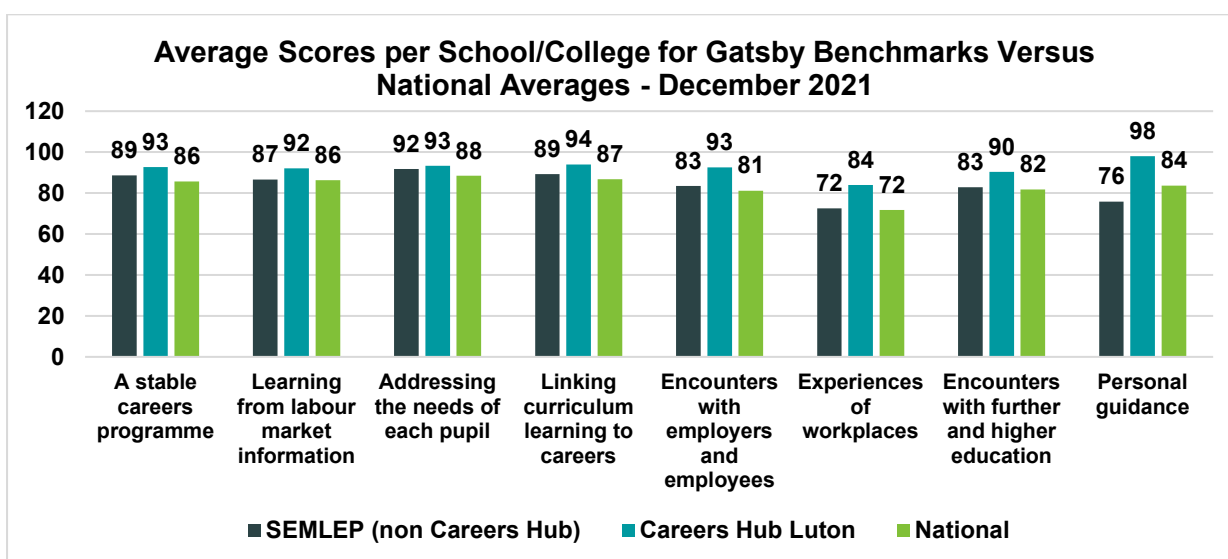*Source : The Careers and Enterprise Company, EANR*

Careers Hub Luton

As one of the national network of Careers Hubs supported by CEC, Careers Hub Luton is acting as pilot to test, learn and adapt activity locally to improve outcomes for young people, education and employers.

SEMLEP sub contracted the project to the school improvement team in Luton Borough Council in 2018/19 as Careers Hub Luton (CHL) and working closely with secondary schools and FE colleges in Luton, Dunstable, Houghton Regis, with local cornerstone employers with support from a Careers Hub Lead and Enterprise Coordinator, the hub was recognised by CEC as one of the top three in England.

Progression has seen the embedding of careers into curriculum, more employer engagement with young people, more efficient engagement for all and provision more aligned to employer needs and opportunities for young people.

The high Gatsby Benchmark scores reflect the impact of the additional resources and funding, not available to the wider network.

Average Scores per School/College for Gatsby Benchmarks Versus National Averages - December 2021

Benchmark	SEMLEP (non Careers Hub)	Careers Hub Luton	National
A stable careers programme	89	93	86
Learning from labour market information	87	92	86
Addressing the needs of each pupil	92	93	88
Linking curriculum learning to careers	89	94	87
Encounters with employers and employees	83	93	81
Experiences of workplaces	72	84	72
Encounters with further and higher education	83	90	82
Personal guidance	76	98	84

Source : The Careers and Enterprise Company, EANR

Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Community of Practice

Working in partnership with TRACK, a social enterprise, the local SEND schools and supported by CEC, a range of resources to encourage engagement between employers and education have been produced, focusing on SEND.

The resources have been developed to easy to use and understand and highlight some best practice, materials, processes and pathways both for schools and employers.

More information at https://www.track.org.uk/community.

In partnership with Daventry Hill School, Spokes Education, TRACK, Hospital and Outreach, SEMLEP with CEC support, have also supported the creation of Future Destinations, a digital platform to provide information and signposting to education and employment post 16 options for young people with disabilities in Northamptonshire.

