



Local Skills Report and Plan

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Foreword

Oxfordshire is the UK's engine for innovation: ground breaking research and development (R&D) is driving the creation of new, dynamic businesses, hungry to grow and scale up; cutting edge products and services are solving the challenges in healthcare, mobility, energy and communications; and commercialisation of these new ideas is delivering manufacturing and supply chain opportunities across the length and breadth of our country. This has never been so clearly evidenced as through the newly developed Oxford University/AstraZeneca coronavirus vaccine now being administered globally.

Our recently adopted Local Industrial Strategy¹ sets out an ambitious plan to build on Oxfordshire's strong foundations and world-leading assets and drive Oxfordshire's ambition to become a top three global innovation ecosystem by 2040. We are at the forefront in Transformative Technologies and sectors such as Fusion Technology, Autonomous Vehicles and Space. To achieve this, we will continue to need a highly skilled, adaptable and innovative workforce and to ensure that they, and future generations, have the skills that businesses need and value. Three key enabling skills have been identified by all sectors to enable continued growth and development, alongside recovery from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. They are: Artificial intelligence (AI) and Big Data skills; Business and Digital/ICT skills; and other skills often termed as 'soft' skills such as 'employability' or 'common' skills.

With a well-established skills ecosystem, our two world-renowned universities provide a strong pipeline of graduates within a broad range of subjects which are well matched to the local area's specialisms. Technical and Vocational achievements are rising to meet some of the skills and labour shortages, particularly in Health and Social Care, although there has been a decline in Apprenticeship take-up over the last four years, as seen nationally. More learners transition into sustained employment or further education and training than nationally. Our Economic Recovery Plan suggests that Oxfordshire will bounce back from the impacts of COVID-19 much quicker than many other economies. Skills will underpin this recovery and provide foundations for future prosperity.

For an area with a tight labour market and generally low unemployment, COVID-19 has changed the dynamics, with an initial near threefold increase in unemployment. The jobs most impacted by pandemic restrictions have been in service industries - cornerstone businesses such as Wholesale and Retail trades, Accommodation and Food Services and Manufacturing that support the basis of our economy and offer a range of employment opportunities. This impact is seen alongside those roles that support the innovation ecosystem such as Professional, Scientific, Technical and ICT sectors. Although job growth has centered on knowledge intensive professional and technician roles, management and senior leadership roles over the last 15 years, there remains a dichotomy of skills shortages, centered on high value-added job roles and labour shortages centered on lower-value added roles. Employers report shortages of degree level (Level 4+) candidates for occupations such as programmers and software developers and those with sector specific specialist skills, in contrast to the greatest shortage in elementary roles² and long-standing labour shortages, as seen nationally, in the Health and Social Care system.

Alongside this, the county has pockets of significant deprivation and wage disparity that continue to be a concern and that are likely to be further exacerbated by the longer-term impacts of the pandemic. One of the positives aspects of 2020 is the way the pandemic unleashed a greater sense of community spirit, of businesses, communities and individuals stepping up to help – for example the region's high-tech manufacturers quickly gearing up to make ventilators during the first wave of the pandemic including Oxford Optronix, Penlon and OES Medical. Prodrive and Williams Advanced Engineering also pivoted their operations to contribute to the effort, while medical device maker Owen Mumford provided 10 million rapid blood testing devices. Other skills supply challenges exist, such as an ageing population, and attraction and retention of talent (linked to graduate retention, and housing affordability). There are also gaps in skills supply where learners choose to take-up courses which aren't necessarily relevant to local labour market

¹ OxLEP, Local Industrial Strategy (2019) <https://www.oxfordshirelep.com/lis>

² Elementary occupations consist of simple and routine tasks, which typically require the use of hand-held tools and some physical efforts. Examples include street vendors, domestic helpers and cleaners, building caretakers, window cleaners, porters and garbage collectors.

information, there are active traditional gender role beliefs and greater focus is needed on equality, diversity and inclusion.

It is against this backdrop that the Local Skills Report has been developed. The report provides a comprehensive overview of our skills and labour market and shines a light on some significant challenges and opportunities for our economy, our communities and our businesses. This approach isn't new – the Oxfordshire Skills Board has, for almost a decade, taken the lead role in better understanding the dynamics of our labour market, in developing skills strategies for Oxfordshire and in seeking to develop a more responsive skills ecosystem for the benefit of all who live, learn, invest and innovate in Oxfordshire.

The Oxfordshire Skills Board published its first skills strategy in 2013, which set out a high-level vision for skills development in the area. The skills strategy to 2020 set out the key priorities to meet the *'needs of local employers through a more integrated approach to education and training, developed in partnership with our provider network'*. Much progress has been made, with significant investment in our skills infrastructure - including City Deal investment to support Apprenticeships, alongside over £23m capital investment in new training facilities, including investment to support additional STEM provision, as well as the introduction of our Enterprise Advisor Network embedded in our Careers Hub.

COVID-19 has highlighted some significant challenges facing our skills and labour market but also provides the opportunity for review and reflection. The Local Skills Plans priorities are derived from an extensive evidence and data review. They build on existing skills priorities that the Skills Board and OxLEP has championed and made good progress against for many years.

A more integrated and employer led approach to skills and training development; continued and co-ordinated support for young people at the start of their employment journey (including T Levels and Apprenticeship support for those furthest from the labour market); and improving the retention rate, both vocational and graduate, of those who have learnt in the county, to stay and have thriving careers, are the strategic priorities of the Local Skills Plan.

From 2019, the Oxfordshire Skills Board has taken on the additional responsibilities of the Skills Advisory Panel (SAP) for the Department of Education (DfE) continuing to bring together key partners and stakeholders to strategically plan for an improved skills infrastructure for the benefit of Oxfordshire's communities.

This report starts to identify some of the initial impacts of pandemic – not all of which are visible now; for example, the ending of the Job Retention Scheme (furlough) in April could well have additional impacts on our labour market. Our labour market analytics allows us to review real time data and to put in place programmes and activities to support those most impacted by any changes in our economy.

This Local Skills Report and Plan complements and supports the ambitions and priorities of our Economic Recovery Plan³ over the short term and the Local Industrial Strategy (LIS)⁴ over an extended period, to drive recovery and economic renewal, whilst building a resilient and inclusive economy for the future.

We look forward to continuing to work collaboratively to deliver our key priorities for the benefit of our residents, communities and businesses.



Adrian Lockwood

Chair Oxfordshire Skills Board
Deputy Chair Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership

³ OxLEP, Economic Recovery Plan (2020) <https://www.oxfordshirelep.com/publications>

⁴ OxLEP, Local Industrial Strategy (2019) <https://www.oxfordshirelep.com/lis>

Chapter 2. Skills Advisory Panel Introduction

Skills Advisory Panels: the national context

Skills Advisory Panels (SAPs) bring together employers, skills providers and key local stakeholders to better understand and resolve skills mismatches at a local level. There are 36 SAPs across England as part of Mayoral Combined Authorities and Local Enterprise Partnerships.

The Department for Education (DfE) supports SAPs with grant funding primarily to produce high quality analysis of local labour markets and *Local Skills Reports*. The Reports set out the local strengths and skills needs and how the SAP proposes its area addresses its key priorities. The Reports aim to influence local partners and feed intelligence to central government, including the national-level *Skills and Productivity Board* (SPB).

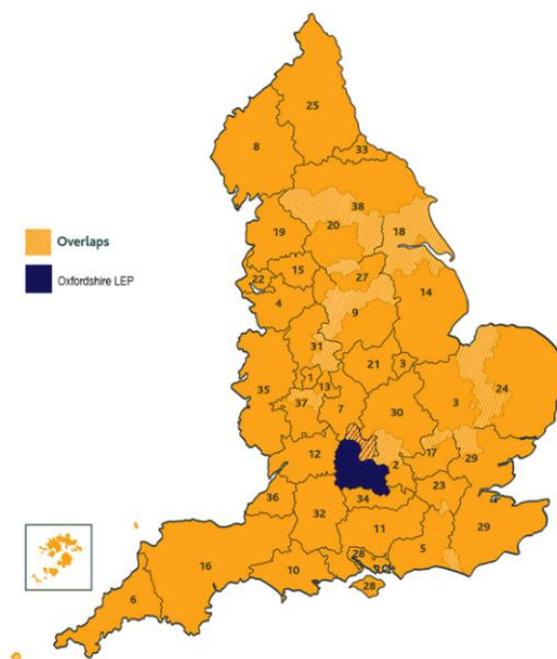
In January 2021, DfE published its White Paper “*Skills for Jobs: Lifelong Learning for Opportunity and Growth*,” which set out a number of reforms aimed at putting employers more firmly at the heart of the skills system. The White Paper outlined plans to test in 2021-22, in a small number of areas, “Local Skills Improvement Plans” created by business representative organisations.

The White Paper committed to build on the work of SAPs to date. SAPs and their Local Skills Reports will continue as the DfE trailblazes “Local Skill Improvement Plans” and until any potential changes are made to a SAP’s remit and responsibilities.



Department
for Education

Oxfordshire sits within a key corridor stretching 130 miles from Cambridgeshire, via the south-east midlands to Oxfordshire that contains approximately 3.3 million people.⁵ This development corridor is known as the ‘Oxford-Cambridge Arc’ or the ‘OxCam Arc Project’. The vision is to reinforce it as the most innovative, growth orientated region of the world. Government recognise it being of national importance; ‘The arching sweep of land between Oxford, Milton Keynes and Cambridge has a unique opportunity to become an economic asset of international standing – a place that demonstrates the very best of British business and innovation, and for the benefit of local communities and the country as a whole. The Arc already contains globally renowned universities, at the heart of a business, science and technology ecosystem that makes it one of the most exciting economic growth opportunities in the world. Realising this potential can mean more jobs, of a higher quality, for existing communities and future residents, and can encourage international investment and exports for the benefit of local businesses and the national economy.’⁶



The OxLEP skills agenda is supported and delivered by the Oxfordshire Skills Board (OSB) operating as sub-group of, and under the rules of governance of OxLEP. OSB pre-dates OxLEP and has for over a decade convened key stakeholders and communities of interest to develop a strategic & coordinated approach to skills support activities aligned to Oxfordshire’s economic growth ambitions, as articulated in the Oxfordshire Local Industrial Strategy (LIS), and the extant skills strategy. It was from these firm foundations that OSB

⁵ OxLEP, Local Industrial Strategy (2019) <https://www.oxfordshirelep.com/lis>

⁶ MHCLG, The Oxford Cambridge Arc (2019) <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-oxford-cambridge-arc-government-ambition-and-joint-declaration-between-government-and-local-partners>

assumed the responsibilities of the Oxfordshire Skills Advisory Panel (SAP) in early 2019 – a natural evolution of the group and an endorsement of OSB's activities.

OSB/SAP draws representatives from relevant local key stakeholder groups, including (but not limited to); public and private sector employers, further education, higher education, local authorities, schools, private training providers, and other key stakeholders appropriate to the remit. Members are visionary independent thinkers who have a shared ambition to drive change.

The SAP board is chaired by Adrian Lockwood, Chief Executive of an innovative Oxfordshire Small Medium Enterprise (SME) and deputy chair of OxLEP. Sally Dicketts, CEO of Activate Learning, Oxfordshire's largest training provider is deputy. The Chair represents the Group at board meetings of the OxLEP board.

OSB meets quarterly, or more frequently as required at the discretion of the Chair in advance of OxLEP Board meetings. Minutes of meetings are published on the OxLEP website.

The full list of Skills Advisory Panel members can be found here:

<https://www.oxfordshirelep.com/about/our-governance/skills-sub-group>

The Skills Advisory Panel's Terms of Reference, can be found here:

<https://www.oxfordshirelep.com/sites/default/files/uploads/Subgroup%20ToFR%20-%20August%202019.pdf>

The Skills Advisory Panel meeting minutes can be found here (listed as OxLEP Skills Sub Group meetings):

<https://www.oxfordshirelep.com/about/our-governance/meetings>

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Chapter 3. Skills Strengths and Needs

Strengths and Needs Summary This chapter provides a high-level narrative that builds on the area's pre-existing evidence bases and Annex A and B. Please refer to these annexes and the reference section for underlying data or analysis.

Oxfordshire's Key Skills Strengths

Oxfordshire's strong economy is driven by five core sectors and a high concentration of innovation assets, both through business and academia, which position the County at the forefront of global innovation. The economy consists of cornerstone businesses, breakthrough businesses, large employers and high value employers. Oxfordshire has world-leading strengths in key transformative technologies industries, with rapidly growing global markets offering significant opportunities for growth. Oxfordshire's unique strengths and capabilities in these industries are of strategic importance to the UK. Our economy is founded on a diverse mix of businesses, which we have grouped into two main categories: cornerstone businesses and breakthrough businesses; both are essential for sustainable future growth in Oxfordshire. Supporting Oxfordshire's innovation and business ecosystem is a highly skilled, truly global workforce, drawn by a high quality of life, world class research and a range of employment options, with the following highlights:

- The area has a tight labour market with generally low unemployment.
- A well-established skills ecosystem has supported recent growth in our innovative clusters which we need to maintain in the post Brexit era.
- Higher Education qualifications align well with the economic specialisms of the area.
- Both universities play a key role supporting specialist sectors by providing a strong pipeline of graduates.
- In some of the area's labour and skills shortage sectors, Further Education achievements are rising to meet shortages such as those experienced locally and nationally in the Health, Public Services and Social Care.
- Higher numbers of learners move directly into sustained employment than nationally, with the rest mainly moving into apprenticeships or on the job training.
- Apprenticeship achievements by all age groups increasingly match the area's sector make-up, enabling 93% of apprentices in Oxfordshire to transition to sustained employment.

Oxfordshire's Key Skills Needs and Shortages

Short Term: Predicting the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on our labour market is still a challenge, the area has seen a tripling in the Claimant and Alternative Claimant Count rate during the Covid19 pandemic to 3.9%. Young people and the over 50's have been hit hardest; older citizens proportionally more than in other previous economic recessions. Employers in specialist sectors value recent training/qualification over long term experience creating challenges for those older workers to get back into work. Youth unemployment has increased and there has been a significant sharp rise in not in Education, Employment and Training (NEET) young people across the county.

Medium to Long Term: Broadly speaking, Oxfordshire's labour market dichotomy appears to be skill shortages centred on higher value-added job roles and labour shortages centred on lower-value added job roles. Job growth has been focussed on knowledge-intensive, STEM and technology professional, associate professional and technician roles, as well as managerial and senior leadership roles. In striking contrast, there has been a contraction in employment across every other SOC Major Group occupational category.

There is under-representation of FE take-up and achievements in the area's core and specialist subjects given the areas specialisms and planned large construction projects. Local colleges report this as take-up choice by students, rather than under-representation of provision. Traditional gender role beliefs were statistically significant in subject choice for both male and female genders, but some headway has been made with females notably achieving more than males in ICT (63%) and Science and Mathematics (58%).

With employers reporting a shortage of high-level technical skills, an increased take-up of T-Level, high (degree) level vocational/technical courses and apprenticeships which are adapted and aligned to emerging technologies and employer needs, could do much to address this, including more flexible 'bite-sized' courses for existing workforce to upskill and reskill. The DfE 'Skills for Jobs' White paper highlights the need for FE reform to enable change.

Existing workforce, graduate and young people retention remains a challenge based on housing affordability and attractiveness of other roles in the South East, particularly London. A greater focus on developing home grown talent with better awareness of local labour market information along with higher levels of upskilling and reskilling within current workforce should lead to better matched skills supply that employers are looking for and stronger retention.

Recommendation: Oxfordshire must focus on retaining existing skills of our businesses whilst focussing on ensuring the next generation have access to the skills businesses need – both current and projected. Three 'enabling skills: AI and Big Data Skills; Business and Digital Skills and Soft Skills will be required by the majority of sectors as we move into economic recovery and sustained growth.

Oxfordshire's Key Skills Strengths

Key Sectors – Cornerstone and Breakthrough Businesses

In 2020, Oxfordshire was home to over 691,000 people and more than 37,500 active companies. It has key urban centres, such as Oxford, Banbury, and Didcot, as well as significant areas of rural landscape. The area is one of the strongest and most resilient economies in the UK and underpinned by one of the highest concentrations of research assets globally alongside pioneering clusters of knowledge intensive firms. Our economy is founded on a diverse mix of businesses, which we have grouped into **two main categories: cornerstone businesses and breakthrough businesses**; The high concentration of innovation assets, both through business and academia, position the County at the forefront of global innovation in transformative technologies⁷ and sectors such as Fusion Technology, Autonomous Vehicles, Quantum Computing, Cryogenics, Space, Life Sciences, and Digital Health. Both cornerstone and breakthrough businesses are essential for sustainable future growth in Oxfordshire. The convergence of breakthrough technologies will unlock new industries and global markets in the future. Oxfordshire's unique strengths and capabilities in these industries are of strategic importance to the UK. There is also a strong visitor economy historically anchored around Oxford, Blenheim Palace and Bicester Village. There is a further strong pipeline of major development unlocking growth in sectors such as life sciences, construction and a real opportunity to drive a carbon neutral economy.

