



Greater Lincolnshire

Local Skills Improvement Plan

Full Report June 2026 to 2029

Approval Statement

This Local Skills Improvement Plan has been approved by the Secretary of State in accordance with the requirements of section 1 of the Skills and Post-16 Education Act 2022, and the relevant published statutory guidance.

Greater Lincolnshire
Combined County Authority 

The evidence base and skills analysis created through the production of this Local Skills Improvement Plan are endorsed by the Greater Lincolnshire Combined County Authority (GLCCA) and will contribute to a Greater Lincolnshire Local Growth Plan and Employment and Skills Strategy. GLCCA worked with the FSB throughout the production of the plan to ensure local stakeholders had a voice in how it developed and that all industries and businesses had an opportunity to contribute.

Contents

Approval Statement	2
Introduction	4
Executive Summary	5
Strategic and Economic Context	6
LSIP Integration with Other Strategic Local Plans	7
Part One: Local Skills Needs	9
Priority Theme 1: FORWARD: Growth Sector Technical Skills Needs.	10
Priority Theme 2: FOUNDATIONS: Supporting Sector Skills Needs.	11
Priority Theme 3: INNOVATE: Data, Digital and AI Awareness	12
Priority Theme 4: INSPIRE: Employability & Essential Skills	13
Priority Theme 5: EMPOWER: People Management Skills	14
Priority Theme 6: ACCESS: Navigation and Delivery of Training.	15
Part Two: Agreed Changes and Actions Needed	16
Priority Theme 1: FORWARD: Growth Sector Technical Skills Needs.	17
Combined Growth Sector Actions.	17
Defence Actions	17
Energy Industries Actions	18
Advanced Manufacturing Actions.	19
Agri-tech, Farming and Food Manufacturing Actions.	20
Outcome	20
Priority Theme 2: FOUNDATIONS: Supporting Sector Skills Needs.	21
Health & Adult Social Care Actions	21
Visitor Economy Actions	22
Construction Actions	23
Outcome	23
Priority Theme 3: INNOVATE: Data, Digital and AI Awareness	24
Data, Digital and AI Awareness Actions	24
Outcome	24
Priority Theme 4: INSPIRE: Employability & Essential Skills	25
Employability & Essential Skills Actions.	25
Outcome	26
Priority Theme 5: EMPOWER: People Management Skills	27
People Management Skills - Actions	27
Outcome.	27
Priority Theme 6: ACCESS: Navigation and Delivery of Training	28
Navigation and Delivery of Training Actions.	28
Outcome.	29
Combined Actions Across All Themes.	29
Outcome	29
Endnotes	30

Introduction

Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs) are designed to place employers' established and emerging skills needs at the very heart of localised training provision. They are an important and strategic mechanism in ensuring critical dialogue between providers and employers and strong pipelining of relevant technical and essential skills into the local workforce. The plans are collaboratively developed and action-oriented and must outline priority changes and improvements to course provision, engagement with employers and learner opportunities for the next three years.

Commissioned by Skills England¹ as part of the Department for Work & Pensions (DWP)², they were introduced to England as part of reforms in the Post-16 Education and Skills White Paper³ and now enshrined in law by the Skills for Jobs White Paper 2021⁴. They are developed and delivered on a rolling three-year programme and are now in their second cycle, with the first plans published in 2023. Being regularly reviewed and updated means the plans remain aligned with, and responsive to, local economic needs.

Each of the 39 LSIPs⁵ is led and delivered by a designated and independent Employer Representative Body (ERB). Individually they must demonstrate and evidence suitable reach and engagement with each area's local employer community and the required capability and expertise to engage business leaders, providers, stakeholders and other critical parties.

The plans must be prepared and published in line with updated statutory guidance issued by Skills England. Since the publication of new guidance published in November 2025⁶, each ERB is required to work in partnership with the local Strategic Authority (SA) in developing and implementing the LSIP to ensure maximum correlation and coherence between the LSIP and other critical local plans such as the Local Growth Plan and relevant Get Britain Working Plan, and maximising localised or devolved skills funding opportunities. Robust Governance structures must also be in place to guide, advise and challenge wherever necessary.

For Greater Lincolnshire, Federation of Small Businesses (FSB)⁷ leads the development of the Greater Lincolnshire LSIP and is working in close collaboration with Greater Lincolnshire Combined County Authority (GLCCA)⁸ to deliver this new LSIP.

This plan is an evidence base and is intended to inform education and training providers, as well as funders

and commissioners of education and training. It is also aimed at business owners and other senior personnel in businesses of all sizes and locations across Greater Lincolnshire, and those based outside the area but with a workforce operating within (or offshore) the county border. It will also be of utmost interest to the county's Sixth Form Colleges, Colleges, Universities, Independent Training Providers (ITPs), Regional Technical Excellence Colleges, the Institute of Technology (IoT), and apprenticeship providers. As well as GLCCA, Greater Lincolnshire's ten county, unitary and district Local Authorities will also have a particular stake in this report. It is also relevant to representatives of Employer Representative Bodies (ERBs), sector and trade bodies, representative groups, trade unions, researchers, careers advisors, skills boards and business support and training specialists. Anyone else invested in the Greater Lincolnshire economic environment should also take interest in this report.

Due to Greater Lincolnshire's vast size and close borders that include key travel-to-learn and travel-to-work areas, stakeholders from Hull & East Yorkshire, South Yorkshire, the East Midlands (Nottinghamshire & Derbyshire EMCCA region), Leicestershire, Rutland, Cambridgeshire, Northamptonshire and Norfolk are also invited to consider this report. Humber specific bodies such as Future Humber and the Humber Freeport will find this report of critical importance, as will leaders of large infrastructure projects located just outside of the county border, such as the STEP Fusion West Burton site. It is also recommended that Towns Fund Boards, such as the Boston Pride in Place Board, consider this report to guide investment and allocations for skills funding.

Aside from the Government agencies funding the development and publication of LSIP - Skills England and the Department for Work & Pensions - this is also of relevance to local and regional representatives Department for Education (DfE), the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), the Department for Business and Trade (DBT), the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ), the Department for Transport (DfT) and the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT), Innovate UK and the Office for Students.

We also welcome interest from the county's workers, learners, parents, teachers, tutors and investors.

Executive Summary

The following Greater Lincolnshire Local Skills Improvement Plan is an accurate and up-to-date distillation of employer-driven skills needs and associated solutions across the area. Each need is a chance for change, each challenge an opportunity, and each barrier is a benchmark for measuring success in 2029.

Through extensive engagement with over 700 employers and further education, higher education and independent training providers carried out between January and March 2026, analysis of labour market information, interrogation of provision data and alignment with other local strategic plans and projects, this Plan outlines the clear priorities that require localised, achievable and collaborative resolutions.

Improvement plans by their nature can focus on problems, shortfalls and complaints. This is due to employers being asked to voice where they wish to see changes made to resolve issues and data tells us where there are percentage points to be gained. While taking all of that into consideration, this LSIP seeks to highlight the immense economic opportunities already open and those breaking in Greater Lincolnshire. This Plan seeks to maximise our area's significant local pride, profile of excellent local training institutions and exciting incoming economic strategies and projects.

By summer 2029, the intended impact is a stronger, healthier pipeline of local people progressing into priority shortage occupations across growth and foundational sectors; improved work-readiness and essential skills; and a simpler, more navigable local training system that increases take-up of provision and strengthens collaboration between employers and providers.