More information at https://www.futuredestinations.co.uk/.

Careers Hub South East Midlands

Based on the success of Careers Hub Luton, both SEMLEP's and the CEC's ambition is to roll-out the elements of best practice across the whole SEM area, creating Careers Hub South East Midlands (see Chapter 8).

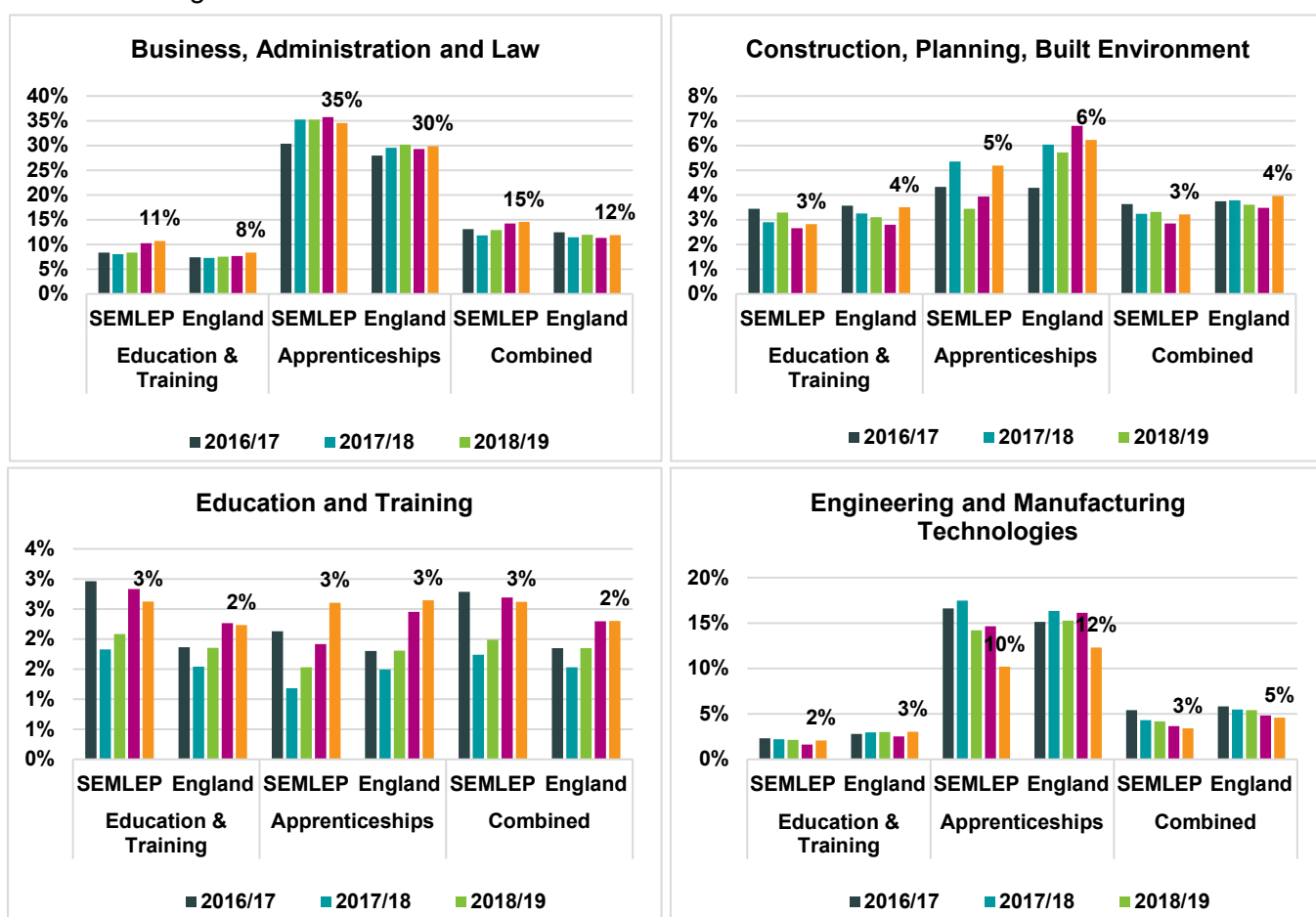# Case studies/positive impact stories
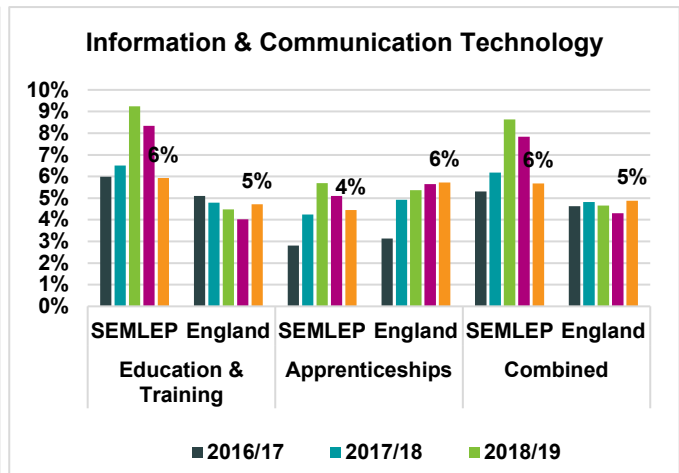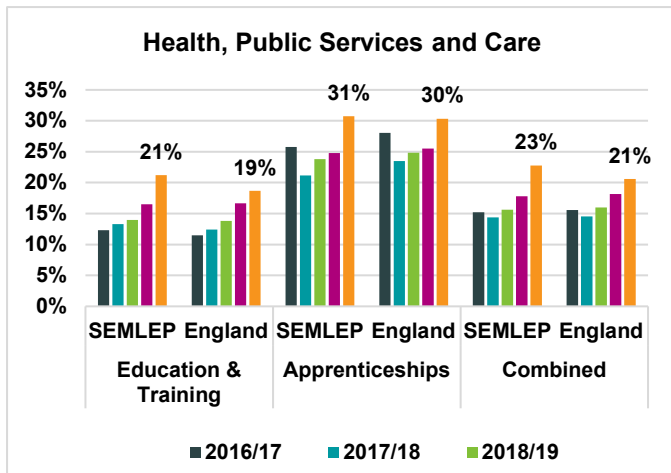
Investment in the Further Education Pathways

