



Hampshire
Chamber of
Commerce

Solent Local Skills Improvement Plan (Solent LSIP)

2024 Progress Report

HAMPSHIRE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

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Introduction

This report presents a review of our progress delivering the Solent Local Skills Improvement Plan ('LSIP') published in August 2023, in line with guidance from the Department for Education ('DfE'). This report (henceforth "the 2024 Progress Report") serves to reflect on, and celebrate our achievements to date. At the same time it also identifies areas requiring further attention, ensuring we remain on track to meet the long-term objectives outlined in the Solent LSIP.

This report highlights the significant work done by Hampshire Chamber of Commerce ('CoC'), employers, education and training providers, as well as other stakeholders from across the area in forging strong connections and laying the foundations for future success. The 2024 Progress Report provides an opportunity to take stock, analyse and reassess any factors not working as anticipated, with the aim of ensuring successful delivery.

Audience of the Progress Report

The intended audience of this report is as broad and inclusive as that of the original LSIP. It is crafted to engage employers – i.e. those who have been actively involved, as well as those who are yet to join our efforts – alongside further education institutions ('FEIs'), higher education institutions ('HEIs') and independent training providers ('ITPs'), sector representatives from across the area – such as Maritime UK ['MUK'] Solent and Creative Network South ('CNS') – and other stakeholders with an interest in the skills landscape. Ultimately, our aim is to drive comprehensive buy-in across the ecosystem, fostering a unified approach to skills development and economic growth.

We believe stakeholders will find this report of particular interest as it offers a review of progress to date, celebrates successes and highlights positive developments across the Solent. By showcasing the tangible outcomes of our collaborative efforts, the 2024 Progress Report not only acknowledges the hard work accomplished, but also serves as motivation for continued engagement and contribution by all parties involved.

Ultimately, the shift in focus – driven by employers' needs – will provide the region with a skills system which is able to meet labour market needs, in a simplified and less complex way.

Structure of the Progress Report

In line with DfE guidance, the 2024 Progress Report is structured as follows:

- ~ **Part 1** provides a recap of the Solent LSIP as approved by the Secretary of State ('SoS') for Education in August 2023.
- ~ **Part 2** updates the strategic and economic context in the Solent, focusing on changes to skills demand, supply offer and strategic shifts since publication of the LSIP.
- ~ **Part 3** revisits our roadmap to delivery.
- ~ **Part 4** celebrates the successes achieved to date, highlighting exemplary initiatives and collaborations across the area.
- ~ **Part 5** outlines our plan to ensure continued progress and successful delivery of the Solent LSIP over the next 12-months.

Part 1:

Summary of Solent LSIP

Designated as the local employer representative body ('ERB'), Hampshire CoC led preparation of the Solent LSIP in collaboration with a broad range of regional stakeholders - including training providers, sector-interest groups, the Solent Local Enterprise Partnership ('LEP') and educational institutions across the region. The Solent LSIP aligns with the Government's Skills for Jobs White Paper to...

"...provide a representative and coherent employer view of the skills most needed to support local economic growth and boost productivity, and improve employability and progression for learners."

Objectives of the Solent LSIP

Building on these national-level aspirations, the objectives of the Solent LSIP are to:

- Establish a robust and dynamic assessment of skills needs and priorities for employers in the Solent;
- Set out a clear, forward-thinking narrative on the skills agenda taking account of the wider economy and locally significant employment sectors, which addresses both cross-cutting and sector-based nuances;
- Co-ordinate a suite of relevant, purposeful, and high-quality skills provision that addresses both current and future employer needs; and
- Drive employer and learner demand for skills with the aim of optimising performance and increasing productivity, and the capabilities of our talent pool to readily contribute to economic growth.

The LSIP geography

The Solent LSIP covers the stretch of strategic coastline extending from the New Forest in the west to Havant in the east and includes the Isle of Wight. The local authorities included within the scope of the Solent LSIP comprise eight local authority areas which include the three unitary authorities (i.e. of Portsmouth, Southampton and the Isle of Wight), and five district councils (i.e. Eastleigh, Fareham, Gosport, Havant and the New Forest) as shown in Figure 1 below.

However, it should be noted that delivery of the Solent LSIP has required collaboration with a wide range of ERBs and organisations which operate at different spatial levels. This includes cross-boundary collaboration with Hampshire County Council ('HCC'), as well as joined-up delivery with the neighbouring Enterprise M3 ('EM3') LEP (which includes all of Surrey). Furthermore, it should be noted that since April 2024, Government funding for Local Enterprise Partnerships ('LEPs') has been withdrawn, in the process leading to a requirement for increased cross-boundary collaboration.



Figure 1: Area covered by the Solent LSIP

The LSIP priorities

Building on the objectives set out on the previous page, in addition to a review of the key challenges impacting the skills ecosystem (i.e. drawing on analysis of skills gaps, local skills provision, labour market evidence, and engagement with a wide array of local stakeholders), the Solent LSIP has been built around six key priorities.

The LSIP's priorities were designed to be cross-cutting and applicable to the full range of employment sectors in the Solent. These priorities were developed in response to challenges, and the need for change required by the skills ecosystem within the Solent.

Figure 2 below presents an overview of the LSIP's priorities, and lists the challenges and problems each priority seeks to address in order to support local growth and productivity.

Priority 1: Awareness and aspirations

The Solent LSIP seeks to tackle low levels of awareness and challenge deep rooted perceptions, stimulate interest, raise aspirations and support sectors across the economy to promote their message to a wider audience.

Priority 2: Navigating the skills ecosystem

Employers labelled the skills ecosystem as being difficult to understand, navigate and engage with. However, day-to-day challenges often push engagement and continued professional development ('CPD') down employers' priorities.

