

Dec 2021

Gloucestershire's
Skills Advisory Panel

Local Skills Report

2021/22



Content outline

The table below provides an overview of the Local Skills Report's content with an accompanying description.

Chapter	Pages	Content	Description
1	3-4	Foreword	An executive summary by the GSAP Acting Chair providing reflections on GSAP's progress and summarising the main points of the report.
2	5-7	Skills Advisory Panels- Introduction	An overview of the governance and geography of GSAP area alongside information about the SAP programme more broadly.
3	8-19	Skills strengths and needs	A summary of GSAP's skills landscape, key skills needs and strengths, geographic and socioeconomic features.
4	20-29	Skills strategy	An outline of the main factors influencing skills strategy development in Gloucestershire and how GSAP prioritises its skills needs
5	30	Skills action plan	An overview of the skills actions GSAP and key partner organisations are taking in Gloucestershire to address its skills priorities.
6	31-37	Assessment of progress	A critical look at progress made against GSAP's skills strategy and action plan. This includes a reflection on the key achievements of GSAP and challenges faced.
7	38-39	Case studies / positive impact stories	Local success stories, case studies that show how skills mismatches are being addressed.
8	40-42	Looking forward	Draws together the thinking from across Chapters 4, 5 and 6 and provides a clear message for local providers and employers on how they can support the local skills agenda.
Annex A	43	Core indicators	A selection of skills-related indicators supplemented with supporting local analysis and intelligence.
B	43	Additional analysis and references	Additional relevant data that supports the report and a full list of sources referred to in the main body of the report. This refers readers to the Gloucestershire Employment and Skills Evidence base which was updated and published in March 2020.

Table 1: Outline of Local Skills Report chapters

Chapter 1. Foreword

For GFirst LEP, Gloucestershire Skills Advisory Panel (GSAP) and its members 2021-22 proved to be a challenging and busy period as it developed and finalised the Gloucestershire Skills Strategy 2022-27

<https://www.gfirstlep.com/downloads/2022/gfirst-lep-gloucestershire-skills-strategy-2022-27.pdf> and helped the County to recover from the economic impacts of the Covid pandemic and EU exit as well as:

- influence support for local employers in many sectors dealing with staffing and skills shortages
- co-ordinate and implement a wide range of national and local employment and skills programmes
- continue to progress the workstreams within the draft Gloucestershire Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) <https://www.gfirstlep.com/industrial-strategy/> published in 2019
- ensuring skills capital programmes/projects such as the Cirencester College Digital Skills Centre progressed on schedule to extend the learning provision available to Gloucestershire's young people, businesses and residents

Work of GSAP

Gloucestershire Skills Advisory Panel (GSAP) has brought together local employers, skills and training providers and key Departments and agencies working in the skills landscape to guide and facilitate effective collaboration and resource sharing to support local people and organisations dealing with the pandemic and beyond.

Three examples of GSAP-led collaboration include:

Information and Signposting – in November 2020 a new skills portal for Gloucestershire was launched to bring together into one place, the national and local support available for individuals facing redundancy, needing careers advice, seeking work or upskilling/retraining. www.skillsportalglos.com This is hosted and managed by GFirst LEP and funded by Gloucestershire County Council, signposting people to local training providers and a wide range of other support including the EMSI Career Coach tool, which brings careers information together with live job postings. Since launch the site has supported approx. 6,900 residents.

Enhanced redundancy/unemployment support – As part of the GSAP work on the skills response to the pandemic, it was identified that the existing support both for local businesses at risk of making redundancies and individuals facing redundancy/already made redundant needed further development, promotion and resources. This 'taskforce' seeks to identify businesses at risk of redundancy as

early as possible and also works with the individuals affected to help them retrain or move into other available work.

Adult Education Budget (AEB) – Through the GSAP, the organisations in the County receiving Adult Education Budget (AEB) funding from the Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) agreed to review the collective allocation of AEB and seek ways to use in a more co-ordinated way to help support local economic recovery from the impacts of Covid. With a County Deal again becoming a possibility for Gloucestershire, this provides further impetus for reviewing how AEB funding is used to best effect in Gloucestershire.

GSAP will continue to encourage and steer further collaboration and sharing of resources to support businesses and individuals in Gloucestershire. This report provides a 'snapshot' of the skills strengths and needs in the County, together with an outline of the impacts that GSAP is having. As such, it underpins the substantial work completed in preparing and publishing the Gloucestershire Skills Strategy 2022-27 and its related workstreams.

Pete Carr, Acting Chair of Gloucestershire Skills Advisory Panel, January 2022

Chapter 2. Skills Advisory Panels- Introduction

Skills Advisory Panels: the national context

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

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

The Gloucestershire Skills Advisory panel (GSAP) provides a link between local economic development needs and strategic planning, with the mandate to address issues around skills and unemployment/worklessness in the County. It is an advisory body with no legal status but with a specific role as part of GFirst Local Enterprise Partnership and the local authority structure within Gloucestershire.

The aim of the Panel is to boost economic growth by creating a more appropriate, relevant and highly skilled local workforce, and its role is to shape and influence employment and skills training and support to meet the skills needs of employers in Gloucestershire.

This is done by engaging private and public sector employers, colleges, training providers and the voluntary and community sector in the development and delivery of an integrated employment and skills strategy and associated action plan.

The Panel:

- Has developed an evidence base to inform the Panel about the employment and skills needs, demand and supply in the County
- Has developed and is driving the implementation of the Gloucestershire Skills Strategy 2022 to 2027. Initially this was done as part of the Gloucestershire Local Industrial Strategy published in 2019

<https://www.gfirstlep.com/industrial-strategy/> and now involves a skills strategy that

incorporates both the skills workstreams supporting local economic recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic, and those meeting the longer-term skills needs and sector growth ambitions of the County. These are brought together into an Action plan for Employment and Skills in Gloucestershire <https://www.gfirstlep.com/about-us/skills-for-business/>

- Has provided GFirst LEP and other appropriate bodies/groups such as the Gloucestershire European Structural and Investment Funding Committee (ESIF) with recommendations on both revenue and capital skills funding priorities and skills projects within Gloucestershire as well as initial thinking and priorities ahead of the UK Shared Investment Fund employment and skills elements
- Has optimised the impact of employment and skills investment for local communities, employers and individuals
- Used experience and knowledge of Panel Members and others associated with the Panel to seek to shape strategy and policy on employment, learning and skills development
- Influenced the prioritisation, planning and investment in employment and skills supply and the shape of delivery

The GSAP has made recommendations to the GFirst LEP Board, to Gloucestershire County Council, to the Gloucestershire Economic Growth Joint Committee (GEGJC), and to the Gloucestershire European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) Committee to enable employment and skills capital and revenue funding to be bid for and allocated in Gloucestershire, based on and targeted to deal with local priorities. It also works closely with the education, skills and training providers to ensure they are fully aware of and work towards achieving local employment and skills priorities.

GSAP members include representatives from:

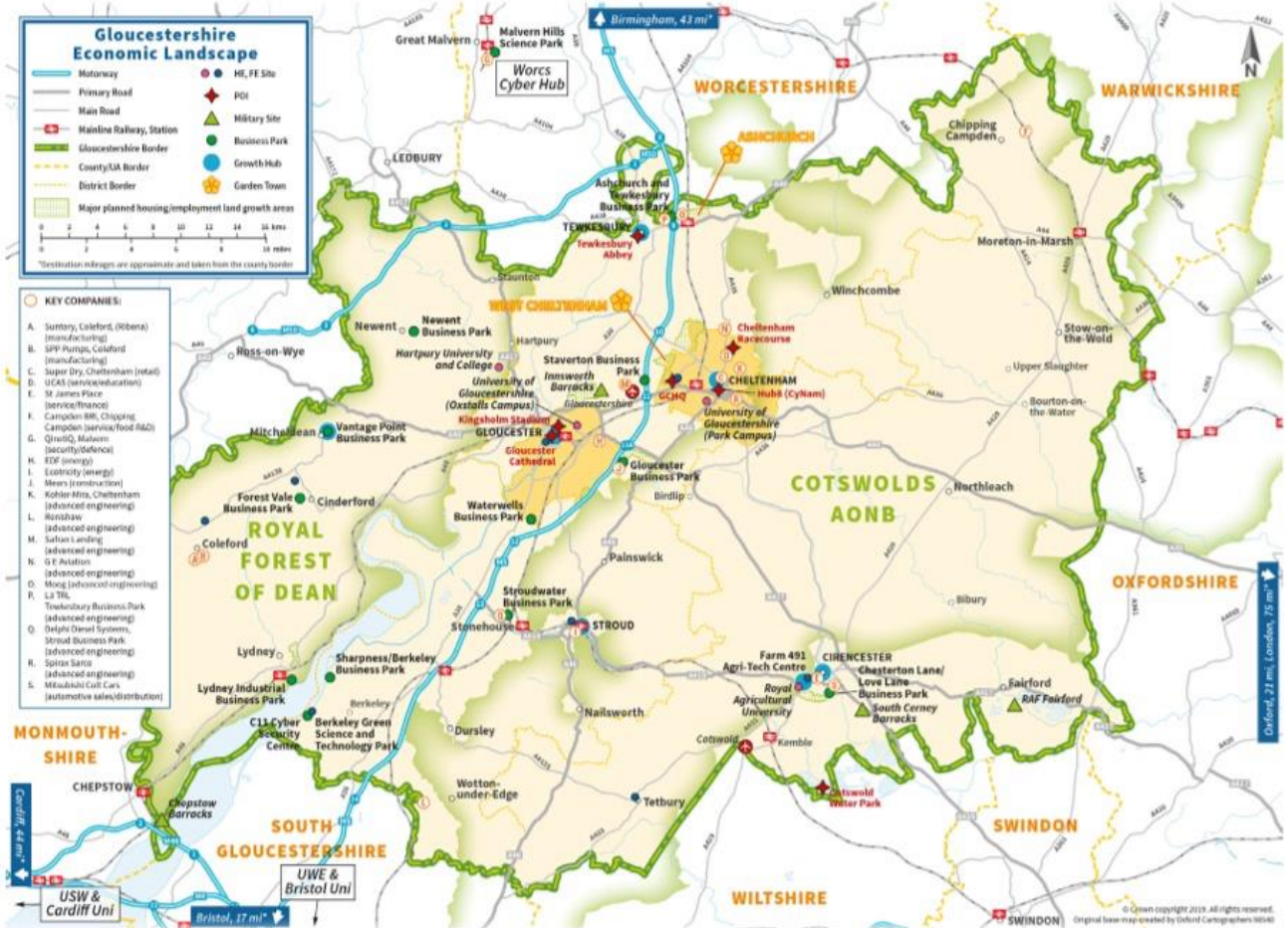
- GFirst LEP
- Public, private and voluntary sector employers
- Chambers of Commerce
- Education and skills providers (including schools, further education, higher education and independent training providers)
- Agencies and organisations within the local and national skills system (Careers and Enterprise Company, Department of Work and Pensions (DWP), Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA))