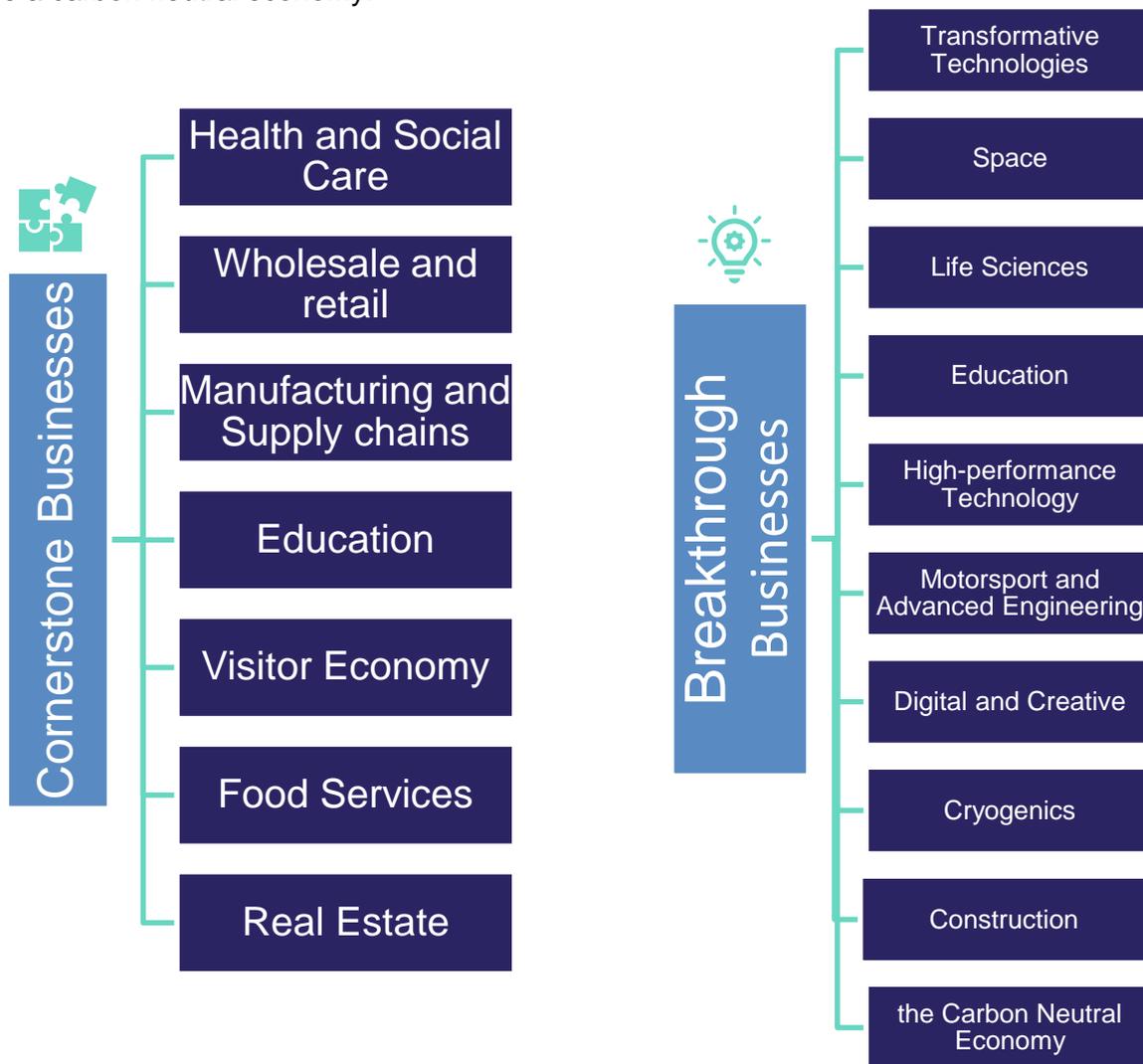


Figure 1 Oxfordshire's Key Sectors: Cornerstone and Breakthrough Businesses

⁷ Transformative technology is hardware- and software-based tools designed to enhance human psychological well-being, cognitive function and physical capabilities.

Key Sectors – Gross Value Added

£ Oxfordshire is one of the UK’s strongest economies, with sustained annual growth of 3.9 per cent per annum recorded between 2006-2019 and exceeding national and South East averages on most key measures. The economy is underpinned by one of the highest concentrations of research assets globally, including leading Universities of Oxford and Oxford Brookes and pioneering research and innovation hubs. Our economy is driven largely by five broad sectors, which produce around 60 per cent of the GVA⁸ output. These five sectors are shown here by percentage share of total GVA output for the County.



Figure 2 Oxfordshire’s Key Sectors – Highest GVA

Key Sectors – Employment

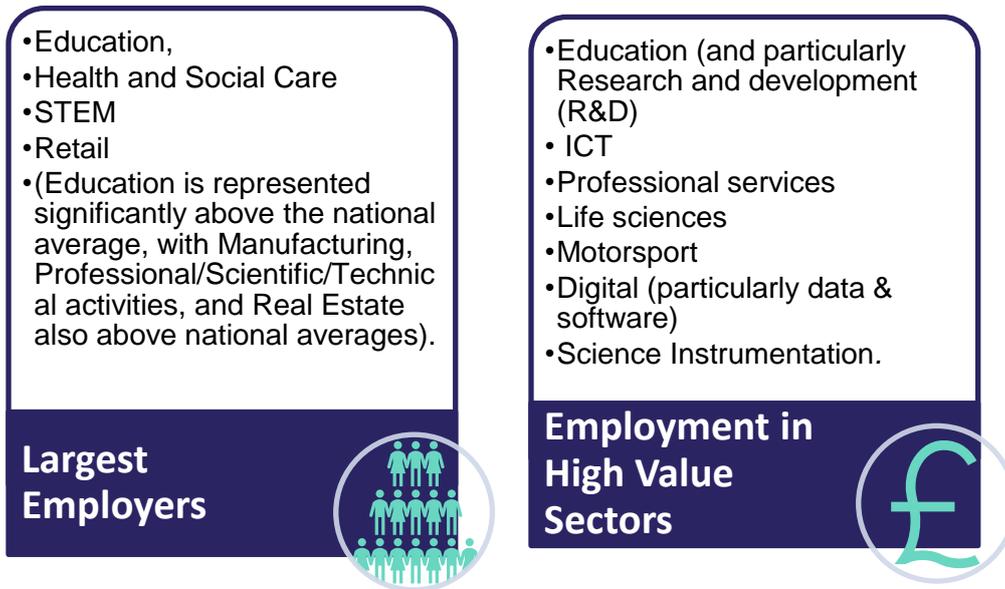


Figure 3 Oxfordshire’s Key Sectors - Employment



A Highly Skilled Workforce

Supporting Oxfordshire’s innovation and business ecosystem is a highly skilled workforce, with generally low unemployment, despite a near three-fold claimant count increase as a result of the pandemic. Oxfordshire has one of the highest skilled workforces in the country, with over half (51%) of its population qualified to degree-level or above (compared to 40% nationally). The percentage of people with NVQ4+ qualifications in all districts of Oxfordshire is higher than the national average.

⁸ GVA – Gross Value Added - the measure of the value of goods and services produced in an area, industry or sector of an economy.



An Established Skills Ecosystem

We have a well-established skills ecosystem that has supported recent growth in our innovative clusters which we need to maintain in the post Brexit era. With a truly global workforce drawn by a high quality of life, world class research and a range of employment options Oxfordshire must focus on retaining existing skills of our businesses whilst focussing on ensuring the next generation have access to the skills businesses need – both current and projected.

Higher Education qualifications align well with the economic specialisms of the area, particularly breakthrough sectors. Both universities play a key role supporting specialist sectors by providing a strong pipeline of graduates. Graduates from the University of Oxford undertake a range of activities, with many graduates continuing to stay in academia and full-time education. The two universities remain top employers and their strong links with the world-leading specialist professional, scientific and high-tech sectors in the area should ensure a regular talent pipeline. They are the main employee feed for many of the already established SMEs in the area's specialist sectors and often the inception points of many of the new start-ups.

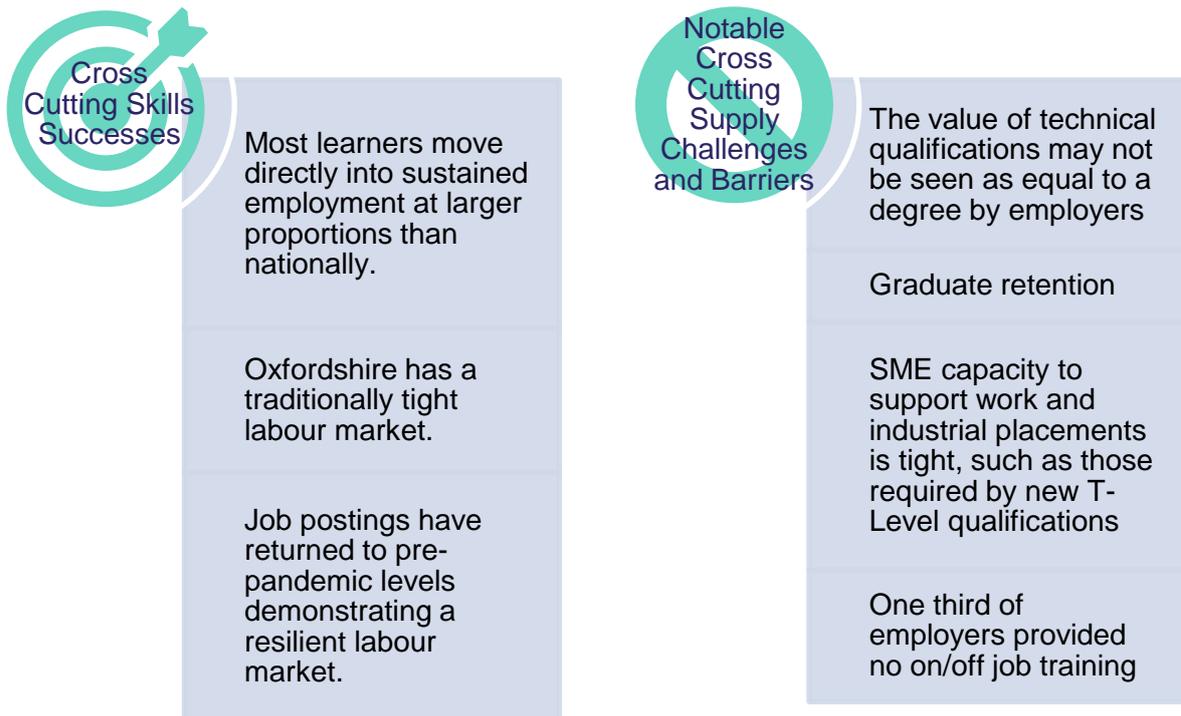


Figure 4 Cross-Cutting Skills Successes, Challenges and Barriers



Skills Supply for Cornerstone Businesses

Apprenticeship achievements by all age groups increasingly match the area's sector make-up, enabling most (93%) apprentices in Oxfordshire to transition to sustained employment. This mirrors the national picture at all levels of Apprenticeship.

Higher (level 4+) Apprenticeship courses led to 100% sustained employment in Oxfordshire, which is substantially higher than nationally. This might help satisfy some of higher level technical skill required in the county. Achievements of learners aged 25+ tend to be at higher levels in Business and Administration, Health, Public Services and Care. This could be because these sectors represent larger levy paying organisations use their Apprenticeship levy to upskill and reskill their existing workforce.

*'The COVID-19 pandemic has decimated the visitor economy with unemployment potentially reaching 10,000 – almost 25% of employment in this sector.'*⁹ Oxfordshire is globally renowned with a strong international

⁹ Experience Oxfordshire, Business Impact report (2020)

<https://www.experienceoxfordshire.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Business-Impact-Report-Final.pdf>

brand and thriving visitor economy. The sector supported a wide range of employment opportunities – from elementary to higher value roles and this diversity of employment offer is a great strength. Prior to the pandemic, Oxfordshire attracted 32 million visitors a year and ‘ the sector saw an impressive increase in jobs to just over 42,000 - an increase of 9% on the previous year– accounting for 12% of all employment across the county which resulted in the creation of over 3,000 additional jobs compared to the previous year. Overall, the value of the visitor economy in Oxfordshire grew to £2.5 billion per annum; 9% of total GVA.

FE Achievements 2019/2020 meeting Cornerstone Business Needs		
In some of the area’s labour and skills shortage sectors, Further Education achievements are rising to meet shortages such as Health, Public Services and Social Care (up 30%).	+45% Retail and Commercial Enterprise achievements, specifically within Hospitality and Catering and Retailing and Wholesaling	More relevant subject take-up at age 25+ suggests employers are using the Apprenticeship Levy to upskill/reskill existing workforce.
A third of achievements were in these subjects at Levels 2 and 3.		

Figure 5 Further Education Achievements for Cornerstone Businesses

Skills Supply for Breakthrough Businesses

Higher Education qualifications align well with the economic specialisms of the area. Both universities play a key role supporting specialist sectors by providing a strong pipeline of graduates. Graduates from the University of Oxford undertake a range of activities, with many graduates continuing to stay in academia and full-time education. The two universities remain top employers and their strong links with the world-leading specialist professional, scientific and high-tech sectors in the area should ensure a regular flow of staff. They are the main employee feed for many of the already established businesses in the area’s specialist sectors and often the inception points of many of the new start-ups. Employers demand Level 4+ qualifications or specialist skills which the universities can supply.

Many of the subjects needed for breakthrough sectors are under presented by Achievements in Further Education and Apprenticeships over the last year.

FE Achievements 2019/2020 meeting Breakthrough Business Needs							
Subject	STEM Subjects			Education and Training	Accounting and Finance/ Business Management	Construction and the Built Environment	Level 4+ There were no Science and Mathematics and minimal ICT
	Science	Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies	ICT				
Decrease in Achievements	- 50%	- 50%	- 50%.	- 40%	-40%	-50%	Only 2% Achievements
Only 13% of achievements were at Higher (4+) Level							

Figure 6 Further Education Achievements for Breakthrough Businesses

 Over representation of FE Achievements
Students are also increasingly choosing to take-up irrelevant courses for the area’s needs resulting in oversupply.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students are increasingly choosing to take-up Language, Literature and Culture at much higher proportions than Science and Information and Communication Technology. • Students still choose Sport, Leisure and Recreation over more relevant Travel and Tourism subjects

Oxfordshire's Key Skills Needs

Labour Market Challenges

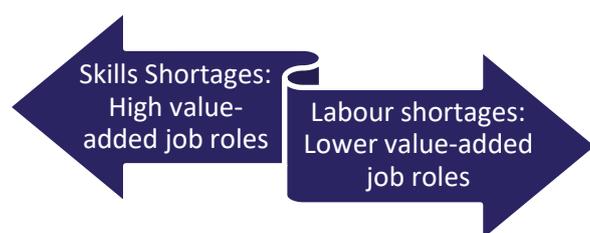


Figure 7 Skills Dichotomy

Broadly speaking, the dichotomy in the Oxfordshire labour market appears to be skill shortages centred on higher value-added job roles and labour shortages centred on lower-value added job roles.

The clear story is that job growth has been focussed on knowledge-intensive, STEM and technology professional, associate professional and technician roles as well as

managerial and senior leadership roles in Oxfordshire between 2004 and 2020. This trend is expected to continue; *'Harwell Campus is at the heart of transformative technologies and is forecast to grow to over 20,000 people over the next decade from 6,000 today attracting new staff, - and requiring reskilling and upskilling of existing staff and strong links into future talent pipelines.'*¹⁰

In striking contrast, there has been a contraction in employment across every other SOC Major Group occupational category, including Skilled Trade Occupations, Sales and Customer Service Occupations and Process Plant and Machine Operatives.

COVID-19 Impact on the Local Labour Market



Given the ongoing challenges arising from the pandemic, it is difficult to predict the full impact on our labour market. Whilst the ending of CJRS¹¹ will be a key barometer of ongoing employment impact it will undoubtedly be many months before the full impact can be accurately reflected. We expect to have a more evidenced based understanding of impact in our November 2021 refresh of this report.

Immediate support is needed as the area has seen a tripling in the Claimant and Alternative Claimant Count rate during the COVID19 pandemic to 3.9%. Young people and the over 50's have been hit hardest; importantly, older citizens proportionally more than in other previous economic recessions. Employers in specialist sectors still value recent training/qualification over long term experience creating challenges for those older workers to get back into work. Closure of the CJRS in April 2021 may have significant affects in Cherwell and West Oxfordshire as take-up of the furlough scheme has been highest here. Youth unemployment is highest in Cherwell and there has been a significant sharp rise in not in Education, Employment and Training (NEET) young people across the county. Traditionally there has been a lack of flexible provision start dates and appropriate offers of EET learning, compounded by increased competition for employment and apprenticeships against a reduced number of vacancies available.



Cross-cutting Enabling Skills:

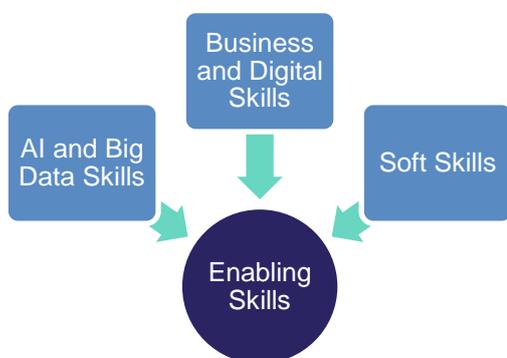


Figure 8 Cross-cutting Enabling Skills

Local Employer Skills Survey focus groups identified three particular sets of cross-cutting 'enabling skills'. Digital Skills are a key skill that is in demand nationally and locally with spreadsheet and Microsoft Excel skills particularly required. Given the increase in 50+ claimants – many of whom are entering the labour market for the first time in many years its likely many of this group lack the range of IT skills required by most employers. Oxfordshire is investing significantly in our IT infrastructure and have now achieved excellent coverage across the county. We must ensure that the IT skills of residents keeps pace with the requirements of both the education sector – which is likely to see an increased blend between on-line and onsite provision and the rapidly changing requirements of businesses.

¹⁰ OxLEP, Oxfordshire: a trailblazer for the UK economy, 2018 Economic Review: Baseline (2018)

<https://www.oxfordshirelep.com/lis>

¹¹ Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme

Skills and Labour Shortages

Cornerstone and Breakthrough Business Skills Needs

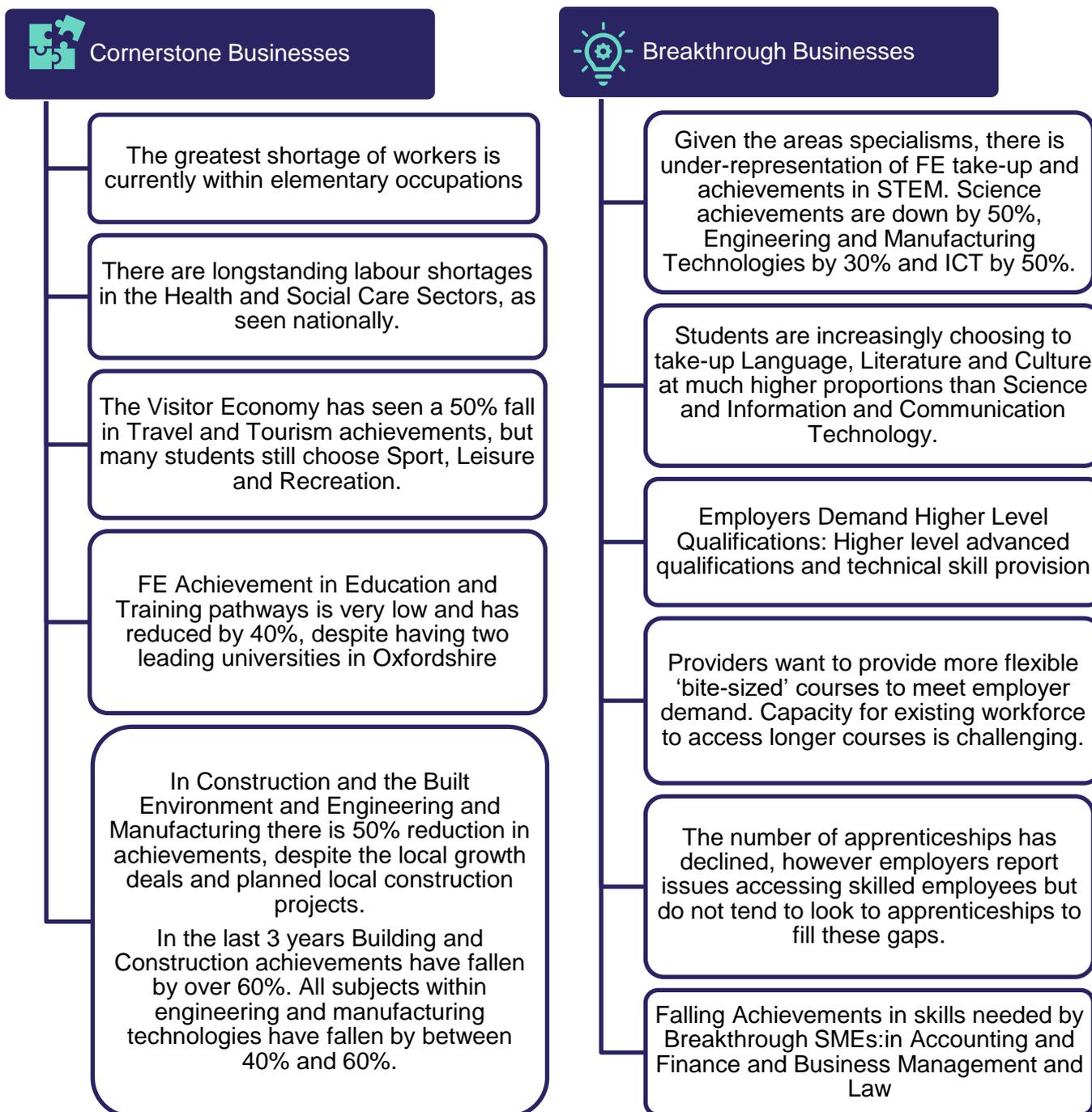


Figure 9 Cornerstone and Breakthrough Business Skills Needs

Cross-cutting Skills Gaps and Challenges:

Minimal Achievements at the higher level required by local employers: The majority (83%) of FE Adult education and training achievements are at Level 2 or lower. Only 2% of achievements were at Level 4+ which employers in the area demand. Most Level 4+ achievements were in Business Management, Health and Social Care and Nursing and Subjects/Vocations allied to Medicine, Teaching and Lecturing. There were no Science and Mathematics achievements at this higher level and minimal engineering and ICT. A third of all achievements were in the Health, Public Services and Care subjects at Levels 2 and 3 but STEM achievements were minimal. Most of the achievements in Building and Construction were at Level 3.