The investments in the further education colleges through the South East Midlands supported by the Local Growth Fund and the Getting Building Fund (see Chapter 6) continue to start to show improvements in the pipeline of people taking pathways to occupational groups with need and opportunities.

Growth as a proportion of learner starts continues within Business, Administration and Law, Construction, Planning and the Built Environment, Education and Training and Health, Public Services and Care.

Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies has slowed due to impact of Covid-19, apprenticeship numbers being hit the hardest.

The proportion of learners starts compared to England remains high for Information and Communication Technology but is declining partly due to slow down in the economy but also due to alternative pathways favoured by employers including short intensive courses and in house training.


Business, Administration and Law

Construction, Planning, Built Environment

Education and Training

Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies

Two bar charts side by side.

Health, Public Services and Care (left chart, y-axis 0% to 35%)
Categories: SEMLEP / England under Education & Training, SEMLEP / England under Apprenticeships, SEMLEP / England under Combined.
Labelled values: 21%, 19%, 31%, 30%, 23%, 21%.
Legend: 2016/17, 2017/18, 2018/19.

Information & Communication Technology (right chart, y-axis 0% to 10%)
Categories: SEMLEP / England under Education & Training, SEMLEP / England under Apprenticeships, SEMLEP / England under Combined.
Labelled values: 6%, 5%, 4%, 6%, 6%, 5%.
Legend: 2016/17, 2017/18, 2018/19.

Source: Proportion of learner starts from Further Education & Skills data, DfE

Priority now needs to be given to the promotion of the opportunities within Construction, Planning and the Built Environment, Education and Training, Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies and Information and Communication Technology within pre 16 education to increase the number of learners starts based on informed careers decisions (see Chapter 8).

MK:U: Addressing higher education skills shortages through employers

The need for specialist digital skills in emerging fields such as data analytics, AI, robotics and cybersecurity are identified by businesses as constraints on their growth.