How GSAP is co-ordinated

GSAP is co-ordinated and facilitated by Pete Carr and Roxanne Varnham of GFirst LEP. Further support for GSAP members and at meetings is provided by a number of staff working for GFirst LEP and Gloucestershire County Council. They all contribute through their specific areas of expertise as well as through actioning the various employment and skills actions agreed by the GSAP.

For further details of current membership and meeting dates please see the GFirst LEP Skills for Business page <https://www.gfirstlep.com/about-us/skills-for-business/>

Map of Gloucestershire's Economic Landscape



29% of the Gloucestershire population live in rural areas compared to 17% nationally. The area therefore has a 70% higher rural population than average.

Contact details for questions/follow-up on the contents of this report or the work of the Gloucestershire Employment & Skills Board (GSAP):

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Chapter 3. Skills strengths and needs

Skills strengths and opportunities for further development	
Cyber and digital skills	Recent expansion of provision at Levels 4 to 7, including Degree Apprenticeships; new Digital Skills Centre at Cirencester College. Development of cyber park in Cheltenham. There are two Digital Skills Bootcamps funded by DfE operating across Gloucestershire. Cyber and digital skills lead employed by Cynam and working closely with the GFirst Careers Hub. Cirencester College opening a GFirst LEP co-funded Digital Skills Centre in 2022 and completing a 'digification' project to embed digital skills across the College's curricula. University of Gloucestershire has set up and is running a Cyber Education Advisory Board to further develop provision and enhance input from local and national employers.
Agri-tech	Expanding provision and technology dissemination via Hartpury College and University and at the Royal Agricultural University (RAU). Both organisations have secured funding to enhance their knowledge transfer work with local employers and Hartpury College and Hartpury University has been successful in securing some Levelling Up funding to further develop careers provision, especially in the Forest of Dean.
Construction	Major infrastructure and construction projects planned for the county provide opportunities for apprenticeships, skills and employment. AccXel centre in Cinderford funded through GFirst LEP now operational to provide apprenticeships, industry-led training and other construction skills opportunities in the County. Established construction skills programmes at Gloucestershire College and South Glos and Stroud College. Active Building Centre operational – a national resource based in Gloucestershire.
Skills needs and opportunities for further development	
Health and social care	EU exit and the Covid-19 pandemic have combined to increase the already existing high demand for health and social care staff. Demand is expected to grow further in the next few years and local provision needs to keep pace with this. GSAP will work with One Gloucestershire/the Integrated Care System to better understand their workforce development needs and, where possible, support the work with skills providers to

	<p>meet these needs. Initial work has started between the ICS, Gloucestershire County Council (GCC), Proud to Care and GFirst LEP to promote pathways into these sectors and increase local recruitment.</p> <p>The Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) Trailblazer reports prepared and published by Business West's LSIP team highlight some of the skills needs in the sector reported by employers https://www.businesswest.co.uk/local-skills-improvement-plan-lsip-west-england-plus</p>
<p>Green/renewables/retrofit (including green construction skills)</p>	<p>Qualifications have not yet been developed and there is lack of clarity about which businesses/job roles need which skills. This research, mapping and qualification development is needed at a national as well as a regional level. Work is underway with the SW Energy Hub and other SW LEPs to commission research to inform this. A new role of Climate Change Lead Co-Ordinator for Gloucestershire was established in 2020 and was appointed to. This role will help progress this agenda. The establishment of Zero Avia at Cotswold Airport provides a local opportunity to learn from cutting-edge work on hydrogen-powered aviation. South Gloucestershire and Stroud College has submitted a further bid into the DfE Strategic Development Fund to secure resources for a green skills centre. SGS College has also been successful in securing £400,000 of local 'pump priming' funding for the green skills centre through the Gloucestershire Economic Growth Joint Committee.</p>
<p>Haulage and Logistics</p>	<p>As widely reported, there was a significantly increased demand for Large/Heavy Goods Vehicle (LGV & HGV) drivers in 2021. This has been acknowledged as a wider historic problem of trying to fill shortages within the industry over many years. The combination of the pandemic and EU Exit has further exacerbated the shortage within the industry as overseas drivers have now returned to their place of birth, or have re-evaluated their chosen career with potentially better working conditions to be found in other sectors.</p> <p>Latest figures suggest that Gloucestershire places itself 8% above the national average in the availability of driver's jobs being advertised which is a 1.2% increase on the previous year. This supports the theory that although there is a year on year increase in drivers jobs available within the county, there may well be a deficit left by existing drivers leaving the industry.</p>

Gender breakdown for the industry: 98.8 % males; 1.2 % females.

Age breakdown: 34.5% aged 45 to 54 years; 24.4% aged 55 to 64 years (2018) This may go some way to explain why some drivers have decided to retire or seek alternative less demanding employment.

The largest employers of drivers in the county are the dedicated freight transport companies (60% of all LGV driving jobs).

The average wage for Drivers in Gloucestershire is £11.43 per hour compared with the national average of £11.97.

In 2020, within Gloucestershire the Districts of Tewkesbury and Stroud advertise more LGV driving jobs than the remaining districts advertising 885 and 798 respectively against Forest of Dean at 560 and Cheltenham at 524. This is in part due to the preferences for distribution companies to locate their businesses for easier access to major road networks.

Local training organisations suggest that the closure of the Large Goods testing centre in Gloucester impacted negatively on HGV training in the County because this necessitated travel outside the county for LGV testing, so increasing training and assessment costs.

The cost of training and attaining a licence is estimated at between £250 and £300 for a LGV licence and driving courses can range from £600- £1924 (2021).

Feedback from local logistics firms indicates that long hours and working conditions have made driving jobs less attractive compared with other sectors, as the commercial demands of logistics organisations often result in drivers spending longer time behind the wheel than planned.

Strengths and Opportunities:

Local training providers have the capacity and will to react quickly and successfully to local training needs. An example of this is:

As a direct result of the national HGV driver shortage the DfE launched a call for training organisations to deliver HGV Class 1 training courses under the Governments Plan for Jobs 'Bootcamp' initiative. This is where unemployed individuals can receive free intensive

	<p>training to qualify as an LGV/HGV driver. Betaris and Gloucestershire College were successful in securing a contract to deliver this training in Gloucestershire in 2021-22. The delivery model for four courses is 10 days classroom learning and 5 days practical training and capacity is 56 learners. Once the DfE-funded 'bootcamps' have been delivered, Betaris will be offering 3 courses for HGV training using Gloucestershire College's Adult Education Budget (AEB) funding delivered over a 5 week period April to June 2022.</p>
<p>Manufacturing</p>	<p>Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering</p> <p>Please note that Business West has been contracted to research and report on the skills needs of this sector as part of the Department for Education (DfE) Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) Trailblazer. This research will provide more detail and can be found at https://www.businesswest.co.uk/local-skills-improvement-plan-lsip-west-england-plus</p> <p>On the whole, future growth predictions appear to be stabilising, but some businesses have reported sales decreases and the number of survey respondents expecting to increase staff numbers and investment in the next six months has also fallen. Despite this, future sales predictions have increased, which indicates that businesses across the region may be planning to streamline current processes or utilise investments previously made to increase productivity, boost sales, and continue to grow.</p> <p>Skills Needs: Supply chain issues are not the only challenges being faced by SME manufacturers across the South West; over half of respondents (56%) from a Gloucestershire skills survey said that recruitment is also causing concerns. The South West reported a higher percentage of businesses in the sector facing recruitment challenges than the national average and some specific regional support could be required in this area. The challenges around recruitment appear to be affecting manufacturers regardless of whether their trade has increased or reduced since COVID-19, indicating a universal problem that needs to be addressed.</p> <p>Strengths and opportunities: As well as causing barriers to growth, these supply chain issues could also present an opportunity for SME</p>

