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Greater Lincolnshire

Local Skills Improvement Plan

Annex A: Explanatory Information on Greater Lincolnshire's Skills Needs

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Contents

This Annex provides additional or more detailed information about Greater Lincolnshire's skills needs identified in the main LSIP report. It will define the key sectors and occupations - with relevant Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) and Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) designations - that have been identified as of critical importance for Greater Lincolnshire as well as overarching narratives of the skills needs in the cross-cutting themes outlined in Themes 3-6 of the main report. In each relevant section, noted Occupations by level are definitive whereas the SOC codes do not always cover all of the Occupations due to the limitations of those classifications.

Primary employer research carried out for the LSIP (Annex D), local labour market information, publicly available sources such the Office for National Statistics, Skills England, the Migration Advisory Committee, and other existing economic data will outline the skills needs before Annex B specifies explicit activities that should be carried out to address these needs.

When outlining Skills Needs, it is critical to consider that there are two types:

Skills Shortages: This is largely about ensuring a supply of skills and qualified people into key and specific occupations. This is based on employers' recruitment needs, such as vacancies that are hard to fill, or occupations where there is expected demand in the future. Most Government investment in education and training is on programmes that directly or indirectly focus on getting people into occupations (such as via Apprenticeships, college or University courses, programmes for the unemployed, etc).

Skills Gaps: This is more about the capabilities of the workforce and where it requires development to fill gaps that have emerged perhaps due to technological, regulatory or practice changes. Where employers have reported gaps, this Annex outlines where there are skills needs among existing staff that recruitment cannot solve. The type of training needed here is often funded by employers (e.g. health and safety, new technologies etc) but sometimes can be publicly funded via Skills Bootcamps and, for longer programmes, Apprenticeships or by Trade bodies (CITB etc).

This Annex will break down the skills needs into shortages (occupations) where they are clear and defined, and gaps (either by sector, theme or where issues are evident across the general workforce), as well as specifying at what levels of training are likely to be required to resolve recruitment, capacity and skills issues. It also considers labour market signals and delivery or system constraints with understanding generated by the LSIP's winter 2026 engagement with employers, stakeholders, and with FE, HE and Independent providers.

When looking at Occupations, this LSIP has used the following data to sift for occupations that may be in high demand locally:

1. Resident employment within each sector
2. Projected change in employment in this occupation within the sector
3. Job vacancy advertising data (where available)
4. Whether an occupation is listed as 'high growth' by Skills England, based on national evidence
5. Whether the occupation requires a training-led response (rather than occupations where competence can usually be achieved "on the job"- such as delivery drivers, kitchen assistants, packers/bottlers, retail assistants etc)

Where the National Office for Statistics' SIC and SOC codes have been listed - when the focus is on specific sectors and occupations rather than cross-cutting, industry-agnostic themes - this mapping took place following the primary research, as typically employers do not put forward their skills needs via these systemised codes. Employers were asked to identify occupations by name, in standard English, those which they struggle to recruit or retain and those which they feel they are able to source at the required volume. They also highlighted roles they believe will become more difficult to recruit over the next three years to 2029. The ERB then mapped this employer language to the appropriate codes to ensure a shared, consistent language across LSIP's stakeholders, including Skills England, Providers, Local Authorities, Funders, ERBs and Employers. They are intended to support analysis and establish consistency but should not dominate the plan or lead employer engagement.

When mapping skills needs against strengths and weaknesses in local provision for each specific and named sector, this is driven by data on the Individualised Learner Record (ILR) returns submitted by local providers, published quarterly by the Department for Education. Data was drawn down and supplied by GLCCA from the Department for Education data cube and identified the largest two or three providers with a relevant learning aim, rather than all (which would be an impenetrably long and detailed list). Other key factors to note on provision commentary are:

- Data and comments included relate to learner residence – Greater Lincolnshire - rather than location of delivery, because the latter can be recorded inconsistently.
- The information solely relates to the academic year 2024/25 (therefore does not reflect changes to the curriculum undertaken in the 2025/26 year).
- The intelligence relates to learning aim starts, not learners as some learners will have more than one learning aim start in a year. It is worth acknowledging that learning aim starts vary considerably in duration and complexity.
- Data only relates to DfE-funded provision, no full cost commercial activity or delivery by universities (except in apprenticeships)

- This Annex identifies delivery that is most relevant to LSIP priorities based on learning aim titles

The LSIP has also considered other key factors including:

- Geographical, rural and transport problems that impact on both work and learning
- Employer investment in skills
- Available pathways for young people to a variety of careers
- Predominance of low skill work and associated labour shortages

Greater Lincolnshire Workforce Overview: LSIP Primary Research

Before specifying skills shortages, gaps, opportunities and threats it is important to consider the recruitment and retention profile of employer and provider participants, their use of training and their ambitions for upskilling over the course of this LSIP. Evidence on these points was generated by the focus groups and survey conducted during winter 2026. Understanding these issues as a baseline gives context to each theme and how the relevant headline needs and rationales (Part One), Actions (Part Two) and Activities (Annex B) are set out, as well as to the following content of Annex A. A full evidence pack of LSIP's primary research can be found in Annex D.

When refencing priority sectors, this explicitly means the Growth and Foundational sectors identified in Themes 1 and 2: Defence, Agri-tech, Farming and Food Manufacturing, Energy Industries, Advanced Manufacturing, Construction, Health & Adult Social Care and the Visitor Economy. Some Digital and Technology roles have also been explored here. Non-priority refers to all other sectors and industries represented.

Recruitment Experiences and Plans

When looking at recent and current recruitment activities, 84% of all employers (of those that could confidently give an answer) have either recruited new employees, or tried to do so, over the last 12 months, with incidence rising to 88% for the LSIP's priority theme sectors[1]. 40% of employer organisations indicated that recruitment was 'Harder' or 'Much harder' in 2025 compared with 2024, with this perception equally widespread in priority and in non-priority Sectors[2]. The incidence of finding recruitment 'Much harder' has risen by +3.1% to 11.5% when compared with the equivalent LSIP Phase 2 survey carried out in 2024[3]. Participants were asked to briefly describe what issues made recruitment harder or much harder in 2025. See pages 33-35 of Annex D for the full

[1] Annex D: Page 28
[2] Annex D: Page 29
[3] Annex D: Page 30

breakdown by sector but Image 1 below demonstrates the most cited words and phrases.

Image 1: Word cloud of employer responses to the Question "Please briefly describe below, what you feel has made recruitment harder or much harder in 2025"

On intent to recruit over the next three years, 85% of the organisations expressing an opinion intend to add at least one employee to their team(s) over the next three years. Whilst recruiting two to five new employees is the mode answer across both the priority and
non-priority Sectors, the priority sectors have a markedly greater intent to recruit six to ten new employees[4].

When asked if here any new roles or new skills participants anticipated needing in the next three to five years
that are not currently available in the local labour market, 39% of employers in the priority sectors anticipate needing new roles or new skills in the next three to five years, a +7% higher incidence than for non-priority[5]. Over a third of the employers in five of the sectors, anticipate needing new roles or new skills over the next three to five years, with the highest demand in Digital and Technologies (60.4%), Construction (38.7%) and Health & Adult Social Care (36.2%)[6].

[4] Annex D: Page 37
[5] Annex D: Page 40
[6] Annex D: Page 41

Training Needs

Employers were asked to offer details of their most pressing training needs, both for skills shortages and gaps, as well as their views and perception of local provision to establish opportunities for improvement that the LSIP can influence.

When employers were asked to select a statement that best described the skills gaps in their existing workforces, 16.4% across all sectors reported no skills gaps at all but a further 16.4% – the exact same proportion – sat at the other end of the scale, reporting severe skills gaps. Slightly more employers in the Priority Sectors acknowledge the presence of any skills gaps (+5.8%) and slightly more of them admit that they are severe (+2.3%)[7]. Health and Adult Social Care (95.5%) stated the widest incidence of any skills gap, Advanced Manufacturing has the widest 'severe' skills gaps (24.4%) and Construction has the highest share of severe skills gaps affecting many employees (14.3%)[8].72.3% of employers have provided some training to address skills gaps within the last three years – this rises to 78% in the priority sectors[9].

Image 2: Word cloud of employer responses to the Question "Please briefly describe the skills gaps that you regard as being severe?"

Use of Training Providers and Perceptions

When seeking training in the last three years, 47% of all employers say they rely on in-house training or their own training department. Given this is a low or no cost option,

[7] Annex D: Page 270
[8] Annex D: Page 271
[9] Annex D: Page 276

this is perhaps unsurprising. A further 35.8% sourced training from free online/on-demand training options. Where external training has been supplied, just over a quarter (28.4%) have worked with a local independent provider, 18.5% sourced from a local college and 13.7% went to a local university[10].

Mandatory or compliance-driven training is the leading type of provision delivered, at 44.9%. At the other end of the scale, just 8% invested in T Levels[11] which aligns with Actions for growth in Themes 1 and 2.

Employers were asked to signal whether they had faced barriers when trying to source the training their organisation needs locally; 36.5% across the sample said yes[12]. Agri-tech, Farming and Food Manufacturing (60%), Construction (54%) and Digital and Technologies (44%) are the sectors who encountered the most widespread challenges in sourcing training locally in Greater Lincolnshire. Health and Adult Social Care reported the least challenge[13].

The cost of training and funding challenges make up over half (54.7%) of the most stated barriers to accessing training[14] reported by cross-sector employers. Priority sector employers more widely select course relevance (+4%), willingness of workers to undertake training (+4%) and flexibility of training options (+6%) as their top three barriers[15].

To track the impact of the 2023 LSIP and understand a new baseline for improvements, employers were asked if they had you noticed any significant improvements, innovations or major developments in the provision of training in Greater Lincolnshire in the last three years. Positively, 37% of all employers surveyed indicated that they had noticed significant improvements in provision, increasing to 41% in the priority sectors[16]. Skills Bootcamps, more flexible delivery (online, blended, and hybrid), investment in facilities/training infrastructure and a strengthening of employer alignment and partnerships with providers are the most stated reasons for notable improvement[17].

Provider Contributions

To understand the context regarding post-16 education and training provision from the local providers' perspectives in Greater Lincolnshire, the LSIP primary research programme included specialist workshop sessions (online and in-person) with participants from locally based and/or locally operating Sixth-form, FE, HE and

[10] Annex D: Page 279
[11] Annex D: Page 293
[12] Annex D: Page 297
[13] Annex D: Page 298
[14] Annex D: Page 330
[15] Annex D: Page 331
[16] Annex D: Page 312
[17] Annex D: Page 314-317

Independent Providers. The attendees were asked to review recent changes to education and training provision over the last three years.

When reviewing recent positive changes, a move towards greater collaboration across FE Colleges and ITPs - in particular, driven by the LSIF programme of collaborative bidding and delivery - was very widely endorsed[18]. Less positively, there were many more instances of negative or ambiguous changes the training sector. Participants stated[19]:

- Changes to Apprenticeship rules affecting affordability
- Uncertainty created by Devolution
- Demographic growth in 16–18 population without matching funding - growth in funding should follow but it lags the growth in volumes
- Reduction in capital funding
- Loss of major employers reducing training demand and reduction in training by employers
- 16 to 19 qualifications reform (T Levels, qualification changes
- Removal of Level 7 Apprenticeship funding
- Maths and English funding/requirement shock
- Very rapid de-listing of Apprenticeship standards

Participants also collaborated to conduct a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis of local provision to establish were LSIP should focus Actions and Activities and where the area can build upon successes already won. Some issues are triggered by national changes, others more locally driven and it is those where LSIP will focus on change where required. The opportunities for improvement were identified as:

- Targeted support for NEETs, economically inactive adults and SEND
- Systematically understanding the skills network and skill system for Greater Lincolnshire and respond to mobilise and address any weaknesses or gaps
- The inclusion of foundational sectors within the LSIP, however it should be noted generally the other foundational sectors (such as retail) do not have skills shortages, rather they have labour shortages
- Continued growth in numbers of 16–18-year-olds over the next 2 years at least
- Opportunity to reduce student debt by studying at HE-level much closer to home
- The Lifelong Learning Entitlement (LLE) which is introduced in January 2027, offers the potential for take up of more modular provision by adult learners and young people alike

[18] Annex D: Page 339
[19] Annex D: Pages 340-341

During both workshop sessions, providers also highlighted the following priority learner-driven or learner-inspired needs that should be considered as part of the Greater Lincolnshire LSIP[20]:

- IT skills – *"...phone skills, using a touchscreen, are different from IT skills" (FE) "Using PC and software is a different set of skills...Using Microsoft software, spreadsheets, even how to save work is a challenge, relative to scrolling." (FE) "Some older people may also lack digital skills" (ITP)*
- Interview preparation and CV writing
- Work-ready employability skills – *"Being professional in a workplace." (Sixth Form) "Basic behaviours are needed and development is required, across really all curriculum areas." (FE)*
- Communication skills – *"They all snapchat each other, they don't communicate in other ways...They need those oracy skills, the ability to talk confidently to others and present." (Sixth Form) "Young people can often not be able to express the skills that they do have." (FE)*
- English and Maths at the required level – *"They come to us in September and we do an initial assessment of them. We've seen them below entry 3 in English and Maths, so the gap to the desired GCSE level is absolutely massive...we've go to do something significant on English and Maths, otherwise it is going to get a bigger and bigger problem." (HE)*
- Learner reflection on skills they have developed, and skills they need to work at.
- Employability Passports were referenced as a way to document employability skills and a plea made for a Greater Lincs-wide Passport, with common standards and common currency – *"I think it would be really good if we all worked on the same Passport that was endorsed by employers., learners could show this at interview." (Sixth Form) "I would completely agree the Skills Passport piece and we did that previously in the West Midlands." (FE)*

When reflecting on their own skills and shortages for roles and capabilities, provider institutions stated that they have recently found that Educational Support Assistants (36%), HE Teaching Professionals (32%) and FE Teaching Professionals (32%) are the top three occupations they have struggled to recruit in the past 12 months[21]. The same three roles are also expected to remain the most difficult to recruit or retain over the next three years[22].