Apprenticeship achievements demonstrate how technical qualifications, which provide more on the job training, might align with the area's skills needs at degree level. However, low take-up persists in some of the area's key specialisms, such as Education subjects and ICT. Currently only 13% of Apprenticeship achievements are at Higher (Level 4+) with employers reporting a shortage of high-level technical skills. An increased take-up of vocational courses and broader level of apprenticeships, up to and including Level 6 (degree) equivalent Apprenticeships, locally could do much to address technical skill shortages.

T-Levels are being introduced initially at two of the main FE providers from 2021 with a limited subject roll-out, in line with Government policy. Capacity to support placements both now and in future will be better supported by SME employers if they can see that the T-Level subjects offered are well matched to the specialist sectors of the area and are a potential pipeline for future workforce and Apprenticeship take-up.

A greater focus on developing home grown talent who have accurate knowledge of the careers pathways available to them in their local area through better awareness of local labour market information should lead to better matched training take-up, and in turn a larger pool of employees with the right skills that employers are looking for.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion:

- **Male Achievements:** traditional gender role beliefs were statistically significant at FE level in 2019/20 and achievements were notably lower in Health, Public Services and Social Care (15%), Teaching and Education (26%), Arts, Media and Publishing (31%) and higher in Construction, Planning and Built Environment (93%), Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies (73%), Leisure, Travel and Tourism (76%).
- **Female Achievements:** were notably lower in: Construction, Planning and Built Environment (7%) and Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies (27%) but headway has been made towards relieving traditional gender role beliefs as females notably achieved more in ICT (63%) and Science and Mathematics (58%).

Gender disproportions also exist in Apprenticeship Achievements;

- Only 44% of Apprenticeship Achievers aged 16-24 were female in contrast to 62% in achievers aged 24+.
- There were distinctly more female achievements in health, public services and care (84%) and business administration and law (67%) than males.
- Just as at FE level and nationally, apprenticeships in construction and built environment, IT, leisure travel and tourism are dominated by males and still low given the strong growth plans for the area.
- There were markedly more achievements by males (89%) in engineering and manufacturing and ICT (83%).

There was higher than average achievements by BAME learners in ICT (30%), Science and Mathematics (30%) meeting the demands of local specialist STEM sectors.

LLDD strongest achievements are generally in well matched subject areas, such as Science and Mathematics.

Workforce Retention and Attraction: Existing workforce, graduate and young people retention remains a challenge. Many of the universities' graduates move directly in research and development or further academia. There is also a strong trend for movement to London alongside high levels of mixed commuting to other areas such as Reading. The challenge being unaffordability of housing in Oxfordshire and the attractive salary opportunities in these other areas as well as the attraction of the London weighting scale. Housing affordability for those on lower incomes or in lower skilled roles is also contributing to the area's shortage of elementary skilled labour. The impacts of the UK leaving the European Union for foreign students and existing workforce retention are yet to be seen.

Upskilling the existing workforce: Employer investment in skills is relatively high, with over two thirds of Oxfordshire employers having provided a combination of off-job and on-job training over the last 12 months (above that provided nationally). However just over one third of employers provided no training at all. The number of days provided by employers should be improved and higher proportions of staff should receive them. The cost to employers and ongoing impact of COVID-19 is likely to have affected this provision given the wider economic uncertainty.

Chapter 4. Skills Strategy

As previously detailed the Oxfordshire Skills Board has made great strides in supporting skills and training development over the past decade. Our extant Skills Strategy 'Building a 21st Century skills ecosystem' 2016-2020 can be found here: <https://www.oxfordshirelep.com/about/our-strategies/skills-strategy>.

Good progress has been in many areas, with OxLEP and OSB/SAP at the heart of a more collaborative approach to skills development, including significant investment in our strategic skills infrastructure. This provides firm foundations on which to develop our latest skills priorities and to encourage and engage a wide range of stakeholders in delivery and discussion.

Our priorities are set in in three broad thematic areas but of course there are interdependencies and many points of cross reference between each and as such they should not be taken in isolation.

Oxfordshire Skills Priorities

Category	Index	Priorities
Cross cutting skills priorities (far reaching, cross-sector)	CC-1	Supporting the reform of vocational and technical skills provision Focus: level 4+ qualifications
	CC-2	Increasing Apprenticeships and T Levels offers and uptake
	CC-3	Provide clear career pathways for young people and adults
	CC-4	Managing Oxfordshire's consistently tight labour market <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raising digital capability • Health and social care labour shortages Upskilling older workers and the existing workforce
	CC-5	Graduate Promotion and Retention
	CC-6	Development of 3 Enabling skills: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AI & Big Data; • Business and Digital • Soft Skills
COVID-19 recovery and renewal skills priorities	C19-1	Support business sectors for who have been most impacted by COVID-19: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Labour and skills shortages • Support for employers to navigate the skills landscape <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wholesale and Retail Trade • Visitor Economy • Manufacturing • Professional, scientific and technical • Arts, entertainment and recreation
	C19-2	Young People, EETS and NEETs
	C19-3	Support for individuals who have been most impacted by COVID-19: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jobseekers • Retraining and retaining older workers • People in digital poverty and/or digitally excluded
Sector priorities (or occupational priorities)	SP1	Meeting areas employer demand, in particular:
		Cornerstone Businesses: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elementary Skills • Visitor Economy • Education • Engineering and manufacturing (inc Green Technology) • Health and Social Care Breakthrough Businesses: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • STEM • Business support occupation subjects (e.g. finance and accounting, business management and law) • Local talent pipeline development • Supporting and driving Vocational and Technical qualification reform
	SP2	Diversity and inclusion
	SP3	Skills provision for the Construction Sector and Employment Development Sites, including development of Green Construction Skills and Green Technology

Oxfordshire Skills Priority Category	Priorities and supporting rationale	CC - Cross Cutting Skills Priority C19 - COVID-19 Recovery and Renewal SP - Sector Priorities
Cross cutting skills priorities (far reaching, cross-sector)	<p>CC-1 Supporting the reform of vocational and technical skills provision (Focus: level 4+ qualifications): to meet the area’s skills needs is a priority echoed by the Department of Educations (DfE) ‘Skills for Jobs’ White paper published in January 2021 and mirrors longstanding ambition set out in our previous strategies.</p> <p>Supporting the FE sector to broaden partnerships that put employers at the heart of the system will enable Oxfordshire’s residents to obtain the skills – both current and projected that our economy needs.</p> <p>The skills community may be described as having five main stakeholder groups (i) residents – both pre and post 16 (ii) schools and colleges – both state and private (iii) further and higher education providers (including private providers_ (iv) businesses and (v) strategists, business representative organisations and sector groups.</p> <p>Each will have differing priorities, ambitions, challenges and opportunities and each will require differing engagement and communication channels.</p> <p>Local Skills Improvement Plans will be developed that provide the opportunity to work collaboratively across each stakeholder grouping – building on significant progress made to date to drive closer alignment between all and better outcomes for our residents and communities.</p> <p>In parallel we will continue to seek reforms of skills and training funding. The current system is often seen as being too formulaic and prescriptive; lacks the flexibilities that providers, learners and employers often seek and, in many cases, leads to disengagement and disinvestment. The ‘Skills for Jobs’ white paper suggests there is significant underspend in the current Adult Education Budget allocations yet that cannot be utilised to support training and upskilling of new adult entrants to the labour market where there is significant demand. Equally we have seen significant decrease in apprenticeship take up since the introduction of the Apprenticeship Levy which may be rectified by greater local pooling and re-deployment of underspend with greater local flexibilities.</p> <p>CC-2 Increasing Apprenticeships and T Levels offers and uptake:</p> <p>There is a need to ensure that more employers, particularly micro and small SME’s are supported to participate in employer-led standards which better meets their needs. Increasing the range of Apprenticeships offers and uptake is a key element of reform and encouraging more Apprenticeships that work for all employers, particularly Higher Technical Level qualifications. Oxfordshire has a high concentration of employment in high value sectors, with half of occupations requiring degree level (or higher) qualifications. In the period 2017-2020, Oxfordshire saw a 43% drop in Apprenticeship Achievements. However, in 2018-19 Higher Level Apprenticeships in Oxfordshire led to 100% sustained employment, highlighting the value of Level 4+ to Oxfordshire employers and the opportunity for apprentices to gain employment in a tight labour market with these qualifications.</p> <p>Raising the profile, value and status of higher technical level qualifications as equivalent to a degree would enable businesses to have stronger talent pipelines with a more developed skill set to meet their business needs. Oxfordshire SMEs have focused recruitment strategies around</p>	

Oxfordshire Skills Priority Category	Priorities and supporting rationale	CC - Cross Cutting Skills Priority C19 - COVID-19 Recovery and Renewal SP - Sector Priorities
	<p>high-level degree qualified workforce and may not appreciate the benefits of offering traineeships, industrial placements, work experience opportunities and technical qualifications in increasing their talent pipeline. Breakthrough businesses requiring niche subject content in technical provision often look to headhunt talent from rival organisations rather than approaching providers to develop courses for small cohorts or pool needs with others.</p>	
	<p>CC-3 Provide clear career pathways for young people and adults: The current careers landscape is confusing, fragmented, and unclear for many. We need to help young people and adults to better understand the modern workplace and develop the career management skills and attributes they need to compete in today’s labour market.</p> <p>Young people should be helped to prepare for work through well-trained careers leaders and advisors using real time Labour Market Information (LMI) that sets out current and future employment and career opportunities and pathways. We must further develop a blend of physical and virtual opportunities for young people to experience the workplace in preparation for future employment which is a key part of the transition from education into employment.</p> <p>This need is particularly key in Cherwell and the City of Oxford, as these areas experience persistent labour market deprivation and education inequality. The City of Oxford performs particularly poorly on the Social Mobility Index for Schools. Ofsted rate two thirds Oxfordshire’s 36 state-funded secondary schools as ‘good’ with only 16% of secondary schools rated as ‘outstanding’. Cherwell and South Oxfordshire also perform in the lower deciles of the Index. Youth ranking also shows significant challenges in Vale of the White Horse. Cherwell also has high levels of economic inactivity linked to long term sickness and high levels of student residents.</p>	
	<p>CC4 Managing Oxfordshire’s consistently tight labour market: Whilst we are seeing more flexibility in the labour market because of the pandemic, economic analysis suggests our labour market will rapidly return to near full employment. Whilst this is generally a positive position it does create some challenges for both residents and businesses and potential hinders long term economic prosperity.</p> <p>There are significant challenges for disadvantaged communities in accessing good opportunities. Some of our local authority areas are ranked amongst the worst in the country on the social mobility index with the largest challenges at early years and school levels, which is linked to access free school meals and school Ofsted ratings. The development of the Oxfordshire Social Contract sets out ambitions to improve social mobility and ensure all residents can benefit from Oxfordshire’s growth.</p> <p>A third of Oxfordshire’s population live in rural areas, creating challenges in accessing education provision and take-up of Apprenticeships, T-Levels and Traineeships. This is a barrier to employment and training and contributes to labour shortages and in some cases deprivation.</p>	

Oxfordshire Skills Priority Category	Priorities and supporting rationale	CC - Cross Cutting Skills Priority C19 - COVID-19 Recovery and Renewal SP - Sector Priorities
	<p>Over recent years, Elementary roles and entry level occupations have reduced in number, with the greatest shortage of workers also currently within elementary occupations. For many years these roles have largely been supported by overseas workers. The impact of HMG's immigration policy changes and the implementation of EU 'settled status' regulations could potentially further impact labour shortages in these roles.</p> <p>There have been longstanding labour shortages as opposed to a skill shortage in the Health and Social Care system, reflecting National NHS shortages in this sector. UK exit from European Union is likely to impact with a quarter of the workforce being non-British. With the longer-term impact of the pandemic, a labour shortage of c700¹² new entrants per annum alongside an aging population continued and innovative support for the health and social care sector is a key requirement.</p> <p>Raising digital capability <i>'Information technology will pervade work environments everywhere. Technologies and disciplines will converge, giving rise to important innovations. Jobs and organisations will become increasingly fluid as people move from project to project'</i>.¹³ Findings of OxLEP's Employer Focus Group established that digital skills are the most demanded skill. This includes computer literacy with strong need for spreadsheet and Microsoft Excel skills. Employers need to prepare the workforce for increasing levels of automation and digitalisation, particularly since COVID-19. Oxfordshire has a strong adaptation of many new technologies, it is important to ensure that all workers can benefit from new opportunities including older workers, disadvantaged groups and those working in SME's.</p> <p>Health and social care labour shortages The labour shortages in the Health and Social Care sector has been described as the worst problem currently facing the NHS. Around 1.2 million full-time equivalent (FTE) staff work in the NHS, and 1.1 million work in adult social care. Around 78% of social care jobs are in the independent sector. Nursing is facing one of the greatest problems with one in eight posts vacant. In adult social care, around one in 10 social worker and one in 11 care worker roles are reportedly unfilled.¹⁴</p> <p>Nursing vacancies in Oxfordshire are the most frequently advertised role. The Health and Social care sector have not traditionally been perceived as a desirable employment pathway due to limited progression opportunities and lower pay. The longstanding labour shortage in the health and social care system, has been amplified by the pandemic. COVID-19 has highlighted the challenge around workforce pay and conditions experienced by social care staff. There has been an increase in the number of people willing to work in the sector, which may bring short-term relief to vacancy rates, but there needs to be an improvement in the recruitment and retention in the medium-to-long term.</p>	

¹² Oxfordshire Association of Care Providers, (2021) [Oxfordshire Association of Care Providers - Promoting and supporting adult social care in Oxfordshire \(oacp.org.uk\)](https://oacp.org.uk)

¹³ UKCES (2015) [High level STEM skills requirements in the UK labour market - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

¹⁴ House of Commons Library, The health and social care workforce gap (2020) <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/the-health-and-social-care-workforce-gap/>

Oxfordshire Skills Priority Category	Priorities and supporting rationale	CC - Cross Cutting Skills Priority C19 - COVID-19 Recovery and Renewal SP - Sector Priorities
	<p>CC-5 Graduate Promotion and Retention: Over 42,000 ¹⁵ students attend courses at Oxford’s Universities. At the University of Oxford, international students make up almost 45% of the total student body, around 10,900 students from more than 160 countries and territories.</p> <p>On graduation, most students either return to their home countries or stay within Oxfordshire for a year before moving to employment in London and the South East. Oxfordshire needs to better help undergraduates understand the opportunities which exist for employment. Rather than letting this talent disappear, Oxfordshire needs to find mechanism/s to retain talent. Barriers to longer term graduate retention include the cost of housing, especially in the city of Oxford due to it being as high (if not in some cases higher) than in London – whilst Oxfordshire tends to perform well against other indicators such as access to good quality employment, quality of life and a good cultural offer.</p>	
	<p>CC-6 Enabling skills to meet employer needs Our focus on transformative technologies requires us to prioritise three sets of cross-cutting ‘enabling’ skills to meet future employer needs:</p> <p>AI and Big Data Skills: Increased use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) can bring major social and economic benefits to the UK. With AI, computers can analyse and learn from information at higher accuracy and speed than humans can. AI offers massive gains in efficiency and performance to most or all industry sectors, from drug discovery to logistics. AI is software that can be integrated into existing processes, improving them, scaling them, and reducing their costs, by making or suggesting more accurate decisions through better use of information. It has been estimated that AI could add an additional USD \$814 billion (£630bn) to the UK economy by 2035, increasing the annual growth rate of GVA from 2.5 to 3.9%. Skilled experts are needed to develop AI, and they are in short supply. To develop more AI, the UK will need a larger workforce with deep AI expertise, and more development of lower level skills to work with AI. ¹⁶</p> <p>Business and Digital Skills: Business and digital skills are becoming ever more important in today’s economy, and employers indicate that about one-third of vacancies they find difficult to fill are, to some degree, attributable to a lack of appropriate digital skills amongst applicants. Digital skills are near-universal requirements: ‘Baseline’ digital skills such as Microsoft Office and other productivity software tools are commonly required in jobs across all skills levels and have become a ticket to entry in the labour market. When breaking the job market down by skill level into low-, middle-, and high-skill roles, over 75% of job openings at each level request digital skills. By entering a role that requires specific digital skills, workers can reduce their risk of automation by a dramatic 59%. ¹⁷</p> <p>Soft Skills: We need to work with employers to provide a common language on skills which can be utilised from the classroom to the boardroom. We need to build the skills Oxfordshire needs for economic recovery while supporting people back to work and ensuring social mobility.</p>	

¹⁵ University of Oxford (2020) <https://www.ox.ac.uk/about/facts-and-figures/student-numbers> and Oxford Brookes University (2021) <https://www.brookes.ac.uk/about-brookes/at-a-glance/our-students/>