The skills needs identified (Part One) and actions outlined (Part Two) span six critical themes, drawn from the UK's Modern Industrial Strategy and selected by Greater Lincolnshire Combined County Authority. These focus on dominant sector-specifics and workforce-wide improvements. Each theme has a single-word motivating title to emphasise the need for the Plan to be future-facing and focused on action. The themes are:

1. FORWARD: Growth Sector Technical Skills focusing on the Defence, Energy Industries, Agri-tech, Farming and Food Manufacturing, and Advanced Manufacturing sectors

2. FOUNDATIONS: Supporting Sector Technical Skills, incorporating Health and Adult Social Care, the Visitor Economy and Construction sectors

3. INNOVATE: Data, Digital and AI Awareness

4. INSPIRE: Employability & Essential Skills

5. EMPOWER: People Management Skills

6. ACCESS: Navigation and Delivery of Training

Each theme articulates the fine detail of dominant and priority skills challenges employers are currently facing, emerging considerations around projects, competition for roles or the profile of the workforce, and localised successes to build upon. When looking at specific occupations and industries in Themes One and Two, employers generously conveyed the recruitment, retention, development and future-proofing issues where they see prospects for improvement. On workforce-wide themes (Three to Six), the plan expresses opportunities to upskill and uplift Greater Lincolnshire's workforce to build economic and productivity gains and personal fulfilment.

This main report is underpinned by a significant volume of evidence across four annexes:

- Annex A provides a deep record of the skills gaps and shortages, key occupations, training provision, employer and provider feedback and other data factors that have been employed to define the priority skills needs and associated actions.
- Annex B breaks down those actions into granular and attainable projects that aim – one by one – to make marked improvements. Collaborations between employers, providers and stakeholders are clearly stated with timebound targets and anticipated outcomes. This is a “roadmap”, an agreed programme of change focused on employer-led design, faster routes into shortage roles, and more flexible, shorter and responsive provision.
- Annex C demonstrates the methodology of producing this LSIP in line with Skills England's Statutory Guidance. It demonstrates how employers and other critical parties have been engaged to formulate the plan, as well as the links to other plans and demographics as well as Governance structures and roles.
- Annex D is a detailed download of the full employer and provider research exercise carried out in winter 2026.

Strategic and Economic Context

Greater Lincolnshire is an area of natural and economic diversity, which is reflected in the range of opportunities open to local people – depending on their background, location, engagement with local services and ability to travel.

Greater Lincolnshire, which is located in the East Midlands of England, has a population of 1.1 million, with nearly 49,000 businesses contributing to a £30bn economy, which has grown by 40% in the past 10 years. It has a varied and dispersed economy, from the world-leading offshore wind energy sector, manufacturers, ports and petrochemicals in the north, to the UK-significant food and agricultural heartland in the south, strengths and opportunities in agri-tech, advanced manufacturing and defence, plus a coastal economy that attracts visitors to destinations such as Cleethorpes and Skegness.

Greater Lincolnshire is also home to the southern half of the Humber region, a critical industrial area which handles 23% of all cargo that passes through English ports (at Grimsby and Immingham) and supports approximately 35,000 jobs⁹. It is the seat of the UK's largest industrial decarbonisation programme, aiming for Net Zero status by 2040¹⁰. The Humber as a whole is undergoing a major economic shift towards green energy with the Humber Freeport at its core, a project that has already attracted over £1 billion of investment¹¹, bringing significant economic and environmental opportunities to the northern edge of Greater Lincolnshire.

All of these economic opportunities exist within a large geography that is predominantly rural. In fact, more than 90% of Greater Lincolnshire's landmass is rural or coastal and population density is around 155 people per km², much lower than the national average of 434 people per km². This level of sparsity means that reaching critical mass for delivery of services is challenging, particularly delivering education and training. In short, this is an area twenty times the size of Birmingham but with the approximate population of that same city¹².

As well as being the base for 135 large employers, Greater Lincolnshire boasts a high proportion of SMEs. 88.9% of business are micros (0-9 employees), 9.1% are small (10-49 workers) and 1.37% are in the medium band (50-249 staff members)¹³. With these enterprises at its heart, the Greater Lincolnshire economy has grown over

the last decade. Low jobs density (0.79 – up from 0.74 in 2011), a recent 2% decline in the business base and low productivity (GVA per working-age population 23% below the UK average) limit, or create barriers to, work and personal career advancement.

Set against the national average wage of £37,500 per annum, which has grown 4.3% since 2019, earnings in Greater Lincolnshire are typically lower as they currently stand at £33,716. While this lower wage status is a challenge, it can also be viewed as an opportunity for wage improvement. Average earnings in Greater Lincolnshire have increased in recent years, but they have not risen as fast as the UK average.

According to the Office for National Statistics' 2024-2025 data, 543,000 people aged 16-64 in Greater Lincolnshire are economically active, meaning they are either in work or actively seeking and are available for work. Of these, 524,600 residents are employed or self-employed, with more males in employment than females (273,000 versus 251,100). When looking at most key metrics, Greater Lincolnshire scores lower in economic activity levels compared with averages across the East Midlands and Great Britain. However, that also rings true for the unemployment rate as the last nationally recorded score for unemployment rate among the economically active was 3.4% for Greater Lincolnshire whereas latest figures (as of April 2026) are 5.5% in the East Midlands and 4.9% nationally¹⁴.

It is important to note that unemployment only includes people who are actively looking for work, whereas those who are not working and not seeking employment are classified as economically inactive. In Greater Lincolnshire 153,400 people fall into this economically inactive group including, 25,000 students, 26,300 people looking after family or the home, 6,700 who are temporarily ill, 50,800 who are long term sick, 26,200 retirees and 17,600 of other reasons. Of those who are economically inactive 32,000 say they want a job (slightly above the Great Britain average of 20.5%) and 121,400 do not wish to work (slightly below the Great Britain average of 79.5%).¹⁵

Given the scale of the area, there are variances and discrepancies, opportunities and prospects within the local labour market when comparing the districts. Urban areas such as the City of Lincoln and the bordering

North Kesteven district generally demonstrate higher employment rates (currently 75.5%¹⁶) and greater concentrations of professional, public-sector and higher-skilled roles, supported by the presence of major employers and institutions including two universities. In contrast, more rural and coastal districts such as East Lindsey and Boston Borough¹⁷ tend to have lower overall employment rates (74.3%¹⁸ and 72.2%¹⁹ respectively) and smaller working-age populations as a proportion of residents, with employment concentrated in sectors characterised by seasonality, including tourism, food manufacturing and agri-tech.

East Lindsey, for example, has a working-age population share of around 55% compared with a national figure of approximately 63%, with coastal communities recording particularly low levels of economic activity (around 43% in some areas), while South Holland and Boston Borough form a nationally significant hub for horticulture and food manufacturing (now centred around the industry leading National Centre for Food Manufacturing²⁰) but experience tighter labour supply and higher exposure to low-wage and shift-based employment. South Kesteven and West Lindsey sit between these extremes, combining manufacturing, distribution and service-sector employment with more dispersed rural labour markets.

North Lincolnshire and North East Lincolnshire display distinct labour-market profiles shaped by their industrial legacy and port and seafaring/seafood-related activity, with stronger concentrations of manufacturing, engineering, chemicals, energy and logistics employment alongside more urban labour pools centred around Scunthorpe and Grimsby. Across all areas, these district-level differences translate into varying patterns of sector dominance, economic activity, and skills opportunity. This reinforces the need for place-based approaches to skills provision where possible.

When looking at the 16-17 age group as an area of focus, 725 people across Greater Lincolnshire are considered NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training). The proportion of NEETs is highest in North Lincolnshire where 11.5% of people from this age group are NEETs or their status is unknown.

Despite the City of Lincoln holding the status of the joint second youngest city in the East Midlands with a median age of 33²¹, the wider county of Greater Lincolnshire has an ageing population which has increased 30% faster than the rest of the UK since 2020²². This presents an urgent need to attract and retain a younger residential profile to grow the workforce and enable local economies to thrive.

It must be stressed that there are immensely strong economic opportunities across Greater Lincolnshire that have the potential to stimulate tens of thousands of new employment openings and points of prosperity.