Priority 3: Proactive employer engagement

The Solent LSIP seeks to put employers at the heart of the conversation about skills. However, ongoing pressure often force them to focus on short-term priorities, instead of developing relationships and investing in skills planning.

Priority 4: A more agile ecosystem

The Solent LSIP has identified the need for the skills ecosystem to improve responsiveness by building on increased digitisation and employers' desire for flexibility in accessing training provision.

Priority 5: Pathway to skills

Acknowledging that career pathways are not linear, the LSIP seeks to deliver improved alignment through increased collaboration between providers and wider industry more broadly.

Priority 6: Managing the skills transition

Rapid developments in technology and digital transformation have highlighted the need to future-proof the Solent's skills ecosystem, whilst at the same time also helping to build skills which support the transition to net zero.

Figure 2: Solent LSIP priorities and challenges it seeks to address

Part 2: Strategic and economic context update

Part 2 of the 2024 Progress Report presents an overview of the key changes to both the strategic and local economic contexts within the Solent over the past 12-months.

Changes to the strategic context

In August 2023, the UK Government announced its decision to withdraw central Government support for LEPs as of April 2024. This process would see functions and activities led by LEPs being transferred to upper tier local authorities. In the case of the Solent this meant responsibility being shared amongst the sub-region's three upper tier authorities (i.e. of Portsmouth, Southampton and the Isle of Wight) and HCC, requiring a degree of cross-collaboration. This aligns with the Government's guidance for collaboration between upper tier authorities as appropriate, particularly in areas with no Combined Authorities and/or where a devolution deal is not yet agreed.

It is noted that Hampshire CoC represents business interests across the whole of Hampshire (including areas which are covered by the Enterprise M3 ('EM3') LSIP. This means that in addition to focusing on the geography established above, delivery of the Solent LSIP benefits businesses across Hampshire (as does delivery of the EM3 LSIP which also benefits businesses within the Solent area).

Changes to the local economic context

The following section provides an overview of the key changes over the past 12-months and draws on the latest-available data. It should be noted that due to a lag between data collection and publication by the Office for National Statistics ('ONS') the following analysis includes only one quarter (i.e. 3-months) of LSIP delivery. As such, this section does not yet fully capture the effect of the Solent

LSIP on the local socio-economic context but provides an overview of the general direction of travel of the local economy and considers how this compares relative to other geographies.

Analysis of the most recent data from the ONS reveals that total employment in the Solent area increased by 9,500 (or the equivalent of +1.8%) by the end of 2022. Whilst positive, this growth rate lags behind that seen across both Hampshire (of +6.1%) and the South East region (of +3.1%). However, enterprise levels are falling (by -2.4%), which whilst in line with the general trend across Hampshire (of -2.2%), is higher than the decline seen across the South East region (of -1.9%). In part, this decline can be attributed to a fall in the number of business registrations (i.e. business births), and growing business de-registrations (i.e. business deaths) over the same period.

Labour market statistics for the 12-months to December 2023 put labour market participation (or economic activity) within the Solent area at 80.7% of core working age residents (i.e. people aged 16-64). Whilst higher than the equivalent rate over the previous 12-months (of 77.7%), this is lower than the average across Hampshire (of 84.0%) and the South East region (of 81.7%). Further analysis suggests that the employment rate has increased (i.e. by 3.1%) to 78.3%, whilst the unemployment rate fell slightly (i.e. by 0.3 percentage points) to 2.9%.

Overall, this analysis suggests that whilst the Solent economy is recovering well (i.e. following the Covid-19 pandemic) and the labour market is starting to grow, performance remains subdued and generally lags behind that seen across Hampshire and the South East region. Critical to this is the economic inactivity rate within the area which is 3.3 percentage points higher than the equivalent rate across Hampshire. This reinforces the need to continue increasing labour market participation, and highlights the LSIP's role in building robust skills pathways.

Demand for skills

Labour market data for the 12-months to December 2023, reveals a 17.2% rise in job postings across the Solent (i.e. compared with the previous 12-months), totalling just over 128,000 unique postings. This represents a reversal of the medium-term trend reported in the Solent LSIP which has seen the number of (monthly) job postings decline by 43.2% between January 2017 and December 2019.

Industries seeing the highest number of jobs postings reflect employment distribution in the area, with the highest number in human health activities (13,300 job postings), followed by retail trade (7,200), residential care activities (4,500), as well as food and beverage (6,100). However, despite seeing the highest number of job postings, demand for roles in human health activities has declined by 17.4% during 2023. Building on the above, the most sought-after skills across the Solent include auditing, project management, finance, marketing and personal care, echoing trends seen in previous years (albeit with slight variations in relative importance).

This highlights the need for continued strategic focus and collaborative effort to ensure that the sub-region's workforce is well-equipped and adaptable to future skills needs.

Supply-side picture

DfE data shows that during 2022/23, the number of enrolments in further education ['FE'] courses has increased by 15.0%, relative to enrolments recorded in the previous academic year (i.e. 2021/22).

Focussing on priority sectors within the Solent LSIP, DfE data shows that the number of enrolments in courses related to the creative sector (such as arts and crafts design, performing arts, media and communication) have increased by an average of 12% relative to 2021/22). However, DfE data shows a much diverse picture when enrolments in maritime and low carbon FE courses are considered.

Enrolment data shows a decline for courses in engineering and manufacturing (of 10%) and business administration and law (of 25%), whilst enrolments in mathematics and science, social sciences and information and communications technology ('ICT') all increased (by 12%, 13% and 37% respectively) relative to the previous year.

The increase in enrolments reflects a positive trajectory for skills development in the Solent region. However, sector-specific variations highlight the need for strategic interventions to balance the supply of skilled workers with the evolving demands of the local labour market. The South Coast Institute of Technology ('IoT') commenced operations in September 2023, and represents the most significant supply-side change within the local skills ecosystem.