A new university, MK:U, aims to address these skills gaps both locally and nationally, through a radically different approach to higher education.
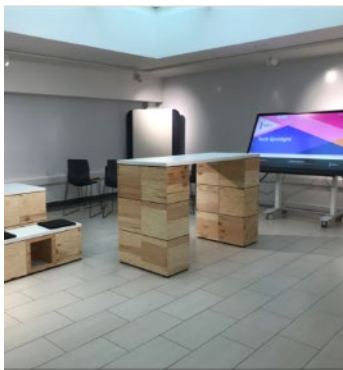
MK:U's education is co-designed and co-delivered with business. Each new curriculum subject is framed through detailed discussions with companies ranging from global businesses to local micro-enterprises, many of whom are members of its Business Supporters Group. These consultations helped identify four 'pillars' for its curriculum that address the skills needs of the digital economy: Business and Entrepreneurship; Data and Digital; Engineering and Robotics; and Design Thinking and highlighted the importance to employers of facilitating flexible learners.

In response, it has designed its entire curriculum based on Problem-Based Learning, with employers encouraged to contribute to delivery; and has integrated a core spine of professional development - including team-working, commercial understanding and project management - for all learners. This powerful combination of technical and applied knowledge alongside personal development uniquely enables people to apply their learning to the world of work.

Additional courses, including apprenticeships, short courses and 'boot camps', will be on offer soon especially in new technologies such as data, digital tech, cyber and robotics.

Filling skills gaps isn't all about education through degrees or upskilling the workforce. In 2022, MK:U opens its Innovation Hub offering courses, facilities and events for entrepreneurs, assisting 40 small businesses per year within four years.

As described earlier, as the largest urban area in the UK without its own university, Milton Keynes has suffered historically from a 'brain drain' of young talent moving away to university and not returning to the town; lack of local provision has also led to some of the lowest HE participation rates in the UK in its more deprived areas. Education opportunities are attractive to individuals and families as well as businesses, encouraging people to move to the area and boosting the local and night-time economies as well as delivering powerful cultural, social and leisure benefits. A local university is a lynchpin for regional economic growth – in the case of MK:U, delivering £6 to the local economy for every £1 invested, creating over 500 direct jobs within 5 years whilst helping large and small business locate the skills they need to grow.

MK:U has also established a diversity and inclusion working group exploring with business how to attract and work with a full range of recruits and encourage participation and inclusivity. Its degree apprenticeships enable access to degree-level education for learners from non-traditional backgrounds; it is also working closely with MK College and the South-Central Institute of Technology to create new pathways for diverse learners.

The current apprenticeship offering can be found at https://www.cranfield.ac.uk/mku/mku-apprenticeships.

South Central Institute of Technology – Bridging the digital skills gap with diversity

South Central Institute of Technology (SCIoT) is now operational, providing higher level technical qualifications, apprenticeships and short courses for a new generation of digital visionaries.

The project is led by Milton Keynes College Group, working with a consortium of world-leading brands including Microsoft, KPMG, McAfee, Activate Learning, and Cranfield University and offers a hub of innovation and technological advancements, future-proofing the skills of learners.

Curriculum is employer led, bridging the digital skills gap, built on understanding and responding to business needs, to create unrivalled talent in the process. SCIoT offers real-world learning experiences, aiming to increase the diversity of the technology sector and develop learners.

SCIoT is purpose-led and operating to embedded values to:
- Include – creating opportunities for all, raising aspirations, diverse in thinking and offering incredible support to the community.
- Innovate – forever in beta mode, continuously seeking to refine and adapt ways of working to respond to new technologies and innovations in learning.
- Connect – seeking to collaborate and form partnerships, developing a community among stakeholders which will create opportunities and lead to a thriving alumni network.
- Challenge – ambition in everything, solving real world problems and using non-traditional methods.

Equality and diversity

As one of the largest educational institutions and employers in a richly diverse area, the leadership at SCIoT wanted to reflect this inside the establishment, challenging the current inclusivity and diversity within the digital sector and occupational groups.