These opportunities include the Humber Freeport; the UK Food Valley programme leading investment in production capacity locally; growth in the local defence and security sector because Greater Lincolnshire is home to one of the UK's most significant networks of ISTAR businesses (Intelligence, Surveillance, Target Acquisition and Reconnaissance) Greater Lincolnshire Defence and Security Cluster; and the nationally recognised STEP Nuclear Fusion Programme at West Burton near Gainsborough. All are creating jobs for Greater Lincolnshire residents at varying skill levels in construction, data analysis, welding, engineering, advanced manufacturing, cyber security and many more. That is not to forget the value and importance of Greater Lincolnshire's other sectors, the essential sectors often referred to as 'foundational,' including health and social care, construction, the visitor economy and retail that also provide over 200,000 local jobs.

Devolution

Greater Lincolnshire has been a devolved area since 2025²³. The Greater Lincolnshire Combined County Authority (GLCCA) was formed following an agreement between the constituent councils - Lincolnshire County Council, North Lincolnshire Council and North East Lincolnshire Council - and the UK Government.

The devolution "deal" has secured greater localised decision-making powers and a minimum investment fund of £720 million (£24 million per year) over 30 years, plus an initial £2 million capacity fund and consolidated, multi-year transport fund²⁴. Relevant to this LSIP, the Authority will take control of adult skills budgets during 2026, including an allocation of the Adult Skills Fund (ASF) totalling £18.2 million in the first academic year. While the ASF funding is not additional or new money, GLCCA now has powers to define the programme to ensure it best meets local need. It must be noted that this funding is predominantly intended to support local people with no, or few, qualifications to develop their skills, in particular in literacy, numeracy and foundational digital skills.

GLCCA's elected Mayor is Dame Andrea Jenkyns.²⁵

LSIP Integration with Other Strategic Local Plans

The Greater Lincolnshire LSIP will feed into a variety of other local plans and strategies, providing a critical part of our evidence base for our strategic framework for the GLCCA. These include:

- The Greater Lincolnshire Plan – the GLCCA corporate plan, highlights priorities around training provision that meets business and employment needs; and boosting aspiration and confidence in learning and training. This directly links to the objectives of the LSIP.

- Local Growth Plan – in development and due to be published in summer 2026. The Local Growth Plan will incorporate findings from the draft LSIP and evidence base.
- Greater Lincolnshire Employment and Skills Strategy – to be developed during 2026, it will draw on evidence from the LSIP and Get Lincolnshire Working Plan.²⁶
- Adult Skills Fund (ASF) Strategic Skills Plan – demonstrating GLCCA's preparedness to manage the devolved Adult Skills Fund (ASF) budget.

The LSIP has been designed to ensure that it mirrors the sectoral priorities for Greater Lincolnshire. These sectoral priorities are clearly aligned through the Greater Lincolnshire Combined County Authority Corporate Plan and the forthcoming Local Growth Plan. Some of these sectors are strongly aligned with UK's Modern Industrial Strategy's eight growth-driving sectors²⁷ (IS-8) such as defence, advanced manufacturing and agri-food (agri-tech).

The core priority sectors for the region include:

- Agri-Food & Agri-Tech (IS-8): Centred on the UK Food Valley²⁸, Greater Lincolnshire accounts for around 30% of England's food chain and is a global leader in food security and technology.
- Energy (IS-8): A major focus on energy security, including offshore wind, hydrogen, and system integration, particularly around the Humber.
- Manufacturing: A sector with a strong heritage, contributing over £1.9bn to the economy and focusing on advanced manufacturing²⁹.
- Ports & Logistics: Greater Lincolnshire serves as a strategic gateway for UK trade, supported by the Humber Freeport³⁰.
- Defence & Security (IS-8): Home to significant RAF operations and a growing cluster of innovation-focused defence companies³¹, particularly in ISTAR (Intelligence, Surveillance, Target Acquisition and Reconnaissance).

The LSIP also has a focus on enabling and foundational sectors some of which also feature within the IS-8.

- Digital and technology (IS-8): underpins much of the technological development within our major growth opportunity sectors.
- Professional and business services (IS-8): a large portion of the Greater Lincolnshire economy which is critical to supporting the development of our priority sectors, employing over 35,000 people.
- Health and Adult Social Care: a significant sector in its own respect but also a vital enabling service for other socio-economic areas and factors.
- Construction: critical to developing commercial and housing sites as well as retrofitting activities.
- Visitor Economy: Vital to parts of our economy, particularly on the east coast where the sector can make up over 50% of the workforce.

Part One: Local Skills Needs

This section sets out the key current and medium term (three-year) priority skills needs of Greater Lincolnshire. The dominant themes have been identified via employer research on skills gaps and skills shortages carried out during winter 2025/26. This has been supplemented and sense-checked against local labour market data and known occupational growth opportunities. This has led to the prioritisation of six key themes that require urgent and collaborative solutions across Greater Lincolnshire between summer 2026 and summer 2029.

The first two themes span seven economically critical sectors, focusing on established and emerging occupational shortages and workforce skills gaps embedded within those industries, and the LSIP will highlight where there are strong correlations and cross-sector needs. The latter four themes are more cross-cutting in nature and seek to address skills gaps and fulfilment of economic opportunity across sectors (including those highlighted by the UK's Modern Industrial Strategy³²) and others analysed for their local economic importance across Greater Lincolnshire.

- 1. FORWARD:** Growth Sector Technical Skills
- 2. FOUNDATIONS:** Supporting Sector Technical Skills
- 3. INNOVATE:** Data, Digital and AI Awareness
- 4. INSPIRE:** Employability & Essential Skills
- 5. EMPOWER:** People Management Skills
- 6. ACCESS:** Navigation and Delivery of Training

Priority Theme 1: FORWARD: Growth Sector Technical Skills Needs

Headline need: Increase the supply of technical skills at pace, focussing on critical Growth sectors that are vital to growing our economy and protecting national security. Specifically, focus must be on strengthening Defence, Energy, Agri-tech, Farming and Food Manufacturing and Advanced Manufacturing sectors across Levels 2-7. Growth of opportunities offered by employers via work experience, industry placements, apprenticeships is also required.

Rationale: Labour market evidence, local growth opportunities, global shifts and employer feedback all show urgent need to bolster key roles in four critical sectors that underpin local prosperity and national sovereignty in military, food, energy and material security. From the dominance of the energy industries in the north of the county to the Food Valley in the south, these key sectors (all already prevalent in Greater Lincolnshire's economy) are experiencing some shortages, gaps and barriers to entry but employers as well as stakeholders are ambitious to turn the challenges into opportunities.

A strengthened supply of provision, especially of apprenticeships and shorter provision and tutors drawn from industry professionals, have been strongly voiced by both employers and providers. Existing models such as the Air and Defence College demonstrate how structured, high-quality pathways can successfully accelerate progression into the defence industry and RAF, providing a strong foundation to build further scalable approaches within this priority sector

Employer Insight: Across these critical growth sectors, which closely align with the Local Growth Plan's priority industries, employers recognise the need to strengthen the technical preparedness of new entrants while responding to a more constrained labour pipeline.

Some employers report that practical fundamentals can vary among new starters, and that longstanding talent sources – including Defence retirees – are becoming less available.

At the same time, rapid technological change, particularly through automation and robotics in sectors such as Agri-tech and Advanced Manufacturing, is reshaping skills requirements and creating new opportunities for upskilling and progression for workers at all stages of their careers. This is set against significant projected workforce growth, most notably in the Energy Industries, where employment demand is expected to rise substantially. Together, this highlights a clear opportunity to expand and strengthen capacity in core technical roles and to attract, develop and retain a larger, appropriately skilled workforce to support future growth.

Priority Theme 2: FOUNDATIONS: Supporting Sector Skills Needs

Headline need: Increase the local supply (and individual take up) of skills in three locally critical Foundation Sectors – namely Adult Social Care, the Visitor Economy and Construction between Levels 2 and Levels 7 via engagement of FE and HE partners and uptake of Industry Associates where relevant.