Case Study: South Coast Institute of Technology

The South Coast IoT represents a collaboration between four FE colleges (Brockenhurst, South Hampshire College Group ['SHCG'], Havant and South Downs College ['HSDC'] and the Isle of Wight College) and two universities (Solent University and University of Portsmouth) and focuses on three key career pathways – in maritime, engineering and digital technologies. The South Coast IoT offers comprehensive career progression pathways across various levels, in the process empowering students to excel in their chosen field of study.

The IoT's curriculum is aligned with the gaps identified, and priority sectors within the Solent LSIP, and seeks to play a key role in brokering relationships between employers, education providers and learners. The role of the IoT is to promote careers within each of the three areas identified above, and its website outlines potential pathways across 30 careers (ranging from software engineers to data engineers, naval architects, shipping and supply chain managers, mechanical engineer, etc.).

Part 3: Priorities and actions

Led by Hampshire CoC, delivery of the LSIP represents a collective effort by several organisations across the area and beyond working together to tackle the challenges identified, and deliver the priorities, recommendations and activities outlined within the Solent LSIP. Whilst the CoC retains ownership of the Solent LSIP (including reporting responsibilities), its role extends beyond day-to-day management and delivery of the activities outlined in Table 1. Through its delivery, the CoC seeks to inspire action across the wider skills ecosystem and use its influence (i.e. as a local ERB) to drive interest and leverage additional outcomes.

Figure 3 below presents an overview of the various “levels of activity” influencing delivery of the Solent LSIP. It should be noted that there is significant overlap and existing inter-relationships between the different levels shown in the diagram below. This approach seeks to create a positive “trickle down” effect between the different levels, in the process engaging with more stakeholders that together contribute to the ongoing success of the Solent LSIP.

Overall progress against each priority of the Solent LSIP is considered on page 9, with a detailed overview of progress against each key activity presented in Table 1.



Figure 3: Overview of the strands influencing delivery of the Solent LSIP

The Solent Local Skills Improvement Fund

The Local Skills Improvement Fund ('LSIF') is a key delivery vehicle for LSIPs across the country, and is concerned with investing in new facilities, as well as the provision and teaching expertise needed to deliver the skills priorities identified. The purpose of LSIF is to address the skills gap between what the skills ecosystem delivers and those needed by the labour market.

Within the area, integration between the LSIP and LSIF represents a strategic collaboration between industry and FEIs aimed at:

“addressing skills shortages, enhancing access to higher technical education and building capacity in the Solent region”.

On this basis, this approach seeks to build on previous successes and draws on long-term collaboration in the delivery of the skills agenda locally (such as work by the Solent Skills Advisory Panel ['SAP'] and delivery of the Strategic Development Fund ['SDF']). This collaborative approach is exemplified by the co-location of the CoC within the grounds of Fareham College, seeking to continue the interaction between employers (i.e. via ERBs) and FE providers.

The Solent LSIF is a partnership involving several FE colleges, ITPs (including HTP Apprenticeship College, and PETA Ltd), the South Coast IoT, University Technical College ('UTC') Portsmouth, the Department for Work and Pensions ('DWP'), Hampshire CoC, relevant local authority organisations, in addition to a range of internal and external stakeholders from across the sub-region. This integration seeks to align local priorities established by the Solent LSIP, with targeted actions aimed at meeting the evolving needs of the regional economy through the following 4 projects:

- ~ **Project 1:** Creative Art;
- ~ **Project 2:** Maritime and freeport sector services;
- ~ **Project 3:** Research and Development, aimed at reducing both the increasing number of young people who are not in education, employment or training ('NEET'), and simultaneously increase participation in vocational and technical education in the region; and
- ~ **Project 4:** Health and social care.