[20] Annex D: Page 358
[21] Annex D: Page 355
[22] Annex D: Page 356

Priority Theme 1: FORWARD: Growth Sector Technical Skills Needs

These four priority sectors are not only locally significant as dominators in employment but together build and protect national military, material, energy and food security.

Defence Skills Needs

The Greater Lincolnshire Defence sector is a major employer in the area, covering establishments that employ a total of 7,537 people. It boasts a long history of the Royal Air Force having a strong presence in the county. Known as Bomber County due to the prevalence of RAF stations established here during World War II, there are still five large bases; RAF Cranwell, RAF Waddington, RAF Coningsby, RAF Digby and RAF Wittering, which is located on the Lincolnshire/Cambridgeshire/Northamptonshire border.

As well as the armed forces, Greater Lincolnshire houses sites operated by significant supply chain of large organisations including (BAE Systems and Babcock) and a wide range of SMEs supporting national security operations. The county is home to one of the UK's most critical networks of ISTAR (Intelligence, Surveillance, Target Acquisition and Reconnaissance) businesses. The RAF's Air and Space Warfare Centre (ASWC), Air Battlespace Training Centre, MOD Joint Cyber and Electromagnetic Activities group are also based in Greater Lincolnshire.

The supply chain is spread across Greater Lincolnshire but there are collections of SMEs in institutions such as the Lincoln Science & Innovation Park, which was the location for an LSIP employer focus group in January 2026.

Currently, the sector generates a total annual GVA of £300m in Greater Lincolnshire. In total, the Defence sector workforce is currently projected to reduce by 2034, however recent global shifts have resulted in the UK Government committing to the largest sustained increase in defence spending since the Cold War[23] to at least 2.5% of GDP from April 2027, so this contraction figure should be reviewed during this LSIP timeframe.

Due to the national strategic importance of Greater Lincolnshire's defence organisations and GVA, The Greater Lincolnshire Regional Defence and Security Cluster was established in July 2023. Founded as a partnership between the University of Lincoln, Greater Lincolnshire LEP (now dissolved since the formation of GLCCA) and Lincolnshire County Council, the Cluster exists to create a collaborative environment for SMEs, drives innovation in intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR), and supports military

[23] https://www.gov.uk/government/news/prime-minister-sets-out-biggest-sustained-increase-in-defence-spending-since-the-cold-war-protecting-british-people-in-new-era-for-national-security#:~:text=Press%20release-,Prime%20Minister%20sets%20out%20biggest%20sustained%20increase%20in%20defence%20spending,of%20GDP%20from%20April%202027.&text=Defence%20spending%20to%20increase%20to,intensifying%20geopolitical%20competition%20and%20conflict.

capabilities. It is one of three formally recognised regional defence clusters in the UK, making Greater Lincolnshire a significant location for defence, sovereignty and security innovation.

In April 2026, Lincoln College was named as the Defence Technical Excellence College (TEC)[24] for the East Midlands. This places the College alongside five others across the country as a national leader in delivering high-quality, industry-standard training for the Defence sector. The College is quoted as saying "By bridging the gap between the classroom and the frontline, the DTEC will seek ensure the UK remains self-sufficient in maintaining and developing its critical defence assets." [25]

Table of Priority SIC codes - Defence

Industry (SIC code)	TOTAL EMPLOYEES 2024	PROJECTED 2024-34 % CHANGE	Employment Concentration (GB = 1.00)	GVA
Engineering Activities and Related Technical Consultancy (7112)	3112	-2%	0.56	£100m
Computer Consultancy Activities (6202)	1617	-7%	0.27	£73m
Other Professional, Scientific and Technical Activities n.e.c. (7490)	1506	+6%	0.94	£44m
Defence Activities (8422)	1023	-1%	1.50	£41m
Other Research and Experimental Development on Natural Sciences and Engineering (7219)	216	+9%	0.12	£34m
Manufacture of Weapons and Ammunition (2540)	38	-47%	0.09	£4m
Data Processing, Hosting and Related Activities (6311)	26	-55%	0.02	£4m

[24] https://www.gov.uk/government/news/next-generation-empowered-through-technical-excellence-colleges
[25] https://www.lincolncollege.ac.uk/news/lincoln-college-announced-as-newly-established-defence-technical-college-dtec

Summary of LSIP Primary Research

During winter 2026 both employers and providers confirmed there are ongoing skills demands across central Military and supply chains in the Defence sector, mainly focused on engineering, technical maintenance, logistics, digital systems including cyber-security, regulatory compliance and business and finance roles. Employer evidence indicates that workforce pressure is structural, driven by replacement demand, increased specialisation, changing workforce expectations, challenges around security clearance for support roles and rising technical complexity.

Employers highlight difficulties recruiting individuals with experience of regulated, high-assurance environments, where technical competence must be matched with strong documentation control, quality assurance, safety culture and a strong and clear hierarchy. Ageing workforce profiles in specialist roles create further medium-term risk.

As series of underlying issues causing shortages and gaps were voiced by Focus Group participants[26].

- Ageing workforce and shrinking ex-military talent supply
- Competition for the same limited talent pool
- Wage inflation driven by this competition
- Contracted services pay too low to attract talent
- Attracting people to Lincolnshire - the location and perception of the place can prove to be a challenge
- Work-from-home expectations conflicting with operational needs but working from home/remotely has brought staff retention benefits
- Several participants agreed that many candidates are found wanting across several soft or transferable skills
- Security clearance barriers limiting recruitment, particularly to low paid support and contract roles

Focus Group participants stated these skills shortages that they find are recently and/or currently the most difficult to recruit[27]:

Core and frontline roles

- Pilots & Weapon Systems Operators
- Licensed Engineers / Aircraft Engineers
- GCHQ roles in Lincolnshire

[26] Annex D: Pages 125-126
[27] Annex D: Pages 128-132

Key operational roles

- Cybersecurity Engineers
- IT/Software Engineers (Mid-Senior, esp. C programmers)
- Data Scientists / Data Analysts
- Logistics / Drivers / Fuel & Ops Support
- Health & Safety Professionals
- Military Doctors and Medics
- Language Specialists
- Project Managers

Support and contracted roles

- Governance / Compliance / Auditors
- Infrastructure / Estates / Facilities Specialists
- Welfare Officers / Community Support Roles
- Chefs & Catering Staff
- Hospitality / Accommodation / Hotel Management
- Cleaning / Real Life Support Roles

General needs

- Security-cleared personnel (RAF)
- Some roles and employers are required to employ UK nationals only
- STEM & Technical Graduates

New and Emerging Skill Shortage Roles - Next 3 years

- Space-related Engineering / Space Domain Roles
- AI ethics and coaching roles

Table of Priority SOC codes - Defence

Occupation (SOC code)	Employees in employment in this sector (Greater Lincolnshire)	Projected change in demand 2024-34 (Greater Lincolnshire)	Is it a Skills England 'high growth' occupation?
Cyber Security Professionals (2135)	56	-3%	Yes
Aerospace Engineers (2126)	59	-4%	Yes
Programmers and Software Development Professionals (2134)	333	-5%	Yes
Information Technology Professionals n.e.c. (2139)	209	-5%	Yes

Business and Financial Project Management Professionals (2440)	184	-1%	Yes
IT Business Analysts, Architects and Systems Designers (2133)	143	-5%	Yes
Mechanical Engineers (2122)	130	-5%	Yes
IT User Support Technicians (3132)	95	-4%	Yes
Engineering Technicians (3113)	88	-2%	Yes
Electrical Engineers (2123)	81	2%	Yes

Defence Skills Needs: Existing Workforce

- High-spec fabrication skills
- Digital & systems integration skills
- AI Awareness+ (beyond basic awareness)
- Cyber-security
- Expertise in designing, testing and integrating large defence platforms
- Logistics planning
- Supply-chain risk management
- Expertise in geospatial and signals intelligence
- Green/Net-Zero awareness and understanding
- Energy resilience planning and management skills
- Emerging platform knowledge, e.g. regarding quantum, autonomy and electronic warfare support
- Project leadership and managing people
- Export market knowledge

Defence Skills Needs: Priority Occupations by Level

Level	**Occupation**
L2 Trades	Welders and coded welders
L3 Craft / Technician	Engineering technicians Maintenance fitters and electricians Machinists and setter/machinists Fabricator/welders
	IT user support technicians

L4-5 Higher technical, supervisors etc	Cyber security (all three levels) IT business analysts, systems architects/designers Data scientists Project managers
L6-7 Professionals and management	IT professionals Programmers and software developers (L4-6)
	Mechanical engineers Electrical engineers
	Aerospace engineers Military doctors

Defence Sector Post-16 Provision Opportunity Summary Comments

16-18

- Maintenance Engineering T Level
- Aircraft Maintenance L3 diploma at Lincoln College's (Defence TEC) Newark Air & Space Institute Campus

Apprenticeships

- Note 62 L3 Engineering Fitter starts by Siemens – this is likely to be energy or offshore. Siemens is an employer provider training its own staff
- See cross-sector comments re: Electricians and Welding

19+

- Notable evidence on aerospace but some cybersecurity (led by Lincoln College Group).
- 286 starts in a L2 diploma in Performing Manufacturing Operations by DN Colleges – a pre-employment training for an employer

Energy Industries Skills Needs

Greater Lincolnshire sits at the centre of one of the UK's most strategically important energy clusters, closely linked to the Humber energy landscape. The Greater Lincolnshire contributions to the sector is recognised nationally as a key growth engine for clean energy and Net Zero Strategy[28] delivery. Locally, it is valued at £1.46bn of GVA to the Greater Lincolnshire economy.

Mainly but not exclusively focused around North East Lincolnshire, the area's strengths span offshore wind, renewables, low carbon fuels (hydrogen), solar, grid infrastructure,

[28] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/net-zero-strategy

and intensive industrial decarbonisation technologies, supported by major ports, established industrial sites, and a strong engineering workforce. With a nationally significant project underway to redevelop the former West Burton Power Station on the edge of West Lindsey district into the STEP Fusion nuclear plant, the sector will not only require high-level nuclear skills in the future but will trigger large demand for construction engineering, project management and hospitality skills in the short and medium term.

The National Clean Energy Jobs Plan[29] projects a 10% annual job growth to 2030. That demand is forecast to rise strongest in construction (key trades for retrofit), electrical and engineering (especially welding, professional engineers and metal working) as well as professional/business services to support the scale of delivery. Beyond 2030 to 2040, the energy and low-carbon economy in Greater Lincolnshire and the Humber is set to support 32,000 jobs, with offshore wind forming the largest single employment base within the sector. The Humber region is already home to the world's largest offshore wind cluster, with eight operational offshore wind farms and associated onshore operations, maintenance and supply-chain activity centred around Grimsby, Immingham and the South Humber Bank.

The Humber is currently undergoing the UK's largest industrial decarbonisation project[30] as the region emits more carbon dioxide into the atmosphere than any other area - 30% more than the next largest industrial cluster[31]. This presents enormous economic and environmental opportunity for Greater Lincolnshire's share of the Humber given the "significant surgent in demand" for skilled labour, according to the 2021 Humber Industrial Cluster Plan Skills Analysis[32] and its workers and learners. This is an especially opportunity-fuelled sector for younger workers, as employers here have already attracted a significant proportion of workers under 30[33].

National announcements have identified Greater Lincolnshire as one of a small number of UK priority regions for clean energy workforce growth, with explicit reference to offshore wind, nuclear and solar employment pipelines. The UK Government, via the Office for Clean Energy Jobs within the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) has recently concluded (March 2026) Phase 2 of a Regional Skills Pilot for North and North East Lincolnshire[34] as part of the Clean Energy Jobs Plan[35], supporting workers to move into clean energy jobs. Focus was placed on Level 2 to 5 training in key

[29] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/clean-energy-jobs-plan/clean-energy-jobs-plan-html
[30] HICP - The Largest CO2 Emitting Cluster in the UK
[31] THE HUMBER OFFSHORE WIND CLUSTER PROSPECTUS, Page 3
[32] Humber Industrial Cluster Plan: Skills Analysis & Engineering Construction Opportunities, Page 4
[33] 2024 ECITB Workforce Census
[34] Regional Skills Pilot – North & North East Lincolnshire
[35] Clean energy jobs plan - GOV.UK

industry skills including retrofit, renewables, Solar PV, Hydrogen, ESG and energy efficiency in older buildings.

Table of Priority SIC codes – Energy Industries

Industry (SIC code)	TOTAL EMPLOYEES 2024	PROJECTED 2024-34 % CHANGE	Employment Concentration (GB = 1.00)	GVA
Electrical Installation (4321)	3260	-12%	1.03	£220m
Production of Electricity (3511)	1050	+23%	2.87	£399m
Distribution of Electricity (3513)	393	-1%	0.64	£185m
Distribution of Gas through mains (3522)	252	+29%	1.14	£98m
Support Activities for Petroleum and Natural Gas Extraction (910)	63	+43%	0.59	£1.3m
Extraction of Crude Petroleum (610)	33	+35%	0.27	£484m
Trade of Electricity (3514)	22	+55%	0.17	£4.8m
Transport via Pipeline (4950)	22	+21%	0.66	£2.5m
Extraction of Natural Gas (620)	10	+35%	0.28	£59m

Summary of LSIP Primary Research

Energy Industries are strategically important to Greater Lincolnshire's economic resilience and decarbonisation ambitions. Employers report sustained demand for electrical, mechanical, systems maintenance and technical assurance skills with key

projects underpinned by strong construction engineering skills, with shortages driven by expansion, cross- and inter-sector competition and replacement demand.

Difficulties are most acute in roles requiring experience of regulated and safety-critical environments. Employers highlight some misalignment between training pace and evolving technologies but are encouraged by the expansion of specialist sites such as CATCH in Stallingborough. Overall employers are calling to play a stronger role in training collaboration, better standardisation of delivery and a shared training infrastructure. There is also a clear desire from employers to see training frontloaded ahead of demand; a "pre-final investment decision" approach where possible due to long planning and development timescales.