Rationale: The 17% projected growth of adult social care activities in Greater Lincolnshire over the next decade and the volume of feedback from employers about the difficulties in attracting and retaining workers, or even securing placements for them (especially those aged 16-18) in some vital roles, points to a sector-wide need to focus on recruitment and development of workers. Employers across all areas of adult social care voiced the need for more available training for caring for adults with complex co-morbidities in a variety of settings. There needs to be good alignment between provision and the NHS's jobs and skills plans to fill the gaps in nurse and pharmacist provision.

In the Visitor Economy sector, chefs are in urgent demand across hospitality, but this need was also raised as an issue in Defence and other foundational sector employers. There is also a need to address the volume of hospitality bed space across the county to support the delivery of large infrastructure projects and major events.

For Construction – a sector vital to the delivery of Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects and local priorities (a 29% expected growth of roles in residential and non-residential building occupations and 13% growth in roads and other infrastructure projects) - employers say they need assistance to ensure young people complete apprenticeships and progress within the profession.

Employer Insight: Survey and focus group participants highlight ongoing challenges in recruiting and retaining skilled and experienced staff across a range of critical support sectors, alongside clear ambition to strengthen workforce capability. Employers consistently note difficulties in filling supervisory, management and specialist technical roles, with some individuals moving within or between sectors before fully developing the depth of skills required to realise their potential in these occupations.

Many roles are recognised as demanding and high-responsibility, which can influence perceptions of attractiveness and limit the size of the available talent pool. At the same time, employers are increasingly seeking individuals with broader, higher-level capabilities, including leadership, technical expertise and the ability to manage teams and complex operational environments.

Skills gaps were most evident in key occupations such as deputy managers, clinical and care roles, head chefs, multi-trade construction workers and sector specialists, particularly where enhanced clinical, technical and supervisory skills are needed to support more complex service delivery, including care in community and home-based settings.

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

Headline need: Deliver local short/flexible training for further education students and adults to plug widening skills gaps in data, digital and AI capabilities in line with technological progressions.

Rationale: There is a critical need for refreshed short, flexible, localised training provision on three areas of digital capability; data interpretation/analytics skills to enable businesses make better data-led decisions, post-16 training on the Microsoft Office suite, and an urgent need to equip SME owners with suitable and current awareness of Artificial Intelligence (AI) opportunities to aid productivity and avoid vulnerabilities. AI was the single most mentioned skills need across the primary research for this LSIP. This is due to a general low base of understanding of what AI actually is, its benefits, and associated or perceived risks.

Employer Insight: Throughout the LSIP consultation, employers and providers consistently highlighted a widening digital and AI skills gap across the Greater Lincolnshire workforce – gaps which they are highly motivated to resolve. At a literacy level, businesses report that workforce entrants need better support to be competent and confident in using the Microsoft Office Suite to a common workplace standard – Word, Outlook and Excel were most frequently stated as examples of need to build proficiency.

A step up from literacy is a fast-emerging need for workers at all levels to become armed with the ability to understand, interpret and make decisions using data generated by new customer insight and performance recording tools. Currently, these advanced data analysis skills are concentrated in a small number of senior roles. This over-reliance on managers for digital and analytical capability is constraining productivity and wider organisational development, particularly in sectors such as Agri-tech, Advanced Manufacturing and Professional Services.

Although there is growing recognition of the need to improve digital and AI literacy across the region, current provision is seen as insufficient due to the challenging pace of technological change.

Employers also raised concerns that the length of existing IT and AI courses means content risks becoming outdated before completion, limiting their relevance and impact in fast-evolving digital environments.

Priority Theme 4: INSPIRE: Employability & Essential Skills

Headline need: Gaps in employability and essential skills across the workforce must be addressed, with particular (but not exclusive) focus on further and higher education students ahead of their entries into the local labour market and other under 25s. Provision for economically inactive 55-64 years olds in hotspots of economic inactivity and coastal areas also requires focus.

Employers – as key investors and stakeholders in this issue - must also play a greater role where possible in supporting younger workers and contributing to work readiness initiatives.

Rationale: There is an ongoing critical need to rebuild general employability skills and associated essential skills across the workforce, especially (but not solely) among younger workers. Specifically, employers need to see improvements in timekeeping, behaviour, teamworking, professional and interpersonal communications, telephone confidence, customer service and resilience in the workplace. While these needs are clearly profound and challenging employers, the feedback also points to people management training for those employers on inter-generational ways of working.

Employer Insight: Employers and providers consistently report a strong desire to support and develop their workers, maximising their talents and recognising their contributions to their businesses. However, societal shifts that were apparent during the post-Covid 2023 LSIP are persisting; employers highlighted significant gaps in core employability, communication and personal effectiveness skills among workers. Basic workplace capabilities such as handling phone calls professionally, composing business-appropriate emails and workplace collaboration often require direct employer intervention and additional support.

Concerns were raised about low resilience levels, limited attention to detail, some challenging behaviours, and arguably misaligned workplace expectations. Local providers further highlighted growing emotional, social and mental health needs among learners that they are committed to supporting despite the limitations of their resources.

Taken altogether these issues are creating barriers to progression, retention and productivity across multiple sectors and increasing the level of pastoral and remedial support required from both employers and providers.

While this could be viewed negatively, this LSIP aims to focus on this as an opportunity to build confidence, resilience and capability in workers of all ages to help them help them reach their full potential in Greater Lincolnshire.

Priority Theme 5: EMPOWER: People Management Skills

Headline need: In light of tandem issues - workforce issues highlighted in Theme 4 and new legislation - there is enormous potential to upskill people/team management capabilities across the area. Furthermore, given the region's prevalence of SMEs and family-run firms, business owners require support in succession planning to shore up the futures of their enterprises and build company resilience.

These issues require training solutions delivered via short provision as businesses cannot spare key supervisor or management staff to be away from work to attend long-form courses.

Rationale: There is a pressing need to uptake training on specific people management skills in the area. This is due to the high volume of micro and small enterprises in Greater Lincolnshire, where senior staff have wide ranging responsibilities. This requirement can also be attributed to the increasing need to carefully, compassionately and compliantly manage sometimes complex adaptations in the workplace and have difficult conversations, but gaps in knowledge and confidence make this challenging.

Furthermore, with the incoming Employment Rights Act 2025 set to fully embed during the lifespan of this LSIP it is essential that local employers are equipped with suitable employment law training.

Employers also need guidance on succession planning in their businesses. This is challenged by reticence in some sectors as a notable volume of workers do not wish to take on more senior roles (Agri and Food Manufacturing, Adult Social Care and Construction) due to a perceived narrow gap between the "hassle" of additional responsibilities and the often-minimal pay uplift.

Employer Insight: Employers and providers recognise the critical importance of strong people-management capability across sectors and identify this as a key area for development.

Many organisations are actively attempting to promote internal talent to supervisory and leadership roles, but report that individuals would benefit from earlier and more structured support to build confidence and capability in managing people and teams, especially against some challenging pay profiles. There is a clear opportunity to strengthen management pipelines, particularly as experienced managers approach retirement and succession planning becomes increasingly important.

Employers consistently highlight people skills as central to effective management, while providers note that the level of responsibility attached to supervisory and clerical roles is not always fully understood by potential entrants.

Addressing these gaps through targeted management development, with the new Employment Rights Act 2025 as a hook, would help improve workforce resilience, retention and progression across Greater Lincolnshire.

Priority Theme 6: ACCESS: Navigation and Delivery of Training

Headline need: There is a need to make access to training simpler for local employers and learners to underpin stronger take-up of local provision. More collaboration to address these issues is required. A focus on raising the number of qualified drivers across the area is also required.

Rationale: Throughout the LSIP consultation, employers strongly called for a comprehensive and easy to navigate localised service they can access to understand what training and funding opportunities are open to them, as this is currently a critical barrier. It is also clear we must raise awareness of what training and development local providers offer via an easy-to-access service, and real need to educate SMEs on the power of apprenticeships, Skills Bootcamps and flexible, short courses.