	<p>manufacturers to work collaboratively by connecting those who are unable to fulfil demand, with those who are still struggling with a lack of demand. A number of respondents have told us they are working closely with both customers and suppliers to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand future demand and plan for the longer term • Review/change inventory holding positions to maintain supply and minimise the impact of price changes for customers • Review and often extend lead times to provide accurate forecasts • Increase their own supply chains to maintain supply to their customers <p>Threats</p> <p>Recruitment challenges are being experienced by a diverse range of businesses, regardless of their current situation or future growth expectations, and has been cited by 56% of regional respondents - 7% greater than nationally.</p> <p>Alarmingly, almost all firms are citing supply chain issues, which has the potential to constrain present and future growth prospects for the manufacturing industry across the South West of England. 96% of respondents have said that price changes are causing challenges, with 93% believing that this is being driven by a lack of raw materials available. This regional report also suggests that SME manufacturers are under pressure from their customers to maintain supplies and costs, whilst, at the same time, their suppliers are looking to increase the price of the goods they need to purchase. On top of this, there is a need for lead times to be extended to cope with the lack of availability.</p>
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Table 2: Gloucestershire Skills Strengths and Needs

Skills strengths and opportunities for further development

Cyber and digital skills

GCHQ is the UK's national cyber security and communications centre and has created a large pool of skills and talent that also impacts on local employment in finance, computing and management-consultancy, microbusiness and high-growth sectors. GCHQ runs engagement initiatives such as demonstrating new technologies at the

Cheltenham science festival and sponsoring entrepreneurship programmes in local schools. In terms of talent engagement and retention, there may be further scope for GCHQ to support talent networks for spinouts and engage with local education providers as broader activity around cyber and AI data sectors progresses.

Through our LIS research, we identified that 15.4% of young people surveyed have plans to enter the cyber-tech sector showing a good level of interest, with room to grow. 20.4% want to enter the creative industries, which is increasingly likely to incorporate advanced digital skills.

Gloucestershire's Universities, Further Education colleges, Adult Education Service, Library Service and independent training providers (ITPs) are increasingly seeking to align the courses they offer with the many local opportunities in cyber-tech.

Gloucestershire College, University of West of England (UWE) and University of Gloucestershire, in part through their involvement in the two Institutes of Technology (IoTs) that operate in the County, are working with other universities, businesses and government agencies on the Cheltenham Cyber Park ('Cyber Central') within the Golden Valley Development area.

The University of Gloucestershire, through both its School of Business and Technology, and its C11 Cyber Training facility at Berkeley Science and Technology Park, undertakes research and knowledge exchange activities that support innovation; deliver innovative solutions, courses, training and materials in areas related to cyber-tech and digital, business growth and innovation. Provision currently includes Level 7 (MSc in Cyber Security; Technical and Applied Computing; Creative Computing; Digital Construction), Level 6 (BSc (Hons) in Computer and Cyber Forensics; Cyber and Computer Security; Computing Technologies and Degree Apprenticeship in Digital and Technology Solutions).

Gloucestershire College has established cyber incubation units within the College's Cheltenham Campus to create a range of new office space, shared and dedicated laboratories, workshops and co-working facilities designed specifically for high-tech, cyber-based entrepreneurs and innovators, with access to educational facilities. This was part-funded through GFirst LEP and the 'Getting Building Fund'. Gloucestershire College's cyber and digital provision has been enhanced through collaboration with University of West of England (UWE) and currently includes provision at Level 4 (HNC Computing, Software Developer Higher Apprenticeship, Software Tester Higher Apprenticeship), Level 5 (HND Digital Forensics and Cyber Security), and Level 6 (Cyber Security Technical Professional Integrated Degree Apprenticeship).

South Gloucestershire and Stroud College's cyber and digital provision currently includes provision at Level 4 (HNC/HND Computing, and the following Higher Apprenticeships: Software Developer; Software Tester; Cyber Security Technologist; Network Engineer).

Cirencester College, again in part through its involvement in the Swindon College-led IoT, has added a new £4.48m digital skills centre to its campus that opened in early 2022. This centre provides additional learning space modelled on digital industries, rather than traditional classrooms, and will support progression into cyber and digital careers. Again, this was part-funded through GFirst LEP and the 'Getting Building Fund'.

Implications for GSAP's work:

This recent increase in cyber and digital provision at Levels 4 to 7 provides stronger pathways into cyber and digital careers. Along with the colleges' and universities' and GFirst LEP's work to establish more extensive and deeper links with local cyber and digital employers, this should result in a pipeline of talent for local employers and opportunities for those achieving these qualifications to gain local employment opportunities. This in turn will help retain in County some of the young people who previously may have sought to study and then work elsewhere. GSAP will need to continue to support the work of these local providers and assist them in establishing strong links with local cyber and digital employers, as well as helping them to promote the associated careers and employment pathways via such things as the Employment & Skills Hub, Careers Hub and Skills Portal.

GSAP will continue to support emerging initiatives to encourage greater collaboration between businesses active in the cyber-tech and digital sector, academia, and nationally important institutions such as GCHQ. Collaborative working of this nature will create an environment in which innovation within cyber-tech, artificial intelligence and associated cross-sector businesses will flourish and grow. GSAP will also to continue look beyond Gloucestershire, to seek collaborations with others such as the Universities of Oxford, Bath, South Wales, Cardiff, and Bristol to further develop and accelerate the pipeline of talent to satisfy current demand and support projected growth in cyber-tech and the digital economy.

Agri-tech

Hartpury University and College and the Royal Agricultural University deliver both general and specialist skills relevant to Gloucestershire's businesses as well as significant research and innovation support in agri-tech.

Hartpury University and College is a specialist provider of high-quality applied education, training and research. Their industry-led research and commercial partnerships within the specialisms of animal, in particular equine, and sport, result in innovative solutions, which impact and influence locally, nationally and internationally the development of these same sectors. In addition, the Hartpury Agri-Tech Centre, which opened in September 2019, provides farming professionals with access to the latest livestock technology, expertise and ideas and the Digital Innovation Farm, part-funded by GFirst LEP in 2020 through the 'Getting Building Fund' will create new innovation and demonstration workspace for high growth SMEs.

With the challenges of EU exit and food security, the Royal Agricultural University (RAU) is well-placed to provide innovative, sustainable solutions for land managers, food producers and the wider rural economy. This is achieved through (i) innovative education programmes, supported by a government post-Brexit strategic initiative, co-designed with industry to ensure that businesses have the skills needed to face the future, (ii) a nationally recognised centre of excellence for student entrepreneurship, (iii) applied research, and (iv) a Knowledge Exchange Hub that pioneers farmer-led innovation and supports the agricultural and wider business sectors through the LEP-funded Farm491 project, as well as businesses of all types through the Cirencester Growth Hub.

Implications for GSAP's work:

As articulated in the draft Gloucestershire Local Industrial Strategy (LIS), agri-tech is very important to Gloucestershire, as a predominantly rural county with a strong land-based sector. GSAP will need to work with Hartpury University and College and the Royal Agricultural University to ensure that the skills capital investments made by GFirst LEP and both institutions are fully utilised. These investments need to help provide the career pathways into local agri-tech employment that were originally envisaged and help knowledge transfer and disseminate learning and good practice to the land-based industries.

Construction

There are strategic plans for the construction of housing and infrastructure in Gloucestershire and these bring with them significant employment and skills opportunities.

Housing - In total the strategic plans in Gloucestershire identify the need for a total of 61,500 new homes to 2031.

Transport infrastructure projects include:

M5 Junction 10

Gloucestershire County Council have been successful in their bid to Highways England for funding to upgrade Junction 10 of the M5. The agreement is for £250million with a delivery by October 2024. This funding will be used to improve access to and from the motorway northbound and southbound to a new link road into Cheltenham and will be critical in the delivery of housing and employment growth in this area.

M5 Junction 9 / A46

Options are currently being considered for a new dual carriageway between the M5 near Tewkesbury and Teddington Hands roundabout and associated works to M5 junction 9. The scheme would improve regional/national north-south road connectivity as well as solving long standing local traffic issues along the A46 corridor. The scheme will also unlock transport capacity to support the delivery of the Tewkesbury Garden Town.

A417 Missing Link

The planned £500 million upgrade of the A417, a key route linking the South West and Midlands, will see a single lane stretch of carriageway between the Brockworth bypass and Cowley roundabout in Gloucestershire, upgraded to dual carriageway.

Golden Valley Development

This West Cheltenham strategic allocation site was identified to deliver 1,100 homes and 45ha of employment land and will include the development of a major cyber park to host businesses in the cyber and digital supply chain.

Tewkesbury Garden Town

The Tewkesbury/Ashchurch area was awarded Garden Town status in 2019 based

upon a potential development of 10,195 homes and approximately 100 hectares of employment land.

Gloucester City Centre

Gloucester City Centre is undergoing some significant redevelopment, including the construction of a digital quarter and The Forum providing 125,000 sq ft of office space, a shared workspace club, an innovation hub designed for emerging cyber businesses and incubator businesses, a 116-bedroom four-star hotel, a 9,000 sq ft gym, restaurants, shops, bars and cathedral view apartments, together with a multi-storey car park, alongside over one acre of public realm and landscaping work.

<https://www.forumdigital.co.uk/> The announcement that University of Gloucestershire is purchasing the Debenhams store close to the site of the Forum, will provide further learning opportunities in the city centre.