Employers voiced a wide range of reasons and drivers for current skills shortages which can be reduced down to three headline issues - long lead times, immense scale and the urgency of requirements. Breaking those challenges down, employers frequently referenced[36]:

- An ageing workforce in engineering is thought to mean needing to recruit 2,000 new entrants a year across the local sector just to replace exiting those roles
- Severe shortages reported across key occupations– welders, pipe fitters, electricians, mechanical fitters, instrumentation technicians, riggers and lifting specialists
- Major skills bottlenecks in hydrogen, CCUS, offshore wind and fusion – demand in all these areas is expected to grow further in future but supply is not keeping pace
- Very long project lead times that are reliant upon planning consent being granted:
- Rapid growth in offshore wind in the UK drives a very general need: *"We're going from 35,000 in the industry now…to 100,000 by 2030. So, we need more of everyone."*
- Generating new energy sources from new processing operations does not have an existing resourcing model to follow: This can put the focus on importing some transferable skills from near neighbour sectors including oil, gas, nuclear and defence. This in turn generates a need for transition training. The desire to transition is likely to be very age dependent, with those in their 20s, 30s much more inclined than individuals in their 50s.
- Urgent requirements for very high volumes in a particular trade, for a very short, contracted period on huge projects.
- The scale of projects can produce waves of demand or suddenly boost supply if one or two projects are either put on hold or declined.

[36] Annex D: Pages 174-175

- Fluctuations in major projects can create short term scarcity in Senior Managers with the relevant experience and competence. Concerns were also expressed regarding a gulf in quality and capability between Gen Y Millennials (born 1981-96) and Gen Z (born 1997-2012) leaders.
- A view was expressed that the High Marnham hydrogen production plant near the Trent had struggled with skill shortages.
- The sector continues to suffer from diversity challenges both in relation to females and ethnic minorities.
- The Energy Sector can sometimes be in direct local competition with the Marine and Ports & Logistics Sectors for the same skills, which can amplify scarcity.
- Providers to the sector habitually struggle to recruit from the industry, due to pay differentials to tutoring and a lack of clear pathways for workers to become dual professionals. Fears were voiced by employers that one of the bottlenecks to future training provision, will be the "teacher-tutor element".

Focus Group participants stated these skills shortages that they find are recently and/or currently the most difficult to recruit[37]:

- Electrical Design Engineers
- Advanced Control Specialists
- Instrumentation Design Technicians
- Rigging Specialists

Each are quite specific roles, not high volume (circa 24 in a large organisation) but hard to fill and in high demand, particularly around the storage and delivery of clean energy. Annex B has identified the key priority roles with relevant SOC codes, but it is worth highlighting all roles that employers have stated as cause for concern in terms of supply.

High Demand Roles

- Welders (particularly in relation to transport and storage)
- Pipe fitters
- Mechanical fitters
- Platers
- Electricians

Offshore Wind

- High Voltage Electricians
- Senior Authorised Persons (SAP)

Wider Workforce

[37] Annex D: Pages 177-178

- Business Development Managers (BDMs): Who have both the relevant energy user contacts but also an extensive understanding of newer clean energy sources and processes
- Data Analysis and Digital specialists
- IT professionals

When looking at future roles, given the expected huge expansion, demand and changing nature of roles, the following occupations with desirable specialist knowledge which are likely to become hard to recruit over the next three years[38]:

- Plasma Physics
- Fusion Engineering
- Magnet Science
- Superconducting Engineering
- Clean Energy Plant Operations
- Commissioning
- Project Management in technically complex settings, incorporating a knowledge of engineering, fusion, commercial and procurement.

Table of Priority SOC codes - Energy Industries

Occupation (SOC code)	Employees in sector (Greater Lincs)	Projected change in demand 2024-34 (Greater Lincs)	Is it a Skills England 'high growth' occupation?
Electricians and Electrical Fitters	2762	-30	Yes
Engineering Technicians	1166	+27	Yes
Science, Engineering and Production Technicians n.e.c.	943	+36	Yes
Mechanical Engineers	757	19	Yes
Environment Professionals	701	16	Yes

[38] Annex D: Page 179

Production and Process Engineers	601	-1	Yes
Electrical Engineers	595	13	Yes
Plant and Machine Operatives n.e.c.	543	17	No
Chemical and Related Process Operatives	489	9	Yes

Energy Industries Skills Needs: Existing Workforce

- AI integration
- Confidence and competence in using technology
- Reducing the time period between arrival as a new graduate entrant to the business and truly productive working: thought to average around two to three years at the moment
- Leadership skills
- Communication skills across all uses face-to-face, verbal, written, presentation, etc
- Problem solving skills
- Specialised skills in renewable technologies
- Carbon Capture & Storage (CCS) systems knowledge
- High-voltage specialism and power systems design
- Hydrogen production expertise
- Safety management expertise
- Advanced data analytics
- Digitisation
- Specialised skills in renewable technologies
- Carbon Capture & Storage (CCS) systems knowledge
- High-voltage specialism and power systems design
- Hydrogen production expertise
- Safety management expertise
- Advanced data analytics
- Digitisation

Energy Industries Skills Needs: Priority Occupations by Level

Level	Occupation

L2 Trades	Welders
L3 Craft / Technician	Installation and maintenance electricians
	Pipe welders
	Plate welders
	Engineering fitters
	Power industry fitters
	Engineering construction riggers
L4/5 Higher Technical	Electrical engineers
	Data analysts
L6/7 Professions	Electro-mechanical engineers
	Power engineers

Energy Industries Sector Post-16 Provision Opportunity Summary Comments

16-18

- Notable that HETA delivers full-time FE, fairly rare to see an ITP in this market
- Largest volume is in L3 Cambridge Technical Diploma at Franklin College. There is potential here to expand capacity to deliver T Levels

Apprenticeships

- See cross-sector commentary regarding welding, electricians and fitters

19+

- See Advanced Manufacturing and Defence

Advanced Manufacturing Skills Needs

Advanced Manufacturing businesses in Greater Lincolnshire employ a total of 39,497 people, generating a total annual GVA of £2.75bn in the area. In total, the sector workforce is projected to increase by 10% from 2020 to 2034.

The sector spans advanced engineering, food and drink manufacturing, steel production, automation, robotics, and digital manufacturing. The geography benefits from:

- A large, established manufacturing base with a significant British Steel production plant in Scunthorpe
- Strong links to energy, agri-food and defence supply chains creating a strong emphasis on the area's critical role in securing and building national food, energy, material and military security
- Proximity to ports and logistics hubs (Immingham, Grimsby, South Humber Bank, Boston)
- A growing focus on digitalisation, automation and low-carbon production

Anchored by major industrial clusters and a nationally important manufacturing base, the sector is undergoing rapid transformation driven by automation, digital manufacturing and the transition to low-carbon production. Sustained replacement demand, combined with new skills requirements in engineering, digital systems and process optimisation, positions advanced manufacturing as a priority growth and skills investment area for the region over the next decade. The flagship British Steel plant and its 2,700 workers also faced threats to its future sustainability after Chinese conglomerate owner Jingye Group began moves to close the site in 2025 (the UK Government has since intervened however full nationalisation of the plant has yet to be completed or confirmed). For smaller enterprise employers, their threats are different. They report not only growing challenge in driving employees into the sector but a critical need for workers arrive into roles well trained in traditional and foundational manufacturing tooling capabilities.

Given the sector's value to the county, Advanced Manufacturing has a specialist business support programme - the GLEAM Network (Greater Lincolnshire Engineering and Manufacturing Network)[39] - which is based at The Bridge at the University of Lincoln. The Made Smarter programme (part of a wider East Midlands initiative) is also in place to support micro, small and medium sized manufacturing and engineering businesses who have manufacturing premises in Lincolnshire[40]. This aids qualifying businesses to implement 'Industrial Digital Technologies' (IDTs) to solve productivity and competitiveness issues and deliver a measurable return on investment, highlighting the importance of SMEs in the sector as well as dominating large businesses to the local economy and their capacity to innovate.

According to MakeUK, the three main priorities for Greater Lincolnshire's manufacturing sector are[41]:

- Support the ever-growing industrial diversification of the region through policies which allow the transformation of the manufacturing sector to take advantage of

[39] https://www.lincoln.ac.uk/servicesforbusiness/whoweworkwith/gleam-network/
[40] https://www.businesslincolnshire.com/grants/made-smarter-adoption-programme/
[41] https://www.makeuk.org/docs/greater-lincolnshire-factcard-2025pdf/download?attachment

the vibrant new and emerging industries throughout the East Midlands, embracing Net Zero, digitalisation and upskilling employees.

- Upgrade transportation networks such as roads and public transit by utilising local industry to deliver this.
- Support manufacturers in the region to deliver the jobs of the future through the development of regional skills programmes and incentivise employers

Table of Priority SIC codes – Advanced Manufacturing

Industry (SIC code)	TOTAL EMPLOYEES 2024	PROJECTED 2020-34 % CHANGE	Employment Concentration (GB = 1.00)	GVA
Manufacture of Rubber and Plastic Products (22)	4659	+24%	2.25	£160m
Manufacture of Fabricated Metal Products, Except Machinery and Equipment (25)	4645	+27%	1.25	£382m
Manufacture of Basic Metals (24)	4046	+34%	4.12	£178m
Manufacture of Machinery & Equipment n.e.c. (28)	2901	-42%	1.32	£260m
Manufacture of Motor Vehicles, Trailers and Semi-trailers (29)	2151	51%	1.2	£53m
Manufacture of Chemicals & Chemical Products (20)	1887	2%	1.31	£144m
Manufacture of Paper and Paper Products (17)	1727	-16%	2.74	£95m
Repair and Installation of Machinery and Equipment (33)	1580	-49%	0.92	£138m
Manufacture of Coke and Refined Petroleum Products (33)	1407	40%	11.15	£528m

Summary of LSIP Primary Research

Advanced Manufacturing employers say they face long-standing recruitment and retention challenges across engineering, machining, automation and maintenance roles.

Employer engagement highlights persistent vacancies linked to ageing workforces and increasing technical complexity.

Skills gaps are most pronounced where roles require multi-disciplinary capability across mechanical, electrical and digital fields. Employers report many applicants lack work-ready competences among course graduates which when set against the volume of workers and GVA of the sector, show urgent need for change.

When discussing skills shortages, employers voiced a wide range of drivers that require attention[42].

- Perceptions of the sector - low awareness, poor image and signposting to the occupations
- The mindset and attitudes of new entrants
- Implications for the sector – reduction in portable technical skills and unexpected gaps in training
- Apparently long-standing issues in the calibre of candidates, shortall of apprenticeship places and occasional breakdown in the relationship between employers and training institutions

Focus Group participants stated the skills shortages they find recently and/or currently the most difficult to recruit[43]:

- Senior Engineering Technicians and Professionals: Losing one very experienced manager can mean having to find two-three people to replace them, as they have acquired multiple skills, encompassing three or four jobs, over a long career
- Their future successors as Business Owners and Leaders, particularly in Micro enterprises.
- Instrumentation and Control (I&C) Engineers: with the appropriate professional certificates and/or specialised diplomas (HNC/Level 3).
- Electronic Engineers: Who can repair and fix devices down to a component level. NB This role is distinct from more general electricians.

By a distance, Engineering Technicians (39%) have most widely been difficult to recruit over the last 12 months, followed by Engineering Professionals (27%)[44]. Engineering Professionals is also set to be the difficult to recruit over the next three years[45].

[42] Annex D: Pages 50-53
[43] Annex D: Page 54
[44] Annex D: Page 57
[45] Annex D: Page 58

Looking forward, employers say there is a tight range of occupational shortages they expect to remain or become harder to recruit over the coming three years, which correlate closely with other Theme 1 sectors[46]:

- AI, Robotics and Automation
- Engineering Professionals
- Engineering Technicians
- Mechanical Engineers
- Metal Machining Setters and Setter-operators
- Metal Working Machine Operatives
- Metal Working Production and Maintenance Fitters
- Production Managers and Directors in Manufacturing
- Production, Factory and Assembly Supervisors

Table of Priority SOC codes: Advanced Manufacturing

Occupation (SOC code)	Employees in employment in this sector (Greater Lincolnshire)	New vacancy adverts posted (12 months) in Greater Lincolnshire	Projected change in demand 2024-34 (Greater Lincolnshire)	Is it a Skills England 'high growth' occupation ?
Metal Working Production and Maintenance Fitters	1,500	0	3%	Yes
Metal Machining Setters and Setter-operators	810	474	5%	Yes
Welding Trades	680	309	2%	Yes
Engineering Technicians	448	977	5%	Yes
Mechanical Engineers	374	1059	3%	Yes
Production and Process Engineers	361	537	0%	Yes
Planning, Process and Production Technicians	316	47	5%	Yes
CAD, Drawing & Architectural Technicians	258	180	4%	Yes
Chemical Scientists	209	23	10%	Yes
Laboratory Technicians	161	102	7%	Yes

[46] Annex D: Pages 55-56

Electrical Engineers	158	426	3%	Yes
Science, Engineering & Production Technicians n.e.c.	135	262	7%	Yes