¹⁶ Department of Business and Culture (Date - TBC) Growing the Artificial Intelligence Industry in the UK – Gov.UK (www.gov.uk)

¹⁷ Department of Media, Culture, Digital and Sport (June 2019) No Longer Optional: Employer Demand for Digital Skills – Gov.UK (www.gov.uk)

Oxfordshire Skills Priority Category	Priorities and supporting rationale	CC - Cross Cutting Skills Priority C19 - COVID-19 Recovery and Renewal SP - Sector Priorities
	<p>'Skills' has different connotations depending on the user and often goes beyond qualifications to include 'soft' skills that Oxfordshire's employers value highly. In order to bridge the gap and strengthen links between employers and providers a new 'skills' language should be explored. Skills, training, qualifications and reskilling are all used interchangeably by many, but each has a distinct meaning in outcome and funding terms depending on viewpoint. This can create confusion and disengagement. <i>'As the world of work becomes more flexible, employees are expected to shoulder more and more responsibility for skills development. Personal agility and resilience, such as the ability to adapt to or embrace change is important within this context - particularly for young people who will be competing for jobs with those that stay in employment longer'</i>¹⁸.</p>	

Oxfordshire Skills Priority Category	Priorities and supporting rationale	CC - Cross Cutting Skills Priority C19 - COVID-19 Recovery and Renewal SP - Sector Priorities
COVID-19 recovery and renewal skills priorities	<p>C19-1 Support business sectors for who have been most impacted by COVID-19:</p> <p>Labour and skills shortages</p> <p>Support for employers to navigate the skills landscape</p> <p>The pandemic has exacerbated the longstanding labour shortage in the Health and Social care system. Oxfordshire's ageing population has increased demand for adult social care workers and many job vacancies are going unfilled. 'In adult social care, staff are affected by the lack of value given to social care by society and disproportionate levels of pay'¹⁹</p> <p>Oxfordshire's Visitor Economy has been significantly impacted due to COVID-19 and is not expected return to pre-Pandemic levels until 2024. Many workers from these industries were initially put on furlough but many have now been made redundant. Due to the impact of the COVID-19 lockdowns, longer term labour shortages are likely in Retail and the Visitor Economy as many workers leave the sector – by choice or through redundancy.</p> <p>Work has become more interconnected and network oriented due to COVID-19. Employees (and employers) require the competencies to work across different disciplines, to collaborate virtually, and to demonstrate a new range of skills. With many workers forced to work from home, many organisations need to develop new HR and contractual mechanisms to manage performance, address issues of trust and transparency, and invest in keeping the skills of a largely virtual workforce up to date. New ways of working are likely to become the new norm moving forward requiring a new understanding and approach to digital skills</p>	
	<p>C19-2 Young People, EETS and NEETs:</p> <p>The pandemic has led to a significant increase in NEETs, those at risk on NEET and a more competitive labour market for young people. The Careers and Enterprise Company (CEC) state that 'a young person who has 4 or more high-quality encounters with an employer is 86% less</p>	

¹⁸ UKCES (2015) [High level STEM skills requirements in the UK labour market - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/444444/High-level-STEM-skills-requirements-in-the-UK-labour-market.pdf)

¹⁹ UK House of Commons Library, The health and social care workforce gap (2020) <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/the-health-and-social-care-workforce-gap/>

Oxfordshire Skills Priority Category	Priorities and supporting rationale	CC - Cross Cutting Skills Priority C19 - COVID-19 Recovery and Renewal SP - Sector Priorities
	<p>likely to be unemployed or not in education or training'. For many young people looking at their future careers is particularly challenging, due to the pandemic. With the third national lockdown and the closure of schools, successive year groups of young people have had their education and training unavoidably disrupted at a point in their lives when they should be finding their feet and thinking about their career direction. Secondary schools are reporting through their RONI data²⁰ that a significant number of young people are potentially leaving formal education and becoming NEET.</p> <p>The mental health of young people is also great a concern. It is crucial that in order to rebuild the UK economy we need highly skilled, motivated young people, yet many young people are concerned that employers won't value their A' Levels results (due to not sitting a formal exam) which could in turn impact their future job prospects. We need to support the next generation so they can play an active role in the economic recovery and plug the skills gap.</p>	
	<p>C19-3 Support for individuals who have been most impacted by COVID-19:</p> <p>Jobseekers Job Seekers: Immediate multi-stakeholder engagement is needed as the area has seen a tripling in the Claimant and Alternative Claimant Count rate. It is important that we support job seekers, especially those from areas of overall and labour market deprivation (i.e. the City of Oxford/Cherwell) to get back into work quickly and not to become long term unemployed. It is important that organisations supporting these interventions understand the labour market locally to ensure that redeployment should be into roles which are also not at risk of future redundancy or automation. This is particularly important for those residents that have not traditionally benefited from Oxfordshire's economic growth.</p> <p>Retraining and retaining older workers Retaining and retraining older workers: Through COVID-19 and subsequent lockdowns, we have seen that business agility is crucial for business survival; the ability to respond and adapt faster to change, in leaner and smarter ways (for example, retailers closing their physical stores, but reinforcing online services, restaurants forced to shut down quickly, pivoting to takeaways). To enable this pivoting and further resilience there is a demand to retraining and upskilling. While the speed of technological change may place younger cohorts at a perceived advantage, especially those who have grown up entirely in a digital age, all age cohorts will need to invest in continual up-skilling to keep pace with accelerating development. Workers in older age groups, particularly those aged 50+, will need more support to embrace technology fully in order to compete in the labour market. Many older workers have been made redundant or are currently at risk of redundancy following the end of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) scheme in April 2021 so may need more intensive support to re-engage in the labour market.</p> <p>Cherwell and West Oxfordshire have seen the highest take-up of JRS. Three of Oxfordshire's most dominant sectors, Manufacturing, Real Estate and Wholesale/Retail are on par with the UK average JRS take-up. The Arts/Entertainment/Recreation sector is strongly represented in</p>	

²⁰ The Risk of NEET Indicator (RONI)

Oxfordshire Skills Priority Category	Priorities and supporting rationale	CC - Cross Cutting Skills Priority C19 - COVID-19 Recovery and Renewal SP - Sector Priorities
	<p>West Oxfordshire, which can explain the greater JRS take-up rate there. The percentages of those returning to work in Arts/Entertainment/Recreation and Accommodation/Food Services have been well below 50 per cent, whereas Cherwell has a significant proportion of the Oxfordshire's more deprived areas, with lower skilled jobs which have been affected disproportionately by the pandemic.</p> <p>People in digital poverty and/or digitally excluded People in digital poverty and/or digitally excluded: Coronavirus has revealed the scale of the digital divide through 'digital poverty' and 'digital exclusion'. Like many areas across England, COVID-19 has amplified deprivation and has intensified the area's digital divide with many individuals and communities in 'digital poverty'. Due to the lack of equipment and connectivity, students from low income families could be significantly impacted in their key learning and understanding of career progression. University Vice Chancellors are also concerned that disadvantaged HE students might become a 'lost generation' due to students being unable to access remote learning while campuses are off-limits.</p> <p>Digital exclusion was already prevalent prior to COVID-19 but it has been exacerbated by the pandemic. Through the ten food larder locations run by <i>South Oxfordshire Food and Education Alliance (SOFEA)</i> across Oxfordshire, we understand that a significant proportion of their low-income clients are digitally excluded because they lack internet access and/or have low levels of digital literacy. They are also more likely to be heavy users of government services and need support on tax and tax credit issues. As resources (including government services and skills training) are being delivered by self-serve online platforms, it is this group who could become increasingly isolated and 'hard-to-reach'. Motivation seems to be the largest barrier to overcome for those affected by digital inclusion, particularly for low-income groups.</p>	

Oxfordshire Skills Priority Category	Priorities and supporting rationale	CC - Cross Cutting Skills Priority C19 - COVID-19 Recovery and Renewal SP - Sector Priorities
Sector priorities (or occupational priorities)	<p>SP1 Meeting specialist employer demand</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cornerstone Businesses: The government's recent response to the Committee on Climate Change 2020 progress report commitments the UK to be net zero by 2050, and to delivering the skilled workforce which will be needed for the future green economy. Oxfordshire through its transformative technologies' strengths, is central to UK's ambitious clean growth agenda. Many in this sector are small companies, pioneering new science and technology that will create positive change. Access to skilled employees has been quoted as a vital growth enabler by businesses. • Health and Social Care: The labour shortages in the Health and Social Care sector has been described as the worst problem currently facing the NHS. Around 1.2 million full-time equivalent (FTE) staff work in the NHS, and 1.1 million work in adult social care. Around 78% of 	

Oxfordshire Skills Priority Category	Priorities and supporting rationale	CC - Cross Cutting Skills Priority C19 - COVID-19 Recovery and Renewal SP - Sector Priorities
	<p>social care jobs are in the independent sector. Nursing is facing one of the greatest problems with one in eight posts vacant. In adult social care, around one in 10 social worker and one in 11 care worker roles are reportedly unfilled.²¹</p> <p>Nursing vacancies in Oxfordshire are the most frequently advertised role. The Health and Social care sector have not traditionally been perceived as a desirable employment pathway due to limited progression opportunities and lower pay. The longstanding labour shortage in the health and social care system, has been amplified by the pandemic. COVID-19 has highlighted the challenge around workforce pay and conditions experienced by social care staff. There has been an increase in the number of people willing to work in the sector, which may bring short-term relief to vacancy rates, but there needs to be an improvement in the recruitment and retention in the medium-to-long term.</p> <p>Breakthrough Businesses:</p> <p>STEM There is strong under-representation of subjects which underpin Oxfordshire’s sector specialisms in take-up and achievements at FE level for STEM, education subjects, construction, leisure, travel and tourism and manufacturing given our key sectors.</p> <p>Skills Capital Projects designed to meet Skills Needs/Gaps (further details on each of these projects can be found in Annex B supporting evidence):</p> <p>To support the need from employers to provide increased numbers of Higher-Level technical provision, OxLEP has invested c£23m in skills capital infrastructure. This is to support a range of provision aligned to key sectors and priorities including apprenticeships and T-Levels. Most of these courses are now delivering additional specialist skills and training outcomes across the county and offer the most up-to-date facilities and equipment. This will help students move successfully into employment or on to further technical education. Our investments are:</p> <p>Digital and ICT Centre for Applied Super Connectivity Oxford Centre for Innovation and Technology Technology Livestock Centre Advanced Skills Centre Advanced Digital & Science Centre</p> <p>Construction Construction Skills Academy Green Construction Skills Centre</p>	

²¹ House of Commons Library, The health and social care workforce gap (2020) <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/the-health-and-social-care-workforce-gap/>

Oxfordshire Skills Priority Category	Priorities and supporting rationale	CC - Cross Cutting Skills Priority C19 - COVID-19 Recovery and Renewal SP - Sector Priorities
	<p>Visitor Economy Hospitality Training Centre</p> <p>Health and Social Care Care Skills Training Centre</p>	
	<p>SP2 Diversity and inclusion: There is a need to engage a greater number of young people, particularly women and Black Asian Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups into skills training provision aligned to our growth sectors. Bringing in people with different backgrounds and perspectives can lead to better decision-making, greater innovation, and higher engagement in the workplace. Benefits of diversity and inclusion to a business can include improved resourcing of talented personnel; enhanced corporate image; improved creativity and problem-solving; innovation; greater flexibility; increased productivity; improved organisational performance and efficiency; enhanced trust in relationships, satisfaction and commitment within the workforce. Achievements in Apprenticeships demonstrate the disparities, where women and BAME learners are taking up learning in subjects such as health and social care, rather than engineering or STEM.</p>	
	<p>SP3 Construction Sector and Employment Development Sites: Across Oxfordshire, there are multiple large-scale infrastructure projects being developed or planned. In order to mitigate the impacts of development through ensuring that local people can better access job opportunities arising from development Community Employment Plans (CEP's) are being created. CEPs are employer-led initiatives which can form part of S106 planning obligations for significant developments, however planning inspectors prefer a non-conditional commitment by developers. The measures contained within CEPs seek to. The outcomes in CEP's should apply at the construction phase and end-use phase where appropriate, and are likely to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apprenticeships • Employment/training initiatives for all ages • Best endeavours to maximise local labour and use of local supply chains • School, college and university engagement initiatives <p>There is a significant skills shortage in the construction industry, which in part is to be met through the newly created Construction Skills Academy (see SP1 Meeting specialist employer demand) although training for construction site roles still needs to be met.</p>	

Chapter 5. Skills Action Plan

In this chapter we start to reflect on the key messages of the research undertaken to date and to think about a range of activities that will contribute towards the delivery of our strategic objectives. SAP members and providers are encouraged to develop further thinking on how they might continue to contribute towards these objectives and to explore where we can collaborate to maximise investment, reduce duplication and amplify messaging to employers, providers, learners and stakeholders with an interest in skills development. The table below articulates a range of activities we can prioritise to drive change. We need to continue to engage a wider range of stakeholders to support its delivery but are equally cognisant that many are still focussed on the immediate post-COVID landscape and potential changes in focus and delivery. It is not definitive and will be further shaped in the November 21 refresh when we will have a better understanding of the labour market implications of COVID.

Category	Index	Priorities
Cross cutting skills priorities (far reaching, cross-sector)	CC-1	Supporting the reform of vocational and technical skills provision Focus: level 4+ qualifications
	CC-2	Increasing Apprenticeships and T Levels offers and uptake
	CC-3	Provide clear career pathways for young people and adults
	CC-4	Managing Oxfordshire's consistently tight labour market <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raising digital capability Health and social care labour shortages Upskilling older workers and the existing workforce
	CC-5	Graduate Promotion and Retention
	CC-6	Development of 3 Enabling skills: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> AI & Big Data; Business and Digital; Soft Skills
COVID-19 recovery and renewal skills priorities	C19-1	Support business sectors for who have been most impacted by COVID-19: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Labour and skills shortages Support for employers to navigate the skills landscape <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wholesale and Retail Trade Visitor Economy Manufacturing Professional, scientific and technical Arts, entertainment and recreation
	C19-2	Young People, EETS and NEETs
	C19-3	Support for individuals who have been most impacted by COVID-19: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jobseekers Retraining and retaining older workers People in digital poverty and/or digitally excluded
Sector priorities (or occupational priorities)	SP1	Meeting areas employer demand, in particular:
		Cornerstone Businesses: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elementary Skills Visitor Economy Education Engineering and manufacturing (inc Green Technology) Health and Social Care Breakthrough Businesses: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> STEM Business support occupation subjects (e.g. finance and accounting, business management and law) Local talent pipeline development Supporting and driving Vocational and Technical qualification reform
	SP2	Diversity and inclusion
	SP3	Skills provision for the Construction Sector and Employment Development Sites, including development of Green Construction Skills and Green Technology

Action Plan Supporting Information

Organisation	Abbreviation	Organisation	Abbreviation	Stage of activity	
Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership	OxLEP	Education and Skills Funding Agency	ESFA	Stage 1	Preparation
OxLEP Skills Team	OxSkills	Oxfordshire District Council Economic Development Officer	EDOs	Stage 2	Start
Oxfordshire Growth Hub	OxGrHub	Construction Sector Developers	ConstDev	Stage 3	Early
The SAP Board, OxLEP	OxSAP	Oxfordshire Civilian Military Partnership	OCMP	Stage 4	Advanced/Ongoing
Oxfordshire Growth Board	OxGrwth	District Council Senior Planning Officers	DSPOs	Stage 5	Completed
Oxfordshire's Business Representative Organisations (BROs)	OxBROs	Oxfordshire Association of Care Providers	OACP	Timescales	
Chambers of Commerce	ChOfC	Health Education England	HEE	Short term	Up to 6 months
Oxfordshire Provider Network Members (State and Independent FE)	OPN	Dept of Health and Social Care	DHSC	Medium term	6 months to 1 year
Careers and Enterprise Company	CEC	Oxfordshire County Council Employment Education and Training Team	OCCEET	Long term	1 year or more
Oxfordshire State Secondary Schools and Colleges	SecSchs&Col	Adviza	Adviza		
Jobcentre Plus	JobC+	South Oxfordshire Food and Education Alliance Community Larder	SOFEA		
National Careers Service (NCS)	NCS	Oxfordshire Learning Network	OLN		
Oxfordshire Employers	OxEmps	Aspire Oxford	Aspire		
Oxford Artificial Intelligence	OxAI	Oxfordshire Community Foundation	OCF		
Activate Learning/National lottery 'Back on Track' programme	BkOT	University of Oxford	OxUni		
Seetec/Activate Learning 'JETS' programme	JETS	Oxford Brookes University	OxB		
Activate Learning Skills Support for the Unemployed programme	SSU	FE Activate Learning	Activate		
Activate Learning Skills Support for the Workforce	SSW	FE Abingdon and Witney College	A&W		
Department for Work and Pensions	DWP	Oxford Advanced Skills Centre	OxAdvSk		

Cross cutting skills priorities (far reaching, cross-sector) Action Plan

Priority	Action	Partners	Stage	Timescale
CC1 Supporting the reform of vocational and technical skills provision	<p>As part of the ongoing SAP evolution we will be developing a better understanding of HMG skills investment into Oxfordshire and developing mechanisms to better map provision against demand – including employer demand and projected employment opportunities.</p> <p>This will form part of our labour market intelligence reporting and will be shared with residents, schools, further and higher education providers, businesses and strategists, business representative organisations and sector groups with specific engagement plans for each. This will be achieved through the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will continue to lobby HMG for greater local influence and potential co-commissioning of HMG investment to better align provision with demand. • Explore a mechanism for SME's to feed their skills needs into our provider base in order to help providers create the appropriate content and develop viable cohort – including for sector specific training needs. • The SAP Board and OxLEP will continue working with providers to develop a refreshed skills capital pipeline that supports priority sectors and share regular skills intelligence briefings through the OxLEP led Oxfordshire Provider Network 	<p>OxSkills</p> <p>OxSAP OxBROs ChOfC OxSAP OxSkills OPN</p>	Stage 2	Medium/ Long
CC2 Increasing Apprenticeships and T Levels offers and uptake	<p>OxLEP have been promoting and celebrating quality Apprenticeships as a valuable alternative career route through the Oxfordshire Apprenticeship Awards and Apprentice Ambassador Scheme. The leadership and management of the Oxfordshire Apprenticeship Awards (now in its 5th year) allows OxLEP to be advocate the benefits of Apprenticeships, experienced by both the apprentice and employer. Importantly, the awards are sponsored, judged and awarded by business. Moving forwards, it may seek to broaden the awards to celebrate technical qualifications including T Levels and Traineeships.</p> <p>This will be achieved through the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OxLEP will work with providers and collaborating partners to increase awareness and understanding of T-levels with employers through a range of activities including webinars and events. • Build on the solid foundations led by OxLEP's European Social Fund (ESF) '<i>Skills for Business</i>' Programme to explore additional funding to undertake skills needs assessments and bespoke training and development plans for employers. • Support the development of new tailored employer led standard model courses delivered through a more flexible provision i.e. short 'bite-sized' part-time courses, taught through digital and blended learning. 	<p>ESFA OxBROs OPN</p> <p>OPN ESFA OxBROs</p> <p>OxSkills</p> <p>DfE OxSkills OPN OxBROs ChOfC</p>	Stage 1	Medium/ Long