Solent LSIP Priority



Figure 4: Solent LSIP Priorities mapped against LSIF activities and KPIs

Case Study: LSIP-LSIF integration

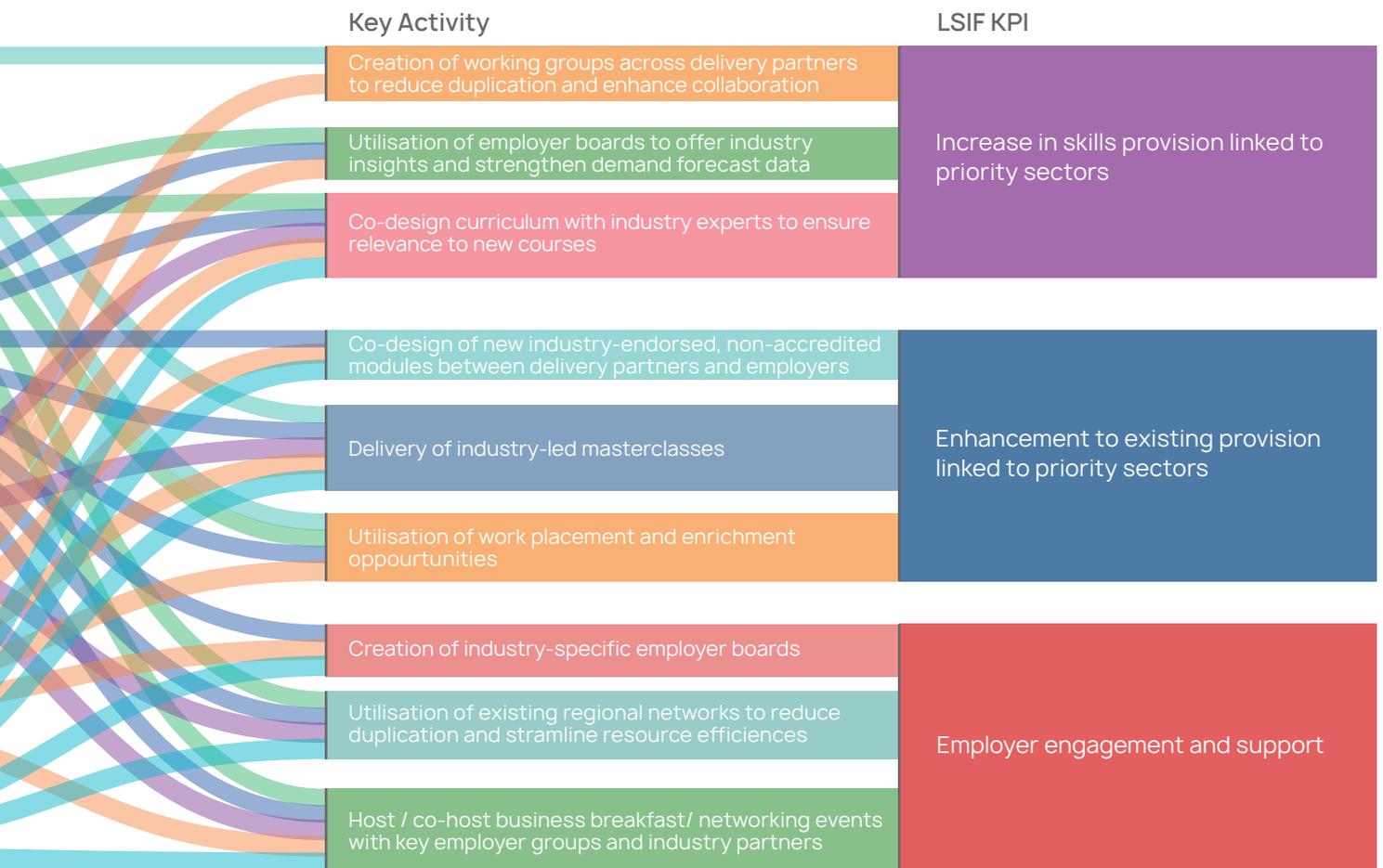
This case study uses Project 2 of the Solent LSIF to highlight integration and synergies between both LSIP and LSIF. It should be noted that the same level of integration is visible across all LSIF projects.

Project 2 seeks to increase capacity within the FE sector to meet the technical skills demands across various critical areas within the maritime and freeport sector services (e.g. engineering, technical fields, robotics and logistics). To ensure success, the Project seeks to raise awareness about the diverse career opportunities, establish clear and flexible

progression routes, and foster collaboration between industry and the skills ecosystem.

The Project's outcomes have been designed to create a dynamic environment that meets the demands of both learners and employers, in line with LSIP priorities.

Figure 4 below presents a snapshot of LSIP-LSIF integration, and shows how LSIP priorities translate into LSIF activities and key performance indicators ('KPIs'). Please note, Figure 4 is not exhaustive, but serves as an illustration of the links between LSIP priorities and LSIF activities.



Progressing the LSIP Priorities

Building on the identified need for change, the Solent LSIP sets out a series of (14) recommendations (i.e. across 6 Priorities) for delivering change in the Solent. Together these recommendations and proposed actions seek to improve the skills ecosystem, increase employer engagement, and create the best environment for individuals to make the most of their learning and employment within the Solent.

An overview of the actions and progress against each key activity is presented in Table 1. In line with the overall approach to the Solent LSIP, the recommendations and actions proposed are sector-agnostic, and whilst presented as specific actions for individual stakeholder(s) to take forward, their nature means that there is great complementarity both in terms of the actions themselves but also across the priorities identified.

Ultimately, the LSIP seeks to effect wholesale change to the skills ecosystem across the sub-region.



Priority 1: Awareness and aspiration

Hampshire CoC drives progress on this priority through events, briefings, roundtables and marketing campaigns. Initial effort has focused on raising awareness of the LSIP amongst employers who will in due course be supported to raise awareness and challenge deep rooted (i.e. often negative) perceptions.

Stakeholder discussions (including with MUK Solent and CNS) show an overall increased effort in awareness raising and driving aspirations over the past 12-months. This includes advocacy work by MUK Solent with local schools, the delivery of free sessions (called 'Maritime Mondays') to school teachers, and inviting local school children to attend industry events (e.g. the Southampton International Boat Show).

Similarly, each LSIF project aims to raise awareness by encouraging employer involvement (via the co-design and delivery of industry-specific modules), encouraging hands-on experience and providing career insights.

Planned activity for the rest of 2024 and early 2025 will see the CoC engage with sector bodies to promote opportunities and diversity across LSIP priority sectors. The CoC is also working with the University of Portsmouth to deliver a Future of Work Skills event in early 2025.

The CoC has played a key role driving awareness and increasing employers' engagement. Building on planned activities, it is anticipated that going forward employers will play a greater role, and drive this forward by continuing to engage with schools and the wider ecosystem on a regular basis.

■ **Overall progress: On track to deliver**

Priority 2: Navigating the skills ecosystem

Engagement with employers has identified the skills ecosystem as being too difficult to understand, navigate and engage with. As such, the LSIP seeks to build a more accessible skills ecosystem with the aim of improving coordination, complementarity and increasing clarity for employers.

Key to this, is delivery of the Skills Channel which will provides access to reliable and trustworthy skills resources and provide employers in the Solent with a clearer view of training pathways to employment and skills development. More broadly, the CoC aspires for the Skills Channel to become a one-stop-shop for all LSIP-related outputs, and a "local notice board" for employers.

A key, early win for the Solent LSIP has been to support delivery of a skills brokerage service, run by Solent Business & Skills Solution ('SBSS'). To date over 100 employers have been supported, with a target of 150 employers to be supported by March 2025. This shows that delivery of the skills brokerage service is progressing ahead of target, with additional engagement (in particular with hard-to-reach groups) planned for Summer 2024.