Advanced Manufacturing Skills Needs: Existing Workforce

- In some geographies, the technical fundamentals were felt to be missing at entry level: "*The students come out today and they don't even know, like, why a bolt is a bolt and a screw is a screw. They don't know why you should use this type of file. They don't know why you should…centre drill a hole first. It's really basic stuff.*"
- There was a feeling that advanced Health & Safety content or Continuous Improvement principles like Kaizen were being focused on too much to the detriment of practical, fundamental skills that sit at the heart of entry level roles
- Duplicating supplier training to contain cost and maximise autonomy and control: Once a technological kit supplier (e.g. FANUC robot) has delivered specialist training on the equipment, employers may then need to replicate this training in-house as the number of employees required to know how to use or maintain the kit grows. Employers end up identifying their own trainers and teaching resources on the kit
- Systems integration skills for Software Engineers are hard to find, hard to build up and hard to keep updated
- Communication and interpersonal skills of younger, less experienced staff and new entrants were highlighted:
- Gaps in range of "scientific" understanding issues e.g. metallurgy, materials, process science). "*No Level 3 scientific/technical FE offer in North Lincolnshire*"?
- Multi-skilling of engineers
- Ability to use automation systems (PLC/HMI)
- Integrating digital tools into manufacturing processes
- Harnessing AI and Machine Learning
- Programming, maintaining and re-configuring industrial robotics
- Flexible problem-solving
- Systems Thinking
- People Management was referenced as an emerging need (Theme 5)

Advanced Manufacturing Skills Needs: Priority Occupations by Level

Level	Occupation
L2 Trades	Welders and coded welders
L3 Craft / Technician	Metal working production and maintenance fitters Engineering technicians Lab techs Vehicle/plant maintenance technicians
	Installation and maintenance electricians CNC programmers Machinists and setter/machinists Fabricator welders CAD technicians Furniture makers and craft woodworkers
L4-5 Higher technical, supervisors etc	Planning, processing and production techs (higher level) Sales and procurement Senior engineering technicians Production managers
L6-7 Professionals and management	Engineering professional (multi-skilled)
	Mechanical engineers Electrical engineers
	Production and process engineers Chemical scientists

Advanced Manufacturing Sector Post-16 Provision Opportunity Summary Comments

16-18

- L3 diploma volumes appear high relative to T Level start volumes
- No Lincoln College T Level. Other T Level volumes at colleges look modest – potentially just one cohort each

Apprenticeships

- Potential for HETA / HCF Catch / DN Colleges regarding welding, plating, pipe fitting expansion
- HETA - 148 L3 Maintenance and Operations Technician starts (data is assigned to construction, but should be in advanced manufacturing)
- HCF Catch – 102 starts in L3 Science Manufacturing Technician.
- Good range of delivery also by Lincoln College

- Possible lack of L3 Installation/Maintenance Electrician in North Lincolnshire which points to an opportunities for TEC Partnership and/or DN Colleges Group as current volumes are low. It is likely most delivery of this Apprenticeship is into construction and not industry.
- Nine L6 Nuclear Scientist/Engineer apprenticeship starts by University Centre Somerset, which is notable

19+

- HNC/HND at L4/5 remains more substantial than Apprenticeship starts at those levels
- Substantial 19+ provision at DN Colleges Group

Agri-tech, Farming and Food Manufacturing Skills Needs

The Agri-tech, Farming and Food Manufacturing (sometimes listed as Agri-Food) sector covers establishments that employ a total over 75,000 people[47], with the Agri-tech element generating a total annual GVA of £2.1bn in Greater Lincolnshire alone.

From the fisheries and factories along the South Humber Bank to the low fields, processing sites and logistics hubs in South Lincolnshire, the county is home to 25% of grade 1 arable land[48] and one eighth of England's food production[49], Greater Lincolnshire is the epicentre of the UK's wider £254bn agri-food sector. There are key clusters and concentrations across produce, meat, fishing and seafood, manufacturing, processing, automation, logistics and distribution spread across the area, represented by large national chains and SMEs.

Understandably, given the dominance of the sector here, the UK Food Valley[50] is based in Greater Lincolnshire. This initiative was established to support food security, productivity, research, funding and innovation with a heavy focus on sustainability, good business support and acting as an influential voice in policy development. The associated Ag Zone agri-tech cluster is anchored by the Lincoln Institute for Agri-Food Technology (LIAT), Barclays Eagle Lab and farm partners[51] and specialises in growing the sector and supporting the growth of a UK agri-tech, robotics, AI, and sustainable farming cluster.

The National Centre for Food Manufacturing (NCFM) is also based in the area, at Holbeach in the south of the county. As a campus of the University of Lincoln, the centre

[47] Agriculture & Agri-tech - 2aspire
[48] Greater Lincolnshire UK Agrifood Investment Opportunity Brochure
[49] Home | UK Food Valley
[50] Home | UK Food Valley
[51] Ag Zone | UK Food Valley

aims to lead progress and development across the food sector, offering study options for food industry employees, Apprenticeships, distance learning, lab and testing resources, research opportunities and industry partnerships[52]. Other Specialist land-based, agri, farming and food training establishments based in the county include the Lincoln Institute for Agri-Food Technology (LIAT) just outside Lincoln and Riseholme College (not to be confused with the University's nearby Riseholme Campus), part of the Bishop Burton College group. Boston College, DN Colleges Group, Lincoln College also deliver Devolution-funded agri-food training[53].

When looking at local agriculture alone, the sector is recorded as much more dependent on casual workers and regular full-time workers as part of its workforce than national comparators[54]. Seasonal work patterns and a high reliance on migrant labour (up to 90% of non-UK nationals accounted for seasonal harvest work in 2020)[55] creates a complex set of labour factors.

In total, the Agri Food sector workforce is projected to reduce by 14% between 2020 and 2034. though much of that reduction appears to have already taken place. This points to a stable and critical workforce but one that requires a healthy pipeline of workers to remain sustainable.

Table of Priority SIC codes - Agri-tech, Farming and Food Manufacturing

Industry (SIC code)	TOTAL EMPLOYEES	PROJECTED 2020-34 % CHANGE	Employment Concentration (GB = 1.00)	GVA
Growing of Crops, Market Gardening, Horticulture; Farming of Animals (1A10)	6929	-5%	2.59 (159% above average)	£1,124m
Processing and Preserving of Poultry Meat (1012)	4624	+25%	11.17	£138m
Other Processing & Preserving of Fruit & Veg (1039)	3739	-7%	13.54	£122m
Processing and Preserving of Fish, Crustaceans and Molluscs (1020)	3237	-39%	16.02	£138m

[52] National Centre for Food Manufacturing | University of Lincoln
[53] College to benefit from Devolution grants to build skills training infrastructure in agrifood - Latest news from Boston, Lincolnshire
[54] https://lincolnshire.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s57979/Appendix%20B%20-%20Agriculture%20Across%20Lincolnshire-%20Evidence%20Considered.pdf
[55] https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/8358/pdf/

Manufacture of Prepared Meals & Dishes (1085)	3049	-19%	7.79	£81m
Manufacture of Other Food Products n.e.c. (1089)	2305	111%	4.5	£90m
Manufacture of Bread; Manufacture of Fresh Pastry Goods and Cakes (1071)	1303	-6%	1.19	£59m
Production of Meat and Poultry Meat Products (1013)	1217	-42%	2.86	£67m
Processing and Preserving of Meat (1011)	749	-76%	2.19	£47m
Processing & Preserving of Potatoes (1031)	740	-29%	6.15	£34m

Summary of LSIP Primary Research

Agri-tech, Farming and Food Manufacturing remain core pillars of Greater Lincolnshire's economy. Skills demands span production, processing, engineering (technicians), quality assurance, logistics, management and more traditional but changing agricultural skills. Employer evidence shows that automation, environmental regulation and data-enabled production have significantly altered skill requirements within existing roles.

Employers report shortages in multi-skilled technical workers able to operate, maintain and optimise automated systems, alongside growing need for supervisory and compliance capability. Rural geography, low pay at entry level and limited progression visibility exacerbate recruitment challenges.

During two focus groups held in key Food Valley locations – Grimsby and Holbeach – employers voiced a range of sector profile and workforce challenges, as well as the underlying drivers of the skills shortages they face[56]:

- A perceived declining education and training pipeline: Employers believe that universities and colleges have reduced specialist provision (e.g., food science,

[56] Annex D: Pages 70-75

technical placements, agriculture), shrinking the talent pipeline. Courses that once fed directly into the sector have disappeared or become too expensive.

- Low awareness and misconceptions of the sector: Young people are believed to have little understanding of agri-tech, farming or food manufacturing careers. Many see these as low-skilled or unattractive, despite strong salary and progression potential. Similarly, retaining young talent is also a challenge. Young employees often seek flexibility, faster career progression, and work that feels meaningful.
- Rising skill requirements but unchanged perceptions: Roles that were once seen as "basic" have become highly technical, requiring digital, mechanical, animal welfare, and analytical capability but the labour market still views them as low-skilled.
- Ageing workforce and loss of heritage skills: Large proportions of skilled workers are nearing retirement, and there is limited succession planning. Losing these individuals means losing decades of tacit knowledge.
- Competition from other higher-paying sectors: Engineering and technical talent is being attracted into energy, renewables, offshore work, defence, robotics and other advanced manufacturing sectors.
- Limited industry and education coordination: Disconnects between universities, colleges and employers mean curricula don't reflect industry needs; research and innovation often fail to reach farms or factories
- High costs of recruitment, training and wage pressures: Rising minimum wages and National Insurance contributions increase the cost of hiring and training, especially for SMEs and start-ups.
- Rapid pace of technological change: AI, automation, robotics and digitalisation require skills that many businesses (and workers) don't yet have. Employers know they need new skills but often can't articulate exactly what they are.

Agriculture and Fishing Trades make up 50% of the most stated type of role that has been most difficult to recruit within the last 12 months[57]. Other current skills shortages reported by sector employers include[58]:

- Pig livestock roles: Stock persons are increasingly required to possess technical capabilities (medicines, antibiotics, welfare, feed systems, trials); calibre and expectations are misaligned with traditional perceptions. These businesses typically employ a small workforce, but one that has high skill intensity; succession risk for senior technical managers with 30+ years' experience.
- General agricultural roles: Requiring understanding of mixed crop and livestock operations, technical livestock management and high-level welfare and

[57] Annex D: Page 84
[58] Annex D: Pages 76-79

veterinary-adjacent competence. 30% of survey respondents said "Farm Workers" was the most widely anticipated role that will become harder to source[59].

- Engineering: the sector generally struggles due to ageing engineering workforce and competition from the Energy Industries for talent. Specific roles include maintenance engineers, manufacturing/automation engineers and food processing engineers.
- AI/software/tech roles for agri-tech: For smaller and early-stage agri-tech businesses AI engineers, software developers (front and back end), applied AI/data roles on-farm systems are difficult to find. There's a very limited local talent pool, candidates lack work readiness and start-ups cannot compete on salary.
- Seafood technical functions: Quality assurance, technical managers and new product development (NPD) are hardest to recruit, these are critical roles with limited university pipeline due to a decline in food science and food technology courses plus low awareness among young people.
- Operational roles: Lower-skilled roles are fillable and easy to recruit at entry level however progressing workers up to supervisor/manager level is harder. There's a lack of clear development pathways for internal progression and pay uplifts are reported as sometimes minimal when compared with the additional responsibilities.

Looking to the near future, employers state there are a range of technical, functional and heritage skills they believe will become much harder to recruit[60]:

- AI, automation and digital roles: The sector is moving quickly towards AI-enabled production, automation of equipment and processes, digital twins and robotics in farming and manufacturing. However, it's not yet determinable exactly what these roles are or look like, only that they are on the horizon. It does mean new job categories will exists such as AI/Automation operatives, digital equipment technicians, machine optimisation operatives and on-factory digital and data support roles. These are expected to be essential for keeping new automated equipment running and for interpreting AI-generated outputs.
- Broader AI literacy and digital skills across the workforce: Even where new job titles don't yet exist, AI competence, basic programming logic and data interpretation skills will be required across multiple job families. The challenge is that schools and colleges currently do not provide sufficient exposure, and young people cannot see the career pathways. This will widen the gap further.

[59] Annex D: Page 88
[60] Annex D: Pages 80-82

- Heritage skills: Roles such as fish filleting and hand-skill craft roles, whilst not new are expected to become even harder to recruit for. Fish filleting for example is a high skilled manual craft trade that younger generations are not entering, smaller companies rely on heavily and cannot be auto effectively unless within a very large business. It's a financially rewarding role but not well known or promoted.
- Robotics-enabled agricultural roles: As robotics adoption accelerates (e.g. autonomous machinery, precision systems), the future workforce will need skills in robot operation, sensor and machine learning interpretation and digital/remote farm management. Roles that are likely to be difficult to recruit to are robotics farm technicians, precision agriculture operatives and digital livestock system operators.
- A new occupation - Aquaculture: Anticipated skills demand for planned on-land salmon farming in Grimsby within two years. Local skills/providers currently lacking (expertise exists in Shetlands and similar regions) but this is an up-and-coming need.

Employers articulated a series of barriers to training across their workforce[61]. As expected, the issue of funding was most commonly cited; uncertain, short-term funding streams, unclear future cycles that hinder planning, and the absence of support for higher-level qualifications such as Level 4 Food Safety. However, participants did comment the value of Skills Bootcamps which have increased accessibility and affordability of specialist programmes. Speciality agri, farming and food training in AI and data is also believed to be an issue with a perceived gap between what City & Guilds and Lantra currently offer nationally. Employers also believe that FE and HE providers struggle to keep pace with rapid developments in AI, however this is a running theme across the sectors. There are positives to the local training profile[62] however, all recognised by employers with most of the notable examples from the North of the county. Improvements to local specialist engineering and technician provision through HETA, CATCH (due for major expansion) and NCFM (University of Lincoln) is a nationally recognised specialist provider and highly valued. The Future Seafood Leaders programme is also regarded as a major success and the Seafood Leadership Bootcamp has improved management and leadership pipeline development. Better provider-employer links was also commented on, with one example stated around Franklin College (Grimsby) being said to be more responsive and is building deeper connections with local industries.