New Construction Skills centre

In addition to the existing local and national construction training providers operating in Gloucestershire, in 2019, GFirst LEP funded the development of the AccXel Construction Centre in Cinderford, Forest of Dean. Developed by the construction industry, for the industry, AccXel seeks to accelerate learning of the latest technological advances in sustainability and digital construction. <https://www.accxel.co.uk/#about>

Implications for GSAP's work:

The extensive pipeline of housing, transport infrastructure and regeneration projects in Gloucestershire provides GSAP and key partners with significant opportunities to build Social Value into major contracts and work with developers to ensure that apprenticeships, careers inspiration and support, jobs and skills development are all integrated for the benefit of local residents and businesses.

Skills Needs

Gloucestershire has a higher incidence of firms reporting vacancies than nationally and regionally – with 28% of firms reporting at least one vacancy and 43% of these classed as 'hard to fill'. The main reasons for hard-to-fill vacancies are low number of applicants with required skills, as well as a lack of qualifications or work experience required by the employer.

Sector Growth Forecasts:

Gloucestershire LEP	
Sectors with highest forecast growth (2017-2027)	Sectors with lowest forecast growth (2017-2027)
1) Health and social work	1) Food drink and tobacco
2) Arts and entertainment	2) Rest of manufacturing
3) Information technology	3) Engineering
4) Professional services	4) Agriculture
5) Other services	5) Public admin. and defence

Table 3: Gloucestershire Growth Forecasts for Sectors

The COVID-19 Pandemic has only increased demand in health and social care. Elsewhere the need for digital skills remains high. Risks of automation, replacement demands and a high proportion of hard to fill vacancies are continuing issues for the Engineering and Manufacturing sectors.

Occupation Growth Forecasts:

Gloucestershire LEP	
Occupations with highest forecast growth (2017-2027)	Occupations with lowest forecast growth (2017-2027)
1) Caring personal service occupations	1) Secretarial and related occupations
2) Health and social care associate professionals	2) Process, plant and machine operatives
3) Health professionals	3) Textiles, printing and other skilled trades
4) Customer service occupations	4) Skilled metal, electrical and electronic trades
5) Corporate managers and directors	5) Administrative occupations

Table 4: Gloucestershire Growth Forecasts for Occupations

Health and social care occupations are forecast to grow and the combined effects of EU exit and the pandemic has accelerated this.

Implications for GSAP’s work:

GSAP and local and national training providers need to work more closely with One Gloucestershire, the Integrated Care Service (ICS) for Gloucestershire and to support the strategic and operational planning and delivery of training for the health and social care sectors in the County. One Gloucestershire has a specific objective to develop a sustainable local health and care workforce – offering the best training, education, learning, professional supervision and environment to attract and keep the best staff.

Skills and training provider perspectives

In Gloucestershire, as is the case in lots of other areas, there is a balance to be struck between employers wanting a ready supply of suitably qualified and experienced applicants for particular job roles and employers being willing to invest in training and the development of staff once they have recruited and appointed them.

This point also holds for Apprenticeships in the County, where skills providers report that the supply of potential apprentices outweighs the supply of apprenticeship job roles in local businesses. This indicates that further work needs to be done locally to stimulate the offer of more apprenticeships, and this work is included as a workstream in the Employment & Skills Action Plan.

Feedback from skills providers indicates that the pattern of demand for skills training in the following sectors includes:

Sector/sub-sector	Demand level
Construction and building services (including new/developing green construction technologies)	Consistently high demand
Computing/ICT	Consistently high demand

Sales	Consistently high demand
Accounting	Consistently high demand
Rail	Consistently high demand
Forklift truck operating	Consistently high demand
Health and care	Consistently high demand, EU exit will further increase demand
Engineering and manufacturing	Fluctuating demand
Hospitality	Very low demand – partly because of national training programmes (and current Covid impacts on the sector)
Retail	Very low demand – partly because of national training programmes (and current Covid impacts on the sector)

Table 5: Sector/subsector demand feedback from providers

Additionally, skills providers report the following in relation to emerging sectors:

Sector	Demand	Issues affecting providers being able to meet demand
Green/renewables/retrofit	Increasing	Qualifications have not yet been developed, lack of clarity about which businesses/job roles need which skills
Motor vehicles (electric)	Increasing	Technology for diagnostics training needed

Table 6: Emerging sector/subsector demand feedback from providers

The need for time-limited ‘conversion’ courses – The pandemic has resulted in experienced, qualified staff from some sectors needing to retrain rapidly in order to secure work in other sectors. Typically, this can require a 3-month intensive training approach by skills and training providers. This need is sometimes difficult to respond to, especially given the below two factors affecting capacity.

Factors affecting skills providers' capacity to respond to local skills needs include:

Availability of/access to training venues/facilities - even if providers have their own fully-equipped venues/facilities, they are often booked with existing provision so rapid, responsive provision to deal with short-term increases in demand is challenging.

Availability of tutors/lecturers and ability to attract people from industry to take up these roles – This is partly because of the salaries able to be offered by colleges/training providers and because of the shortage of tutors/lecturers in certain subjects/specialisms.

Implications for GSAP's work:

GSAP needs to continue to work with the employment and skills funding agencies, primarily the Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) and Department of Work and Pensions (DWP), as well as the local and national training providers operating in Gloucestershire to ensure that:

- Gloucestershire is able to meet its skills needs effectively and
- Skills and training providers are able to respond flexibly and in a timely way to the impacts of the pandemic and the longer-term employment and skills needs of the County.

Chapter 4. Skills Strategy

GFirst LEP and GSAP have recently developed and published the Gloucestershire Skills Strategy 2022-27 that incorporates both the skills workstreams supporting local economic recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic, and those meeting the longer-term skills needs and sector growth ambitions of the County.

Strategy development was led by GFirst LEP's Director of Employment & Skills, working with a sub-group of GSAP members and LEP and Gloucestershire County Council (GCC) education, employment and skills staff. Development of the strategy included contributions from and consultation with:

- Local employers
- Local careers, employment and skills providers
- GFirst LEP Board, business groups, Careers Hub
- Growth Hub Network partners
- Gloucestershire County Council members and officers
- District Council members and officers
- Gloucestershire Economic Growth Joint Committee (GEGJC)

Factors that GSAP is taking into consideration for prioritising skills needs locally

Local economy key trends and summary

Predicted sector growth

Pre-Covid, four sectors: Agriculture, forestry & fishing; Health; Information & communication; and Accommodation and food services were anticipated to see the greatest growth over the next 20 years for Gloucestershire compared to the UK average. These sectors along with Construction; Mining, quarrying and utilities; Motor trades; and Education were all expected to grow above the national rate. In absolute numbers the greatest increase in employment in Gloucestershire was expected to be in Health and Accommodation & food services.

Three sectors have seen significant additional business formation and start-up activity: Professional scientific and technical; Mining and Utilities; and ICT.

A further three sectors that have comparable levels of employee growth, but lower levels of business formation: Construction; Property; and Business Administration.

Implications for GSAP's work:

Subject to the impacts of Covid and EU Exit, these predicted growth sectors will provide employment opportunities in the County and local skills providers' provision will need to continue to take account of this.

Predicted sector decline

The Wholesale sector was expected to exceed the national decline, while the Manufacturing sector was also expected to decline. The impact of Covid has accelerated the decline of the manufacturing sector in the County and has stalled, and even reversed, the projected growth in accommodation and food services. The Finance & insurance; Property; Public administration & defence; and Transport & storage sectors were also expected to decline in contrast to the national picture. The greatest reduction in employment numbers was projected to be in Manufacturing, followed by Public administration & defence.

Implications for GSAP's work:

There may be particular recruitment challenges for these more highly skilled sectors that may be likely to rely on agencies where they are outside of larger urban skills networks and reserve pools of graduate skills.

Creative Industries clusters in the County

There is notable Creative Industries clustering in Gloucestershire. Cheltenham (the largest district labour market) also has a very high percentage of Creative Employment. The presence of DCMS Creative Industries sectors has been shown to have a strong direct effect on skills clustering and retention, which, in the medium term, also drives the formation of higher value business sectors.

Implications for GSAP's work:

Through the draft Gloucestershire Local Industrial Strategy, GFirst LEP and several stakeholders have identified the creative industries in Gloucestershire as an important aspect of the local economy and something that attracts and clusters skills in the County.

Job Vacancy Trends and Skills Shortage Vacancies

Gloucestershire has a higher incidence of firms reporting vacancies than nationally and regionally, with 28% of firms reporting at least one vacancy compared to 20% nationally and 21% regionally.

43% of vacancies in Gloucestershire were classed as Hard to Fill, this was in line with the regional average but higher than the national average of 33%. The percentage of skills shortage vacancies was lower than the regional average but higher than the national average.

Implications for GSAP's work:

'Manufacturing' and 'Business and other services' sectors have the highest proportion of skills shortage vacancies, suggesting this is an area for GSAP to focus on in the future.

Deprivation

Gloucestershire is a mixed area in terms of the Index of Multiple Deprivation. Some parts, in Cheltenham and some more rural areas, are less deprived, while there are some areas, mainly in Gloucester and Cheltenham, which are very deprived. Deprivation is linked to productivity through under-training of the workforce, a reduction in life expectancy and underemployment, among other links.

The urban areas, particularly Cheltenham and Gloucester, have a mix of high and low

levels of deprivation. Deprivation in Gloucester is spread, with the more deprived areas in the west and the less deprived in the east, while in Cheltenham the more deprived areas are in the north and the less deprived in the south.