Furthermore, the Solent LSIF is also contributing towards this priority by creating new initiatives such as the "Workforce Industry Exchange Opportunities" aimed at providing training and support to enhance teaching staff by facilitating industry placements, and the delivery of marketing and recruitment activities showcasing project collaboration, achievements and insights.

■ **Overall progress: On track to deliver**

Priority 3: Proactive employer engagement

Priority 3 seeks to encourage employers to be proactive and play a greater role in shaping local provision, in addition to developing and nurturing partnerships with the skills ecosystem as a way of good business planning.

Delivery against this priority will see the CoC work with SBSS to co-host a series of webinars to support employers and other stakeholders (such as Business South and the Federation of Small Businesses ['FSB']) to engage with, and become involved with the skills ecosystem. Furthermore, the CoC will also work with SBSS to co-host a number of skills webinars (planned for Summer 2024) to support employers accessing the skills ecosystem. This will complement activity (aimed at engaging hard-to-reach groups) delivered as part of Priority 2.

Drawing on key activities identified in the Solent LSIP, the CoC has also developed a consistent brief and commissioned deep dives into four key employment sectors in the Solent (i.e. on health and social care, hospitality, construction and logistics), all of which are currently underway. In addition to building a research-based understanding of sector-specific skills gaps, each deep dive will also include roundtable events aimed at incorporating employers' views within the recommendations put forward.

■ **Overall progress: On track to deliver**

Priority 4: A more agile skills ecosystem

Linked to Priority 3, Priority 4 seeks to build an agile and more responsive skills ecosystem by acknowledging that both employers and skills providers have a key role to play. Delivery against this priority includes work with partners across the Solent skills ecosystem to ensure that training is delivered in a way that not only fulfils national requirements, but which also works better for industry needs.

Key to this are the LSIF projects which seek to involve employers in the co-design and delivery of industry-specific courses and masterclasses, in addition to the creation of employer boards aimed at facilitating and validating employer endorsement of curriculum content.

To date, the CoC has engaged with partners from across the sub-region to identify sector-specific actions for improving alignment between skills delivery and sectors' industry needs. Additional activity planned for the second half of 2024 includes engagement with industry boards to help identify SMEs' needs and requirements, in addition to wider engagement with employers. The latter will seek to involve previously un-engaged employers as well as strategic partners to gather their views on future skills needs (i.e. via events, workshop and/or business support activities) in order to gauge demand for new skills initiatives.

■ **Overall progress: On track to deliver**

Priority 5: Pathways to skills

Priority 5 seeks to provide better alignment between skills demand and supply through increased collaboration between providers and wider industry more broadly. The LSIP aims to achieve this by tackling the ongoing mismatch between supply and demand, and encourage greater local retention of newly-skilled learners, and improved pathways to skills development.

Key to this is delivery of the Solent LSIF which draws on engagement with employers to gather industry insights and strengthen sectors' view on demand forecast (i.e. in terms of future skills requirements). This approach will establish a greater balance between supply and demand, in the process ensuring that the learning offer remains aligned with emerging need.

The CoC is also planning to host a Future of Work Skills event in partnership with the University of Portsmouth, currently scheduled for early 2025. It is anticipated that this will attract in the region of 150 attendees.

■ **Overall progress: On track to deliver**

Priority 6: Managing the skills transition

This priority seeks to future-proof the skills ecosystem, whilst at the same time ensuring that legacy skillsets are retained (i.e. through intergenerational training) before these are lost and/or forgotten.

Given the long-term nature of this priority, in addition to several "unknowns" about future skills requirements (particularly for roles which do not yet exist), progress against this priority is difficult to measure. The CoC has used the first year of LSIP delivery to establish relationships (such as with FEIs, HEIs and ITPs) and deliver engagement with a view to building strong foundations, maintain engagement and form a better understanding the industry's needs.

Work on this priority is ongoing, and will require constant engagement between the stakeholders and employers across the sub-region to ensure that the offer reflects both current and the evolving demand for skills. The Solent LSIF seeks to achieve this via engagement with employers to co-design the curriculum with industry experts, and draw on these to gather industry insights and strengthen their understanding of future need.

■ **Overall progress: Started**

Key Activities	Partners	Delivery timeline	Method of implementation and outcomes expected
Priority 1: Awareness and aspiration			
1. Deliver a programme of engagement comprising events, briefings, roundtables and marketing campaigns to help raise awareness and aspirations.	ERB (Hampshire CoC), Employers, Local authorities, Schools in the Solent.	Spring 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ~ Marketing and promotion ~ Direct delivery by ERB ~ Employer engagement (at Fareham College)
2. Work with sector representatives to identify sector champions and role models who can drive interest and help spread the message.		Autumn 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ~ Marketing and promotion ~ Direct delivery by ERB
3. Set up a number of employer and/or sector fora that will provide the mechanism through which to promote discussions and help businesses better articulate their offer to a wider audience.		Autumn 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ~ Marketing and promotion ~ Conference (delivered with University of Portsmouth)
Priority 2: Navigating the skills ecosystem			
4. Establish a dedicated Skills Channel that creates a single 'point of call' connecting employers with the wider skills provision in the Solent.	ERB (Hampshire CoC), Providers (FEIs, HEIs & ITPs), Other partners.	Summer 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ~ Direct delivery by ERB signposting to partners where appropriate
5. Investigate skills brokerage models which can be put forward and implemented.		Summer 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ~ ERB funding ~ SBSS appointed to deliver skills brokerage
6. Map occupations for identified skills gaps following the framework provided by IfATE.		Spring 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ~ Engagement with LSIF ~ Direct delivery by ERB ~ Research
Priority 3: Proactive employer engagement			
7. Establish a dedicated programme focused on SME-led skills growth to enable a greater focus on skills and scalability strategies within SME business planning.	ERB (Hampshire CoC), Providers (FEIs, HEIs & ITPs), Other stakeholders.	Autumn 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ~ Marketing and promotion ~ Roundtables
8. Develop a consistent brief and commission deep dives into a number of key employment sectors in the Solent.		Spring 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ~ Deep dive analyses ~ Employer engagement via roundtables