Priority	Action	Partners	Stage	Timescale
CC3 Provide clear career pathways for young people and adults	OxLEP and the Careers and Enterprise Company (CEC) are currently partnering to prepare and inspire young people for the fast-changing world of work. This is being achieved through two initiatives; The Careers Hub and the Enterprise Advisor Network (EAN):	OxSkills CEC SecSchs	Ongoing	Short
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> OxLEP Skills aims for all Careers Hub schools to attain five Gatsby Benchmarks by the end of the 2020/21 academic year. OxLEP has created a new virtual 'Find Your Future' platform for young people, schools and parents. Which includes a virtual careers platform, video and classroom resources: https://www.oxfordshirelep.com/findyourfuture From the 2022/23 academic year, OxLEP plans to explore additional funding to expand the Careers Hub from 23 secondary schools/colleges to 43. We will continue support the 10 Special Educational Need and Disabilities (SEND COP) schools and Pupil Referral Unit (PRU). Our ambition is to continue the upwards trajectory in improving social mobility for all young people, by ensuring that they will have a better understanding of the career pathways and recruitment by local employers. 	OxSkills CEC SecSchs	Stage 1	Long
	OxLEP are also collaborating with Jobcentre Plus and the National Careers Service (NCS) to support 18+ Jobseekers through virtual careers/ job fairs.	OxSkills JobC+ NCS	Ongoing	Short
	From Autumn 2020, the SAP Board and OxLEP will work with employers and providers to agree the mutual terms for those 'soft and transferable skills' which are valued by employers. OxLEP will further highlight to schools, colleges and HE institutions the inclusion of transferable employability skills through curriculum enhancement.	OxSkills OxEmps OxAI OPN	Stage 1	Short/ Medium
The SAP, OxLEP, Oxfordshire Chambers of Commerce, The National Career Service (NCS) and other business focused organisations will work together to promote the new ' <i>Lifetime Skills Guarantee</i> ' and ' <i>Lifelong Loan Entitlement</i> ' with a focus on the following priority groups: the over '50's, transitioning/ex-armed forces personnel, those furthest from the labour market and people with long term illness and disabilities.	OxSAP OxSkills ChofC NCS OCMP JETS SSU	Stage 1	Medium/ Long	
CC4 Managing Oxfordshire's consistently tight labour market	Oxfordshire needs to mitigate impacts of an increasingly ageing population which aligns with the national picture by expanding the size of its workforce in order to provide the workers needed as the economy returns to sustained growth. There are several activities required:			
	Support people in continuing to contribute to the economy into later life through longer and flexible careers through retaining and retraining. This work is being delivered through the ' <i>Work and Health Programme – JET's</i> ' operated by Seetec until April 2022 and has a focus on those furthest from the labour market.	JETS	Stage 3	Long
	Retain talent in the local area (partly linked to housing supply and affordability) and the promotion of career progression routes, particularly in those sectors experiencing high levels of replacement demand (see CC3 Graduate Promotion and Retention).	OxSkills OxBROs	Ongoing	Short
Maximise our existing ESF programmes to respond to the reskilling and retraining demands of our workforce and employers and develop new programmes that support this cohort.	OxSkills DWP	Ongoing	Short	

Priority	Action	Partners	Stage	Timescale
	We will continue to engage our Local Planning Authorities (x5) and the Oxfordshire Growth Board to maximise the skills and training outcomes arising from major developments. We will work with local authority partners, developers and stakeholder to develop and agree Community Employment Plans (CEPs) on all major housing or employment generating developments ensuring that local communities -especially those furthest from the labour market are able to access a range of skills and training outcomes – such a work experience placements and Sector Based Work Academies using the convening influence of the SAP and OxLEP.	EDOs OxGrwth ConstDev DSPOs OxSAP OxLEP	Ongoing	Short
CC5 Graduate promotion and retention	<p>A recent UCAS survey suggests that more students (23%) want to study closer to home (due to the pandemic) so they are closer to their 'support network'. This presents an opportunity to create a 'Oxfordshire Jobs' campaign to promote the variety of high-quality employment opportunities in Oxfordshire.</p> <p>OxLEP will work with both local university career services to raise awareness of industrial placements and local employment opportunities for undergraduate learners approaching graduation and support jobs and careers fairs with a focus on our key sectors.</p>	OPN OxUni OxB OxBROs	Stage 1	Medium/ Long
CC6 'Enabling Skills' to meet employer needs	<p>AI and Big Data: The pioneering British computer scientist Alan Turing is widely regarded as launching and inspiring much of the development of AI. While other countries and international companies are investing heavily in AI development, the UK is still regarded as a centre of expertise, for the present at least. More can be achieved in order to build on Turing's legacy to ensure the UK remains among the leaders in AI. The University of Oxford is a founding partner of The Alan Turing Institute alongside the universities of Cambridge, Edinburgh, UCL and Warwick, and the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council. There is an opportunity utilising the high value skills expertise held at the University of Oxford and the Alan Turing Institute, to create a ground-breaking capital project in the development of AI skills, particularly in under-represented groups such as a BAME and women.</p> <p>Business and Digital Skills: Digital skills are becoming near-universal requirements for employment. The move up the career ladder from low-to high-skill jobs comes with increased demand for specific digital skills. Acquiring specific digital skills makes career progression as well as a pay increase more likely. In certain fields, job seekers need to develop digital skills related to specific technical tools of their chosen discipline to advance their careers. The Business and Digital skills development will be primarily led through the DfE Skills White Paper:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Digital skills will be introduced for adults who need essential digital skills for work, giving free access to new digital skills qualifications based on employer-supported national standards. • Establish pathfinder College Business Centres concentrating on local priority sectors, and we will offer support through the Strategic Development Fund' • T Level Digital courses which offer 45 days on a meaningful industry placement, putting the skills they have developed into practice and gaining first-hand experience of industry. • To ensure that adult education budget funding rules continue to allow a mix of face-to-face learning and online education to support providers to capitalise on the potential of digital learning. <p>Soft Skills: From Spring 2020, the SAP Board and OxLEP will work with employers and providers to agree the mutual terms for those 'soft skills' which are valued by employers. OxLEP will further highlight to schools, colleges and HE institutions the inclusion of transferable employability skills through curriculum enhancement. The transferability of soft skills, business skills and digital skills across considerable swathes of economic activity</p>	OxSAP OxSkills SecSchs OPN	Stage 1	Short

Priority	Action	Partners	Stage	Timescale
	irrespective of sector and touching upon a wide range of occupations has the potential to be an impactful approach to the design of local skills policy.			

COVID-19 recovery and renewal skills priorities Action Plan

Priority	Action	Partners	Stage	Timescale
C19-1 Support business sectors for who have been most impacted by COVID-19: Labour and skills shortages Support for employers to navigate the skills landscape	Demand for health and social care roles such as registered nurses, nurse practitioners, social workers, care assistants and physiotherapists have increased due to COVID-19 putting further stresses on these longstanding labour shortages. Whilst demand for health and social care sectors continues to grow, many sectors are instead contracting. We will seek funding to deliver a range of activities that support improved recruitment, retention and leadership and management in the health and social care sector.	OxSkills OCC OACP	Stage 1	Medium/ Long
	This will include: Mobility improvements for health and social care workers: Building on work previously undergone as part of Oxfordshire's Social Contract in understanding challenges around Oxfordshire's rural areas and the social mobility as a result of this e.g. in accessing work experience. A programme will be developed that aligns to this thinking and work to improved mobility for young people. This will likely be through a Car Club, mopeds, or similar. Future leaders in health and social care skills programme: The development and delivery of a training programme that addresses clear challenges at a senior management level and is centered around developing our future leaders in health and social care. The training programme will be based upon the three successful programmes ran in 2015-2018. Due to capacity and financial constraints for health and social care sector organisations locally, backfill support has been costed for organisations that are part of the programme so that interim support can be put into place during training. Training will utilise existing material where possible working in close partnership with the OACP, Health Education England, the Department of Health and Social Care etc., including maximising apprenticeship opportunities where relevant. Delivery will likely be organised through the Skills for Business programme or the peer network through the Growth Hub.	OxSkills TBC OACP OCC HEE DHSC TBC OxSkills OxGrHub	Stage 1	Medium/ Long
	Oxfordshire has a majority of SME's (99%). To support these businesses in navigate the skills landscape, OxLEP has jointly funded with the European Social Fund (ESF) the 'Skills for Business' (S4B) programme. S4B offers SME's 12 hours of support through the creation of a Skills Needs Assessment (SNA) to identify the business learning and development gaps. The programme develops a training and development plan, which could include recruiting an Apprentice, Intern, Kickstart or upskill current staff. It also offers local market intelligence to support workforce growth and workshops/conferences. The programme ends on 31st July 2021, however, OxLEP will be applying a revised Programme Commencement Review (PCR) to continue delivery from August 2021 to July 2022. (see SP1 - Reforming vocational/technical skills provision).	OxSkills DWP	Ongoing	Short

Priority	Action	Partners	Stage	Timescale
C19-2 Young People, EETS and NEETs	The new Government Kickstart Scheme provides funding to employers to create job placements for 16 to 24-year olds in receipt of Universal Credit. We have held employer webinars to promote the scheme.	OxSkills DWP	Stage 5	Short
	Oxfordshire County Council's EET team leads on supporting young people who have been identified as NEET, including those who are home schooled. The <i>'Back on Track'</i> Programme is funded to June 2022 and works with partner organisations to deliver a free project to help transform the lives of youngsters at risk of becoming NEET. It works with young people to develop their self-confidence and motivation to stay in education. It results in young people being more work ready and able to make more informed decisions about their future. OxLEP will investigate the opportunities of broadening the provision for EET/NEET other than just the <i>'Back on Track'</i> programme and for those young people who are considered 'high risk' and/or have a 'Youth Disposal Order'.	OxSkills OCCEET BkOT TBC	Ongoing	Short
	From January to July 2021, OxLEP secured funding to deliver <i>the 'My Choices'</i> programme. The programme (delivered by Adviza) aims to support 100+ KS4 and KS5 students at risk of becoming NEET, to receive careers support and guidance in order to remain in education and training. We will explore continuation of funding for this, if successful.	OxSkills CEC Adviza	Ongoing	Short
C19-3 Support for individuals who have been most impacted by COVID-19:	Jobseekers/Retraining and retaining older workers The ESF funded 'Skills Support for the Unemployed' (SSU) is delivered by Activate Learning and funded until June 2023. SSU is a training project to support unemployed people living in Oxfordshire, to up-skill and progress into employment or further education. Participants can be referred from a variety of sources, JCP, Oxford City Council Welfare Reform Team, charity organisations, self-referred, Oxfordshire Work and Health Programme and the Oxfordshire BBO project. Participants who join the project complete an individual learning plan and identify their skills gaps to finding work. They are encouraged to enrol on courses that will help them to improve skills. Courses include: Building confidence and self-esteem, personal and mental health and well-being, employability, developing online skills and IT Courses (Basic, Level 1 and 2).	SSU	Stage 4	Short/ Medium
	OxLEP will continue to collaborate with Job Centre Plus and the NCS to promote Virtual Careers/Jobs Fairs and free webinars for job seekers to boost job searching skills and applications.	JobC+ NCS	Ongoing	Short/ Medium
	People in digital poverty and/or digitally excluded Coronavirus has revealed the scale of the digital divide through 'digital poverty' and 'digital exclusion'. SOFEA, a registered charity in Oxfordshire, works in 10 locations providing a food larder to low income groups. SOFEA has plans to expand to 30 high need locations across Oxfordshire. In order to help this 'hard to reach' disadvantaged group, there needs to be a multi-agency strategy. SOFEA, Aspire, Oxfordshire Learning Network and Oxfordshire Community Foundation (OCF) are in discussions to offer computer equipment to disadvantaged clients. To tackle digital exclusion, OxLEP is seeking funding to create a mobile 'one stop shop' for skills and motivational support for individuals and families. A small mobile classroom would travel around the community larder locations offering accessible entry level I.T. courses and would link with JobCentre Plus and SSU to offer unemployment, training, skills support and guidance. (For more information on this project please see the Oxfordshire Skills Economic Investment Plan).	SOFEA OLN Aspire OCF JobC+ SSU	Stage 1	Short/ Medium

Sector priorities (or occupational priorities) Action Plan

Priority	Action	Partners	Stage	Timescale
SP1 Meeting specialist employer demand Cornerstone Businesses Breakthrough Businesses	<p>OxLEP has invested c£23m in skills capital infrastructure to support a range of additional provision aligned to key sectors and priorities. We are working collectively with providers: University of Oxford, Activate Learning, Abingdon and Witney College, Oxfordshire Advanced Skills and Henley College to 2025, in order to maximise student demand, continue employer engagement and to use these investments to deliver a step change in specialist provision. From September 2020, the SAP Board and OxLEP will identify, explore and address any barriers to Higher Level Apprenticeships perceived by SME employers.</p> <p>Our skills investments are in brief (see Appendix B for more detail):</p> <p><u>University of Oxford:</u> <i>Centre for Applied Super Connectivity</i> - A new centre of innovation to train people with necessary skills in superconductivity which can be transferable to other relevant industries.</p> <p><u>Activate Learning:</u> <i>Oxford Centre for Innovation and Technology</i> - The development of a specialist technology training centre in Blackbird Leys, Oxford, to address skills shortages across engineering, electrical, design, and emerging technologies. <i>Hospitality Training Centre</i> - Project focuses on increasing the volume of skilled employees to respond to long standing skills and labour shortages across the hospitality sector. <i>Care Skills Training Centre</i> - The Care Skills Training Centres at the City of Oxford College gives a unique insight into careers in the health and social care sector.</p> <p><u>Abingdon and Witney College</u> <i>Technology Livestock Centre</i> - A major new skills centre supporting courses and research relating to livestock husbandry in a 'highly-technical' environment <i>Construction Skills Academy</i> - Abingdon & Witney College's new academy will give young people and adults opportunities in the property maintenance sector. <i>Green Construction Skills Centre</i> - The Green Construction Skills Centre will meet the considerable shortage of green construction skills across Oxfordshire</p> <p><u>Oxfordshire Advanced Skills (OAS)</u> <i>Advanced Skills Centre</i> A high-tech higher education hub dedicated to STEM training and provides a quiet space for all higher education students to work.</p> <p><u>The Henley College</u> <i>Advanced Digital & Science Centre</i> - This project refurbished five key areas to promote STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Maths) progression.</p>	<p>OxSAP OxSkills</p> <p>OxUni</p> <p>Activate</p> <p>A&W</p> <p>OxAdvSk</p> <p>HenleyCo</p>	<p>Stage 1</p>	<p>Medium/ Long</p>

Priority	Action	Partners	Stage	Timescale
SP3 Diversity and Inclusion	There is a need to promote STEM and Digital IT career routes to women and BAME young people in order to create a more diverse workforce. From May 2021, OxLEP working in partnership with Oxfordshire Advanced Skills (OAS) and other providers, will host webinars and events to inform and encourage a greater number of young people, particularly women and BAME groups into skills training provision that supports Oxfordshire's growth sectors.	OAS OPN	Stage 1	Medium/ Long
	Over the 2021/22 academic year, OxLEP will identify ways to promote STEM, Digital IT and Coding careers. This is particularly important for Cherwell and the City of Oxford schools due to the region experiencing persistent labour market deprivation within education, skills and training. This might be achieved through providing STEM ambassadors and after school Coding Clubs. Consultation with career leaders and young people will be undertaken to ascertain levels of interest and feasibility.	CEC OxSkills TBC	Stage 1	Medium/ Long
	A repeat of Oxfordshire's Transformative Technologies Tour is in discussion. In February 2020, a one-day tour was given to KS4-KS5 STEM students where they met businesses and employees working in the sector. Resulting from the tour a short video and lesson pack was created. When face to face visits are possible, a further tour will be offered to students.	OxSkills TBC	TBC	Short/ Medium
SP4 Managing Oxfordshire's consistently tight labour market.	Raising digital capability From September 2021, two of Oxfordshire's providers are offering the new T Level courses in Digital production, design and development and Healthcare. T Levels bring classroom learning and an extended industry placement together a course designed with businesses and employers, helping prepare students to meet the needs of industry and work. This will be a good opportunity for employers to start to build a talent pipeline by offering quality placements to students.	Activate A&W	Stage 1	Medium/ Long
	The government's Digital Bootcamps are being rolled out. The bootcamps offer free, flexible courses of just 12 to 16 weeks to people the opportunity to build up sector-specific skills and fast-track to an interview with a local employer. A large Oxfordshire provider investigated the possibility of jointly bidding for the tender. It was unable to find sufficient employers able to offer new digital jobs at L3+ level for those who are both unemployed and career changers within the timeline of the programme (April 2021 – March 2022). This will be reviewed again in 2022 for the re-tender.	OPN	Stage 1	Long
	'Digital Skills for Life' part time courses are led through the Oxfordshire Learning Network (OLN) by Abingdon and Witney College. The Oxfordshire Learning Network (OLN) is Oxfordshire's Community Learning Trust, formed in response to the "New Challenges, New Chances" Government strategy . It aims to bring together interested parties from the local community, encourage collaboration, and to identify priorities for the Oxfordshire area and match it with provision. To do this, the Community Learning Strategy has been created to target four areas of focus – Partnership, Participation, Protecting the Environment and Progression.	OLN A&W	Stage 1	Short/ Medium
Health and social care labour shortages In January 2021, OxLEP has in collaboration with Oxfordshire County Council and Oxfordshire Association of Care providers created the 'Health and Social Care Economic recovery plan'. The plan aims to help improve	OCC OAC OxLEP	Stage 1	Medium/ Long	

Priority	Action	Partners	Stage	Timescale
	mobility options to help employees get from/to more rural locations, which has been identified as a major barrier to employment by non-car owners.			
SP5 Construction sector and employment development Sites	<p>– OxLEP continue its work with each Local Planning Authority, on an ongoing timeline linked to local development plans, to facilitate the implementation of Community Employment Plan (CEPs) policies and to request CEPs as a condition on development sites which meet the proposed threshold via supplementary planning documentation when deemed appropriate by planning inspection.</p> <p>It is recommended that CEP's are focused on the sites with 1,000 or more houses and/or 4,000 square metres (gross) of floor space. There is currently approximately 30+ proposed sites in Oxfordshire where this suggested threshold might apply. The development of the 'Net Zero' Construction sector brings further opportunities for OxLEP to tie-in additional outcomes linked to training and development for this evolving sector.</p>	OxSkills EDOs DSPOs ConstDev	Ongoing	Long

Chapter 6. Assessment of Progress

Taking a local leadership role

The SAP is one of six business sub-groups that support the delivery and governance of the LEP.