[61] Annex D: Pages 94-95
[62] Annex D: Page 96

The sector's employers offered a tight set of priorities for improvements in local training provision and workforce development to build on the noted established successes[63]:

- Flexibility and responsiveness: Training that can respond quickly to emerging needs such as short courses, sector-led, modular, not restricted by apprenticeship frameworks. Less bureaucracy and greater agility in funding models (especially for urgent or niche training needs).
- AI, data, and digital upskilling for existing employees: Foundational data analysis training for current staff. Sector-specific AI/data application training (how to apply it on farms, in factories, with sensors, robotics, drones). Support for transitioning experienced workers into more digital roles.
- Addressing key gaps in accreditation: Reintroducing or replacing basic accredited animal welfare training (lost when City & Guilds withdrew). Ensuring higher-level food safety qualifications (e.g., Level 4) are available and funded.
- Workforce pipeline development: Continuing and expanding leadership pipelines (e.g., seafood model). Encouraging pride and career identity in technical/operator roles, not just managerial pathways.
- Employer-led collaboration: More industry clusters designing joint training (pig sector was specifically mentioned). Better sector-to-sector learning (e.g., farming learning from advanced dairy or international models).
- Improving alignment between providers and industry: Ensuring providers can contextualise delivery to real processes and equipment. Strengthening FE/HE capability in AI and digital which is currently behind pace.

Table of Priority SOC codes - Agri-tech, Farming and Food Manufacturing

Occupation (SOC code)	Employees in employment in this sector (Greater Lincolnshire)	New vacancy adverts posted (12 months) in Greater Lincolnshire	Projected change in demand 2024-34 (Greater Lincolnshire)	Is it a Skills England 'high growth' occupation ?
Farm Workers (9111)	1590	292	-3%	No
Butchers (5431)	1037	102	-11%	No
Farmers (5111)	680	92	-3%	No

[63] Annex D: Pages 97-98

Animal Care Services n.e.c. (6129)	373	137	-5%	No
Quality Assurance and Regulatory Professionals (2482)	325	228	-5%	No

Agri-tech, Farming and Food Manufacturing Skills Needs: Existing Workforce

Skills gaps match with those of other critical sectors, where transport barriers (cost of driving, owning and maintaining a car, public transport cold spots), data, digital and AI awareness, and exposure of the career pathways all prevent the desired take up and retention of roles in this sector. Some specific gaps stated by employers include[64]:

- Engineering skills: Particularly multi-skilled engineers with both electrical and mechanical expertise.
- Technical operator skills: Moving machine minders into more advanced technical operator roles that combine engineering knowledge, digital skills, and problem-solving.
- Refrigeration and energy engineering: Especially relevant in sectors with large cold-storage estates.
- Agriculture and food production technical competencies including understanding breeding and productivity technologies and using data to make decisions about livestock health, growth, and breeding sources.
- Food safety and compliance: There are gaps in food safety training including Levels 3 and 4, HACCP qualifications and understanding regulatory standard and digital traceability requirements.
- Advanced scientific skills: Food science, biological sciences, and product safety expertise; businesses struggle to recruit new entrants. Some of this is attributed to a lack of higher-level (Levels 6 to 8) technical programmes. While from a small base, employers believe that Universities (not just the local institutions) are not sufficiently engaged in offering vocational, applied programmes needed by the sector. Rather than a criticism, this is a clear opportunity for improvement and partnership.
- Transferrable skills: problem-solving and critical thinking, adaptability and learning agility: The workforce needs to adapt to rapid digitalization, new regulatory requirements and changing production methods. Employees who are trained for older systems struggle to transition, self-management and professionalism and communications and collaboration. These skills are necessary for cross-functional technical teams, apprenticeship providers,

[64] Annex D: Pages 87-91

businesses and universities who are working together and translation of data insights into operational decisions.

- ESOL provision non-UK workers who are vital to the sector, especially in South and East Lincolnshire

Agri-tech, Farming and Food Manufacturing Skills Needs: Priority Occupations by Level

Level	Occupation
L2 Trades	Butchers
	Farm workers
	Livestock trades
	Agricultural machine drivers (inc automated vehicles)
L3 Craft / Technician	Farmers
	Fishers
	Animal care
	Food & drink installation and maintenance engineers
	Engineering technicians
	Multi-skilled engineers
	Supervisors/team leaders
	Food safety technicians
L4-5 Higher technical, etc	Finance
	Food technologists
L6-7 Professions and management	Mech and electrical engineers
	Quality assurance/regulatory professionals

Agri-tech, Farming and Food Manufacturing Sector Post-16 Provision Opportunity Summary Comments

16-18

- Riseholme College is most prominent provider

- Other L2/L3 provision by colleges focused on animal care, typically 30-40 learning aim starts each

Apprenticeships

- Relatively limited offer given importance of the sector. Most is delivered by Riseholme College but their offer appears to cover five standards
- Vet nursing college at Market Rasen (Rase VY) supply to 16-18 leavers who studied animal care in College

19+

- Mainly supplied by Riseholme College but some areas of L4 Animal Management (Foundation Degree) and Animal Welfare (BSc top-up) by colleges too (Boston College, Lincoln College, DN College Group)

Note – data doesn't seem to include specific relating to food manufacturing

Priority Theme 2: FOUNDATIONS: Supporting Sector Skills Needs

Construction Skills Needs

Construction currently employs a total of 21,174 people, generating a total annual GVA of £1.83bn in Greater Lincolnshire. A cornerstone sector, Construction underpins housing delivery, transport connectivity, flood resilience, energy infrastructure and industrial growth. It plays a critical enabling role across priority sectors including key growth areas including Energy Industries, Advanced Manufacturing, Agri-food, Defence and Logistics, and is central to delivering local growth ambitions set out by the Greater Lincolnshire Combined County Authority (GLCCA).

The sector encompasses:

- Residential and commercial building
- Civil engineering and major infrastructure
- Energy-related and industrial Construction
- Repair, maintenance and retrofit in line with Net Zero goals
- Professional and technical Construction services

The sector is driven by sustained investment in transport, environmental projects, housing and energy-related infrastructure, including major schemes such as the Lincoln

Eastern Bypass[65], Humber Freeport[66], STEP Fusion plant at West Burton[67] and the Boston flood defence programme[68]. Statistics show that the Construction sector workforce is projected to decrease slightly by 8% from 2020 to 2034 however this is altered when exploring wider Construction Engineering roles and projects, which are set to substantially grow. Activity is expected to remain strong over the medium to long term, with persistent demand for skilled trades, civil engineering capability, site supervision and project management. Addressing workforce shortages and improving progression into skilled and supervisory roles is critical to delivering the region's wider economic and infrastructure ambitions.

The Greater Lincolnshire Combined County Authority's Devolution deal outlined an ambition to "unlock housing through enhanced infrastructure"[69]. This investment in building houses with increased support from Homes England, regeneration projects and pressing urgency for retrofitting skills all drive the need for a skilled Construction workforce within the county.

Like the rest of Greater Lincolnshire, the sector is dominated by SMEs and family firms but with a volume of self-employment and strong sub-contractor supply chains.

Table of Priority SIC Codes - Construction

Industry (SIC code)	TOTAL EMPLOYEES 2024	PROJECTED 2020-34 % CHANGE	Employment Concentration (GB = 1.00)	GVA
Construction of Residential and Non-residential Buildings (4120)	4,955	29%	0.98	£528m
Electrical Installation (4321)	3,183	-23%	1.13	£214m
Other Specialised Construction Activities n.e.c. (4399)	2,215	-10%	1.44	£138m
Plumbing, Heat and Air-conditioning Installation (4322)	2,168	-12%	1.01	£160m

[65] https://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/major-projects/lincoln-eastern-bypass
[66] https://humberfreeport.org/
[67] https://stepfusion.com/west-burton/
[68] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/boston-barrier-scheme/boston-barrier-scheme
[69] https://www.northlincs.gov.uk/site/documents/your-council/greater-lincolnshire-devolution-combined-county-authority-proposal/

Construction of Other Civil Engineering Projects n.e.c (4299)	1,568	-52%	0.97	£124m
Development of Building Projects (4110)	1,251	18%	0.74	£165m
Construction of Railways and Underground Railways (4212)	1,134	139%	4.88	£85m
Joinery Installation (4332)	994	-35%	1.08	£92m
Construction of Roads and Motorways (4211)	922	13%	1.36	£97m
Painting and Glazing (4334)	552	-54%	1	£43m

Summary of LSIP Primary Research

Although Construction is critical to Greater Lincolnshire's housing, infrastructure and growth pipeline, employers report persistent shortages across core trades, technical roles and site supervision. Skills pressure is driven by ageing workers, variable training throughput and challenges attracting new entrants. Gaps in site-readiness and health and safety competence are commonly cited as are frustrations about the volume of Apprentices who start but do not complete their formal training programmes.

Focus Group participants at a session in Sleaford explained their perspectives on the underlying issues causing skills shortages and retention issues. They include[70]:

- Irregular work and lack of security: Unpredictable scheduling in Construction makes many roles unattractive to potential recruits who want stability. Self-employment also makes income unpredictable. Labourer roles are the hardest to fill due to irregular work patterns and low motivation.
- Compliance burden and credential creep: Ever changing site induction requirements deter candidates and makes it difficult to ensure stable work.
- Generational differences and COVID impacts: Young workers entering the workforce post Covid often lack confidence, initiative and communication skills.

[70] Annex D: Pages 101-102

- Unrealistic pay expectations: Some new entrants overestimate their value compared to their actual skills, creating tension and recruitment difficulties. Employers say they believe this is fuelled by comparing themselves to social media content.
- Poor careers advice: Schools heavily promote academic routes and overlook vocational and Construction pathways.
- Lack of problem solving among new entrants: College training often focuses on idealised scenarios, leaving young workers unprepared for real world complexities.
- Rural access barriers: Limited access to nearby training centres and poor transport links mean many potential learners simply can't reach the courses available.

Where skills shortages have become more urgent in the past 12 months[71], employers say Labourers and Off Loaders, Line managers (especially in small firms), Estimators and quantity surveyors, Drivers, Heritage and traditional trades and Town planners have all become more difficult to recruit. Providers similarly voiced that Trainers, Assessors and College lecturers to train the next generation of Construction workers are also hard to source. Overall, Construction and Building Trades Supervisors (31%) is the skilled role that was difficult to recruit for more employers than any other, over the last 12 months[72]. Colleges say they struggle to hire trade lecturers because experienced tradespeople can earn significantly more by staying on site and in industry (Engineering and Advanced Manufacturing trades say the same). Lecturer salaries can't compete with industry wages, leaving providers unable to attract the skilled staff they need[73].

Casting ahead to the next three years, Employers think the following roles will become more difficult to recruit[74]:

- Groundworkers: Candidates expect rapid progression, avoiding manual work. Perception that "wet trades" are low status.
- Multi trade operatives: Small firms increasingly need flexible workers who can handle a range of tasks rather than single specialisms. Increasing demand for flexible workers. Small firms need staff who can work across multiple trades.
- Plant maintenance engineers: These hybrid roles fall between sectors and do not neatly align to Apprenticeship funding, restricting the talent pipeline. Current Apprenticeship funding rules exclude hybrid roles.
- Heritage trades: Demand for specialist heritage work remains high, while new entrants into these crafts are very limited.

[71] Annex D: Pages 102-105
[72] Annex D: Page 109
[73] Annex D: Page 104
[74] Annex D: Pages 106-107

- Ventilation, electrical and digital hybrid roles: The rapid growth of digital tools, automation and sustainability expectations are creating new skills gaps.
- Trainers and assessors: Without improving pay and recruitment routes, the shortages already experienced in FE provision are likely to worsen. This issue is expected to worsen as pay gaps widen.

This is a sector very well connected to training opportunities and obligations, with large accreditation attributed to the strong presence of the CITB locally and several large FE Colleges and Apprenticeship Providers active in the area. Employers here appear more aware of and informed about training programmes (funded or otherwise) and how to maximise the Growth & Skills Levy. Recent training investment examples offered by participants includes[75]:

- Management and leadership training in areas such as Level 5 management and leadership programmes and one-to-one coaching for new managers.
- Apprenticeships in Bricklaying and carpentry and trainee planners and University work-placement students.
- University-based employability sessions.
- Technical training: Mandatory training is delivered to meet on-site compliance requirements, this includes things such as health and safety, site readiness, manual handling, asbestos, confined space awareness, managerial awareness and other compliance modules.
- Development of on-the-job training and portfolios: Some organisations have implemented internal training structures to evidence learning and improve the practical readiness of workers.
- Digital skills and systems training: Not always done through formal routes and courses, companies have been training staff in digital tools due to client requirements. There was an emphasis on ongoing internal support for digital literacy as workloads increase.

Where barriers to training do exist, they are centred around the ongoing issue of sourcing experienced tutors in FE, overly academic courses and criticisms of “tick-box” over building competence[76]. The employers’ top priority for improvements to local training is a strong desire to get “more meaningful feedback”[77] from training providers, mostly for apprentices. Employers say there needs to be more detailed, contextualised feedback on apprentices’ progress. Current feedback is limited to numeric measures (1 – 4) with no explanation. The need is to understand what apprentices can do, evidence of their skills development and assessment of their performance in real-world contexts. The lack of practical knowledge among some college apprenticeship staff was

[75] Annex D: Pages 116-117
[76] Annex D: Page 119
[77] Annex D: Page 120

highlighted as a barrier to meaningful assessment. The businesses also wish to play a part in better integration between training providers and the employer community[78]. They wish to assist with hands-on, real-world learning opportunities and want the ability to visit providers and see Apprentices practising skills in safe environments (e.g., brickwork bays).