Monitoring arrangements	Progress status
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ~ Update to LSIP website to reflect current status of the Solent LSIP, provide employer resources and relevant Skills information. ~ Host Business Breakfast at Fareham College to help raise awareness of Solent LSIP, objectives and priorities with employers in the Solent. ~ Create a monthly Skills Focus in member/non-member CoC newsletters. ~ Increase social media activity on LSIP activity, including stakeholders and LSIF projects. 	On track to deliver
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ~ Work with priority sectors to create awareness and raise aspirations by collaborating on 4 x focused engagement events. ~ Work with Youth Parliament, to secure young people's voice in LSIP with a large-scale event. ~ SBSS/CoC to co-create and deliver Skills System webinars. 	On track to deliver
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ~ Support priority sectors to promote diversity, by improving access to information through the Skills Channel for businesses. ~ Host a Future of Work Skills event in partnership with the University of Portsmouth (see further detail in Action 11). 	On track to deliver
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ~ Establish Skills Channel a platform-based solution aimed at providing: (1) better access to reliable and trustworthy skills resources, (2) employers with a clearer view of different training pathways to employment and skills development, (3) a store for LSIP-related outputs, and (4) a notice board to identify opportunities for further business engagement. 	On track to deliver
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ~ Co-fund a brokerage role with SBSS. ~ Publicise website content and build brokerage models to create a space of connectivity. 	Completed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ~ Recreate an employer-focused Skills Pathway Report, in line with output produced for LSIF delivery (focused on learners pathways). ~ Work alongside LSIF to create documentation identifying clear pathways to employment. 	Completed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ~ Co-host a green skills event with SBSS to support Solent-wide ambitions to achieve Net Zero targets. ~ Co-host 4 x skills webinars to support employers accessing the skills ecosystem. 	On track to deliver
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ~ Deliver 4 x sector deep dives (focused on health and social care, hospitality, construction and logistics) to identify further sector-specific skills needs. 	On track to deliver

Table 1: Progress in roadmap to delivery (continues overleaf)

Key Activities	Partners	Delivery timeline	Method of implementation and outcomes expected
Priority 4: A more agile ecosystem			
9. Work with providers, employers, sector bodies and other stakeholders to ensure that skills training is delivered in a way that not only fulfils national requirements, but which also works better for industry needs.	Providers (FEIs, HEIs & ITPs), Other stakeholders.	Summer 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ~ Events, workshops and roundtables ~ Direct delivery by ERB ~ Engagement with LSIF
10. Work with employers (including SMEs) to develop modular and flexible approaches to skills training that can work in operational settings.		Summer 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ~ Employer engagement via online survey ~ Direct delivery by ERB ~ SBSS
Priority 5: Pathways to skills			
11. Work with FE and HE providers to identify opportunities for co-location, and identify appropriate ways to fund and deliver this.	Providers (FEIs, HEIs & ITPs), Other stakeholders.	Winter 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ~ Marketing and promotion ~ Conference (delivered with University of Portsmouth)
12. Work with employers, sector representatives, ERBs and wider stakeholders to identify and establish a panel of sector specialists across the Solent.		Spring 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ~ ERB funding ~ SBSS appointed to deliver skills brokerage
13. Deploy the Skills Channel to help employers establish their skills needs, and (if required) provide capacity to help them plan for, and deliver this.		Summer 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ~ Direct delivery by ERB in collaboration with SBSS ~ Webinar/event
Priority 6: Managing the skills transition			
14. Provide support and additional insight into future skills needs through the Skills Channel, future deep dive commissions and ongoing engagement with employers and other stakeholders in the Solent.	ERB (Hampshire CoC), Employers, Local authorities, Schools in the Solent, Other stakeholders.	Long-term (beyond Summer 2025)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ~ LSIF ~ Collaboration with FEIs ~ Marketing and promotion

Monitoring arrangements	Progress status
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ~ Attendance at 3 x Levy Payers Network to inform/contribute to deep dives. ~ Adopt a "Digital Badges" initiative through Navigatr to help local employers articulate their needs and develop higher-level progression routes, outreach, employability and engagement activities. ~ Support establishment of industry boards (as per LSIF projects) to help identify SMEs' needs. 	On track to deliver
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ~ Develop a skills questionnaire to ascertain unengaged employers' views on future skills needs via events / workshops / business support activities. ~ Work with stakeholders to gauge demand for new / adapted Skills Bootcamps to help skills development within businesses, to create a focused talent pool. 	On track to deliver
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ~ Host a Future of Work Skills event in partnership with the University of Portsmouth and FE representatives. ~ Target to attract c. 150 attendees. 	On track to deliver
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ~ Creation of brokerage role within SBSS team. 	Completed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ~ Build LSIP section on SBSS website and vice versa, to better link delivery and create synergies. ~ Delivery of webinar/events to discuss importance of skills development and growing talent pool as part of future business planning. ~ Identify employers who can fund/sponsor this as business champions in their field. ~ Create a Skills Pathways Report identifying routes to job roles that clearly display support available to employers. 	On track to deliver
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ~ Sustain LSIP and LSIF partnership between FEIs and Hampshire CoC. ~ Ongoing work alongside LSIF to develop useful resources and tools that can be transferable between students and FE providers to expand on future skills needs. 	Started

Table 1: Progress in roadmap to delivery

Part 4: What has been achieved so far?