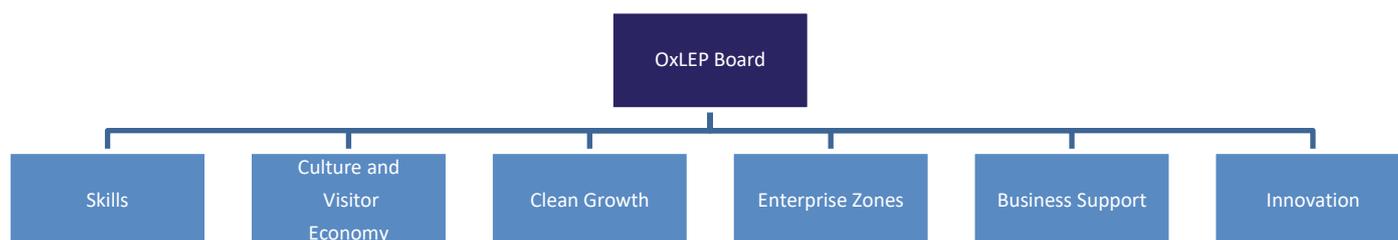


Figure 10 OxLEP Sub-Groups

Whilst convening industry expertise these sub-groups also allow the SAP to reach into an ‘extended family’ of c100+ key stakeholders and engage a broad range of employers from a variety of industry sectors.

The Oxfordshire Skills Board was established in 2011. It brought together a wide range of public and private employers, secondary, further and higher education skills providers and stakeholder groups. Working closely with the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership, it is driven to achieve improvements in the skills available to Oxfordshire’s employers and the learning opportunities available to students, residents and workforce. In many ways OSB was an early SAP but without the formal recognition of DfE. As the Oxfordshire Skills Board has taken on the additional responsibilities of the Skills Advisory Panel (SAP) for the Department of Education, this Local Skills Report and Plan will continue the ambition to develop a more collaborative and co-ordinated approach to strategic skills development.

Skills development has always been a core priority for Oxfordshire; in recognition that skills play a critical role in economic growth. A well-trained workforce is a pre-requisite for a strong and sustainable economy and the life blood of every business and organisation.

The Oxfordshire Skills Board published its first skills strategy in 2013 which set out a high-level vision for skills development in the area. It noted that the pace of change since its launch has been significant across many areas – delivering against its City Deal funded apprenticeship programme, commissioning elements of the European Social Fund programme to help those furthest from the workforce and capital investment in the skills infrastructure through the Local Growth Fund.

The implementation of the 2016 ‘Building a 21st century skills ecosystem’ set out key priorities to address the skills challenges until 2020 and recognised that,

*‘Oxfordshire’s people are the county’s principal resource in supporting the next phase of economic growth. They are versatile, adaptable, generally highly skilled and in great demand by our vibrant and virtual economy’.*²²

A key element of our leadership role has been to use the skills strategy priorities to invest in our skills infrastructure and to that end we have overseen c£23m investment in the creation of new skills centres across Oxfordshire. With many operational and accepting new students, it is over the next few years that we’ll start to see real step change as student numbers grow. By 2025, these new facilities will develop and train 7000 learners annually in a variety of full and part time courses, including higher and degree level Apprenticeships in Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM), Health and Social care, Visitor Economy, Digital, Agri-Tec and Construction sectors. Training courses available include Robotics, Power Engineering and Space Science.

²² OxLEP, Skills Strategy (2016) <https://www.oxfordshirelep.com/about/our-strategies/skills-strategy>



Figure 11 OxLEP Skills Hub wider programmes

There are several wider programmes being delivered by the OxLEP Skills Hub which support the development of skills across Oxfordshire and that the SAP have been instrumental in developing. This includes working in partnership with the Government sponsored Careers and Enterprise Company (CEC) to create an Enterprise Advisor Network and Careers Hub, the Oxfordshire Apprenticeships initiative (including an Ambassadors programme and awards ceremony), overseeing the creation and delivery of our part funded European Social Fund skills and training programme outcomes to influence planning policy to encourage the adoption of Community Employment Plans (CEPs) on major developments – a vital opportunity to maximise opportunity for all.

Our SAP built on the employer led Skills Board and brings employers, providers, education leaders and policy makers together with a common aim. There are around 350+ providers active in Oxfordshire. Around 18 providers deliver in excess of 90% of all outcomes, with providers delivering most outcomes. We have been working many providers through a tri-annual ‘Provider Network’ meeting where information is exchanged, policy reviewed, and strategy is developed. This has been a great success and will continue to be a focus for us moving forward. This group has a nominated ‘seat’ on the SAP adding value to our leadership role.

Over the past five years, we have worked closely with providers and employers including Activate Learning, Abingdon and Witney College, The Henley College and UKAEA to jointly fund new facilities which meet the local skills need and training in the following sectors: STEM (which includes Advanced Digital and Science, Robotics, Power Engineering and Space Science), Health and Social Care, Agri-Tech, Visitor Economy and Construction. Employers have been at the heart of these developments – helping shape the infrastructure required and course content when developed.

We regularly engage our MP’s & Business Representative Organisations to share knowledge and understanding of the business and skills support landscape, to reflect key messages and to better align economic recovery planning support to businesses.

The SAP regularly engages in OxLEP’s meeting and events cycle – including virtual Q&A’s bringing thought leaders, businesses and providers together to discuss key skills challenges and opportunities. The frequency of these events has intensified during the pandemic to ensure a regular information flow between the SAP, OxLEP and our business communities that helps shape economic recovery planning.

From its inception as OSB over a decade ago the SAP is continuing to develop its understanding of the changing dynamics of our economy. We have led the development of or supported numerous strategies that ensures an up to date understanding of the key challenges – including Skills Strategies, Strategic Economic Plans, ESIF strategies, Local Growth Fund strategy and more recently Local Industrial Strategy and

Economic Recovery Plans. Each recognises the value of people and skills and each build understanding of current and future skills opportunities and challenges.

Our knowledge base has been further developed through the newly commissioned Labour Market Information (LMI) webtool. This will enable us to more easily track 'real-time' skills and employment data which allows us to inform and influence a wide range of stakeholders. A key focus will be to further develop the career seeker dashboard to ensure accessibility for young career seekers, their families and career leaders. Other ongoing developments of the LMI webtool include the ability to automate data collation from other published sources including government and national data sets at LEP level and the potential use of AI and Big Data. Guidance on the inclusion of wider data sets not included in the SAP toolkit or core indicators will be sort from other stakeholders interested in utilising the webtool. Increasing in-house analytical capability on a sustainable basis will support further reviews of these important data sets and help review current and shape future policy development.

Significant Skills and Capital Investment

We are hugely proud that we have been at the heart of significant skills capital investment in Oxfordshire. This is delivering top quality physical infrastructure in key sectors identified through our strategy's developed over the past decade - including City Deal and Local Growth Funds.

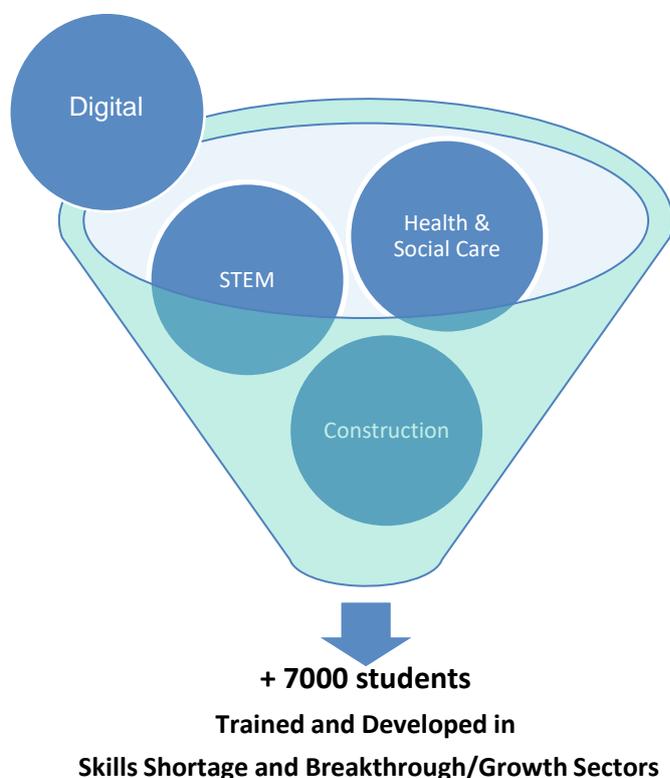


Figure 12 Skills Capital Investment Skills Out-turn

These facilities – developed with employers at their heart will accommodate the training and development of over 7000 students in identified growth sectors and areas of skills shortages, including STEM, Health and Social Care, Construction and Digital. This level of co-ordinated and collaborative investment in the physical skills infrastructure aligned to identified place based economic strategy was unheard of pre OSB and OxLEP and has helped shape new provision for generations of learners to come.

Our regular engagement with the main providers aligned to real time LMI ensures we continue to help shape provision – including community based learning and the deployment of Adult Education Budget although we hope that SAPs in non MCA areas can increase influence over budget allocations to similar levels seen in MCA area

perhaps through some form of co-commissioning protocols. That will help embed SAPs nationally as one of the key bodies responsible for skills strategy and delivery and provide greater influence over funding and ultimately delivery than is currently the case.

An example of where the SAP has helped shape provision based on identified areas of shortage is in construction. Oxfordshire has significant growth ambition yet there is insufficient delivery of construction training to meet current and projected demand. To address this skills gap, the SAP and OxLEP worked in collaboration with Abingdon and Witney College utilising Local Growth Funding to refurbish four former warehouse units in Bicester. The facility now provides opportunities for apprentices to train for the fast-growing property maintenance sector, alongside traditional professional trades in plumbing, electrical installation, carpentry and joinery.

COVID-19 recovery and renewal plans

Our recently adopted Economic Recovery Plan (ERP) identified five priorities to support economic recovery.

Each of these five high level priorities have a skills requirement and each is working up initial priorities over the short term.

The SAP has been an integral part of ERP development and will be at the heart of supporting recovery moving forward.

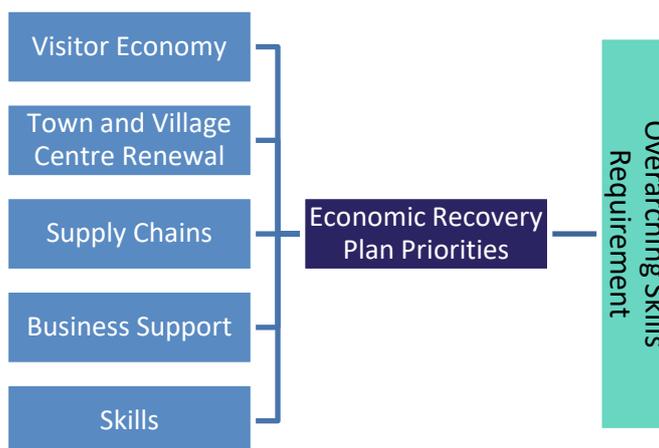


Figure 13 OxLEP Economic Recovery Plan Priorities

What has happened so far

The SAP identified the need to support employers to navigate and understand the various new government skills schemes and funding initiatives announced by the Chancellor in 2020. This included the new Kickstart Scheme, Apprenticeship placement funding and Traineeships. OxLEP in collaboration with the DWP and ESFA hosted virtual breakfast and lunchtime employer Q&A webinars which were hugely well received and helped support many employers to better understand the various schemes

Due to a tripling in the Claimant and Alternative Claimant Count rate during the COVID19 pandemic to 3.9% working with the NCS, we created a redeployment service which enabled employers to potentially redeploy staff into jobs in areas of growth and labour shortage for example careers in Adult Social Care. We are also pivoting our ESF Skills Support for the Unemployed and Skills Support for the Workforce to make them more accessible to those impacted by the pandemic.

OxLEP has stood up an Enhanced Growth Hub offer in response to the pandemic which has supported in excess of 1200 businesses. Skills and Leadership being key challenges identified through the self-diagnostic triage tool which the Skills Hub supported, based on business needs.

There has been a significant sharp rise in 'Not in Education, Employment and Training' (NEET) young people across the county. OxLEP are delivering the Careers and Enterprise Company funded 'My Choices' programme to support young people who have been identified as at risk of becoming NEET, as well as working closely with the Oxfordshire County Council NEET team.

Two skills projects have been created in response to COVID-19, one focussed around the labour and skills shortage in the Health and Social Care sector, and how to support those impacted through digital poverty and digital exclusion. The plans highlight, the lack of public transport and car ownership to access rural areas as a significant barrier to those who are interested in entering the Health and Social Care sector. The digital divide has become starkly transparent due to COVID-19 and the multiple lockdowns. Low income groups are being challenged with not only with digital poverty i.e. the lack of computer equipment and internet, but also digital exclusion through lack of confidence in utilising the equipment once provided.

Through OxLEP's tri-annual 'Provider Forum' meetings there has been the opportunity to engage with all providers about the work of the SAP (DfE gave a presentation), LIS and broader skills work with government departments, for example the promotion of T Levels for the Education Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). We also raised awareness of the LMI Webtool to providers and how they could utilise the data to influence course provision. Further topics include Inclusion and Diversity and the Rural Agenda (in particular, access to industrial placements for students).

Throughout the pandemic, OxLEP created and distributed a monthly LMI newsletter to help stakeholders' understanding of the economic impact of COVID-19, and what measure were needed to start planning the

recovery. This has been replaced with the newly commissioned Labour Market Information Webtool, with induction briefings and support videos for all stakeholders delivered to enable broad use. OxLEP has provided training on the use of the LMI webtool to career leads and Adviza staff who work with schools in the Oxfordshire area as well as economic development leads and county data analysts. This offer of training will also be extended to staff working on Activate's SSW and SSU programme to enable those unemployed or at risk of redundancy move into jobs in growth sectors. With the newly created LMI webtool and this Local Skills Report we will aim to influence providers on their future infrastructure proposals.

Much progress has been made, with significant investment in our skills infrastructure - including City Deal investment to support Apprenticeships alongside in excess of £23m capital investment in new training facilities including investment to support additional STEM provision.

Through joint funding the European Social Fund 'Skills for Business' (S4B) programme has enabled SME's to analyse their skills needs and create a training and development plan which supports their business needs. Outcomes from this programme have led to over 30 new apprenticeships being created and over 600 businesses engaged in education. The S4B programme has also tried to engage larger employers in unlocking their apprenticeship levy for the benefit of micro employers.

Through the Community Employment Plans (CEPS) by working with developers such as Laing O'Rourke on the Westgate Shopping Centre, we have helped to increase numbers of Apprentices, on site workers, contracts awarded within local supply chains, on site tours to schools and colleges and individuals supported through sector based work academies (who have then gone into employment with Laing O'Rourke)

The partnership with the CEC, firstly through the Enterprise Advisor Network, and more recently through becoming a Careers Hub, is working well in ensuring that all young people leaving secondary school in Oxfordshire have a clear career pathway. We are ambitious in enabling more career leaders being Careers Education Information and Guidance (CEIAG) trained and achieving higher numbers of Gatsby Benchmarks. We need to ensure that young people are clear about the areas industry specialisms and routes to local employment. To achieve this, there are significant plans in this academic year to help young people and their parents/carers through a variety of means virtual events, videos, classroom resources for all secondary school year groups and employer led webinars as well as a virtual work experience offer. We are also working with OAS to create a Diversity and Inclusion campaign to encourage women and BAME groups into technical vocational careers.

We have built strong collaborations formed with other stakeholders to meet mutual outcomes including to support those furthest from the workforce, elementary workers, unemployed and young people claiming Universal credit. This has been achieved through engaging with Seetec/JETS programme, Adviza who holds the NCS contract for Oxfordshire, Activate/SSU and Aspire. Stakeholders also include government departments i.e. DWP, ESFA and DfE and local and county councils. This work has included hosting webinars and co-promoting virtual careers events and workshops. Our work to promote and train partners on utilising the LMI webtool is ongoing.

The number of apprenticeships has declined, however employers report issues accessing skilled employees but do not tend to look to apprenticeships to fill these gaps. Over the past five years, we have showcased Apprenticeships, as a positive alternative to Higher Education There is increased need to continue to raise awareness of how T-Levels and Apprenticeships, as an alternative to recruiting HE graduates, can form a valuable career progression route to higher level qualification and skills for employers. Businesses, particularly those specialising in the emerging technologies, need to offer higher-level advanced technical apprenticeships; not only as a way to obtain and train staff, but to retain staff.

Use of DfE SAP funds

The Department for Education Skills Advisory Panel funding has helped to deliver:

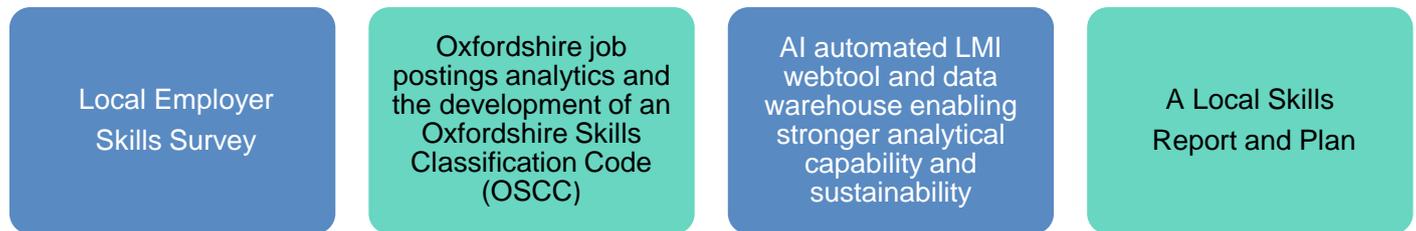


Figure 14 DfE SAP Funding Uses

The new DfE ‘Skills for Jobs’ White Paper

Employers are being given a central role in designing almost all technical courses by 2030, aiming to ensure that the education and training people receive is directly linked to the skills needed for real jobs. This will help address the mismatch between FE provision and those skills required by Oxfordshire’ cornerstone and breakthrough employers.

We are keen to support the delivery of the white paper, however the challenge exists in how to enable micro businesses that form 89% of employers (with up to 9 employees) in Oxfordshire, to engage in the course re-designing. Most micro businesses have limited capacity and are focusing on day-to-day activity, particularly while operating within a pandemic/post EU transition environment.

Due to the wide range of specialist sectors operating in Oxfordshire, it might be challenging to create training courses for such small numbers of attendees. A more effective approach might be to ‘train the trainers’ who could then internally train and upskill staff to meet their specialised needs.