Table of Priority SOC codes – Construction

Occupation (SOC code)	Employees in sector (Greater Lincolnshire)	New vacancy adverts posted (12 months) in Greater Lincolnshire	Projected change in demand 2024-34 (Greater Lincolnshire)	Is it a Skills England 'high growth' occupation?
Electricians and Electrical Fitters (5241)	1,425	550	-9%	Yes
Plumbers and Heating and Ventilating Engineers (5315)	1,022	147	-11%	Yes
Carpenters and Joiners (5316)	811	421	-12%	Yes
Scaffolders, Stagers and Riggers (8151)	478	31	-8%	Yes
Civil Engineers (2121)	429	176	-5%	Yes
Bricklayers (5313)	343	5	3%	Yes
Quantity Surveyors (2453)	328	398	4%	Yes
Painters and Decorators (5323)	280	190	-23%	Yes

[78] Annex D: Page 122

Mobile Machine Drivers and Operatives n.e.c. (8229)	232	100	-3%	No
Roofers, Roof Tilers and Slaters (5314)	212	87	-8%	Yes
Glaziers, Window Fabricators and Fitters 5317)	177	30	-25%	Yes

Construction Skills Needs: Existing Workforce

- Retrofitting
- Net Zero awareness
- Estimating and commercial awareness
- Digital and AI including use of AutoCAD, Microsoft project
- Reading drawings and site plans
- Multi-trades for micro firms
- Supervisory development
- Regulatory including first aid, asbestos, abrasive wheels, confined spaces
- Understanding complex building codes, standards and regulations
- Initiative, problem-solving and independent thinking
- Essential and employability skills (communication, behaviour, initiative, problem solving, resilience, adaptability)

Construction Skills Needs: Priority Occupations by Level

Level	Occupation
L2 Trades	Carpenters and joiners
	Scaffolders Painters and decorators Mobile crane drivers Roofers Glaziers and window fitters Bricklayers Plasterers Civils trades (formworkers, steelfixers, concreters)

L3 Craft / Technician	Electricians Plumbers and heating engineers Plant maintenance engineers
	Trades supervisors Carpenters and joiners Heritage trades Mechanical fitters, welders, platers, pipefitters and project managers (for ECITB civils Humber/coast)
L4-5 Higher technical, supervisors etc	Quantity surveyors Project, contract and site managers
L6-7 Professionals and management	Civil engineers

Construction Sector Post-16 Provision Opportunity Summary Comments

16-18

- Only Inspire (Stamford College) and DN Colleges Group are showing T Level starts.
- Across the area there is a surprising lack of T Levels at other colleges because take-up of these has been very high elsewhere

Apprenticeships

- Lincoln College the most significant provider
- The offer at other providers seems narrow, though it could be the case that they have low volumes in wide range of standards and data hasn't picked this up
- See cross-sector comments in Advanced Manufacturing re: electricians
- No scaffolding or Chartered surveyor Apprenticeships are showing on the data
- Groundworker starts currently appear low

19+

- Aside from Carpentry, there doesn't appear to be 19+ delivery providing access to L2 trades (e.g. bricklaying, painting & decorating)

Visitor Economy Skills Needs

The Greater Lincolnshire Visitor Economy – which comprises tourism operators, accommodation providers, dining, pubs and bars, attractions, experiences, heritage destinations, environmental and outdoor pursuits, entertainment establishments and

arts centres – is currently valued at over £3bn per annum[79], which has risen 3.1% since 2023. The sector's workforce – already 35,504 people - is projected to grow by a further 8% to 2034. All of this considered, the sector is a significant player in the local economic profile. Businesses operate across seasonal and year-round models, with coastal tourism exhibiting pronounced seasonality, while hospitality, arts, sport and visitor attractions generate more continuous demand in urban and rural centres. This is despite ongoing challenges that the hospitality industry has been facing nationally since 2020 and the 2025 closure of the Destination Management Organisation (DMO) and Visitor Economic Partnership (LVEP) for the county, Destination Lincolnshire. Visit Lincolnshire[80], operated by Lincolnshire County Council has taken on the role to centralise and support growth of the sector. Visit Lincoln[81] (run by City of Lincoln Council) focuses on tourism to and within the City as well as promotion of year-round activities to local people.

The 50km of North Sea is home to the resorts of Cleethorpes, Skegness and Mablethorpe plus the inland City of Lincoln, Town of Stamford, village of Woodhall Spa and more rural escapes attracted over 32 million visitors to the county on 2024, staying for a combined 46 million days. As well as established and more traditional tourism offer, the county is adding "screen tourism" to its portfolio given the area's rising prominence as a varied and supported filming location[82].

The sector is characterised by a very high proportion of micro-businesses and SMEs, with relatively few large national or international operators in traditional tourism. County-level analysis identifies approximately 3,880 visitor economy businesses, excluding retail, rising significantly when retail and related services are included.[83] However, the county has accommodation and hospitality needs that sit outside of the tourism offer; high numbers of international guests training at RAF Cranwell for instance generate enough need to operate six hotels each year. Other significant events such as the extensive Graduation programmes at the University of Lincoln and Lincoln Bishop University create spikes in accommodation demand. Large annual events such as the Lincolnshire Show cause surges and it is also worth noting that significant infrastructure projects often require substantial and medium-term hospitality to house and support workers. Supply of beds and the skills to sustain current visitor economy need and future growth is an emerging challenge that needs to be better understood.

[79] https://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/news/article/2405/greater-lincolnshire-s-visitor-economy-exceeds-3bn-for-the-first-time
[80] https://www.visitlincolnshire.com/
[81] https://www.visitlincoln.com/
[82] https://www.locationlincs.com/filming-in-lincs
[83] https://lincolnshire.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s68502/Committee%20Report%20-%20Visitor%20Economy%20Report.pdf

Table of Priority SIC codes – Visitor Economy

Industry (SIC code)	TOTAL EMPLOYEES 2024	PROJECTED 2020-34 % CHANGE	Employment Concentration (GB = 1.00)	GVA
Restaurants and Mobile Food Service Activities (5610)	12,112	8%	0.73	£229m
Beverage Serving Activities (5630)	9,594	11%	1.34	£179m
Camping Grounds, Recreational Vehicle Parks and Trailer Parks (5530)	3,578	94%	5.31	£82m
Hotels and Similar Accommodation (5510)	3,226	-31%	0.63	£84m
Holiday and Other Short-stay Accommodation (5520)	2,737	37%	3.81	£71m
Other Food Service Activities (5629)	1,721	32%	0.96	£30m
Event Catering Activities (5621)	950	45%	0.45	£52m
Other Personal Service Activities n.e.c. (9609)	764	-21%	0.64	£80m
Travel Agency Activities (7911)	308	-77%	0.43	£10m
Renting and Leasing of Cars and Light Motor Vehicles (7711)	221	-73%	0.44	£10m

Summary of LSIP Primary Research

The Visitor Economy plays an important employment role in Greater Lincolnshire but faces long-standing workforce challenges. Employers report shortages in hospitality, food service and supervisory roles as well as technical roles in the arts. High churn, seasonality and limited progression visibility continue to constrain workforce stability.

During an online focus group, employers from across the visitor economy shared their perspectives on the drivers for the skills shortages and gaps they are experiencing[84]:

- Declining talent pipelines and reduced training availability: Traditional sources of skilled workers, particularly Chefs, operational managers and technical roles have weakened.
- Attracting candidates isn't the issue, it's retaining and developing them: Recruitment is relatively strong in some areas, but the real pressure point is training and progression. Even when employers can attract new starters, retention is weak without clear development pathways. With limited structured progression, turnover stays high, which in turn keeps skills shortages ongoing. Retention also hinges on engagement and belonging.
- Poor perception of industry conditions: Hospitality roles are perceived as unattractive due to long hours, demanding shifts, past negative experiences and not a "career" choice.
- Low candidate motivation or work readiness: Employers note behavioural barriers, especially at entry and lower skilled levels. Even when vacancies attract applicants, many are not work-ready or motivated to commit.
- Rurality and transport barriers: Rural Lincolnshire's geography makes recruitment significantly harder as large segments of potential workers cannot reach workplaces reliably.
- Competition from remote, higher-paid roles: Strategic and professional roles (marketing, comms, brand, tech roles) are especially difficult to recruit because candidates can work elsewhere, often for London salaries, while living locally. Visitor economy and local employers are outcompeted on salary and career pathways.
- Lack of security, casual or fragmented roles in the creative and technical arts: Technical theatre and visual/performing arts roles have become harder to fill due to structural changes. Talented technicians leave the sector for more stable employment.
- Fear of instability due to closures and economic uncertainty: Workers stay put instead of applying elsewhere due to closures. This reduced mobility since Covid means it is harder to recruit.

The role that employers in traditional hospitality setting as well as those wider project and training supply chains say has been the hardest to recruit for in the last year is Chefs[85]. This was consistently highlighted as the hardest role to fill, specifically Head Chefs who are multifaceted are the most difficult to source and retain. Lower-level chefs are easier to recruit, but inconsistent skill levels mean menus must be adjusted to match

[84] Annex D: Pages 237-239
[85] Annex D: Pages 240-242

the capacity of whoever is on shift, limiting the ambitions of employer venues. 58.3% of survey participants stated the same challenge[86]. Other shortages include[87]:

- High-level skilled hospitality staff: Shortage of candidates with advanced qualifications in management, health & safety, HACCP, etc.
- Strategic-level marketing, comms and brand professionals: It's hard for smaller local businesses to compete with remote and London-paying roles.
- Technical roles in visual and performing arts: Technician shortages due to freelance insecurity and reduced touring.
- Sales manager for specialist products: Difficulty finding someone with the right commercial experience for a diversified estate (gin, vineyard, beef).
- Receptionists: Demand for candidates with hotel experience and shift flexibility.
- Front-of-house management: Shortage of skilled staff able to run shifts effectively.
- Operations/venue operations staff: Difficulty finding people with broad operational and logistical experience.

Looking forward at future recruitment and the types of roles that employers anticipate will be hard to recruit, they say safeguarding, compliance & safety roles in creative and venue settings – driven by the Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Ac, also known as Martyn's Law – will be tough. Chefs appear to be a consistent challenge as employers expect the recruitment and competition issues to persist. Hotel and Accommodation Managers and Proprietors were also noted. Outside of the actual hospitality settings, employers want to see advocacy & brand roles, marketing specialists and fundraising & development roles in the county, spearheading promotion of the area as a destination and offset the impact of Destination Lincolnshire's closure.

Where barriers to training were identified, the cost and affordability of training, difficulties in finding local, relevant and quality providers and staff capacity constraints all frustrate employers, among other access and co-ordination issues[88]. Participants want to see better alignment and visibility of local training offers, improved support for employers to access and understand the Growth & Skills Levy and more advanced, flexible and sector-relevant training[89]. They – along with other sectors and representatives – long to see the introduction of a local training portal[90].

[86] Annex D: Page 245
[87] Annex D: Pages 240-242
[88] Annex D: Page 257
[89] Annex D: Pages 260-262
[90] Annex D: Page 261

Table of Priority SOC codes – Visitor Economy

Occupation (SOC code)	Employees in sector (Greater Lincolnshire)	New vacancy adverts posted (12 months) in Greater Lincolnshire	Projected change in demand 2024-34 (Greater Lincolnshire)	Is it a Skills England 'high growth' occupation?
Chefs (5434)	2,798	1060	(3%)	No
Restaurant and Catering Establishment Managers and Proprietors (1222)	1174	225	-4%	No
Sports and Leisure Assistants (6211)	1017	313	9%	No
Events Managers and Organisers (3557)	333	65	0%	No
Catering and Bar Managers (5436)	745	378	-1%	No
Bus and Coach Drivers (8212)	674	163	19%	No
Cooks (5435)	657	547	(1%)	No
Bar and Catering Supervisors (9261)	638	472	-1%	No
Sports Coaches, Instructors and Officials (3432)	424	266	4%	No

Visitor Economy Skills Needs: Existing Workforce

- AI skills and creative technology adoption: AI-related skills gaps are widening as digital transformation moves faster than workforce capability. Employers report emerging shortages in understanding and using AI tools, automation, and

creative technologies, with many staff lacking the competence or training needed to adopt these systems effectively.

- Digital and creative technology skills (including backstage tech): A growing skills gap is emerging, with too few staff confident in using digital tools, creative technologies, or core technical-theatre functions such as lighting, sound, AV, and basic stage management. As technology in the visitor economy evolves rapidly, venues feel increasing pressure to keep pace. Employees now need to be adaptable and multi skilled
- Digital marketing, CRM, SEO and social media: Venues and tourism businesses face a widening gap in strategic-level digital marketing capability, particularly in areas such as CRM, SEO, analytics, content strategy, and social media management. Many staff can handle day-to-day posting, but the sector struggles with the more advanced skills needed for brand development, long-term digital planning, and effective campaign design. The pace of digital change is accelerating, making it even harder for organisations to keep up.
- Cyber security awareness: Low staff awareness of online risks, phishing, mobile-device vulnerabilities, and basic cyber safety is creating avoidable exposure. As more work moves online, the risk surface grows, and visitor-facing teams often receive little training in safe digital behaviour.
- Technical budgeting and data/evaluation skills: Weaknesses in budgeting for technical projects and inconsistent data collection and evaluation practices. Funding and impact measurement requirements are increasing, but many organisations lack people who understand budgeting for tech, or consistent evaluation frameworks.
- Compliance, safeguarding and legislative knowledge: Increasing training needs around Martyn's Law, safeguarding, exploitation, and legal responsibilities for employers. Smaller organisations lack capacity to stay up to date; expectations on employers are rising.
- Customer service quality and complaint handling: Need for stronger customer service, handling rising customer expectations, and managing complaints. Consumers are becoming more discerning and quicker to complain; frontline staff must be prepared.
- People skills and confidence: Shortfall in basic interpersonal confidence, including phone handling and dealing with anxious customers. Rising mental health challenges and anxiety among staff also affect service delivery.
- Multitasking and prioritisation: Staff struggle juggling multiple responsibilities and keeping pace with fast moving priorities. Many roles require wearing "multiple hats," especially marketing and operations roles in small venues.

Visitor Economy Skills Needs: Priority Occupations by Level

Level	Occupation
L2 Trades	Cooks
L3 Craft / Technician	Chefs Bar/catering supervisors Sports coaches and instructors Technical roles in visual and performing arts (eg stage management, lighting, sound, AV)
L4-5 Higher technical, supervisors etc	Hospitality managers Digital marketing

Visitor Economy Sector Post-16 Provision Opportunity Summary Comments

16-18

- Very large provision in sports/sports coaching courses. Providers have an opportunity to establish destinations of these learners in terms of sector/occupation, further study etc
- Data on Catering provision is not included in provided data and therefore the extent of current provision must be further interrogated before any changes to courses.