In contrast, the rural areas of Gloucestershire are largely, but not exclusively, somewhere in the 40–60% of most deprived neighbourhoods, although there are large areas of limited deprivation, Forest of Dean is an area of specific rural deprivation focus.

Implications for GSAP's work:

It is expected that nationally and locally-commissioned employment and skills initiatives, including those introduced as a response to support economic recovery post-Covid, will need to include some geographical targeting in the more deprived areas of the County. This is in part because those currently furthest from the labour market are likely to be pushed yet further from it as unemployment increases as a result of Covid. Consideration should be given to the co-ordinated use of the Adult Education Budget for geographically-targeted interventions/programmes.

Employment and self-employment

Compared to national, regional and comparator LEP areas, Gloucestershire has the highest employment rate. The proportion of 16–64 year-olds that are employees is higher than regionally or nationally. Three comparator LEP areas (Oxfordshire, Swindon and Wiltshire and West of England) have a higher share of employees, but when accounting for self-employment (which is relatively high in Gloucestershire) these three LEP areas have a lower share of total employment activity.

Unemployment

Gloucestershire at 4.5% (Dec 2020) has a slightly lower level of unemployment than comparator LEP areas and the South West region (4.9%) and significantly lower than nationally (6.4%).

Self-employment

In spite of an overall increase in the number of active businesses in Gloucestershire as a whole, only Cotswold district has kept pace with (and exceeded) the national level of business formation per head. Gloucester has the lowest level of business starts. As the location with the highest number of students and younger workers, this suggests there may be a need to further support entrepreneurialism, skills and talent retention.

Implications for GSAP's work:

The claimant count in Gloucestershire has increased significantly through the economic impacts of Covid and as some sectors are impacted more than others, former employees in those sectors may consider setting up their own businesses. Whilst Gloucestershire has a strong and expanding Growth Hub Network, specific support for start-ups needs to be reviewed, including the support provided through local skills providers. Consideration should be given to the co-ordinated use of the Adult Education Budget for this.

Skills levels of Gloucestershire residents

In terms of the total level of NVQ4+ skills (equivalent to degree level) in the labour market, Gloucestershire ranks 9th out of 38 LEPs.

Between 2010 and 2019 the number of people with NVQ4+ higher level skills in the Gloucestershire labour market increased by 39,400 to reach 163,600, which is 43.3% of the economically active population. This is above the South West (39.2%) and England (40.0%).

Qualifications (Jan 2019-Dec 2019)

	Gloucestershire (Level)	Gloucestershire (%)	South West (%)	Great Britain (%)
NVQ4 And Above	163,600	43.3	39.2	40.3
NVQ3 And Above	230,600	61.0	60.5	58.5
NVQ2 And Above	296,300	78.4	78.2	75.6
NVQ1 And Above	337,800	89.4	89.3	85.6
Other Qualifications	22,300	5.9	5.4	6.7
No Qualifications	17,800	4.7	5.3	7.7

Source: ONS annual population survey

Notes: For an explanation of the qualification levels see the definitions section.

Numbers and % are for those of aged 16-64

% is a proportion of resident population of area aged 16-64

Proportion of employment in better paid jobs

Gloucestershire has a lower share of those employed in SOC 1–3 jobs (Managers, directors and senior officials, Professional occupations and Associate professional and technical) compared to the South West regional or national proportions.

Implications for GSAP's work:

It is clear that Gloucestershire has not attracted and retained those with higher skills to the same extent as comparator LEP areas, especially the West of England.

Consideration should be given to how those with higher skills can be retained in Gloucestershire through the proposals for a 'Magnet County' in the Gloucestershire Local Industrial Strategy and through identification and promotion of clearer careers pathways and LMI in the County.

EU and Migrant Workers

People from the EU are the largest non-UK-born demographic and make up between 37% (Cotswold) and 47% (Tewkesbury) of non-UK-born residents in Gloucestershire districts.

Implications for GSAP's work:

GSAP needs to continue to monitor the impact of EU exit on the workforce of the County and whether or not this results in skills shortages in certain sectors.

Age and skills

Gloucestershire, like most of the UK, has an ageing population. The local dynamic is unlike neighbouring places in that Gloucestershire has the highest share of 50–64 year-olds of all neighbouring areas, has declining resident workforce availability and is also a net exporter of 18–24 year-olds.

While the proportion of people in the labour market with higher skills has grown, Gloucestershire has not attracted higher level skills to the same extent as some neighbouring areas, or matched the expansion seen nationally in higher skills. Qualitative evidence from local companies supports the view that mature talent in the area supports high value engineering and consultancy sectors – and to some extent the age profile represents a trade-off in terms of mature skills and younger talent, with much of the current workforce due to reach retirement age in the next few years.

Implications for GSAP's work:

Supporting continued productivity growth will require access to both deep and wide labour market talent pools, partly to offset the replacement demand in the County. However, Gloucestershire has a healthier older population than many comparable areas, offering people the opportunity to continue to work later in life so the work of the DWP 'Fuller Working Lives' team and similar initiatives should be explored to identify and develop means of helping local businesses undertake succession planning and for knowledge transfer to take place between older and younger members of the workforce.

Progression from secondary schools/academies

Schools in Gloucestershire are expected to see growth in student numbers over the next few years, at least up to 2025/26, including 8% growth in 11-16 year olds and 20.3% growth in 16 years plus.

Key stage 4 destinations

The vast majority in every district in Gloucestershire proceed to sustained further education, following the national trend. The Forest of Dean has the lowest rate of students going into full time education, at just below 80%, while Cheltenham has the highest rate, at just below 90%. Most school leavers at this stage start apprenticeships or full-time work, although nearly 10% of students in the Forest of Dean have no sustained destination.

Key stage 5 destinations

Over 50% of those who leave school after Key Stage 5 in all districts proceed to further sustained education, with most of those students going on to further education. Of those that do not go into education, a large proportion go into sustained employment, with a small number starting an apprenticeship. Again, the Forest of Dean has the greatest proportion of school leavers (around 15%) who have no sustained destination.

Implications for GSAP's work:

Progression from Forest of Dean schools at both KS4 and KS5 need to remain an area of focus for GSAP. This work is already being supported by the Gloucestershire Careers Hub and its collaborations with the Forest Economic Partnership (FEP) and GSAP recognises that such work on aspirations, progression and careers support takes time.

Graduate Retention

In terms of graduate retention six months after completion, Gloucestershire performs poorly, with a retention rate of 60.7% – 32nd of all LEPs. This shows that graduates are

more likely to leave Gloucestershire within six months of graduating than they are in most other areas, including all neighbouring LEP areas. This is important in understanding whether graduates see Gloucestershire as a good place to live and are able to find suitable work. Nationally, graduate retention tends to be much higher in urban areas with labour market opportunities at scale, so a county like Gloucestershire, without a city of significant size, tends to experience the impact of this through graduates moving to more urban areas for work.

STEM (Science, Technology Engineering and Maths) skills and apprenticeships

Technical and vocational skills are of particular importance to the Gloucestershire economy with potential to address the particular skills shortage vacancies faced as STEM provision and apprenticeship delivery has expanded. However, Gloucestershire remains 33rd of 38 LEP areas in terms of the scale of STEM graduate skills produced.

Approx. 7.5% of Gloucestershire employment (22,778 people) is in STEM roles including science, research, engineering and technology professions.

Apprenticeship delivery numbers suggest a strong expansion of delivery including the expansion of higher standards and new progression routes from intermediate and advanced frameworks. There is continued growth in take up of higher-level apprenticeships resulting in expansion in this skills pipeline.

Implications for GSAP's work:

Gloucestershire ranks above average for STEM employment but it does not produce STEM graduates at a large enough scale locally to support the employment base and is relatively poor at graduate retention in relation to local comparator areas. In part, this is impacted by students at Level 6 seeking STEM programmes at universities outside of Gloucestershire. STEM provision in the County is expanding but this needs to remain an important focus for GSAP. Apprenticeship delivery is highly concentrated in four of ten frameworks and there is potential to target provision more closely at productivity skills shortages and to ensure that apprenticeship provision aligns with and supports the longer-term planned growth sectors of the County including cyber and digital, agri-tech and green/renewables/retrofit.

Employability and employment programmes

There are a number of national and local employment programmes operating in Gloucestershire that need to work collaboratively and in a co-ordinated way to provide effective support for local residents. The introduction of new programmes to help support people in dealing with the effects of the pandemic is to be welcomed but these have the potential to confuse and complicate provision locally. These programmes/schemes include:

Kickstart <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/kickstart-scheme>

Restart <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/restart-scheme>

Youth Hubs <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/help-to-find-work-for-universal-credit-claimants-aged-18-to-24>

Implications for GSAP's work:

GSAP, GFirst LEP and Gloucestershire County Council already play active roles in the co-ordination of skills, employability and employment programmes operating/soon to operate in the County and this work needs to continue as the new programmes are introduced and the EU funding for some of the existing local programmes (e.g. the Going the Extra Mile (GEM) project and Work Start) comes to an end. This co-ordination and collaboration work needs to be adequately resourced and actively managed. It also needs to ensure that potential customers are aware of and understand the options open to them and they know which programme/scheme best supports their needs.