Transport to training, placements and work for young workers is also critical and a currently significantly limiting issue that needs urgent action. In rural areas of Greater Lincolnshire, this “hard barrier” of transport highlights the need for more localised delivery models, ensuring that learners can access training and work-related opportunities closer to where they live.

Employer Insight: Employers and providers highlighted a range of place-based and system-level factors that are influencing consistent access to skills, training and employment.

Greater Lincolnshire's large and rural geography continues to create transport challenges for learners and workers, particularly in occupations and sectors where driving is essential, and can make localised delivery and take-up of training more difficult, despite providers' vast efforts.

Employers also noted challenges in identifying and navigating local training and service provision through existing online tools, alongside perceptions that some pathways, such as apprenticeships, can feel complex and hard to navigate without support (this is especially the case in micro and small enterprises). However, there is strong recognition of recent progress, with Skills Bootcamps and the 2023 LSIP impact both widely viewed as significant, innovation-driven improvements that are making training more accessible, responsive and employer-aligned.

Providers report increasingly effective collaboration between colleges that they wish to build on, a renewed commitment to meeting employer needs, and historically high levels of employer engagement and willingness to participate in skills development. Together, this presents a clear opportunity to further simplify pathways, improve visibility of local provision, and build on strong partnership working to better connect people, places and training opportunities.

Part Two: Agreed Changes and Actions Needed

This section outlines the agreed changes or actions required to address each of the key skill needs identified in Part One. Expanded details on the specific skills needs are listed in Annex A and a full list of specific activities to deliver these changes / actions can be found in Annex B.

Priority Theme 1:

FORWARD: Growth Sector Technical Skills Needs

Combined Growth Sector Actions

Action Number	Skills need	Actions to address the skills need
1	Employers report a critical need across these four growth sectors to be more involved and consulted in course design and review of existing course content to ensure course graduates are equipped with the required capabilities.	Develop a Growth Sector Technical Skills Employer Group(s) for these growth sectors to aid engagement and co-design/co-delivery of training across these four critical sectors. Universities, Colleges and relevant ITPs to meet with and consult this group frequently.

Defence Actions

Action Number	Skills need	Actions to address the skills need
2	Employers in the Defence sector – the Royal Air Force and a strong supply chain of SMEs – wish to see an increased supply of relevant skills pumped into the Greater Lincolnshire workforce, from school, college and university leavers as well as from adult learners particularly among FE and HE leavers.	- Increase take-up of technical and STEM options for 16- to 19-year-olds - Align 16 to 19 Technical education with occupational skills shortages listed in Annex A. - Explore ways to increase T-Level volumes, apprenticeships and employment and Level 4+ Technical education - Continue to grow good apprenticeship offer at Levels 2 to 6 in the skills shortage occupations (Annex A), particularly for young people - Ensure alignment of HE offer at Levels 4, 5 and 6 with occupational skills shortages - Ensure alignment with Adult Skills Provision with the needs of the Defence sector.
3	Defence sector employers report critical recruitment issues that threaten their sustainability and growth. An ageing workforce, shrinking ex-military talent pool, and security barriers all need addressing to improve recruitment into Forces support roles and the supply chain.	Support the Greater Lincolnshire Defence Cluster to develop clearer skills and transition pathways for experienced workers, including ex-military and those moving from adjacent sectors. This activity should also build better understanding of and address the barriers to attracting and onboarding more senior or experienced talent into key defence roles locally.

Energy Industries Actions

Action Number	Skills need	Actions to address the skills need
4	Despite significant and growing opportunities in Greater Lincolnshire's Energy Industries and industrial decarbonisation, employers report workforce pressures in key technical roles due to an ageing workforce. On the Greater Lincolnshire side of the Humber alone, evidence consistently shows sustained and accelerating sector growth through the 2020s and into the 2030s, driven by offshore wind, Freeport investment and industrial decarbonisation. This creates an urgent need to train and recruit priority occupations at scale. At the same time, FE and HE providers report difficulties recruiting experienced industry professionals as tutors, constraining the capacity to train the future workforce. Providers state that a lack of information on employers' recruitment cycles, apprenticeship cohorts, pay scales etc limits the delivery of accurate and aligned Energy Industries (especially around renewables) careers IAG. Several large employers share this but more need to contribute.	• Explore the opportunity to adopt the Gatsby Foundation's Industry Associates programme and incentives for experienced professionals – welders, mechanical fitters, pipefitters, process engineers, project managers, designers, riggers, non-destructive testing technicians and site managers - to phase out of their careers into FE to teach the next generation fundamental skills. Support for those gradually moving from industry to teaching will be needed. This action should be carried out in line with and/or in support of Government's national programme for Construction and ECITB's Regional Skills Hub Funding. • Develop a programme for employers to deliver information on their roles, opportunities, future plans, pay expectations, recruitment plans etc to a set format to be collated and shared with local FE and HE providers. • Improve the flow of information from employers to providers about employers' recruitment cycles, apprenticeship cohorts, pay scales etc which limits the delivery of accurate and aligned Energy Industries (especially around renewables) careers IAG. Several large employers share this but more need to contribute. • Establish a short-term taskforce to understand the scale of the difficulties the local provider sector faces in recruiting experienced industry professionals as tutors, and potential solutions such as the Gatsby Foundation's Industry Associates programme.

Advanced Manufacturing Actions

Action Number	Skills need	Actions to address the skills need
5	Advanced Manufacturing employers report urgent recruitment and upskilling challenges, with both occupational shortages and workforce skills gaps constraining growth. An ageing workforce, reduced FE delivery of basic engineering skills, lack of specialist metallurgy provision, and anticipated difficulties recruiting engineering professionals over the next three years all point to the need to increase the supply of skilled entrants, particularly young people. Employers also consistently highlight the need to strengthen Advanced Manufacturing IAG to pump prime the future workforce to be aware of career opportunities in this sector. With already established challenges in recruiting skilled Engineering Technicians and anticipated difficulties in recruiting across the sector, swift action here is needed.	● Increase take-up of technical and STEM options for 16- to 19-year-olds. ● Align 16 to 19 Technical education with occupational shortages in Annex A. ● Continue to grow the good base of apprenticeships at Levels 2 to 6 in the skills shortage occupations (Annex A), particularly for young people. ● Increase the number and breadth of industry placements for T-Level students, particularly within SMEs. ● Ensure alignment of HE offer at Levels 4, 5 and 6 with occupational skills shortages. ● Aim to re-establish offer in lab science, metallurgy and materials, especially in North Lincolnshire to support the workforce sustainability of British Steel.
6	Employers report an urgent need for new entrants to arrive with core competencies already in place. Too often employers say basic skills must be developed by them “on the job”, creating a productivity burden for SMEs and frustrating workers, who find this slows progression into more senior roles.	● Review and develop short-course provision with employers to ensure learners enter Advanced Manufacturing priority roles (Annex A) with core competencies in place, including foundational engineering skills, automation (PLCs, robotics), digital and data skills, diagnostics, CAD, instrumentation, advanced electronics, tooling and materials science. This should support multi-skilling, reduce SME “on the job” training burdens, but must be underpinned by stronger Advanced Manufacturing IAG that clearly signals entry requirements and progression routes. ● Priority for supervisory and management skills (See Theme 5).
7	Employers strongly voiced the need to play a stronger role in the design of local manufacturing courses, especially at FE level but there is an opportunity for HE providers to better engage with the area’s employers to align training with the skills employers need while improving perception of provision.	● Establish a programme (in line with Action 1) to bring together larger numbers of employers with the local FE sector to tackle the perception of employers regarding their sometimes negative view of content and delivery. ● Tackle delivery capacity constraints at FE by exploring schemes to share tutors and specialist facilities, especially in tooling and CNC machining. ● Providers report barriers to addressing this employer skills need because of challenges recruiting tutors into the industry. Creation of a short-term taskforce is required to understand the scale of the challenge and exploring schemes to share tutors and specialist facilities, especially in tooling and CNC machining.