Apprenticeships

- Only sports-related apprenticeships are shown in the data.
- No catering / chefs, which given the scale of need is surprising

19+

- Foundation Degree in Tourism Management at TEC Partnership

Health & Adult Social Care Skills Needs

Health and Adult Social Care is one of the largest and fastest-growing employment sectors in Greater Lincolnshire, and a cornerstone of both economic activity and population wellbeing. The sector supports employment across NHS trusts, primary and community care, adult social care providers, local authority services, pharmacies, funeral services, voluntary and community organisations, and independent care providers.

ONS local indicators confirm that health and adult social care is a major employment concentration in Greater Lincolnshire. This reflects the county's ageing population,

higher prevalence of long-term health conditions, and rural and coastal geography, which places sustained demand on place-based and community-delivered services. Estimates suggest that 69,618 people are currently employed in the sector, generating a total annual GVA of £1.92bn. In total, the Health and Adult Social Care sector workforce is projected to increase by 17% from 2020 to 2034. Skills for Care[91] data indicates that in 2023/24, the adult social care sub-sector alone supported around 25,000 total posts, of which approximately 23,000 were filled, with around 1,900 vacancies actively being recruited to at any one time. This represents a 2.7% increase in total posts compared to the previous year, underlining sustained growth in workforce demand.

Healthcare is naturally dominated by the National Health Service's NHS trusts and the Integrated Care Board, with services delivered through a combination of acute, community, mental health, primary care and integrated care services. NHS workforce statistics[92] confirm that health services remain one of the largest sources of employment demand nationally and locally, with persistent recruitment pressure across clinical, care support, therapy and community-based roles. Local job demand data consistently shows high vacancy volumes in healthcare and community services occupations, underlining sustained recruitment need across nursing, mental health, allied health professions, support workers and care coordination roles.

Adult social care provision is delivered across 415 CQC-registered locations – both public sector and privately owned enterprises - with the workforce heavily concentrated in the independent sector, accounting for around 21,500 filled posts, compared to approximately 750 posts in local authority provision and 1,000 posts supporting direct payment recipients[93].

Demand for Health & Adult Social Care services in Greater Lincolnshire is driven by demographics and the geography. The county has:

- A significantly ageing population which has increased 30% faster than the rest of the UK since 2020[94]
- Higher-than-average proportions of people living with long-term health conditions. In March 2026, 35% of all economically inactive people were off work with a long-term health issue[95] including musculoskeletal (MSK) disorders, cardiovascular diseases, respiratory conditions and mental health issues.

[91] https://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Adult-Social-Care-Workforce-Data/workforceintelligence/resources/Reports/Local/ICB-Summaries/ICB-summary-2024-Lincolnshire.pdf
[92] https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/nhs-workforce-statistics
[93] https://lincolnshire.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s49155/Appendix%20A%20-%20Briefing%20Paper%20Increasing%20the%20Capacity%20of%20the%20Adult%20Social%20Care%20sector%20Provider%20Workfo.pdf
[94] https://www.northlincs.gov.uk/site/documents/your-council/greater-lincolnshire-devolution-combined-county-authority-proposal/
[95] Department for Work & Pensions State of Greater Lincolnshire Report March 2026, Page 6

- A large rural and coastal geography, increasing reliance on community, domiciliary and outreach-based care models

Local authority analysis[96] highlights that adult social care is expected to require continued workforce expansion over the medium to long term, with Skills for Care estimating that workforce growth will be necessary to keep pace with projected increases in people aged 65 and over.

The 2025 Working Well publication[97] - the Lincolnshire Director of Public Health's Annual report - highlights the two-way relationship between health and employment, stressing that skills development and high-quality work in care and health services are essential to reducing inequality and enabling sustainable economic growth across the county.

Table of Priority SIC codes – Health & Adult Social Care

Industry (SIC code)	TOTAL EMPLOYEES 2024	PROJECTED 2020-34 % CHANGE	Employment Concentration (GB = 1.00)	GVA
Hospital Activities (8610)	22,182	10%	0.91	£826m
Other Human Health Activities (8690)	9,982	30%	1.29	£295m
Other Social Work Activities Without Accommodation n.e.c. (8899)	6,074	2%	1.01	£152m
General Medical Practice Activities (8621)	6,002	45%	1.7	£150m
Other Residential Care Activities (8790)	5,437	-8%	1.4	£143m
Social Work Activities Without Accommodation for the Elderly and Disabled (8810)	5,128	-8%	1.16	£92m
Residential Care Activities for the Elderly and Disabled (8730)	4,455	39%	1.34	£68m

[96] https://lincolnshire.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s49155/Appendix%20A%20-%20Briefing%20Paper%20Increasing%20the%20Capacity%20of%20the%20Adult%20Social%20Care%20sector%20Provider%20Workfo.pdf

[97] https://lincolnshire.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s72510/6d%20Appx%20A%20-%20DPH%20Annual%20Report%202025.pdf

Residential Nursing Care Activities (8710)	3,448	82%	1.24	£58m
Child Day-care Activities (8891)	2,810	60%	0.95	£48m
Residential Care Activities for Learning Disabilities, Mental Health and Substance Abuse (8720)	1,485	21%	1.8	£26m

Summary of LSIP Primary Research

Health and Adult Social Care faces one of the most acute workforce pressure areas in Greater Lincolnshire. Employer evidence highlights sustained recruitment and retention challenges, particularly in frontline and supervisory roles. Drivers include high turnover, demographic demand and limited progression pathways. Evidence indicates demand growth across the LSIP period.

During a focus group held in Grantham in January 2026, employers outlined a list of key roles they have recently encountered issues in recruiting[98]:

- Senior Care Workers
- Care Co-ordinators. This was stated as this role can be highly stressful with logistics and conflict management demands.
- Deputy Managers - hard to retain or find an experienced deputy manager, with a couple of years in a similar role.
- Social Workers - significant county-wide shortage; reliance on agency.
- Newly-qualified Pharmacists. These are perceived as hard to retain, which creates churn. Workers may be daunted by lacking management skills. They also may not see a development trajectory, can move to acute where research opportunities are greater and pay may be higher.
- Relief Pharmacists & Pharmacy Technicians. Driving required for multi-site work and many do not drive; leads to a reliance on locums.
- Medicine Counter Assistants in pharmacy – have been devalued somewhat to Level 2.

Both focus group and survey participants predicted where they believe they will see pressures on future recruitment. Care Workers and Home Carers were selected as top for both groups (50% of survey contributions said this)[99]. Other future stressors include

[98] Annex D: Pages 193-194
[99] Annex D: Page 199

Pharmacy Assistants, Senior Care Workers and Social Workers which are all expected to be challenging to source. On nursing care, the feeling from this Adult Social Care dominated group was that the numbers of nurses in Greater Lincolnshire are currently satisfactory but that there are weaknesses and shortcomings in their skill sets[100]. On new and emerging roles, and in line with the needs of other sectors, AI specialist expertise – understanding how to apply it to best effect – was voiced as an anticipated need.

The participants also offered views on the drivers of the current and future skills shortages they face across the workforce[101]; these challenges are in structural, technical, soft skill and access issues. They include:

- Widespread inability to drive among applicants, or likely applicants, combined with a poor public transport infrastructure makes recruitment much harder in rural Greater Lincolnshire
- Low rates of pay and negative perceptions of the sector
- 16–17-year-olds not having any clear pathway, at that age, into starting their training for a career in Social Work
- Reduced access to international recruitment
- Low morale and high burnout. Gov.uk surveys show low morale, particularly in domiciliary care (46% reporting morale issues).
- High workloads, emotional strain, unpaid travel time, and lack of progression are commonly cited pressures.
- Rising demand from an ageing population. The sector is one of the UK's priority areas because demand is growing rapidly with the ageing population. More complex needs (dementia, chronic conditions) require more skilled staff — but training pipelines have not kept up.

Training and development barriers centre on five main issues[102]. Public transport infrastructure and inability to drive, possibly unintended consequences of funding structures, blockers on transferable skills between Nursing and Social Care then inhibiting pursuing higher technical qualifications, low completion rates, in part down to unwillingness to release employees for training and funding complexity severely impacting utilisation. On the latter point, there was a feeling that the claims process to secure funding was burdensome for SMEs and favoured large entities.

The training improvements Health & Adult Social Care employers wish to see are as follows[103]:

[100] Annex D: Page 197
[101] Annex d: Pages 193-195
[102] Annex D: Page 206
[103] Annex D: Page 207

- Address the current lack of provision pathways between Nursing and Social Care, as resourcing strategies continue to converge
- Introduce a new qualification that reduces the costs involved in updating and refreshing understanding of Compliance with the regulatory framework (particularly CQC)
- Increasing collaboration and multidisciplinary training

Table of Priority SOC codes - Health & Adult Social Care

Occupation (SOC code)	Employees in sector (Greater Lincolnshire)	New vacancy adverts posted (12 months) in Greater Lincolnshire	Projected change in demand 2024-34 (Greater Lincolnshire)	Is it a Skills England 'high growth' occupation?
Care Workers and Home Carers (6135)	12,182	5154	5%	Yes
Nursing Auxiliaries and Assistants (6131)	5,457	532	5%	No
Other Registered Nursing Professionals (2237)	4,347	1229	6%	Yes
Generalist Medical Practitioners (2211)	2,187	188	6%	Yes
Specialist Medical Practitioners (2212)	1,978	544	6%	Yes
Registered Community Nurses (2232)	1,484	114	7%	Yes
Senior Care Workers (6136)	1,339	184	6%	Yes

Early Education and Childcare Assistants (6111)	1,187	314	4%	No
Registered Specialist Nurses (2233)	1,173	216	6%	Yes
Social Workers (2461)	939	1099	2%	Yes
Registered Nurse Practitioners (2234)	864	389	6%	Yes

Health & Adult Social Care Skills Needs Skills Needs: Existing Workforce

- Clinical awareness below Nursing-level, particularly around incontinence and skin health
- Nurses and Care Staff need equal competence in co-morbidities in the elderly
- Ventilation care and monitoring for Home Care services
- Logistics (in Home Care)
- Mental health understanding
- Data and digital skills
- Technical writing
- Ability of nurses to work more autonomously
- More Nurses needing the ability to drive and access to a car as more care takes place away from hospitals
- Leadership and people management including conflicts
- Digital, AI and data skills

Health & Adult Social Care Skills Needs: Priority Occupations by Level

Level	Occupation
L2 Trades	Care workers and home carers
L3 Craft / Technician	Nursing auxiliaries and assts Pharmacy assistants Senior care workers
L4-5 Higher technical, supervisors etc	Registered nurse practitioners Nurses with dealing with the elderly specialism

L6-7 Professionals and management	Registered nursing professionals Registered community nurses Registered specialist nurses Social workers Pharmacists General and specialist medical practitioners

Health & Adult Social Care Sector Post-16 Provision Opportunity Summary Comments

16-18

- It is surprising that there is not a wider range of 16-18 provision, especially at colleges.
- The largest volume is in L3 Cambridge Technical Diploma at Franklin College, which again points to an opportunity to expand provision to T Levels
- T Levels up and running except at Boston College. Start volumes are usually 20-30, showing scope to expand

Apprenticeships

- Delivery is by large national providers (Paragon, Marr, Impact Futures) and Universities in nursing (University of Lincoln, University of Hull, Anglia Ruskin)
- Colleges notable by their absence from the apprenticeship data, except DN Colleges. Do colleges have working relationships with their local NHS trust?

19+

- It is expected that there is a much wider range of provision than shown in the data.
- DN Colleges Group the only really prominent GFE provider in the data, aside from Access courses (Lincoln College and TEC Partnership)
- It is unclear whether 19+ provision is for existing staff or is it helping adult (unemployed, those returning from career breaks) to enter health and care occupations

Priority Theme 3: INNOVATE: Data, Digital and AI Awareness

The Industrial Strategy definition of the Digital and Technology sector covers establishments that employ a total of 13,132 people, generating a total annual GVA of £514m in Greater Lincolnshire.

With a healthy sector in the City of Lincoln at keystone establishments like Mosaic[104], the Digital Lincoln[105] programme and the 2025 designation of North Lincolnshire as an AI Growth Zone[106], there are strong currents of digital progress in Greater Lincolnshire. All of this marks key opportunities to leverage and build the digital skills profile across the county.

In total, the sector's workforce is currently projected to decline by 2% from 2020 to 2034 – however, that is when taking a stark examination of the sector in isolation. Employer evidence shows demand for digital, data and AI skills are embedded within existing roles in sectors such as agri-tech, farming and food manufacturing, energy, defence, advanced manufacturing, professional and business services, construction, health and adult social care and the visitor economy, rather than confined to specialist digital occupations. Therefore, this LSIP is focusing on the cross-cutting skills requirements rather than as a standalone sectoral issue. For clarity relevant SIC and SOC codes have been included here to help define where explicit sector and occupations are required.

Table of Priority SIC codes – Data, Digital and AI Awareness

Industry (SIC code)	TOTAL EMPLOYEES 2024	PROJECTED 2020-34 % CHANGE	Employment Concentration (GB = 1.00)	GVA
Engineering Activities and Related Technical Consultancy (7112)	3,112	-24%	0.57	£100m
Computer Consultancy Activities (6202)	1,617	-24%	0.29	£73m
Computer Programming Activities (6201)	1,544	-20%	0.44	£58m
Publishing of Newspapers (5813)	1,186	n/a	4.89	n/a
Other Telecommunications Activities (6190)	895	-3%	0.44	£58m

[104] https://www.mosaiclincoln.co.uk/
[105] https://www.digitallincoln.co.uk/
[106] https://www.northernlincolnshireaigrowthzone.com/

Publishing of Journals and Periodicals (5814)	602	68%	1.49	£17m
Repair of Computers and Peripheral Equipment (9511)	465	21%	1.24	£21m
Manufacture of Electronic Components (2611)	393	-3%	1.87	£10m
Technical Testing and Analysis (7120)	364	-46%	0.58	£17m
Other IT and Computer Service Activities (6209)	331	-66%	0.17	£23m

Summary of LSIP Primary Research

Evidence confirms that confirms that technology adoption – both in the defined sector and across-industries - is accelerating faster than current workforce capability[107], particularly within the NHS and SMEs, creating productivity constraints and business risk. In specialist businesses and roles, Artificial Intelligence (AI), automation, robotics, cyber security, data engineering and emerging fields like quantum and drone technology are evolving faster than organisations can build talent pipelines for them. Taking a wider view, employers stated frustrations around sourcing and developing skills that are driven by the fast evolution of business intelligence platforms including databases and Power BI.