The Vision:
- Where learners, staff, dual professionals, partners, members of the wider community and other stakeholders are included, knows that they belong and that they matter, and can be their authentic self to achieve their full potential
- Which is representative of the communities it serves
- Which is proactive in ending prejudice and injustice wherever it's found, and
- Which becomes a diversity and inclusion role model for other organisations, and drives improved 'downstream' diversity and inclusion within employer partners.

The Priorities:
1. Create a culture of declaration, in which diversity-related data is captured, analysed and used to drive decision-making
2. Improve the inclusion of current students, and identify and address specific needs
3. Develop mentoring and allyship programmes with partners
4. With learners, co-create an even more inclusive curriculum and student experience for the future
5. Take proactive action against prejudice and hate
6. Engage proactively with prospective learners from under-represented talent groups
7. Communicate in ways that support increased inclusion and celebrate diversity
8. Design-in inclusion at the IoT centres at Bletchley, Oxford and Reading
9. Set a purposeful intention to recruit a diverse base of staff and dual professionals
10. Cement the universal responsibility for supporting equality, diversity and inclusion

A good start, progress to date

SCIoT offer a range of digitally focussed career pathways that can be studied, full-time, part-time, as apprenticeships and intensive short courses.

These include disciplines such as focus specialist digital skills such as Software Development, Cyber Security, Data Analytics, Games and Animation, Artificial Intelligence and more. There are currently two campuses (Bletchley and Reading) and a third will open in Oxford in September 2022.

The Bletchley Campus gained planning approval in January 2022 and work is underway to double the size of the existing space to accommodate approximately 1000 learners from this site.

There are currently have more than 500 learners of which 30% are female, 36% are from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds and 20% have registered a (dis)ability challenge.

Recruitment into Work and Development within Work – RS Components

RS Components at Corby have introduced an apprenticeships strategy, seeing the levy as an opportunity to focus on the challenges of:

- How to grow new and existing talent to meet the future requirements instead of continuous recruitment?
- How to ensure that new talent is diverse?
- How to utilise the experience they have now to remain relevant as an organisation in the future?

Tim Beasley, Apprenticeship Programme Manager at RS Components explains how the strategy was introduced and the impact.

"We had to approach apprenticeships from 2 different angles as we had to see what talent we needed to recruit and what internal talent we needed to grow.

We thereby needed hiring managers to be honest with themselves when recruiting, as some 'vacancy holes' were impossible to recruit ourselves out of. We decided to grow new talent instead of running on a continuous recruiting hamster wheel. This meant the roles we were offering were fairly high level and the aligned apprenticeships were normally degree level.

We also created 'Academies' for internal staff to join that would effectively retrain them with the skills they needed to do their job for the future.

Over 3 years we recruited over 50 new apprentices into roles such as, Software Engineering, Supply Chain Leadership, Project Management, Data Analysts, Metrology, Non-Destructive Testing & Sales. All the graduated apprentices have been offered permanent roles so we can see this as a viable solution to the recruitment issues.

We have also supported over 300 members of staff in upskilling themselves with skills like, Data Analytics, Management, Sales, Digital Marketing & Sales. This has allowed people to work smarter and more efficiently."

Having demonstrated the true value of apprenticeships, they are now finding more departments are looking to new apprentices to strengthen their future success. This means more variety in more roles becoming available.

The success of the internal academies will continue, and RS Components will include more variety in the Data Analytic and Management space to maximise the impact for the future.

Recruitment into Work - Time2Grow

This project was operated and supported by the University of Bedfordshire and University of Northampton.

Time2Grow was a graduate work programme open to any recent graduate (within 5 years) from any university to be paid for work in business for up to 280 hours. The graduate was paid by the university and the university received a 40% contribution towards the cost from the SME. At the end of the 280 hours the SME then had the option to employ the graduate directly.

Evidence from the project indicate that 50% secured a permanent role to date from the 199 placements with number expected to rise after the closure reports were submitted. If this rate of success is maintained, then 55 jobs will be created from the 109 projects.