The ‘Skills for Jobs’ white paper has identified the need to improve the delivery of careers advice in schools and colleges. One of the proposed measures to achieve this includes ‘We will invest in more high-quality training for Careers Leaders, who have proven to be knowledgeable and effective in leading a careers programme’²³. Through our CEC programme delivery, we have promoted and encouraged career leader training to schools and colleges. Career leaders are typically teachers who have taken on the additional responsibility of leading careers within their school/college. The hours they have off timetable devoted to careers, can vary from between two hours per week to full time. To ensure a more generalised time scale focused on careers, across all state secondary schools and colleges, we have developed the ‘Careers Innovation Gateway’ project in our Local Industrial Strategy Investment Plan²⁴. The project enables all career leaders’ to be off curriculum for the same amount of time i.e. 0.5fte per week. This would allow all career leaders to participate in careers training, become confident in navigating and sharing local labour market intelligence, devote more time in employer engagement and become proficient in utilising the CEC’s Compass+ and CRM tool to share progress on the Gatsby Benchmarks.

²³ DfE (2021) <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/skills-for-jobs-lifelong-learning-for-opportunity-and-growth>

²⁴ OxLEP, The Investment Plan (2020) <https://www.oxfordshirelep.com/lis>

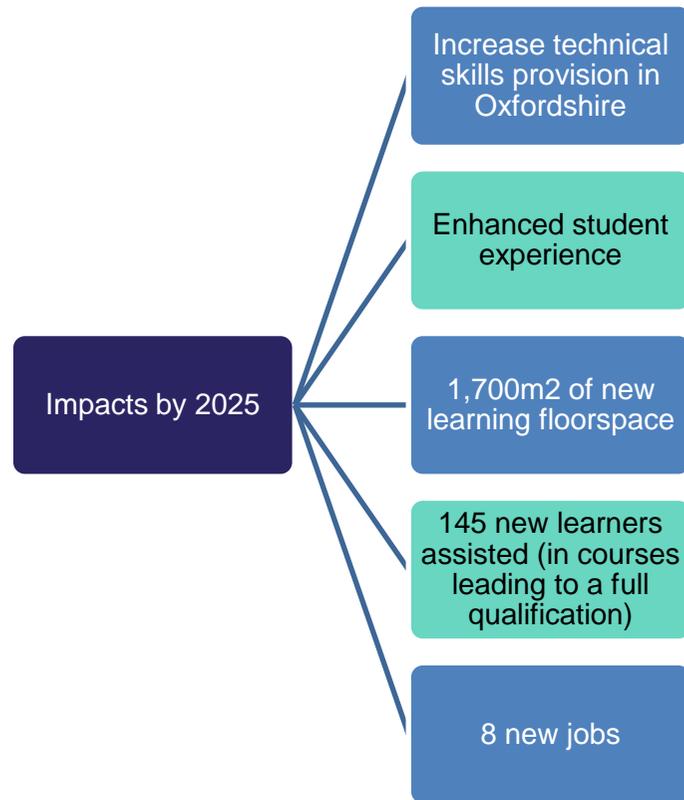
Chapter 7. Case studies/positive impact stories

Index of Case Studies

Case Study Index	Case Study Subject	Partner
CS1	Increased levels of Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) in line with Skills Strategy aspirations	Oxford Centre for Technology & Innovation
CS2	Supporting SME's navigate the Skills landscape	OxLEP ESF Skills for Business Programme
CS3	Employer Engagement with Education	Morgan Sindall Construction
CS4	ESF Skills for Business Programme engaging SMEs in supporting those furthest from the labour market	Fisher Studios: David Fisher
CS5	Reaching those furthest from the workforce Community Employment Plans (CEPs)	Community Employment Plans (CEPs)
	Reaching those furthest from the workforce	University of Oxford and Abingdon & Witney College Westgate Oxford CEP
CS6	Employer/Provider partnership	
CS7	Apprenticeship Levy transfer	University of Oxford
CS8	Supporting H.E talent In Oxfordshire	Crankstart Scholarships

CS1. Increased levels of Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) in line with Skills Strategy aspirations

Oxford Centre for Technology & Innovation; £4.5m co-investment via Local Growth Funds.



OxLEP co-funded a high-specification facility to support training in a wide range of technological industries, including construction, engineering, IT, computing and motor vehicle. The location at Blackbird Leys is one of Oxfordshire most deprived communities particularly in education, skills and training.

The centre's facilities enhance student experience, equipping them with the knowledge and skills in a range of exciting and fast-paced technological industries. In the summer term of 2021, a planned City and Guilds Conference will help to lock in technician level pathways alongside the existing engineering pathways.

The reputation of the campus as a centre for STEM is growing, which has resulted in the successful awarding of IoT status in partnership with Milton Keynes College and Cranfield University. The project has attracted capital to refurbish an additional building on the site allowing the growth of STEM provision into L4 and Higher Apprenticeship provision in digital.

The number of student projects co-created with employers and industry leads continues to grow. The workshop facilities available allow the implementation of multi-disciplinary projects - including a heritage project in collaboration with Jaguar Land Rover. Student recruitment in 2020 for both Engineering and Electrical Installation were both above target.

Figure 15 Oxford Centre for Technology & Innovation Impacts

CS2. Supporting SME's to navigate the Skills landscape

OxLEP ESF Skills for Business programme

Oxfordshire Skills for Business is a programme of support provided by OxLEP Skills and part-funded by the European Social Fund, that provides free practical support to small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) to identify and evaluate their skills and learning needs, including upskilling current staff.

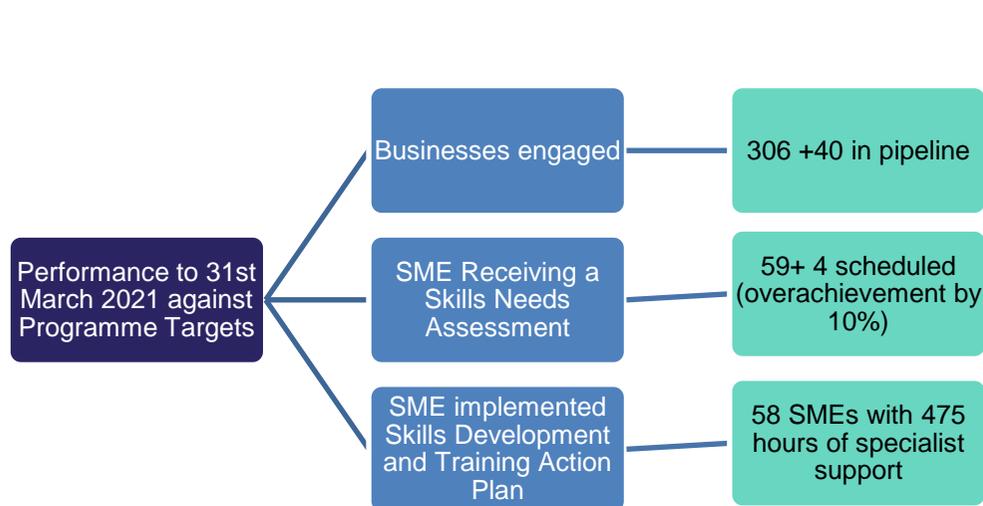


Figure 17 OxLEP ESF Skills for Business Programme Target Out-turns

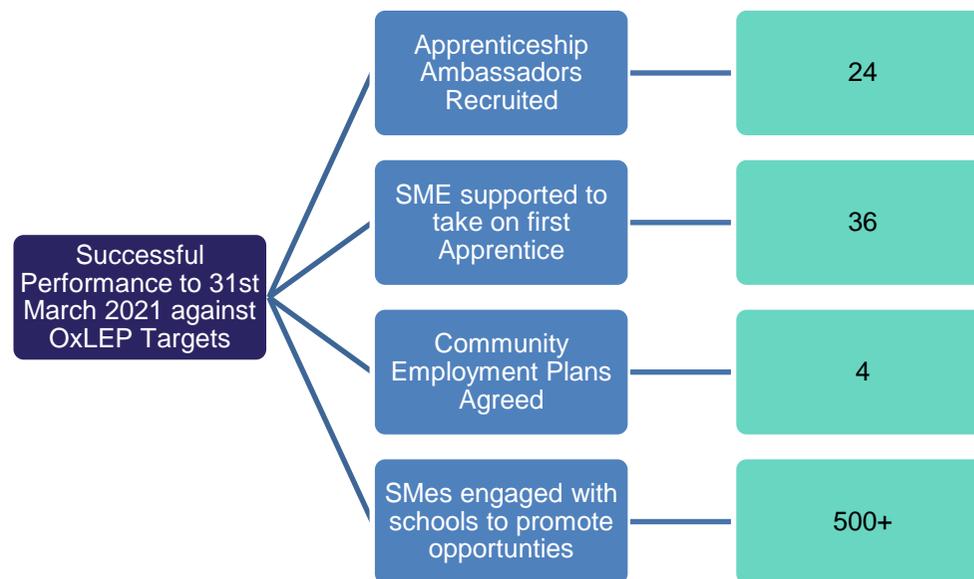


Figure 16 OxLEP ESF Skills for Business Programme - OxLEP Target Out-turns

The team carries out a comprehensive 'Skills Needs Assessment' with each employer, who then receive a detailed training and development plan to help them achieve their skills and development goals. To date, 48 Skills Needs Assessments have been carried out and 37 SMEs supported to take on their first Apprentice.

Some of the employers who have been through the process explain what they gained from taking part in the programme below.

Kate Berman, Director at Olamalu Web Technologies: "Skills development is a top priority for us here at Olamalu. We see growth in skills as being critical for our business growth and that's where the Skills for Business programme came in. They started by doing a Skills Needs Assessment with us, which helped us to identify the top skills that we needed and, even better, they were able to look for creative, cost-effective and practical training options to help us to develop those skills. I'm delighted that we were able to participate."

Eliza Higginbottom, Priory Cast Products: "Skills for Business has been fantastic for clarifying our thoughts, enabling us to channel our energy into the most beneficial decisions and actions for not only growth, but resilience. The training and development report we have received after close conversation and analysis

of our business is extremely comprehensive and astute and is proving to be a fantastic tool. For example, for accessing policy templates and specific training for identified gaps. Specifically, having support accessing and implementing an apprenticeship scheme is going to prove vital to the continuity of skills and building labour force in our sector. The world of apprenticeships has seemed a daunting door to open so we feel extremely lucky to have this very bespoke support and would encourage all to access it. Having someone to talk business strategy with who is on the outside looking in is invaluable!"

Alison Ighani, Director, High Flyers Oxford: "Getting in touch with OxLEP's Skills for Business Programme during the pandemic has had a really positive effect on myself and my business. They have offered support and great advice, as they looked at my individual business and celebrated what we are doing well at and then encouraged us look at new things, to help grow the business: apprenticeships, training courses, sustainability, strategy, where to get free advice and continuity plans. Everyone is so kind, giving and supportive, they really do what to help you."

Rosa Curness, Pathways to Employment, Employment Coordinator, Aspire Oxford: "There was a detailed conversation with the Skills for Business Consultant, who produced an in-depth training report and as part of this report, there was an extensive menu of training and learning opportunities, including a wide choice of apprenticeships. All staff were able to reflect and consider their own continuing professional development needs and aspirations. The comprehensive information listed in our training report has made taking the next steps very smooth and straightforward. We also had the Skills for Business Consultant support us with queries about prospective training and her skills and knowledge were completely invaluable. As a consequence of all this support, three members of staff are undertaking apprenticeships as part of upskilling their knowledge in their current roles. Also, for the first time, Aspire has offered an apprenticeship to a young person in a new job role with us. We have also been very fortunate in that as a small organisation we were able to access apprenticeship levy transfer funding to support with our training and learning aspirations. This is making a difference to our workforce."

CS3. Employer Engagement with Education

Morgan Sindall Construction

Morgan Sindall Construction is a UK construction business with a network of local offices. The company works across the private and public sector to create the inspiring places that enhance the communities in which we all live, learn, work, play, care and protect.

The company are currently building a £12 million new school site at Orion Academy, a school for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) on the outskirts of Oxford. The project is taking place alongside the existing school building.

Tracey Kingsley, Skills & Enterprise Advisor with OxLEP Skills and The Careers & Enterprise Company, supports Orion Academy with careers and enterprise activities. She saw the opportunity to engage students in the construction project, helping to broaden their knowledge about opportunities in the sector, an area in which skills are in high demand in Oxfordshire. Tracey invited Site Manager Charles Warne to become an Enterprise Advisor, working closely with Tracey and the school's senior leaders to support and shape careers education for the students.

In December 2020, Morgan Sindall Construction organised a hands-on session for students at the school, designed to involve them in the building of their school's new home by signing a brick. The event also gave students an insight into construction and the role it plays in shaping the world around us, with members of the Morgan Sindall Construction project team talking to them about the project and answering questions about their jobs and careers in construction.

Darren Male, Consultant Assistant Headteacher at Orion Academy, said: "Students are very excited to have visited the construction site and enjoy the opportunities of seeing a typical working day and leaving a legacy by signing a brick to be used in the new build."

James York, Area Director for Morgan Sindall Construction, said: "We are very pleased to have been able to host this educational event. Morgan Sindall Construction is dedicated towards building inclusive environments for all and engagement sessions really help create a collaborative learning community and a sense of connection with the new school. We look forward to showing the pupils the fruits of their labour with the delivery of the new school next year."

Darren added: "The team at Morgan Sindall have been incredibly helpful and creative in providing a variety of careers enrichment activities over the last few months whilst they continue to build our exciting new school."

Morgan Sindall Construction plan to repeat the model with other schools they complete building projects in the future, both within Oxfordshire and beyond.

CS4. ESF Skills for Business Programme engaging SMEs in supporting those furthest from the labour market

Fisher Studios: David Fisher talks to us about how OxLEP ESF Skills for Business have helped him:

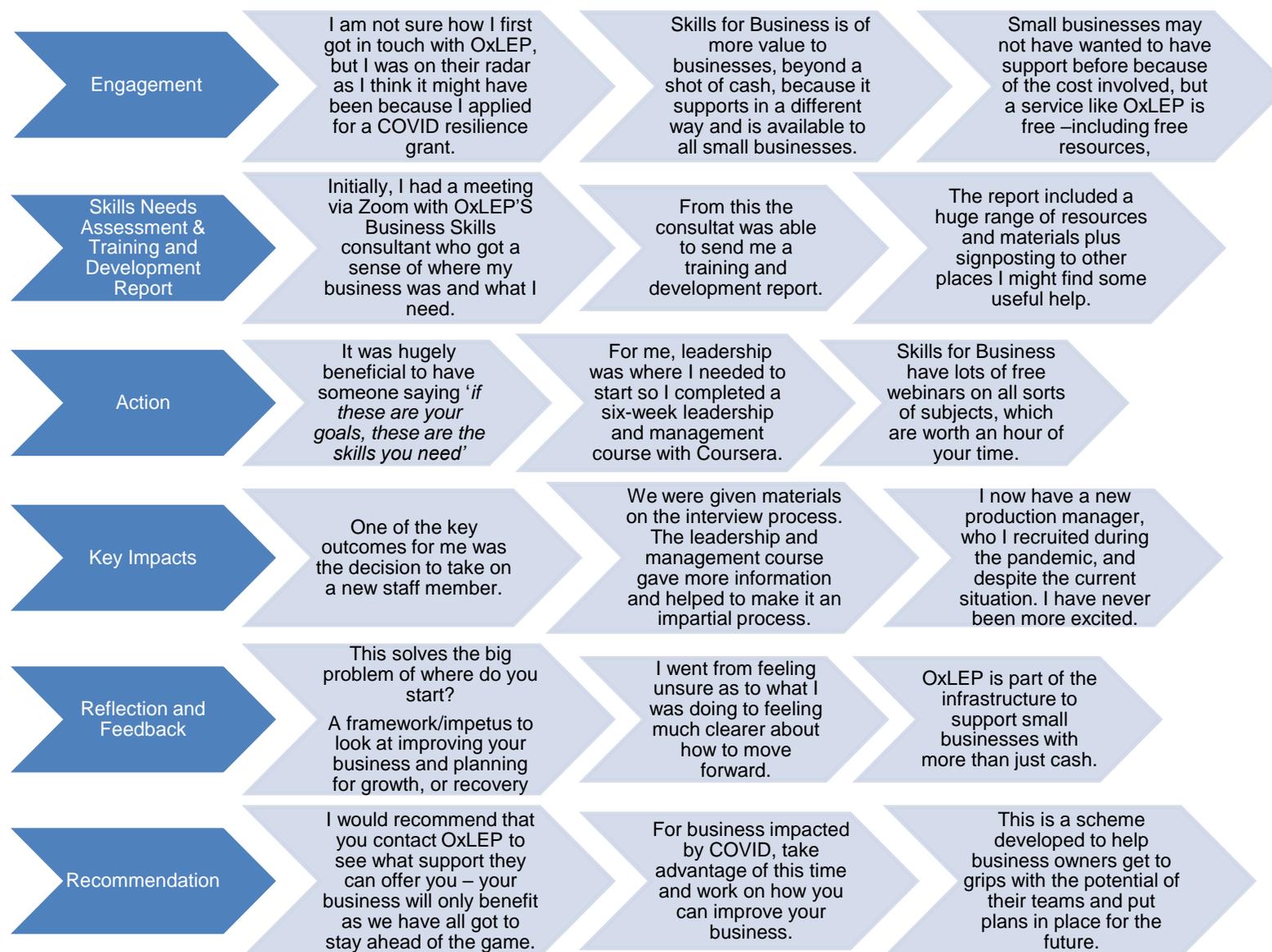


Figure 18 Fisher Studios Case Study

CS5. Reaching those furthest from the workforce Community Employment Plans (CEPs)

Each Local Planning Authority in Oxfordshire has their own Local Plan. The Oxfordshire Skills Board and Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership have been facilitating the implementation of CEPs in Oxfordshire.

CEPs are employer-led initiatives which can form part of Section 106 planning obligations (a legal agreement between an applicant seeking planning permission and the local planning authority) or advisories for significant developments. There are two key areas where S106 planning obligations will be sought or developers advised to develop. The first is the construction phase for all large developments, the second at the end use phase of large commercial developments. – i.e. Westgate delivered two CEPs – the first relating to the construction phase; the second to support end users – the restaurants and shops that occupy the shopping centre. CEP measures seek to mitigate the impacts of development through ensuring that local people can better access job opportunities arising from development.