Over the course of the focus group and survey, employers were able to define their digital needs across three clear areas;

1. Data interpretation/analytics skills to enable businesses make better data-led decisions and to ensure workers can maximise the capabilities of embedded technologies
2. Post-16 training on the Microsoft Office suite to enable school, FE and HE leavers to arrive into the workforce able to use common platforms confidently
3. Awareness of AI opportunities to aid productivity and avoid vulnerabilities.

[107] Annex D: Page 146

Data Interpretation/Analytics Skills

A dominant theme across all sectors and even in large organisations like the NHS, Worldwide Fruit and British Steel was the need for practical data literacy, rather than advanced data science. Employers want staff who can:

- Interpret and use data generated by machinery, production systems, farms, energy assets, databases or business software
- Understand dashboards, basic analytics and performance metrics
- Support supervisors and managers to make data-led operational and strategic decisions

This need is particularly pronounced in Agri-tech, Farming & Food Manufacturing, Energy Industries, Professional Services and Health & Adult Social Care where businesses generate large volumes of data but lack capacity and confidence to exploit it effectively.

Post-16 Training in Microsoft Office

Employers across sectors consistently reported weak baseline digital capability among both new entrants and the existing workforce. This includes:

- Limited competence in Microsoft Office (Excel, Word, Outlook, PowerPoint) beyond basic use
- Poor confidence in handling digital documents, data entry, and workflow tools
- Gaps in understanding digital systems used in regulated, technical and safety-critical environments

These gaps are most acute in SMEs and in rural and coastal parts of Greater Lincolnshire, where access to training has traditionally been more limited.

AI and AI Awareness

AI was mentioned 331 times across the primary research – the highest incidence of any single theme or skills need. This is due to a general low base of understanding of what AI actually is, its benefits, and associated or perceived risks. Confounding the issue. there is also a strong perception among employers and workers that training cannot keep up with the surge forward in platforms and practices and local provision is either not available or not suitable for their needs. That said, well over a third of employers indicated that they were 'Very Likely' to source external training relating to AI (36%)[108] in the near future, marking an opportunity for local training centres to respond.

[108] Annex D: Page 360

Through discussion with employers, the ERB established that while businesses of all types are keen to exploit the productivity gains associated with AI, for micro, small and medium enterprises they need to begin on this route with basic, short introductory training. Content should focus on the fundamentals of what AI actually is, how it works, the business benefits, the tools, plus associated risks and required policies.

The skills need is not driven by demand for AI developers, but by a need for AI-literate business owners and managers who can make informed, responsible decisions about AI adoption.

Data, Digital and AI Awareness Skills needs: Priority Occupations (SOC)

Occupation (SOC code)	Employees in employment in this sector (Greater Lincolnshire)	New vacancy adverts posted (12 months) in Greater Lincolnshire	Projected change in demand 2024-34 (Greater Lincolnshire)	Is it a Skills England 'high growth' occupation?
Programmers and Software Development Professionals (2134)	976	661	2%	Yes
IT Business Analysts, Architects and Systems Designers (2133)	294	257	1%	Yes
IT User Support Technicians (3132)	209	216	-7%	Yes
Advertising and Marketing Associate Professionals (3554)	196	461	13%	Yes
Computer System and Equipment Installers and Servicers (5244)	175	10	4%	Yes
IT Project Managers (2131)	162	31	-5%	Yes

Telecoms and Related Network Installers and Repairers (5242)	144	240	1%	Yes
IT Operations Technicians (3131)	110	85	-5%	No

Data, Digital and AI Awareness Skills Needs: Priority Occupations by Level

Level	Occupation
L3 Craft / Technician	AV technicians, immersive media, virtual production IT business support and operations technicians Computer systems and equipment installers and servicers Telecoms and related network installers Digital Apprentices (and L4) Drone operators
L4-5 Higher technical, supervisors etc	Programmers and mid-level software developers (L3, 5 and 6) Cyber security specialists Data analysts Digital project managers Business analysts, architects and system designers Digital marketeers
L6-7 Professionals and management	Automation engineers Data engineers

Data, Digital and AI Awareness Care Sector Post-16 Provision Opportunity Summary Comments

16-18

- Only T Level data is available, but the area should expect very substantial volumes on L3 Diplomas and A Levels in IT-related subjects.
- Opportunity to track if any of these courses progress into Apprenticeships locally
- Only one T Level specialism shown on the data showing potential to expand Digital T Levels on offer?

Apprenticeships

- The market is dominated by Multiverse, QA and Corndel. Local providers and Colleges should seek to deliver Digital Apprenticeships
- No IT Support Technician Apprenticeships. Volumes on L6 Digital & Technology Solutions Professional are low. The University of Lincoln should explore delivering this

19+

- No data

Priority Theme 4: INSPIRE: Employability & Essential Skills

Summary of LSIP Primary Research

Across the primary research for the LSIP – which comprises dialogue with over 700 businesses - employers consistently reported that employability and essential/transferrable/soft skills gaps continue to represent as significant a constraint as technical shortages, cutting across all sectors. These gaps exacerbate technical shortages and limit progression, particularly for new entrants and career changers.

While sector-specific skills vary, there is a striking consistency in the core behaviours, attitudes and work-readiness skills that employers struggle to find and develop. This was a major theme in the 2023 LSIP, and the issues employers are concerned about appear to have intensified over the last three years.

A pervasive concern relates to workplace readiness among new entrants and early-career staff, not only in younger recruits but also in workers aged 55-64 who are or have been economically inactive for some time.

Effective and professional communication skills emerged as the most widely cited essential skills gap common in younger or less-experienced recruits. Employers across Advanced Manufacturing, Construction, Defence, Agri-Tech, Health and Adult Social Care and Digital sectors report deficiencies in verbal communication, confidence, customer interaction, teamwork, and conflict management. These issues are particularly

acute where roles require collaboration, supervision, client and customer engagement, or the translation of technical information into operational decisions.

Closely linked is a deficit in problem-solving, initiative and critical thinking. Many employers describe recruits who can follow instructions but struggle to work independently, adapt to changing circumstances, or apply learning in real-world workplace settings. This is compounded by limited exposure to practical, contextualised learning before employment.

Employers also frequently highlighted weaknesses in professional behaviours that are challenging the progress and success of the workers, and frustrating more senior and tenured colleagues. The most cited issues employers raised were:

- Punctuality
- Reliability
- Motivation
- Personal resilience and self-management

The personal resilience matter is of particular annoyance to employers. They report a distinct dip in the flexibility of workers, capacity to take and reflect on constructive feedback about operational and performance issues and manage their responses professionally.

Frequent references to poor attendance, interview no-shows, high dropout rates, and unrealistic expectations around pay and progression point to a broader challenge in preparing individuals for the realities of work, especially in SMEs and operationally demanding environments.

One practical skill that employers say needs urgently rebuilding is telephone confidence among education leavers. Focus group and survey participants consistently stated younger workers are unfamiliar with telephone etiquette and are fearful of taking and making calls in the workplace. While this is a broad societal shift and is somewhat unsurprising, those entering their careers clearly need assistance to effectively carry out calls as part of their day-to-day role.

Overall, the evidence points to a clear need for stronger, earlier and more consistent development of employability skills. They wish to see those capabilities embedded throughout school, FE and HE education, training and workforce transitions, alongside technical provision, to support productivity, retention and progression across Greater Lincolnshire's economy. Throughout the consultation, employers and providers voiced a need for a Skills Passport for the county. While not a new concept, the strength of discussion on this matter demonstrated an eagerness for this to be introduced. Employers said it would be effective for learners at FE and HE level to complete

employability modules and that a completed passport would give them as recruiters confidence in the individual's readiness for work.

Priority Theme 5: EMPOWER: People Management Skills

Summary of LSIP Primary Research

Throughout the Primary Research period, employers across key sectors reported a defined need; that those with people or line management responsibilities require support to carry out their roles effectively, compliantly and confidentially. Recent changes within the wider workforce - some of which are set out in Theme 4 - and the implications of the new and unfolding Employment Rights Act 2025 - are creating new pressures on managers. Employers were very clear this need is not about Leadership level – this mass need is for people managers.

Overall, employers say that weaknesses in people management capability are emerging as a critical constraint on productivity, retention and skills development, particularly within SMEs and operationally intensive sectors. LSIP research shows that employers in some critical sub-sectors – especially Food Manufacturing and Adult Social Care - are facing challenges in directing or promoting individuals into supervisory or managerial roles without the corresponding leadership, people or business skills or meaningful pay uplift, creating performance risks for both teams and organisations.

A consistent theme across Advanced Manufacturing, Construction, Agri-Tech, Defence, Health and Digital sectors is the gap between technical competence and effective line management. Employers report strong tradespeople, engineers and operators struggling when required to manage staff, handle performance issues, communicate expectations, make suitable health-related adjustments or motivate teams. This is especially acute in smaller businesses where managers hold multiple responsibilities and have limited access to formal or internal HR support.

Performance management and people development are highlighted as key areas of weakness by employer participants in focus groups and the survey. Employers describe limited capability in giving constructive feedback, managing underperformance, supporting apprentices and early-career staff, and planning progression routes. This contributes to inconsistent workforce standards and over-reliance on a small number of experienced individuals, which when conflated with the ageing workforce in key sectors is troubling.

The research also identifies gaps in communication, oracy, confidence and conflict management among managers. Difficult conversations - around attendance, behaviour, capability, individual needs and change - are often avoided or poorly handled,

undermining team cohesion and accountability. In Construction, Health and Adult Social care and Advanced Manufacturing, inadequate people management was directly linked to retention challenges, disengagement and reduced productivity.

Change pressures are amplifying these needs. Managers are increasingly required to lead teams through digital transformation, adoption of AI-enabled systems, new compliance requirements and changing work patterns. However, many lack the skills to manage change, address workforce anxiety, or translate strategic objectives into day-to-day practice.

Employers also showed self-awareness in their own limitations on their capacity for succession planning. Forward planning for skills, role replacements, retirements and even priming future CEOs or MDs takes time, business intelligence and capacity.

Overall, the evidence points to a clear need to strengthen foundational people management skills, including manager confidence, communication, performance management, coaching, and workforce planning. Without this, employers' ability to recruit, retain and upskill their workforce in line with LSIP priorities will remain constrained.

Finally, employers stated that lengthy and expensive courses are not their desired solution to addressing this skills gap. They want short and accessible solutions that are locally designed and delivered.

Priority Theme 6: ACCESS: Navigation and Delivery of Training

Summary of LSIP Primary Research

Access to training and employment remains a system-level barrier in Greater Lincolnshire. The county's rural geography, limited public transport and travel costs restrict access to skills provision and job opportunities. These constraints disproportionately affect young people, entry-level workers and those seeking to upskill.

Across the LSIP research programme, transport barriers and low visibility of training provision were consistently identified as structural constraints. Employers were clear that these fundamental barriers limit participation in initial training and upskilling, drive recruitment and retention issues and create barriers to employer engagement with the skills system. Focus group and survey participants stated clearly that these issues cut across multiple sectors and disproportionately affect young people, rural communities, apprentices and SMEs.

Transport is a systemic barrier, particularly in rural and coastal areas and where the local economy largely supports sectors that are not 9-to-5 in nature. Employers and providers report that limited or unreliable public transport restricts access to further education colleges, specialist training centres and the workplace (which in some sectors is movable i.e. construction sites or domiciliary care). This is especially acute for 16-19 learners and Apprentices, many of whom cannot drive at that age due to cost barriers and have few viable alternatives. As a result, learners are reportedly deterred from enrolling on courses if providers cannot provide bus transport (though many in the county do so). Further, employers face reduced apprentice retention, and businesses are discouraged from recruiting locally. In some cases, the absence of provision within daily travelling distance extends time out of the business or requires costly travel to other parts of the region or beyond. There are examples of excellence in FE, such as Lincoln College trialling delivery of driving lessons and theory test provision on campus. But it is felt this offer needs to be significantly widened as part of FE enrichment activities to address the problem.

Participants also highlighted significant challenges in navigating the training landscape. Employers - particularly the county's SMEs - report difficulty in identifying appropriate provision, understanding eligibility, funding opportunities and comparing options across FE, HE, independent providers and other solutions such as Skills Bootcamps. Provision is described as fragmented, frequently changing, and poorly signposted, with awareness often reliant on informal networks rather than a clear, trusted and easy-to-find hub of current information. This leads to missed opportunities, duplication of effort, and reliance on in-house training (often sourced from outside of the area).

While digital course directories do exist, the LSIP evidence suggests they are under-used or insufficiently tailored to employer needs, often lacking clarity on location, delivery flexibility, funding, relevance to specific roles, or suitability for small businesses. Quite simply, they are also not localised. Employers expressed a preference for simple, local, current and relevant guidance, rather than qualification-led listings. Providers and local authority representatives were also supportive of a solution to this need, pitching a potential local 11"Trivago for training" at the LSIP Provider Summit.

Overall, transport and course-finder challenges act as hard barriers within the skills system. Without improved physical access to provision and clearer, more navigable information on available courses, employer demand for skills, particularly in priority sectors (Themes 1 and 2), cannot be fully met. Addressing these issues is essential to improving employer and learner participation, retention and alignment between skills supply and meeting local labour market needs.

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