Businesses reported benefits of:
- Easier recruitment and support
- A 'fresh pair of eyes'
- Low risk recruitment through a trial
- Plugging gaps and new skills injected into the business

The graduates also benefited through:
- New skills learnt
- Gaining confidence in the workplace
- Applying university learning into the workplace

The ROI compared with the average EU project job creation cost of approximately £29,000 was significantly below at £27,282 based on the current employment rate. This will reduce further as the anticipated offer of permanent roles increases.

SMEs supported has already exceeded the contracted target; 157 against a target of 145 (+8%) and by the now extended end date of the project it is anticipated that the target for completed placements will also have been exceeded.

As an indicator of the success of the project, a Project Change Request is currently pending at time of print to reduce the overall project costs by over £200k.

Chapter eight

Looking forward

Development of the Talent Pipeline within and from Education

Building on the success of Careers Hub Luton, our aim is to expand the model to create Careers Hub South East Midlands in line with the plans of the national programme for The Careers and Enterprise Company.

The ambition is enhanced activity building on the progress so far:
- To inform (labour market information, pathways, opportunities)
- To inspire (role models, help exploit strengths)
- To raise aspirations (for all, explore opportunities, role models)
- To develop core competencies, attitudes, behaviours, basic skills
- To motivate (relevancy of subjects, identify individual strengths, explore opportunities, provide role models)
- To simplify and improve efficiency of the engagement of stakeholders (partnership working, removing duplication of activity/process/meetings)
- To build in sustainability of the programme
- To listen, review, adapt and develop

Measures of impact will be through:
- Gatsby Benchmarks
- Careers quality mark/framework implementation
- Destinations at keys stages 4 and 5 (pathways)
- Student Progress (progress 8 and attainment)
- Employer survey responses
- Parent/carer feedback
- Student feedback

To deliver against the agreed actions effectively and efficiently within the resources available, the initial work being coordinated by the SEMLEP Employment and Skills Manager through a process of:
- Creation of a group of key employers and business networks in the area (Cornerstone Employers)
- Employer led objectives agreed relating to employment and skills from education
- Review of objectives with head teachers and common objectives and commitments agreed
- Collation and development of engagement provision to meet stakeholder objectives
- To listen, review, adapt and develop

Work is already ongoing in Milton Keynes, North Northamptonshire and West Northamptonshire and focus will start within Bedford and Central Bedfordshire during 2022.

Based on employer feedback and data included in both this and the previous Local Skills Report, focus will be given to:
- The promotion of existing and development of pathways into employment for young people, especially for occupational groups with need.

- Further developing diversity and inclusivity for gender, ethnic groups, special educational need and disability and areas of social derivation in all sectors coupled with providing inspiration and confidence in young people to aspire to any occupation.
- Raising awareness of opportunities being provided by employers to young people, parents, carers and educators in the South East Midlands including myth busting for manufacturing, construction and logistics.
- Showcasing Science, Technology, Engineering, Maths (STEM) including digital with reference to opportunities, diversity, inclusivity and pathways.
- Development of basic skills, core competencies, attitudes and behaviours.
- Supporting the embedding of careers in curriculum

Head teacher commitment is essential for the programme to succeed. Collaboration and feedback so far have seen commitments to:
- To 'make the local area the classroom'.
- View careers as an opportunity/tool for inspiration and aspiration.
- Provide time for activity by embedding across curriculum.
- Seek and encourage employers to enhance the curriculum offer, making it meaningful, relevant and developing skills and awareness.
- Develop partnerships that can focus on different gender/socio-economic/ethnic groups.
- Become increasingly flexible in how to engage with employers.
- Provide a clear brief about their culture, priorities and what the focus of the engagement is with the employer with a clear outcome.
- Accreditation/badging projects/events by employers to add gravitas to parents/carers, evidence to employers and pathway providers and recognition to students.