Links between local skills priorities and national skills priorities

Skills priority category	Priorities and supporting rationale
Cross-cutting skills priorities (far-reaching, cross-sector)	
<p>Digital skills</p>	<p>- These are needed across all sectors and at a range of levels, by businesses and other organisations for business transformation and for individuals from essential 'digital citizens' skills through to Degrees and Degree Apprenticeships in cyber and digital. Local training providers are rapidly developing more extensive programmes and courses to support these priorities and GSAP needs to play a key role in helping to shape, and co-ordinate the learning offers to businesses and individuals to ensure they meet needs, are of high quality, and are viable for providers. This needs to include consideration of national initiatives such as Digital & Technical Bootcamps.</p>
<p>Apprenticeships</p>	<p>- These are needed now to provide a route for talent development and retention in the county into a wide range of sectors and job roles. The apprenticeship offer in the county needs to support the longer-term needs of local businesses as well as the longer-term ambitions for sectoral growth in the county in: agri-tech; cyber and digital; health and social care; green/renewables/retrofit. Currently, there is some mismatch and, consequently, a need to review existing and currently planned provision with apprenticeship providers to work with them to reshape the apprenticeship offer.</p>
<p>More co-ordinated and collaborative use of County skills assets</p>	<p>- Given the lack of a devolution deal for Gloucestershire and the low likelihood of this changing in the near future, focus needs to be on the GSAP developing more cohesive and longer-term plans and more collaborative working between and with training providers to ensure the county's skills needs are better supported. This needs to include funding and strategic management of a County-wide team to co-ordinate this work, ideally involving GFirst LEP and Gloucestershire County Council, and working with the employment and skills providers and agencies operating in the County.</p>

Information and signposting

Overall rationale: Up-to-date information required for those seeking careers advice, opportunities to retrain and upskills to enter/re-enter the job market. Currently this is fragmented. Local initiative would bring together current national and local information and disseminate it.

Labour Market Information - Up-to-date managed LMI that uses best national and local resources

Skills portal - A central point of contact for businesses and individuals seeking skills

Accessible and effective CIAG for adults and young people

Co-ordinated promotion of HE course/programme offer available across all Gloucestershire universities, especially for priority growth sectors (cyber & digital, agri-tech, green/renewables/retrofit)

Apprenticeships

Overall rationale

More apprenticeship opportunities in local businesses; more Levy transfer to local businesses to retain funding in-county; apprenticeship offer to fit growth sectors including longer-term ambitions for the County (e.g. cyber, agri, green); support for businesses to retain existing apprenticeships; support for apprentices made redundant after furlough/from local businesses.

Supply stimulation: Campaign and support for local businesses to see the benefits of apprenticeships in economic recovery

Increased Levy transfer to local businesses: More Levy-paying local employers to transfer unspent Levy to businesses that can use this to increase the number of apprenticeship opportunities

Retain existing apprentices: there is a risk of existing apprentices being laid off at end of furlough/as local businesses contract

Apprenticeship offer supports growth sectors and long-term ambitions of the County: The Apprenticeships and other training provision offered in the County need to enable individuals to gain jobs and train in the growth sectors and the sectors identified in the LIS (e.g. cyber and digital, Green/renewables/retrofitting)

Greater flexibility for employers in the training they spend their Levy on: Shorter and more focused training programmes needed by employers but unable to fund this through Apprenticeship Levy and many employers unwilling/unable to spend on this training

Apprenticeship clearing house: Provide support for local employers and local potential apprentices to connect and to increase the uptake of apprenticeships

Degree Apprenticeships: Extend the range of degree apprenticeships offered by Gloucestershire universities that support the sector growth ambitions of the County (cyber & digital, agri-tech, green/renewables/retrofit)

Unemployment/redundancy support

Overall rationale:

Businesses need brokerage support to help them to mitigate/ deal with potential redundancies; individuals facing redundancy need careers advice to help them switch to other sectors or retrain; unemployed individuals need support to get into/get back into work and tackle any barriers to this

Brokerage support for businesses: Advice, guidance and brokerage to help businesses find ways of avoiding/mitigating redundancies; brokerage to relevant other support available

CIAG support for individuals at risk of redundancy/seeking work: Individuals need help seeking roles in sectors new to them and knowing which sectors are hiring/growing

Clear retraining offers/pathways for those who need it: Courses/programmes that enable individuals to upskill/re-train to enter/re-enter the workforce including Employability skills, Growth sector-specific training/qualifications, Training/qualifications that match the skills sought by local employers, Self-employment & business start-up skills and support

Local co-ordination and contribution to national employability/redundancy support initiatives: Local co-ordination and contribution to national employability/redundancy support initiatives: Kickstart; Restart; Work and Health Programme; Job Entry Targeted Support (JETS)

Commissioning, preparation and delivery of local employability/redundancy support initiatives: Sector-based work academies for cyber and digital; green - renewables/retrofitting to meet longer-term ambitions of the Local Industrial Strategy (LIS)

Engineering and Manufacturing Capability Index: To match redundancies to vacancies and contract fulfilment requests to the Gloucestershire's wider capability

Construction: Use leverage of Social Value and other means to support and maximise the construction skills and employment opportunities across Gloucestershire (including within Cheltenham Borough and The Forum development in Gloucester).

Cyber County - Digital and cyber skills

Overall rationale

There is a need for flexibly delivered and industry-standard digital and cyber skills learning programmes at various levels provided for local residents and organisations to upskill residents as ‘digital citizens’ who are equipped to work remotely for their current or future employers, help businesses with their ‘digital transformation’ and provide local employers with staff with appropriate digital and cyber skills

Expand and improve digital and cyber skills offer in the County to ensure support for: ‘Digital citizens’ and skills to work remotely; Digital skills for businesses to support digital transformation; Cyber skills and qualifications to equip individuals to enter the cyber sector and increase cyber capabilities of local employers

Skills priority category Sector priorities (or occupational priorities)	Priorities and supporting rationale
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Agri-tech; Cyber and digital; green/renewables/retrofit; health and social care

Growth of these sectors and sub-sectors form a fundamental part of the long-term ambitions of the County and the Gloucestershire Local Industrial Strategy. As the impacts of the Covid pandemic include the decline of previously strong and expanding sectors such as aerospace, advanced engineering and manufacturing, tourism, etc. there needs to be planned and co-ordinated growth in these sectors in the County, combined with clear, widely promoted and understood pathways and training routes into jobs at all levels in these sectors and subsectors.

Table 7: Links between local and national skills priorities

Chapter 5. Skills action plan

In line with GSAP prioritising work on local economic recovery from the Covid pandemic and supporting the longer-term ambitions for the County, the Employment and Skills Action Plan focuses on driving forward **five main workstreams** agreed within the Skills Strategy for Gloucestershire 2022-27 and informed by the various local economic recovery strategies, plans and interventions developed by GSAP, GFirst LEP, Gloucestershire County Council, the six District councils in Gloucestershire and the colleges, universities and independent training providers operating in the County.

The **Action Plan for Employment and Skills in Gloucestershire** has been re-written to drive the implementation of the Skills Strategy for Gloucestershire and, along with the strategy, was first published in January 2022. The Action Plan is updated quarterly and reported on every six months and can be found at <https://www.gfirstlep.com/about-us/skills-for-business/>

Chapter 6. Assessment of progress

Taking a local leadership role

a. In what ways has GSAP become a local leader for skills work?

GSAP has acted as a means of identifying, highlighting and discussing local skills needs and a conduit for co-ordinated action based on these needs. This has been particularly important in the absence of a devolution deal for Gloucestershire resulting, in the need for strengthened collaboration between local stakeholders to better utilise resources from within these local stakeholder organisations. Examples include: the planning and coordination of Adult Education Budget (AEB); the development and co-ordination of a redundancy taskforce to gather intelligence about local businesses at risk of making redundancies and intervention to support both the organisations and the individuals affected.

GSAP has also enabled the 'join up' of local agendas, in order to enable skills providers and others to see the impacts of and develop their own responses to such things as local health inequalities.

GSAP members have acted as thought leaders and critical friends to GFirst LEP and other stakeholders in the development and refining of key strategies and action plans. Examples: a sub-group of the GSAP members contributed to and critiqued the draft content of the Gloucestershire Local Industrial Strategy (LIS), in particular, the 'cyber-tech' and 'people' chapters.

Further work needs to be done to ensure the GSAP has a clearer role in reviewing and recommending skills capital projects put forward to GFirst LEP. This needs to take account of the potential conflicts of interest generated by the fact that many of the skills providers seeking skills capital investment also sit on the GSAP.

b. To what extent is GSAP working together with local partners including skills providers and employers? How has this changed over the time GSAP has been running? How has this changed since the Covid-19 pandemic?

In common with all SAPs, GSAP's members are drawn from local employers, local skills providers and local and national strategic partner organisations/agencies such as Gloucestershire County Council, GFirst LEP, DWP, ESFA, Careers & Enterprise Company, etc.

The very nature of the work of the GSAP enables the various members and partner organisations to better understand the needs, ambitions, barriers, constraints, strengths and weaknesses of the various audiences that employment and skills provision in the county is aimed at, as well as of the providers themselves. This has developed and improved over the time the GSAP has been in existence and has led to increased

collaborative working or skills providers boosting their capacity or programme offers based on discussions and prioritisation by the GSAP. Examples include: a local skills provider working more closely with the secondary schools/academies in the County to provide support for those at risk of becoming NEET; a college strengthening its presence and visibility with Jobcentre Plus work coaches in order to increase referrals to provision; an adult education provider strengthening its course offer to better align to and support people facing redundancy and in need of digital skills.