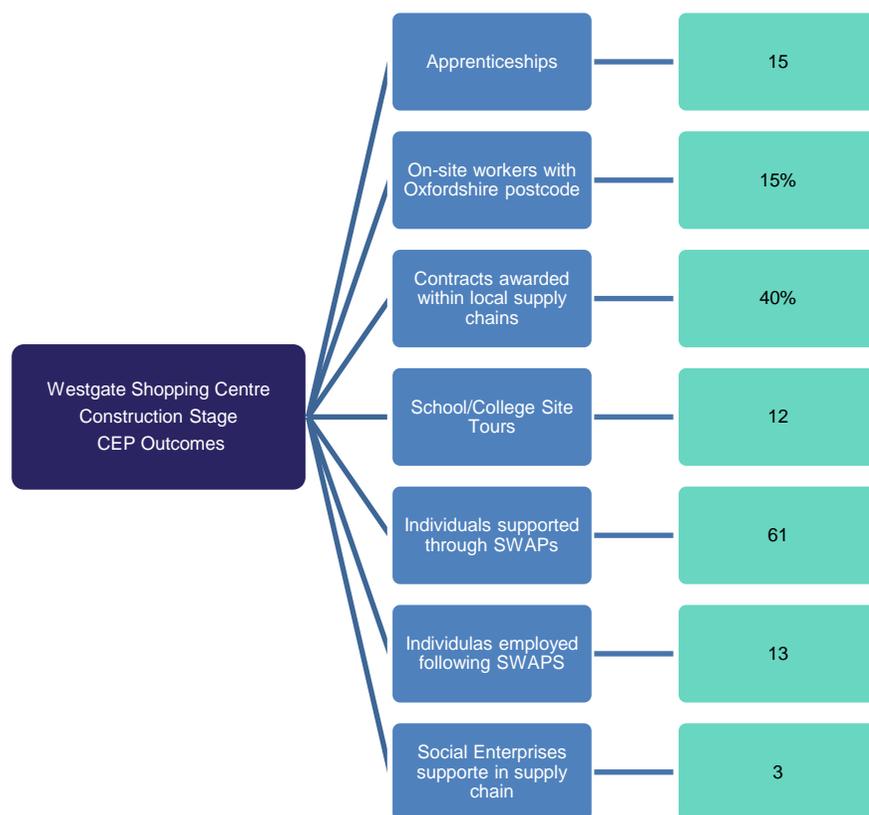


Figure 19 Westgate Shopping Centre CEP Outcomes

CEPs should relate where appropriate to outcomes flowing from both the construction phase and the end use phase and are likely to include:

- Apprenticeships
- Long term unemployed
- Employment / training initiatives for all ages, including both work tasters and work experience placements
- Traineeships for younger people, including those who are not in employment, education or training (NEET)
- Best endeavours to maximise local labour, including pre-employment training
- Local procurement agreement – potential for local businesses to be included in tender lists
- Support for local skills and training events – e.g. Find Your Future careers fair, National Apprenticeship Week
- School, college and university engagement initiatives such as site visits, school visits and project support

OxLEP Skills supports developers in creating their CEP alongside district Economic Development Leads and introduces them to the local community when implementing the plans. Where possible we support a steering group, provide templates and support for monitoring of the plan/s.

CS6. Employer/Provider partnership

University of Oxford and Abingdon & Witney College

The University of Oxford has worked in partnership with Abingdon & Witney College for almost ten years to help develop their employees through apprenticeship training.

Since 2017, the University has partnered with the College as their main training provider and have a member of the College's team fully embedded within the University to support the growth of apprenticeships, including a desk space and inclusion in team meetings.

As at January 2021, over 200 University of Oxford employees have engaged in apprenticeship training with Abingdon & Witney College - a combination of new entrant apprentices and existing employees accessing the training to support their professional development.

The University provides regular apprentice mentor training sessions, in partnership with the College, to ensure that managers have the best opportunity to support and develop their apprentices, understanding their commitment and how to develop successful apprenticeships.

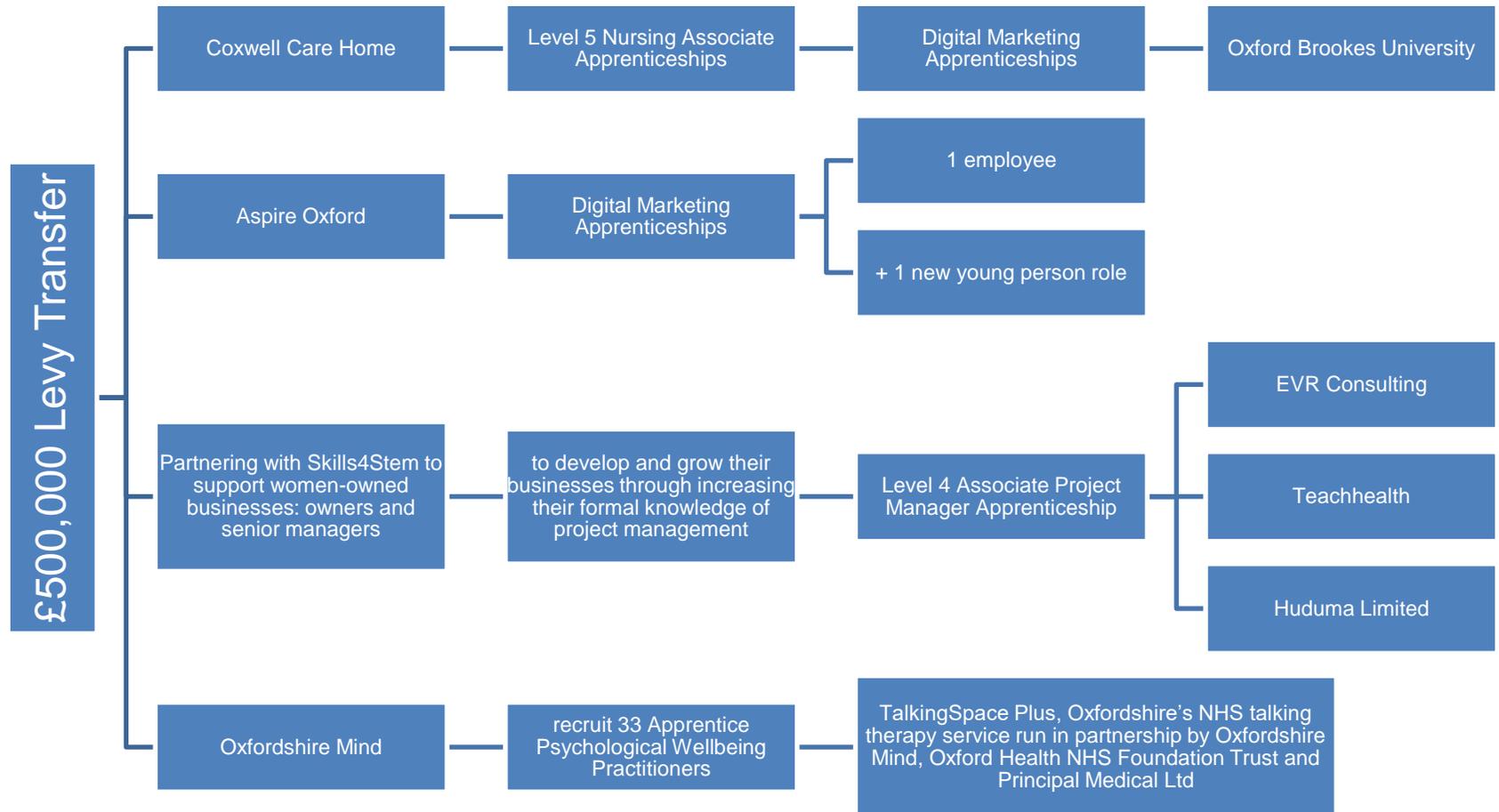
University of Oxford apprentices thrive as a result of the partnership, with Apprentice Clinical Trials Support Officer Teya Agnese being crowned Apprentice of the Year at the Oxfordshire Apprenticeship Awards 2020, a business-led event which is coordinated by OxLEP Skills. She said: "I have really enjoyed completing my apprenticeship with Abingdon & Witney College as they make the experience such an informative learning experience. They have been brilliant at communicating this from the start and throughout the course, offering us many extra opportunities to develop personally and at work."

CS7. Apprenticeship Levy transfer University of Oxford

The University of Oxford supports the local community by transferring some of its unused apprenticeship levy funds to small local businesses and charities to pay for their apprenticeship training. This provides opportunities for small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) who do not have the necessary funds to recruit and train new employees or upskill existing members of their team. The University of Oxford has to date committed to transfer over £500,000 of its unused apprenticeship levy funds to 31 Oxfordshire small businesses and charities. The following are examples of how levy transfers from the University of Oxford have supported local employers:

Oxfordshire Mind:

“Oxfordshire Mind is very grateful to the University of Oxford for their support to the new apprenticeship scheme at TalkingSpace Plus. Through their support we have been able to employ 33 new members of staff as apprentice Psychological Wellbeing Practitioners in TalkingSpace Plus. Once fully trained these new workers will help thousands of Oxfordshire residents to gain access to clinically proven therapy to treat anxiety and depression. This would not have been possible without this support from the University.”



**Figure 19 University of Oxford
Levy Transfer Impact**

CS8. Supporting H.E talent In Oxfordshire Crankstart Scholarships

The Crankstart Scholarship, delivered by the Careers Service, offers a programme of enhanced support to UK resident students from low-income backgrounds studying for their first undergraduate degree. Holders of the Crankstart Scholarship are encouraged to gain local work experience during their time at the University of Oxford and funding and support are available to help them to do so. The Crankstart Internship Programme has been established to enable the Scholars to take advantage of this opportunity by undertaking internships or work shadowing placements during their holidays, with a variety of organisations and local employers, offering internships exclusively to these students.

The University's Careers Service has played an integral part in the programme, helping Crankstart Scholars with internships, careers support, mentoring and providing financial awards for internships generally.

The high level of engagement from scholars has given the team a clear understanding of their needs compared to other groups of students and may be positively impacting graduate level employment.

These positive outcomes reflect how the Crankstart Scholarship Programme supports scholars to develop confidence and build professional networks. This reduces the stigma of poverty by empowering Scholars with choices they would not otherwise have had. Furthermore, the Crankstart Internship Awards remove the financial insecurity of internships and work experience, creating a level playing field for Scholars seeking to enter the workplace.

From 2019, the programme has also provided additional support for care experienced and estranged students.

Alannah Burns, who studied Philosophy and German at Lady Margaret Hall said: *"The Scholarship enabled me to go to university and indeed to complete fantastic internships which really boosted my CV, got me through job interviews and changed my personal life, aspirations and perspective on the world of work in so many ways!"*

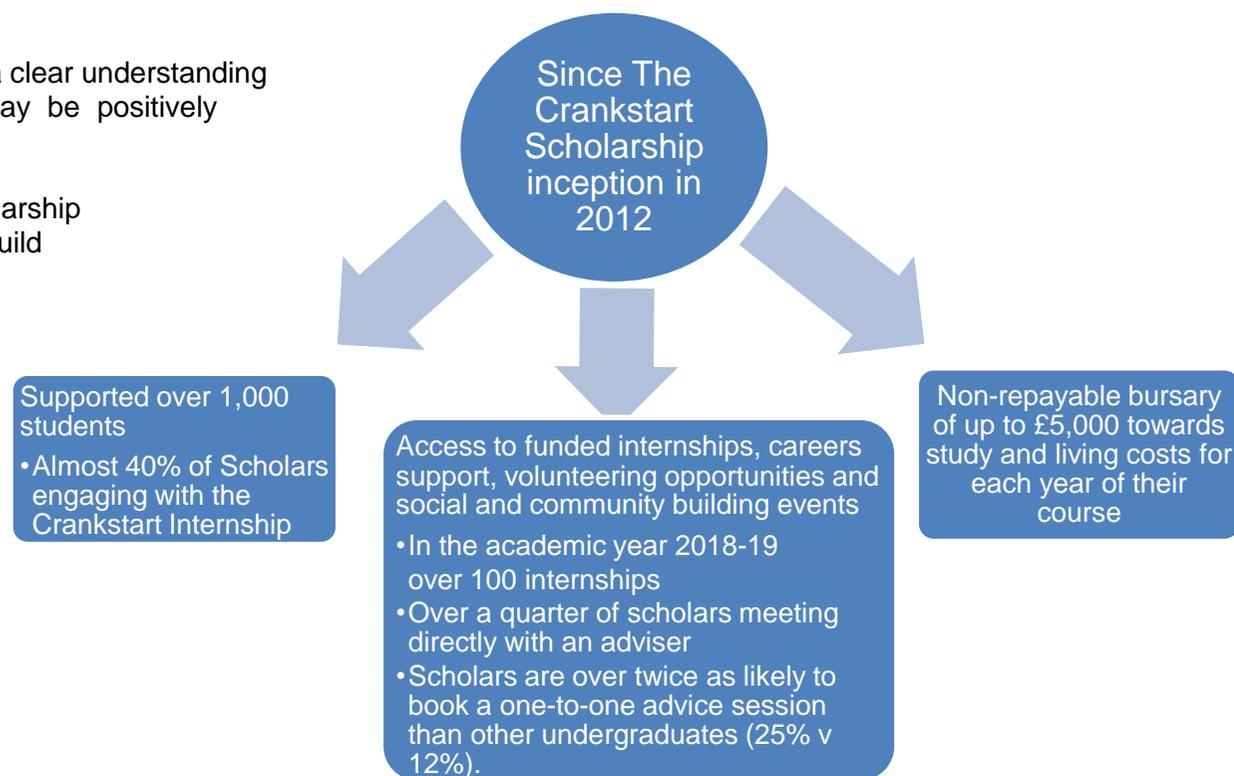


Figure 20 the University of Oxford Crankstart Scholarship Programme

Chapter 8. Looking forward

The Oxfordshire economy is founded on a diverse mix of businesses, which for this report we have grouped into two main categories: cornerstone businesses and breakthrough businesses. Cornerstone businesses provide an essential platform for economic growth, through the delivery of critical services and supply chains (for breakthrough businesses), as well as most jobs for people across Oxfordshire. Breakthrough businesses are our innovation-focused businesses in science and transformative technologies, such as space, quantum computing, digital health and connected and autonomous vehicles.

Economic modelling suggests our economy will rebound quicker than many – and that many sectors will return to growth in the short term. Employers need to understand that they are, unlike other areas of the country, recruiting in a competitive market. Jobseekers and young people need to be made aware of the exciting employment opportunities in the county, and also to ensure that they not only the right qualifications but the right digital skills which businesses require.

The workforce is highly trained, and we need to ensure that employers not only look at graduates to fulfil their talent pipeline but also consider people keen to learn through the higher level technical provision, which offers both progression and potential long-term loyalty to that business.

There are over 40,000 university graduates each year in Oxford. We need to ensure that rather than leaving the county for London and South East, they understand and experience the employment opportunities and quality of life which can be enjoyed if they put down their roots here.

Post Covid-19

Although we are well placed to recover economically quite quickly from the pandemic; it has had a severe impact for many groups within the Oxfordshire labour market, which has seen unemployment rise from a historically low level in March 2020 and affected people in disproportionate ways in the economy, resulting in lost jobs and additional economic hardship. EU transition adds to the uncertainty and challenges for many businesses-including potential staffing and retention challenges as the deadline for Settled Status nears.

Low-income families, vulnerable groups, and the most deprived areas have been the hardest hit by COVID-19. Those who cannot work from home have been affected more and are often the most vulnerable. Both young and old workers have been disproportionately affected by redundancies and job losses, leading to heightened levels of inequality. Those in the Visitor Economy (covering Tourism, Hospitality, Retail, Arts and Culture) have borne the brunt of impact.

The spatial impacts of COVID-19 have been uneven; Cherwell and the City of Oxford have been more impacted than other places in the County. Ten wards in Oxfordshire are in the most deprived 20% in England. These places are frequently home to key workers and BAME communities, both groups being disproportionately affected by COVID-19²⁵.

In short these are unprecedented and challenging times for residents, communities and businesses with many residents joining the labour market – in some cases for the first time in many years, many communities facing uncertain futures and many businesses struggling to survive; whilst in parallel the County's innovation ecosystem has continued to see areas of growth, particularly in Biomedical Sciences and the logistics sector.

In parallel the 'Skills for Jobs: Lifelong Learning for Opportunity and Growth' sets a new vision for skills and training and underlines the importance of skills in driving business growth, productivity, inward investment and inclusive growth and marks the heralding of a new era in the skills landscape.

This Local Skills Plan – overseen by our Skills Advisory Panel provides the basis for a strategic, co-ordinated and collaborative response to both the short to mid-term impacts of the pandemic, whilst continuing to lay the ground for the innovation led ambitions articulated in our Local Industrial Strategy. As locally led public/private business partnerships LEPs and SAPs have a comprehensive understanding of the local skills

²⁵ OxLEP, Economic Recovery Plan (2020) <https://www.oxfordshirelep.com/publications>

demand and supply and are able to work strategically with our employers to leverage funding and join up the dots, driving investment and helping to demystify the skills system for many.

There are multiple opportunities for all to embrace this new era and to actively become part of the solution that supports long term economic growth, prosperity and opportunity for all.

Employers, business groups and business representative organisations will be key in shaping future skills priorities, helping shape curriculum and creating new partnerships with providers. They can support the next generation of talent through closer and deeper engagement with education, including schools, whilst providing apprenticeships, traineeships and T-Level placements and supporting work experience placements for those furthest from the labour market. The SAP - through our OxLEP Skills Hub team will help employers navigate the often overly complex skills landscape to identify the right options for them.

Training providers – from the smallest provider of niche specialist delivery to the largest FE provider will continue to play a key part in taking forward our skills ambitions. They will continue to deliver a range of training and skills opportunities to many; offering support for those most impacted but they should also be in listening mode as employers bring forward key intelligence, skills and shorter term training requirements and they should be responsive to clearly articulated needs.

Residents and communities – the SAP are here to help you achieve your potential and to help create the infrastructure that supports you throughout your learning and employment journey.



**We are at
the start of
a journey**

Our immediate focus is to continue to support those most impacted by the pandemic – to help move into economic recovery and renewal and create economic opportunity for all, whilst laying the ground to support the delivery of our longer term ambitions.

More information about the Skills Advisory Panel and OxLEP can be found [here](#); **please do get in touch.**

Annex A: Core Indicators About This Annex provides data and intelligence on key aspects of Oxfordshire's labour market and skills landscape. It has been published as a separate document that can be accessed:

- <https://www.oxfordshirelep.com/skills/our-approach>
- <https://www.oxfordshirelep.com/publications>
- <https://www.oxfordshirelep.com/about/our-governance/skills-sub-group>

The indicators presented within Annex A have been defined by the Department for Education (DfE), to ensure consistency between the Local Skills Reports being produced by Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) and Mayoral Combined Authorities (MCAs) across England. OxLEP has drawn on local intelligence to provide commentary around these indicators. This local intelligence has been gathered from: OxLEP board members, Oxfordshire Skills Board/Skills Advisory Panel members, Other OxLEP Sub Groups, local employers working within the Oxfordshire Skills Hub on careers initiatives, local employers surveyed as part of the Oxfordshire Employer Skills Survey, local SMEs that have engaged with the OxLEP ESF Skills for Business Programme, the Oxfordshire Provider Network. As per the Department for Education guidance for Local Skills Reports, additional data analysis and local intelligence is provided within (or sign-posted from) Annex B.

Annex B: Additional Data About This Annex provides additional tables and charts. It has been published as a separate document that can be accessed:

- <https://www.oxfordshirelep.com/skills/our-approach>
- <https://www.oxfordshirelep.com/publications>
- <https://www.oxfordshirelep.com/about/our-governance/skills-sub-group>

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