Work in ongoing and will be developed for:
- Development of a portfolio of activity for engagement (both current and existing) to act as a conduit for employer and school engagement:
  - By focusing on activities that underpin the stakeholder objectives, particularly inclusivity and diversity and raising aspirations
  - Exploiting local events such MK Innovates, National Apprenticeship Show, Teentech, City of Code, Big Bang, etc.
  - Embedding across curriculum through:
    - CEC resources 'My Learning, My Future' for subjects at years 7-10
    - Co-curricular 'Connective Learning' activities to apply and develop core competencies, attitudes and behaviours themed on digital, green economy/net zero, STEM and enterprise
    - CPD with employer engagement for teaching staff to develop and sustain knowledge of the local labour market including career pathways, employer needs and recruiting processes.
- 'Real role models' https://www.semlep.com/news/2021/inspire-the-next-generation-real-role-models-needed/
  - Employer engagement, both physical and virtual
  - Local people, ideally alumni from local schools/colleges or based in local employers
  - Representation of relevant occupational groups with need
  - Inclusive and diverse (gender, ethnic group, SEND, social deprivation)
  - Age relevant

- Maximising impact through reference to CEC [moments of choice](#).
- Content that is relevant for the age group.
- Using of 'live' labour market information to inform students, parents/carers and teaching staff
- Providing access to one-to-one support for young people and parents/carers
- Becoming a single focal point of this activity with platforms to ease access and share information and calls to action
- Starting involvement with primary schools to raise the awareness and knowledge of careers

Employers can register at https://www.semlep.com/growing-talent/ or contact paul.thompson@semlep.com

Skills Hubs

In the last Local Skills Report we referred to the concept of 'Skills Hubs' located acting as focal point for employer engagement across the area.

Employer consultation highlighted the increasing demands placed on employers in understanding and engaging with the different phases of education and employment/skills programmes available. It is envisaged that expertise within a Skills Hubs would be able to broker support and pathways by being nodal contact points throughout the South East Midlands.

Through support of the Strategic Development Fund, a pilot is underway at SkillsHub:MK at Milton Keynes College. The hub aims to identifying and bridge the skills gaps in local businesses and the town.

SkillsHub:MK will include a physical space, a College Business Centre, refurbishment of 600m^2 of college accommodation, to provide a collaborative and innovative space open to the college students and local business community.

There are also 3 projects:
- MK Skills Collaboration - aims to understand what skills local organisations really need to make an impact to bridging the skills gaps in their employees through career focused forums of Milton Keynes businesses and local education and training providers. The aim is to develop and deliver new skills training aligned with employers needs both in terms of content and delivery methods.
- MK Digital Skills Network - 'An Informed Digital Future' delivered by Biztech and aimed at small and medium-sized businesses and designed to further address the digital skills shortage. The programme will offer training and mentoring for businesses as well as liaisons with the training providers.
- MK AI Advancement - 'Driving a Technological Future' delivered by MKAI. The demand for expertise in artificial intelligence, cloud and robotics is increasing rapidly with new technologies continuing to emerge with businesses struggling to fill job positions in these areas. The SkillsHub:MK will be the focus for providing networked, high-tech learning aimed at skills development in AI and automation. The Hub will engage with business, training providers and their students, sharing resources to develop the skilled workers of the future. Being able to think differently about AI, how it can impact on business needs and by recognising the need for a highly-skilled workforce, businesses will be more able to keep pace with developments in their own sector.

More information can be found at https://www.skillshubmk.co.uk.

A new training and skills hub in Luton is to be based within a new skills, innovation and business hub which is also expected to create over 200 new jobs. This project is being delivered through Luton Rising, a Luton Borough Council company which owns the airport.

The £8.6m redevelopment is supported by a £3m grant from the SEMLEP Local Growth Fund and is expected to support the creation of a further 80 jobs in the local supply chain.

The training and skills hub will deliver learning in practical and social skills though its 'Passport to Employment' programme. The lower ground floor will also feature a café, seating area and outside courtyard to encourage and foster an exchange of skills and knowledge between the building's business tenants and adult learners alike.

The building will feature state-of-the-art wireless IT and communications systems and flexible, open plan office spaces aimed at attracting businesses in the post Covid-19 recovery phase.

Accommodation within the hub will be targeted at start-up companies particularly within the aviation, automotive, artificial intelligence and data-driven sectors.

More information at https://www.semlep.com/news/2021/morton-house-to-create-200-jobs/

Currently Bedford Borough Council operate The Jobs Hub in Bedford town centre.

SEMLEP

South East Midlands
Local Enterprise Partnership