The Solent LSIP has made significant progress against its objectives and key activities, as detailed in Part 3 of the 2024 Progress Report. This progress highlights a comprehensive approach to tackling the challenge identified built on a credible roadmap to achieving change.

Part 4 of the 2024 Progress Report provides an in-depth look at the achievements to date, and shows how despite the early stages, the Solent LSIP is on course to have a tangible impact on improving the skills ecosystem and responding to future demand for skills. Part 4 also presents examples of how the Skills Channel is developing and adding value locally.

To enhance the analysis, this section presents a number of best-practice case studies to evidence some of the early signs of impact, and celebrate the successes achieved thus far. Drawing on engagement with stakeholders (as listed in Appendix 1), these case studies offer an insightful look into the practical impacts of the Solent LSIP to date.

Sustained priorities and roadmap stability

Engagement with stakeholders from across the skills ecosystem has reaffirmed that the priorities and roadmap for delivery outlined within the Solent LSIP remain relevant, and therefore unchanged. Feedback suggests that there is a strong alignment of the priorities with the strategic direction for the Solent LSIP. The Solent LSIP has for the first time created a centralised impetus to articulate local need within a single, accessible document that speaks to the wider skills ecosystem in the Solent, in addition to employers and other stakeholders interested in the local skills agenda. As such, stakeholders agree that no additional activities and/or changes are required to the LSIP's priorities and key activities over the coming 12-months. Although it is acknowledged that these can be refined and/or reviewed periodically to ensure they are fit for purpose over the lifetime of the project and beyond.

Clearly, there is still progress that needs to be made and significant effort is needed by all stakeholders to ensure that delivery of the Solent LSIP remains on track. However, this stability allows for a concentration of efforts and resources towards achieving the LSIP's long-term goals of making technical education and skills provision in the Solent more responsive to the changing needs of employers and the wider sub-regional economy.

Broad-based delivery and stakeholder engagement

Implementation of the Solent LSIP has required a wide-ranging effort to involve a diverse array of partners and stakeholders from across the skills ecosystem and the employment base. The collaborative approach to delivery has been paramount to the LSIP's success to date and will continue to be so in the future. This includes contributions from educational institutions and training providers, in addition to the public sector, charities and employers of all sizes, in the process underscoring stakeholders' commitment to address skills gaps and enhance economic outcomes for the Solent.

Whilst Part 3 of the 2024 Progress Report primarily outlines progress against the LSIP's key activities, it does not quantify the overall impact of these efforts. Acknowledging that it is too early to measure concrete outcomes, the positive strides made thus far are indicative of our commitment to laying the groundwork for future success.

Data on engagement to date shows that almost 1,000 businesses have engaged with the Solent LSIP via workshops, roundtable discussions and/or accessed a Skills Needs Analysis via the skills brokerage service. In addition, it is also estimated that over 5,000 individuals (comprising primary and secondary school aged children, and young people not in employment, education, or training, and community members) have engaged with LSIP outreach initiatives, such as the TECH:TRUCK.

These efforts have expanded the reach of the Solent LSIP and strengthened relationships between employers and education providers, in the process placing employers at the heart of the conversation about skills in the Solent. The CoC is committed to continue engaging with hard-to-reach groups (i.e. both employers and individuals) to better understand their requirements and understand how participation can be expanded.

Through its ongoing engagement with local employers, the CoC is not only raising awareness of the Solent LSIP but is also advocating for a long-term transformation. Stakeholder discussions have highlighted the LSIP's role as a catalyst for change and complementary activities within the Solent.

Case Study: Brokerage support

The Solent LSIP has identified the need for a skills brokerage service to help employers articulate their needs to better align training provision. SBSS was appointed to support delivery by leveraging its contacts to deliver support to 150 employers across the region. To date, over 100 businesses have undertaken a Skills Needs Analysis, surpassing interim targets. Critical to the success to date was the ability to contact and engage with hard-to-reach businesses that would not consider skills planning a fundamental part of good business planning.

Further outreach is planned for Summer 2024, with the aim of further extending the LSIP's reach. Other planned activity includes a high-profile workshop for larger employers to help them understand their impact on local supply chains and two webinars for local businesses.

Inspiring action across the wider ecosystem

Critical to the success of the Solent LSIP to date has been its ability to inspire action across the wider ecosystem. This includes bringing together partners and stakeholders from across the board (such as employers, sector representatives, charities, providers and DWP) to collaboratively address common challenges and find the best solution(s) for implementation across the wider ecosystem. In many instances, the Solent LSIP has been the catalyst for industry-led action by the wider ecosystem as shown in the following case study.

Case Study: The Solent LSIP as a catalyst for wider action

Creative Network South ('CNS') aims to boost the creative economy in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight by attracting and retaining talent. Acting as an advocate for the creative economy, CNS has established a Skills Steering Group that draws on LSIP research to tackle entrenched challenges and provide sector-wide solutions for businesses in the region.

Discussions with CNS show that the Solent LSIP has unified stakeholders and fostered collaboration to tackle these challenges. Building on this momentum, LSIP delivery is now an item for all future quarterly Steering Group meetings.

Inspired by the LSIP, the collaborative approach promoted by CNS has fostered a shared understanding of the challenges locally, and galvanised different interest groups into action. Acting as a catalyst for wider action, the Solent LSIP is driving meaningful progress in addressing local skills gaps and growing the creative sector locally.

Supporting cross-boundary delivery

Whilst LSIP delivery is focused on the Solent (as defined in Figure 1), the CoC's mandate covering the entirety of Hampshire has enabled us to extend the LSIP's influence and complement efforts in neighbouring EM3 (comprising Hampshire and Surrey), particularly in relation to green skills and the Net Zero transition.

Our strategic collaboration with the EM3 LSIP aims to leverage both regions' strengths, fostering a cohesive environment that supports innovation and growth. It also allows us to pool resources and expertise to effectively tackle critical issues and support our respective workforce to meet local targets.