The absence of a local devolution deal and the funding and greater influence that comes with such a deal has combined with a 'pause' in the EU funding opportunities (specifically ESF funding) that has, until recently, limited the work of GSAP to:

- Contributions to the local strategies and action plans relevant to employment and skills (e.g. Local Industrial Strategy, local skills strategy and action plan)
- The Gloucestershire Careers Hub bid, set up phase and launch
- Actions within the control, remit and resources of the organisations represented on the GSAP

The Covid pandemic has emphasised the need to:

- make best use of existing resources and seek national and local resources and initiatives to support Gloucestershire's skills priorities.
- Act fast to support those facing redundancy or the need to upskill/switch employment to another sector
- Co-ordinate the various employment initiatives operating (or soon to operate) in the County to ensure they collaborate and refer customers between them, as opposed to competing and confusing potential customers.

Examples of this approach can be found in most priorities and actions within the skills strategy and action plan, such as:

Information and signposting – the development of the Gloucestershire skills portal (please see www.skillsportalglos.com and further details of this in Chapter 7).

Redundancy support – a redundancy 'taskforce' has been set up (please see further details of this in Chapter 7).

Co-ordination of national and local employment and skills support initiatives/programmes – (please see further details of this in Chapter 7).

Local collaboration between agencies, employers and providers - (please see further details of this in Chapter 7).

Enhancing local knowledge

- a. *How far is your SAP in developing a clear understanding of current and future skills needs? How developed is your knowledge base? What still needs improving?*

Understanding of future skills needs

The GSAP has a clear understanding of the longer-term direction of travel of skills needs. These include the need for more: STEM provision, particularly within Higher Education in the County; cyber and digital provision that aligns with the needs of local businesses; agri-tech; construction; green/renewables/retrofit; health and social care.

However, the specifics of this longer-term direction of travel needs unpacking, clarifying and disseminating further. This is needed to help skills providers plan their provision and stakeholders to support and guide them effectively and needs considerable further development through the use of:

- Employment data and trends from our employment and skills evidence base and updates
- Awarding body qualification specifications, including apprenticeships and T-levels
- Direct local employer engagement, involvement and feedback e.g. through the GFirst LEP business groups, CYNAM (local cyber employer consortium/membership group), employers offering apprenticeships, etc.
- Employers (both local and national) in the key growth sectors such as: cyber and digital; agri-tech; construction; green/renewables/retrofit; health and social care
- Consultation with employment agencies specialising in the relevant sectors
- Job role analysis for roles in the relevant sectors
- Draft 'pathways' into job roles, in particular into the cyber and digital sector/s

Understanding of current skills needs

The GSAP's understanding of current skills needs has been significantly impacted by the Covid pandemic. Reasons for this include:

- The pandemic has impacted certain sectors and sub-sectors much more than others (e.g. retail, accommodation and hospitality, tourism, events, etc.) and this has resulted in many people previously employed in these sectors to need to change direction and seek jobs in completely different sectors, sometimes in lower-skilled and lower paid jobs
- Some employers have ceased recruiting full-time permanent staff and have switched to short-term and/or zero hours contracts
- Some local employers that have previously predicted and planned for growth,

have had to reconsider and, in some cases, downsize whilst dealing with the double challenges of Covid and EU exit

The GSAP is therefore, on a monthly basis and at each meeting, reviewing key structural changes and trends in the local employment market. More work needs to be done to help local employment and skills providers to understand what the local labour market information (LMI) is showing and therefore how they need to adjust provision and support for learners/clients to progress effectively into work or within work. This directly links to the question and section below. To these ends, GFirst LEP and its Careers Hub have jointly agreed to purchase a LMI tool that will enable job postings to be integrated with careers information within the Skills Portal and the Careers Hub website.

Impact on local skills provision

- a. *To what extent is your SAP influencing skills providers so that their offer better meets the skills and labour market needs in the area? This could include any provision you directly commission and/or any devolved budgets, functions or responsibilities (e.g. devolved AEB in MCA areas).*

As Gloucestershire does not yet have a devolution deal from Government, GSAP has focused on working with skills providers to ensure they support the skills priorities in the ESIF Strategy <https://www.gfirstlep.com/about-us/our-vision/eu-structural-investment-funds-strategy/> and the Strategic Economic Plan <https://www.gfirstlep.com/about-us/our-vision/strategic-economic-plan/> , as well as, more recently, in the draft Local Industrial Strategy <https://www.gfirstlep.com/industrial-strategy/> and the Skills Strategy for Gloucestershire 2022-27 <https://www.gfirstlep.com/downloads/2022/gfirst-lep-gloucestershire-skills-strategy-2022-27.pdf>

This work has included:

Strategic planning

The development of the suite of four documents: employment and skills evidence base; skills strategy; employment and skills action plan; and this local skills report will all enable GSAP to provide a clearer and stronger steer to local skills providers so that their provision is more co-ordinated and more closely aligned with the skills and labour market needs of Gloucestershire.

Specific programmes/schemes

Gloucestershire County Council and GFirst LEP employment and skills staff working with GSAP and involved in the co-ordination and commissioning of employment support programmes, are working with the prime contractors for the Restart scheme. The Gloucestershire County Council staff member involved also worked with DWP on the assessment of the regional tenders for this scheme. This ensured that the needs of GSAP and Gloucestershire residents, the need to co-ordinate

and collaborate with other local and national providers/projects was emphasised to them.

Covid-19 recovery and renewal plans

- a. *How has your SAP influenced priorities for Covid-19 recovery and renewal plans?*

GSAP has strongly influenced the employment and skills aspects of the support for local economic recovery. This has resulted in an extensive range of workstreams and actions, as detailed in the **Action Plan for Employment and Skills in Gloucestershire** which can be found at <https://www.gfirstlep.com/about-us/skills-for-business/>

Skills action plan

- a. *What are the most significant elements of your skills action plan that you have been able to fulfil? Equally, which of those unfulfilled actions need addressing most?*

The most significant elements of the **Action Plan for Employment and Skills in Gloucestershire** that have been fulfilled so far have been:

Information and signposting – the funding and development of the Gloucestershire skills portal www.skillsportalglos.com and the integration into this of Career coach Gloucestershire <https://www.skillsportalglos.com/career-coach/>. Together, these resources have brought together a wide range of national and local careers, employment and skills support, as well as live job vacancies, to make it easier for local residents to find and access the support they need. The development and adjustment of local labour market information (LMI) based on the work of the GFirst Careers Hub LMI working group <https://www.gloscareershub.com/>

Redundancy support – a redundancy ‘taskforce’ has been set up and is working in a co-ordinated way with a number of businesses in the County that are having to make redundancies.

Co-ordination of national and local employment and skills support initiatives/programmes – this includes work on:

Kickstart, with the various Gateway organisations operating in the County, together with DWP/Jobcentre Plus colleagues

Restart, with the potential incoming prime contractors

The unfulfilled actions that need addressing most are:

Actions leading to longer-term and more strategic planning by skills providers to meet the changing local labour market needs, particularly those identified earlier in the Local Skills Report relating to the skills strengths in the County that can be capitalised on and the skills needs requiring further investment and expansion in provision:

Skills strengths and opportunities for further development	
Cyber and digital skills	Recent expansion of provision at Levels 4 to 7, including Degree Apprenticeships; new Digital Skills Centre at Cirencester College. Development of cyber park in Cheltenham. Expansion of University of Gloucestershire cyber skills provision. 'Digital Divides' report published https://www.digitaldivides.co.uk/reports highlighting aspects of digital exclusion in the County and recommendations for tackling this.
Agri-tech	Expanding provision and technology dissemination via Hartpury College and University and at the Royal Agricultural University (RAU). This is a possible sector for inclusion in the next phase of Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs).
Construction	Major infrastructure and construction projects planned for the county provide opportunities for apprenticeships, skills and employment. The establishment of the Employment & Skills Hub by Gloucestershire County Council and GFirst LEP, together with expanded provision through the AccXel Centre, Gloucestershire College, and South Glos and Stroud College provide opportunities for local residents to learn construction skills and be employed on local construction projects.
Skills needs and opportunities for further development	
Health and social care	EU exit and the Covid-19 pandemic have combined to increase the already existing high demand for health and social care staff. Demand is expected to grow further in the next few years and local provision needs to keep pace with this. GSAP will work with One Gloucestershire to better understand their workforce development needs and, where possible, support the work with skills providers to meet these needs. The Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) Trailblazer reports prepared and published by Business West's LSIP team highlight some of the skills needs in the sector reported by employers https://www.businesswest.co.uk/local-skills-improvement-plan-lsip-west-england-plus
Green/renewables/retrofit (including green construction skills)	Qualifications have not yet been developed and there is lack of clarity about which businesses/job roles need which skills. This research, mapping and qualification development is

	<p>needed at a national as well as a regional level. The appointment of a Climate Change Lead co-Ordinator for Gloucestershire is an opportunity to progress this work, along with the recently funded green skills centre managed by South Gloucestershire and Stroud College.</p>
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Chapter 7. Case studies/positive impact stories

Information and signposting – Gloucestershire County Council funded GFirst LEP to establish the skills portal in November 2020 to bring together in one place, information about a wide range of national and local support available to those facing redundancy or seeking work or to upskill themselves. Since launch the site has supported approx. 6,900 residents. Please see www.skillsportalglos.com

The establishment of the Gloucestershire Employment & Skills Hub in 2021 by Gloucestershire County Council and GFirst LEP is already enabling further face-to-face signposting and support for local residents and employers, including those with disabilities.