Agri-tech, Farming and Food Manufacturing Actions

Action Number	Skills need	Actions to address the skills need
8	Food manufacturing employers need a stronger, better-aligned technical talent pipeline at 16–19, with clearer progression into maintenance and engineering roles, to address current and anticipated occupational shortages.	• Increase take-up of technical options for 16- to 19-year-olds • Align 16 to 19 Technical education with occupational skills shortages (Annex A), track destinations and improve progression to related employment in food manufacturing • Establish accelerated apprenticeships for T-Level students in food sector maintenance
9	Employers state that Agri-tech, farming and horticulture provision across the area is fragmented and they have variable access to high-quality training and specialist facilities. This limits employer engagement and progression opportunities for learners.	• There is a good all-round offer at Riseholme College for agriculture and horticulture and specialist provision at the National Centre for Food Manufacturing. Explore opportunities for a Riseholme/NCFM-led initiative/collaboration to improve provision across the area
10	Evidence from employers says that weak coordination between employers and education providers is resulting in curricula and short-course provision that do not reflect real-world skills needs, with limited routes for industry innovation and practice to reach farms, factories and production settings.	• Develop a co-designed short course programme/ curriculum and/or review of current course content to include provision that tackle employer's upskilling challenges.
11	Employers in the Greater Lincolnshire Agri-tech, Farming and Food Manufacturing sectors report that post-16 full-time provision does not sufficiently develop employability and essential skills alongside technical skills, limiting recruitment readiness and long-term retention.	• Strengthen the integration and consistency of employability and essential skills development within post-16 full-time provision for the Agri-tech, Farming and Food Manufacturing sectors, to improve recruitment readiness, workplace behaviours and long-term retention alongside technical training, especially for priority occupations (Annex A)
12	Agri-tech employers report ongoing difficulties in recruiting young people and suitably skilled adults into key occupations, which they say is driven by a lack of specialised support for their recruitment cycles.	• Explore the possibility of a sector-wide but localised Adults Jobs Brokerage service for Agri-Tech via a suitable recruitment agency or other appropriate partner.
13	Food manufacturing employers of all sizes report difficulties in incentivising and developing staff to take on supervisory or management roles due to the sometimes narrow gap between pay and the "hassle factor" of taking on additional responsibilities. This leads to succession planning issues and over-reliance on existing managers.	• With the ERB, employers should review the barriers – pay, working conditions, staff policies, training opportunities – to identify ways to improve incentives and reduce barriers to becoming supervisors in food production (See Theme 5).

Outcome: More young people and adults progress into the named growth driving sectors' specific shortage occupations by summer 2029.

Priority Theme 2:

FOUNDATIONS: Supporting Sector Skills Needs

Health & Adult Social Care Actions

Action Number	Skills need	Actions to address the skills need
14	Employers from across Greater Lincolnshire, in both NHS Health and adult social care providers, wish to see an increased supply of relevant skills pumped into the local workforce, from school, college and university leavers as well as from adult learners. They voice a need for better alignment of technical education with their occupational skills gaps, a growth in relevant apprenticeships and potential bridging qualifications.	• Increase take-up of technical options for 16- to 19-year-olds. • Ensure alignment of 16 to 19 Technical education with occupational skills shortages (Annex A). • Explore ways to increase T-Level volumes and form partnership with NHS for placements and recruitment. • Grow apprenticeships at Levels 2 to 6 in the skills shortage occupations particularly for young people and in line with NHS workforce plan. • Explore the appetite among employers for a bridging qualification between Levels 2 and 5 for more senior care roles. • Ensure alignment of adult skills provision with needs of the Health & Adult Social Care sector. • Ensure HE provision aligns with NHS workforce plan (and other occupational requirements in Annex B) and that there will be sufficient volume.
15	Adult Social Care faces persistent recruitment and retention challenges driven by low relative pay and negative perceptions of the sector, alongside limited awareness of career pathways and progression opportunities, particularly among young people and those under 18.	• Establish a working group/taskforce to explore Adult Social Care careers IAG solutions to the lack of clear pathways or placements for 16-18s and low visibility of the care sector for young people. This should be done in line with the NHS's Workwell programme and leading sector bodies including Skills for Care and Linca.
16	Employers report significant gaps in the skills required to deliver safe and efficient community-based health and care services, including autonomous nursing practice, holistic care across learning disabilities and ageing populations, workforce logistics, conflict management, data and digital capability, and technical documentation such as Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs).	• Develop short course programmes and/or review current course content to include provision that tackle employer's upskilling challenges: Shortage of Pharmacists, end of life care, the "hassle factor" of taking on supervisory, management roles, rising demand for services, limited access to mandatory and specialised training, caring for older adults with complex co-morbidities (mental and physical health conditions).
17	There are challenges around under 18s securing work experience and/or placements in the Health & Social Care sector. This limits uptake of T-Levels, some apprenticeships and entry to the profession.	• Work with Skills for Care, LINCA, Lincolnshire Community Health Services NHS Trust, Northern Lincolnshire and Goole NHS Foundation Trust and employers to map the barriers and identify solutions to placements and work experience due to age considerations.

Visitor Economy Actions

Action Number	Skills need	Actions to address the skills need
18	The Visitor Economy faces persistent skills shortages across both entry-level and higher-level roles due to perceived weak or unknown progression pathways, limited availability of advanced technical and professional training, and misalignment between workforce supply and occupational demand. This is most acute for Chefs (particularly Head Chefs, and other growth and foundational sectors such as Defence also voice this need), senior hospitality managers, technical roles in Arts centres, strategic marketing and commercial roles, where employers report an insufficient supply of work-ready candidates with advanced, multi-disciplinary skills.	- Align 16 to 19 Technical education with occupational skills shortages (Annex A), track destinations and improve progression to related employment – specifically chefs/cooks, sports coaches and technical occupations in the arts/multi-discipline arts centres. - Review provision of Chef/Cook courses aimed at 16- to 19-year-olds and via the Adult Skills Fund. - Review both the current curriculum and the level of learner demand for Chef/Cook courses so could via a taskforce informed by data.
19	Visitor Economy in Greater Lincolnshire - in coastal/seasonal businesses and year-round hospitality, arts and physical activity enterprises - face growing skills gaps in digital, technical and operational capability, including digital marketing, data use, compliance, financial management and leadership skills. The gaps are constraining productivity, customer experience and business sustainability.	Facilitate the development of short course programmes and/or review current course content to include provision that tackle employer's upskilling challenges: technical and digital skills and digital marketing, social media and website management, data handling, cybersecurity awareness (See Theme 4), compliance re safeguarding, venue safety, food safety, employment law, budgeting and financial management, team leadership and people skills, customer service.
20	Limited hospitality accommodation capacity in parts of the area (not just in traditional visitor economy but in Defence, Education and Construction) is constraining workforce supply for major infrastructure projects and events.	- Undertake a review of the area's hospitality bed capacity including facilities to establish current total provision for peak times and where growth is required. - Conduct a study on how hotel/accommodation/ hospitality businesses collaborate at key/peak times to meet current needs and where gaps persist.