Case Study: Delivering Net Zero skills across boundaries

The shift to a low carbon economy is a key focus for the Solent region, which is aiming for carbon neutrality by 2050. Recognising the urgency, the Solent LSIP has established this a key, cross-cutting sector for the region. Similarly, neighbouring EM3 has also prioritised low carbon, highlighting a unique opportunity for cross-boundary collaboration, fostering a broader ecosystem with potential to mobilise regional and national leadership.

Both LSIPs have identified skills gaps relating to the green transition, and propose to address this by encouraging providers to increase the availability and uptake of specialist courses, aligning with the needs of the green economy. This complementarity offers employers and the wider ecosystem a unique opportunity to benefit from the green transition.

In March 2024, the two LSIPs hosted a joint roundtable as part of the Green is Good programme, to discuss strategies for the green transition, in the process ensuring that both regions can meet local demand. By leveraging cross-boundary collaboration and focusing on the development of green skills, both Solent and EM3 LSIPs can drive economic growth and lead the way in the green transition.

A holistic approach to tackling skills gaps

At the heart of the Solent LSIP is a commitment to address skills gaps in a way that not only meets immediate needs, but also anticipates future demand. By focusing on long-term and persistent skills shortages, the LSIP seeks to build an adaptable workforce for the future. Engagement shows that the LSIP is doing this consistently across the region, particularly within priority sectors.

Supported by the Solent LSIF, employment sectors are pioneering innovative methodologies to close skills gaps and future-proof the local workforce (e.g. collaborate with businesses to co-design and deliver learning modules).

Case Study: Future-proofing skills gaps in maritime

Project 2 of the Solent LSIF focuses on maritime skills, and seeks to address the sector's pressing needs by closely collaborating with the industry to pinpoint specific skills gaps, and tailor learning programmes accordingly.

A prime example of this effort is the recent acquisition of the Digital Training Vessel ('DTV') by SHCG (soon to be followed by the Isle of Wight College). This state-of-the-art vessel, equipped with RoboSys Voyager AI technology is generally used in critical marine operations (e.g. search and rescue). A first of its kind in the UK, DTV offers learners unparalleled access to cutting-edge equipment and practical, hands-on experience that is directly applicable in the workplace. The DTV is integrated in a broad range of technical college qualifications (e.g. robotics, automation, and clean energy). It not only provides real-world experience, but also fosters a unique opportunity for cross-disciplinary learning, and real-world experience not possible within a classroom setting.

Through such initiatives, the Solent LSIP will ensure a secure and future-ready skills pipeline, equipping the workforce with the competencies required for tomorrow's challenges.

Part 5: What still needs to be achieved?

The 2024 Progress Report marks a year of significant advancements for the Solent LSIP. Central to our success thus far has been working in partnership with the Solent LSIF, training providers and employers across the sub-region to drive progress across all (14) actions identified in the Solent LSIP.

However, the journey towards a comprehensive improvement in regional skills and workforce development is far from over; in fact, we are still at the beginning of our journey. Part 5 of the 2024 Progress Report outlines the areas we will be focusing our efforts on to continue building on the achievements to date, and our long-term ambition for positive change.

Sustaining and enhancing collaboration

The success of the Solent LSIP thus far underscores the power of collaboration. Moving forward it will be essential to sustain (even enhance) this co-operative spirit amongst all stakeholders. Increased collaboration will amplify the impact of ongoing and future initiatives, ensuring that they are as effective and inclusive as possible. On this basis, we will continue to engage with, and work in partnership with the Solent LSIF, training providers, employers, as well as other stakeholders to ensure that we maintain this momentum going forward.

Engaging with hard-to-reach groups

Despite the progress made, we feel that a more concerted effort is required to engage with hard-to-reach groups. This includes working with businesses that do not participate in skills initiatives, particularly those that perceive this a diversion from core business operations. It is critical to remind these businesses (and the wider ecosystem more broadly) of the importance of integrating skills planning as part of good business planning.

Engaging with these employers will require ongoing outreach and being able to demonstrate the benefits of skills development to daily operations and long-term success.

However, our desire to engage with hard-to-reach groups needs to incorporate engagement with our young residents, in addition to people not part of the Solent's labour market (i.e. people who are economically inactive). Engaging with people and raising their awareness about the different opportunities, and pathways into skilled employment remains central to our delivery. Our continued effort to simplify skills pathways will ensure all learners can easily navigate their career choices and make an informed decision about their future skills needs. By continuing to support learners the LSIP can inspire a new generation to explore diverse career opportunities, thus addressing future workforce needs and reducing skills gaps.

Case Study: Building employability skills and widening participation

Project 3 of the Solent LSIF seeks to tackle disengagement of young people not in education, employment and/or training (defined as NEETs) by widening participation in vocational and technical education, thereby providing learners with the practical skills and knowledge needed to enhance their employability and facilitating their transition into meaningful careers. Additionally, the project seeks to develop learners' softer, interpersonal skills critical for workplace success.

A cornerstone of this project is engagement via TECH:TRUCK - a mobile education and technology roadshow dedicated to inspiring children and young adults by showcasing exciting career opportunities across LSIP priority sectors. Across the Solent, TECH:TRUCK enables visitors to engage with state-of-the-art technologies and gain further knowledge about career pathways to understand how technology is utilised in industry, ultimately fostering a more inclusive and skilled future workforce.

Appendix 1

Consultees for 2024 Progress Report

- ~ Creative Network South
 - ~ Maritime UK Solent / Solent Partners
 - ~ Solent Business & Skills Solutions
 - ~ South Coast Institute of Technology
 - ~ South Hampshire College Group / Solent
Local Skills Improvement Fund ('LSIF')
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