Redundancy support – GSAP members and partners have recognised the urgent need to set up a 'taskforce' to identify businesses at risk of making redundancies and getting appropriate support interventions in place as early as possible. This taskforce was set up in December 2020 and includes DWP/Jobcentre Plus, Adviza (local National Careers Service provider), the Growth Hub Network partners, GFirst LEP, District Council economic development leads, skills providers' business development and other teams, unions, etc.

Co-ordination of national and local employment and skills support

initiatives/programmes – through the GSAP, there is an emerging need for a wider employment and skills hub that supports, co-ordinates and drives the implementation of national employment and skills initiatives e.g. Kickstart, traineeships, Restart, JETS, Youth Hubs, Work & Health Programme, etc., local initiatives/projects e.g. Inclusivity Works, Forwards, NEET projects, the remaining ESF-funded projects (GEM and Workstart) as well as apprenticeships. This has also been highlighted through the work of the Child-Friendly Gloucestershire Coalition Board and working groups

<https://childfriendlygloucestershire.com/> and opportunities presented by the March 2021 Budget announcements around the UK Community Renewal and UK Shared prosperity Funds <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-community-renewal-fund-prospectus> where employment and skills features strongly.

GFirst LEP and Gloucestershire County Council already work closely together on the co-ordination and delivery of employment and skills priorities and there is an opportunity for further co-ordination and collaboration on this in 2021.

Local collaboration between agencies, employers and providers – There is evidence that Gloucestershire skills providers are working collaboratively with DWP/Jobcentre Plus to provide courses and programmes required to help people back into work. This is partly evidenced by feedback from local DWP/Jobcentre Plus contacts and through the comparatively low usage of the DWP Flexible Support Fund in the County. This has been because providers, particularly the colleges, have set up provision needed by

DWP/Jobcentre Plus and have been able to bring their own/ESFA funding to support this work.

Specific responses from providers to local skills needs

Local training providers have the capacity and will to react quickly and successfully to local training needs. An example of this is:

As a direct result of the national HGV driver shortage the DfE launched a call for training organisations to deliver HGV Class 1 training courses under the Governments Plan for Jobs 'Bootcamp' initiative. This is where unemployed individuals can receive free intensive training to qualify as an LGV/HGV driver. Betaris and Gloucestershire College were successful in securing a contract to deliver this training in Gloucestershire in 2021-22. The delivery model for four courses is 10 days classroom learning and 5 days practical training and capacity is 56 learners. Once the DfE-funded 'bootcamps' have been delivered, Betaris will be offering 3 courses for HGV training using Gloucestershire College's Adult Education Budget (AEB) funding delivered over a 5 week period April to June 2022.

Chapter 8. Looking forward

More clarity and direction for skills providers

In order to effectively meet the skills needs in the County, Gloucestershire skills providers continue to need further guidance and clarity on:

- **Priority sectors** – the growth sectors and the sectors we would like to grow further. These include: agri-tech; construction; cyber and digital; green/renewables/retrofit; health and social care (which was one of the two main sectors focused on in the Business West-led Local Skills Improvement Plan Trailblazer)
- **The skills and employment needs within these priority sectors** (e.g. which roles, which qualification levels, which qualifications). The collaborative work that has been carried out between Business West and GFirst LEP on the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) Trailblazer is a good starting point for this more 'granular' reflection from employers on their employment and skills needs. The reports from this work, both sector-specific and wider LSIP report can be found here <https://www.businesswest.co.uk/local-skills-improvement-plan-lsip-west-england-plus>
- Where **additional resources** can be obtained to support these local skills priorities

Clear skills priorities have previously been identified and communicated through the draft Local Industrial Strategy <https://www.gfirstlep.com/industrial-strategy/> and further clarity and direction is provided in the Gloucestershire Skills Strategy 2022-27 and this local skills report and associated evidence base, all published here <https://www.gfirstlep.com/about-us/skills-for-business/>

Employment and skills project funding opportunities may become available through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund managed by the six District Councils in Gloucestershire. UKSPF funding for 'people and skills' priorities is planned for 2024-25 when many of the current employment and skills programmes' funding comes to an end. The Districts have already expressed interest in collaborating with Gloucestershire County Council, GFirst LEP and GSAP in identifying priorities, possible projects/interventions and sharing and analysing appropriate data sets to underpin these. It is therefore hoped that the Gloucestershire-wide collaborative planning and work championed by GSAP will continue. Further information about the UK Shared Prosperity Fund can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-shared-prosperity-fund-prospectus/uk-shared-prosperity-fund-prospectus>

GSAP will continue to work with its business and employer representatives and with the GFirst LEP Business Groups, Growth Hub, etc. to help ensure that GSAP

takes into account the voice of business and employers and their employment and skills needs are articulated and communicated to skills providers.

Links to national skills priorities

Several of the Gloucestershire skills priorities align with national skills priorities and the associated schemes/programmes. These include:

Digital skills - These are needed across all sectors and at a range of levels, by businesses and other organisations for business transformation and for individuals. Please see the cyber and digital skills workstreams within the Action Plan for Employment and Skills in Gloucestershire which can be found at <https://www.gfirstlep.com/about-us/skills-for-business/>

Apprenticeships - These are needed now to provide a route for talent development and retention in the county into a wide range of sectors and job roles. The apprenticeship offer in the county needs to support the longer-term needs of local businesses as well as the longer-term ambitions for sectoral growth in the county in: agri-tech; construction; cyber and digital; health and social care; green/renewables/retrofit. Currently, there is some mismatch and, consequently, a need to review existing and currently planned provision with apprenticeship providers to work with them to reshape the apprenticeship offer. Please see the apprenticeship workstream within the Action Plan for Employment and Skills in Gloucestershire which is updated monthly and can be found at <https://www.gfirstlep.com/about-us/skills-for-business/>

More co-ordinated and collaborative use of County skills assets

Focus needs to be on the GSAP developing more cohesive and longer-term plans and more collaborative working between and with training providers to ensure the county's skills needs are better supported. This needs to include funding and strategic management of a County-wide team to co-ordinate this work, via the Gloucestershire County Council and GFirst LEP Employment & Skills Hub, and working with the employment and skills providers and agencies operating in the County.

Key asks of Providers to support the local skills agenda

- Continue to work with us on supporting the local economic recovery from Covid by aligning your plans and provision to the Countywide skills priorities for economic recovery and the workstreams and actions, as detailed in the **Action Plan for Employment and Skills in Gloucestershire** at <https://www.gfirstlep.com/about-us/skills-for-business/>
- Support the longer-term ambitions for the county including sectoral growth especially in agri-tech, construction, cyber and digital, green/renewables/retrofit and health and social care by planning your provision in consultation with GSAP and by aligning your provision (including apprenticeships) to support these priority growth sectors.
- Be as responsive as you can to meet the retraining demands for those workers displaced from sectors/businesses that have been negatively impacted by the Covid pandemic and EU exit

- Ongoing collaboration with GSAP, GFirst LEP, GCC, DWP/Jobcentre Plus and other skills and training providers
- Simplify and co-ordinate messages to employers to reduce the volume and complexity of asks to employers (e.g. T-levels, Kickstart, work placements, attendance on advisory panels, guest speakers in schools, etc.) and work with GFirst LEP and the Growth Hub on this
- Continue to make your training offer as flexible and as accessible as possible
- Work with the GFirst Careers Hub and Growth Hub and the Skills Portal www.skillsportalglos.com to ensure your provision is promoted and aligned with other provision, both national and local

Key asks of Employers to support the local skills agenda

- Support the national and local initiatives that will help you build your workforce for the future and to help you retain talent in your workforce (e.g. apprenticeships, traineeships, Kickstart, T-levels)
- Large employers – Levy transfer is crucial to employ and develop more apprentices in the County. It can be done and Gloucestershire County Council is leading the way on this and can advise you on ways to do this. Levy transfer enables us to spend money on training in Gloucestershire that would otherwise simply be returned to HM Treasury.
- Recognise that high quality training has substantial benefits to your organisation and your staff and contribute to the costs of this training.
- Continue to identify and communicate training needs in your sector to the GSAP via the GFirst LEP Business Groups, GSAP members or via GFirst LEP and the Growth Hub.

For further information about Gloucestershire Skills Advisory Panel (GSAP) please see

<https://www.gfirstlep.com/about-us/skills-for-business/>

Contact details for questions/follow-up on the contents of this report or the work of the Gloucestershire Employment & Skills Board (GSAP):

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Annex. A- Core indicators

These core indicators are the ones used by all Skills Advisory Panels nationally. They underpin this local skills report and have been published at the same time. They can be found at <https://www.gfirstlep.com/about-us/skills-for-business/>

GSAP members would like to thank John Mayell at Gloucestershire County Council and Jute Blackmon at GFirst LEP for their work on the core indicators.

Annex. B- Additional analysis and references

In addition to the core indicators, GSAP has prepared a full update of the Gloucestershire Employment and Skills Evidence Base. This provides a more comprehensive overview of the socioeconomic, employment and skills landscape in Gloucestershire. The contents of the Evidence Base underpin this local skills report and the Evidence Base has been published at the same time. This can be found at <https://www.gfirstlep.com/about-us/skills-for-business/>

GSAP members would like to thank John Mayell and Kate Martin at Gloucestershire County Council, and Jute Blackmon at GFirst LEP for their work preparing, reviewing and editing the Gloucestershire Employment and Skills Evidence Base.