Construction Actions

Action Number	Skills need	Actions to address the skills need
21	The construction sector faces persistent skills shortages due to perceived shortfalls of training into priority occupations, weak progression from Level 2 and Level 3 provision into employment and apprenticeships, and low take-up of technical pathways among 16–19-year-olds. This is particularly acute for Building Services Engineering (electrical and plumbing), multi-trade technicians and retrofit roles, and is compounded by limited adult retraining routes/funding and frustrations about the volume of apprenticeship starts vs completion rates.	- Grow Technical training take-up for 16–19-year-olds for key Construction roles (Annex A). - Significant growth of Level 2 and Level 3 T-Levels for Building Services Engineering (BSE) for electrical and plumbing skills plus provision for in-demand Multi Trade Technicians and Retrofitting. - Align 16 to 19 Technical education with occupational skills shortages (Annex A), track destinations and improve progression to related employment, especially from Level 2 full-time trade programmes and T-Levels. - Increase promotion of Adult Skills Fund offer to Level 2 occupations for unemployed/economically inactive/career changers. - Establish accelerated apprenticeships for T-Level students and link to placements. Starts versus completions is already a challenge in this sector so this factor must be considered and tackled as part of this acceleration programme.
22	Skills gaps within the construction workforce—particularly in multi-trade skills, commercial awareness, digital capability, supervisory abilities, compliance and retrofit—are constraining productivity and the sector’s ability to respond to clean commercial growth opportunities, plus new energy and net zero demands.	- Review availability of short courses and employer’s own upskilling: estimating and commercial awareness, digital and AI including the use of AutoCAD, Microsoft Project, reading drawings and site plans, multi-trades for micro firms, supervisory development (See Theme 5), regulatory i.e. first aid, asbestos, abrasive wheels, confined spaces, working at height. - Also explore training needs for clean energy for Renewables, Net Zero Awareness and Retrofitting skills.
23	Providers say that their attempts to expand T-Level pathways are challenging, particularly within electrical and plumbing roles, though pressures are evident across other trades. Constraints on time, supervision requirements, and site productivity are restricting placement growth, weakening progression into employment and apprenticeships and exacerbating skills shortages. Employers therefore require targeted support to expand placement capacity at scale.	Providers report they are attempting to grow T Level provision but are challenged by a sharp shortfall in the volume of placements. A project to explore programmes to engage construction employers to help grow their capacity (and willingness) to take on T-Level industry placements for key roles (Annex A) is required.

Outcome: More young people and adults progress into adult social care roles and more uptake of middle and senior care management positions to stem churn in the profession by summer 2029. The shortfall of L2 and L3 trained Chefs is also addressed in the same timeframe. A rise in the number of Construction Apprenticeships and cross-county provision of L2 Trades, L3 Craft/Technician roles and L4-5 Higher Technical Supervisor roles in Construction should also be achieved by summer 2029.

Priority Theme 3:

INNOVATE: Data, Digital and AI Awareness

Data, Digital and AI Awareness Actions

Action Number	Skills need	Actions to address the skills need
24	Gaps in entry, progression and reskilling pathways into priority digital occupations, especially for young people and workers aged 55+, are restricting workforce supply.	- Align 16 to 19 Technical education with occupational skills shortages (Annex A) - Explore ways to increase grow T-Level volumes for occupational skills shortages (Annex A) - Digital 'Top Up' training at Levels 3 to 5 for those who have already been supported by a funded qualification - Align HE offer at Levels 3, 4, 5 and 6 with occupational skills shortages - Explore community-based digital skills provision for those aged 55+
25	Employers say that new entrants are not equipped to meet the challenges and opportunities presented by rapid technological evolution. This is creating digital and data skills gaps across the workforce, not just in digital and technology roles.	Review availability of short courses and provision for employer's to upskill in: AI, data understanding/interpretation/analysis skills, databases, digital automation tools, cyber security, accessibility rules, Microsoft Office suite
26	SME employers report quickly emerging skills gaps in understanding and safely applying AI within their business operations. Limited awareness of what AI is, how it can improve productivity, and how to manage ethical, commercial and data/commercial security risks, including issues such as bias, AI hallucinations and confidentiality, are holding back enterprises from confidently adopting and effective use of AI. Across the entirety of the LSIP primary research, this need was the single most cited need voiced by employers.	Explore current and future (where possible) employer needs around use of AI programmes and what training their businesses really need at a granular level. Employers want shorter (1-2 day) courses for this type of skills need.
27	Demand for AI, data and advanced digital skills across Greater Lincolnshire is outstripping the availability of provision, limiting employers' ability to adopt new technologies. It also presents a barrier to maximising the benefits of North Lincolnshire's AI Growth Zone designation.	Explore innovative ways to meet employer demand for digital, data, AI and cyber related provision and funding gaps. Key focus must be: AI, data understanding/interpretation/analysis skills, databases, digital automation tools, cyber security, accessibility rules, Microsoft Office suite as a minimum.

Outcome: Employers access flexible, modular upskilling that boosts data, digital and AI capabilities across the workforce.

Priority Theme 4:

INSPIRE: Employability & Essential Skills

Employability & Essential Skills Actions

Action Number	Skills need	Actions to address the skills need
28	The 'Soft Skills' deficit was highlighted as a major challenge by employers in the primary research conducted at the start of the 2023-26 LSIP cycle and this has not gone away. Weaknesses here in communications, teamwork, timekeeping, resilience, oracy, independence and telephone skills continue to damage productivity, staff retention and growth. 25% of all employers indicated that they are 'Very likely' to source external training relating to transferable skills over the next three years.	- Continue to strengthen employability and essential skills modules in all post-16 training and education. - This is a long term and national problem. Explore available research on why existing approaches and training is not working in Greater Lincolnshire and consider developing a new localised approach. - In partnership with the Greater Lincolnshire Careers Hub, develop work experience and placement programmes with a wider breadth of employers
29	Employers voiced a clear need for a simple reference point to understand an applicant's work readiness as recruitment is proving costly, time consuming and frustrating.	- Post-16 training institutions and Job Centre Plus should further collaborate – with input from employers, ERBs, sector and trade bodies plus worker representatives – to explore the potential and value of a Greater Lincolnshire Skills Passport scheme. - Explore how a wide range of employers would prefer to see applicants describing their readiness for work and if/where they require evidence in the future.
30	Inter-generational differences are causing friction in workplaces. Specifically these challenges are around younger entrants to the workforce's expectations on progression and rewards and behaviours in the workplace.	Explore the viability and impact of a Greater Lincolnshire (perhaps place based) programme to bring younger and senior workers together to learn about each other's work-based expectations and experiences should be developed to maximise the strengths of all age-groups and their generational traits.

Action Number	Skills need	Actions to address the skills need
31	Employers vociferously remark that younger or less-experienced workers are unready for work during their first few months of employment, resulting in protracted “hand holding” activities that are mutually unrewarding and demotivating.	- Build on previous pilots locally to develop a programme that supports employers to plan and develop their workforce, including inducting their staff to standardise the experience of starting and succeeding in work and mitigate disparate and time-consuming approaches to readying new employees to become operational in their roles quicker. Also expand to aid employers to experience more success in recruitment, induction, upskilling, retention and succession planning activities. - Post-16 training institutions should review their Careers Advice and Guidance and employability programme delivery in line with LSIP’s priorities and actions/activities and ensure it follows best practice and provides learners with information about key local sectors as set out in Priority Themes 1 and 2.

Outcome: Young workers are armed with skills that help them feel more confident in the workplace and local employers report a marked improvement in employability and essential skills by summer 2029. Employers in key sectors report they are equipped with a succession plan by the end of the same timeframe.

Priority Theme 5:

EMPOWER: People Management Skills

People Management Skills - Actions

Action Number	Skills need	Actions to address the skills need
32	People Management skills have been flagged as needing improvement across the area and in multiple sectors. Those entering or established in People Manager roles require short and accessible training to operate as effective and equipped People Managers.	Review local demand and provision of existing People Management courses in light of changing generational expectations of work, the Employment Rights Act, increased financial pressure on SMEs and a desire to retain talent in growing firms.
33	Employers ask for support in improving their awareness, understanding of and training about the unfolding Employment Rights Act, as this prospect is causing fear and reticence to create/replace roles across the labour market	- Develop a Greater Lincolnshire short course on the Employment Rights Act, aimed at SME Managers and family firms. - Investigate potential for targeted ILM or CIPD courses in key sectors and scale-up businesses.
34	Employers report worsening skills gaps in people-management capability, particularly among first-line people managers, limiting workforce performance, retention and progression. Deficits stated in a number of areas including interpersonal and communication skills, conflict management, managing health-related adjustments, leading multi-generational teams, and succession planning, highlighting the need to strengthen practical people-management skills across the workforce.	Review availability of short courses that can be provided in priority sectors where progression to more senior roles is providing a challenge (i.e. this is especially acute in Food Manufacturing and Adult Social Care) to address these skills gaps.
35	Employers say that they are not successful in progressing workers to more senior roles due to narrow pay versus responsibility margins.	Employers to improve incentives, pay grades and ways to reduce barriers to becoming supervisors in Priority sectors.

Outcome: Providers have explored ways to deliver accessible “short” courses across Greater Lincolnshire on specific people management skills, making reasonable adjustments, having challenging conversations and the Employment Rights Act 2025. Provision should be rolled out by autumn 2027.

Priority Theme 6:

ACCESS: Navigation and Delivery of Training

Navigation and Delivery of Training Actions

Action Number	Skills need	Actions to address the skills need
36	Employers find navigating, understanding and accessing training extremely complex, alienating and time-consuming. This limits uptake of technical and foundational skills in our area. A high-profile, county-wide solution is required.	Conduct a feasibility study focused on development, sustainability, ownership and impact of a Greater Lincolnshire Training website or app (to suit young people and those not desk-based). There is appetite for a dynamic site that is live with all current and upcoming provision, with content owned and loaded by providers. Taking examples of success and challenges from other LSIP areas, it is crucial that strong promotion and engagement activities will be critical to use and value given often that SMEs that are most in need of this service are typically time poor.
37	Limited SME understanding of the Growth & Skills Levy and apprenticeships is restricting take-up of this route to building a better skilled a workforce and strong pipeline of skills.	Conduct a communications campaign and deliver at least one large scale event aimed at Greater Lincolnshire's SME community to educate (and myth bust) about the power of apprenticeships, not just during National apprenticeship Week.
38	Due to Lincolnshire's size and rurality – with vast travel to learn and travel to work areas – transport is a widely reported limiting factor in the uptake of training and work for those over 16. Targeted solutions that result in a growth in the number of qualified drivers in Greater Lincolnshire and appropriate and sustainable public transport solutions are required.	- Driver training (including the Theory Test) should be included as enrichment activities within relevant full time FE courses including T-Level courses, adopting a model set out by Lincoln College. - Conduct a review of public transport cold spots/timeslots in order to support planning for targeted solutions.
39	There is a strong call for county-wide collaboration on joint bidding, funding, delivery and design of provision from both providers and employers. The learnings from the 2023-2025 LSIF project is an excellent starting point but must broaden and formalise to include employers.	Expand the Lincolnshire Skills Partnership to include FE, HE, ITPs, Local Authorities, GLCCA, stakeholders, trade and sector bodies and employers as well as the ERB

Outcome: Employers have access to a new localised training service that boosts the uptake of post-16 technical training by summer 2029. Transport issues for the under 25s have been reviewed with suitable and targeted interventions in place. Finally a formalised collaboration of providers which builds on the success of the 2023 LSIF programme to include employers in co-designing provision and other training interventions.

Combined Actions Across All Themes

Action Number	Skills need	Actions to address the skills need
40	Employers and providers report that progression from 16–19 full-time provision into relevant employment in priority sectors is inconsistent and unclear, limiting the effective supply of young people into skills-shortage occupations. A lack of understanding and visibility of learner destinations is constraining progression, completion and entry into the workforce.	A project to explore methods, costs and impact of tracking progression from priority sector-related (Themes 1 and 2) 16-19 full time courses into a relevant job role.

Outcome: Improved visibility and understanding of learner destinations, alongside increased availability of Level 2–3 apprenticeships in priority sectors, leading to stronger progression from 16–19 provision into sustained employment and a stronger pipeline of young people entering skills-shortage roles over the long term.

Endnotes

- 1 Skills England - GOV.UK
- 2 Department for Work and Pensions - GOV.UK
- 3 Skills for jobs: lifelong learning for opportunity and growth - GOV.UK
- 4 Skills and Post-16 Education Act 2022
- 5 Local skills improvement plans and designated employer representative bodies - GOV.UK
- 6 Guidance for developing a Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) - GOV.UK
- 7 FSB LSIPs | Leading the Way in Local Skills Improvement Plans
- 8 Home – Greater Lincolnshire CCA
- 9 <https://www.nelincs.gov.uk/humbers-growth-ambitions-outlined-in-new-economic-strategy/#:~:text=Potential%20to%20meet%2050%20per,before%20it%20is%20formerly%20adopted.>
- 10 <https://www.ukri.org/who-we-are/how-we-are-doing/research-outcomes-and-impact/innovate-uk/humber-industrial-cluster-plan/>
- 11 <https://humberfreeport.org/humber-freeport-attracts-1bn-of-investment-as-success-story-shared-at-decarbonisation-summit/>
- 12 https://www.greaterlincolnshirelep.co.uk/assets/documents/Greater_Lincolnshire_Local_Skills_Report_January_2022.pdf
- 13 Labour Market Profile - Nomis - Official Census and Labour Market Statistics - UK Business Counts (2025)
- 14 <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/bulletins/regional labour market/april2026> Table 1 Summary of the latest headline estimates and quarterly changes
- 15 <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/lep/1925185595/report.aspx#tabempunemp>
- 16 <https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/labourmarketlocal/E07000138/>
- 17 <https://democracy.e-lindsey.gov.uk/documents/s73307/Appendix%20B%20-%20South%20and%20East%20Lincolnshire%20Councils%20Partnership%20Economic%20Narrative%20DRAFT.pdf>
- 18 <https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/labourmarketlocal/E07000136/>
- 19 <https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/labourmarketlocal/E07000137/>
- 20 <https://www.lincoln.ac.uk/holbeach/>
- 21 <https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/censusareachanges/E07000138/>
- 22 <https://www.northlincs.gov.uk/site/documents/your-council/greater-lincolnshire-devolution-combined-county-authority-proposal/>
- 23 <https://greaterlincolnshire-cca.gov.uk/about-1/combined-county-authority/3>
- 24 <https://greaterlincolnshire-cca.gov.uk/about-1/combined-county-authority/2>
- 25 <https://greaterlincolnshire-cca.gov.uk/about-1/mayor>
- 26 <https://greaterlincolnshire-cca.gov.uk/downloads/file/86/get-lincolnshire-working-part-of-the-get-britain-working-initiative>
- 27 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/69256e16367485ea116a56de/industrial_strategy_policy_paper.pdf
- 28 <https://www.greaterlincolnshirelep.co.uk/priorities-and-plans/game-changers/uk-food-valley/>
- 29 <https://www.greaterlincolnshirelep.co.uk/priorities-and-plans/sectors/manufacturing/>
- 30 <https://www.northlincs.gov.uk/site/documents/your-council/greater-lincolnshire-devolution-combined-county-authority-proposal/>
- 31 <https://www.greaterlincolnshirelep.co.uk/priorities-and-plans/sectors/defence-and-security/>
- 32 The UK's Modern Industrial Strategy 2025 - GOV.UK

© Federation of Small Businesses 2026

fsb.org.uk

 [@fsb-uk](https://twitter.com/fsb-uk)

 [FSB Westminster \(Federation of Small Businesses\)](https://www.linkedin.com/company/fsb-westminster)

 [@fsb_policy](https://twitter.com/fsb_policy)

If you require this document in an alternative format please email:
accessability@fsb.org.uk

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior permission of FSB. While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the facts and data contained in this publication, no responsibility can be accepted by FSB for errors or omissions or their consequences. Articles that appear in the report are written in general terms only. They are not intended to be a comprehensive statement of the issues raised and should not be relied upon for any specific purposes. Readers should seek appropriate professional advice regarding the application to their specific circumstances of the issues raised in any article.

This report can be downloaded from the FSB website at www.fsb.org.uk