

LSIP Stakeholder Forum Notes

1. Key Skills Gap Challenges

a) Misalignment Between Employers and Young People

- There is a clear mismatch between **employer expectations** and **student/young people's expectations**, driven by generational differences in values, communication styles, and working norms.
- Employers often expect young people to enter the workforce with the skills and behaviours of experienced employees, showing **limited patience for development**.
- Young people, in turn, are less familiar with 'traditional' communication channels and workplace rules, partly due to the impact of COVID on socialisation and early work experience.

Key gaps:

- Professional communication (especially phone and customer service skills)
- Resilience, confidence, and learning from mistakes
- Understanding workplace culture and expectations

b) Weak Foundational and Transferable Skills

- Students are entering colleges with **lower levels of transferable skills** than in previous years.
- The new curriculum leaves **less time and space** to address these gaps.
- There is a major issue around **English and Maths attainment**, which blocks access to many roles, even where those skills aren't central to the job itself.
- Early years and primary education are seen as critical pressure points:
 - Many children arrive at secondary school without strong basic literacy/numeracy.
 - There is declining parental engagement in skills and education.

Key issues:

- Lack of confidence, communication, and professionalism
- Weak literacy and numeracy
- Declining resilience and independence

c) Sector-Specific Skills Shortages

Construction

- Persistent misconceptions about the sector.
- Attitude and perception issues among young people.
- Need to modernise onboarding and attraction methods.

Hospitality & Care

- Strong growth, but severe difficulty filling vacancies.
- Skills shortages affect business reputation and long-term viability.
- Challenges in selling these roles as **meaningful career pathways**, not just short-term jobs.
- Hospitality forums exist, but engagement is not deep or wide enough.

Social Care

- Growing need for **assistive technology** and digital tools.
- Suggestion: integrate tech and dashboards into curriculum as a major growth area.

Microbusinesses (Surrey context)

- Surrey is microbusiness-led.
- Smaller firms struggle to release staff for training.
- They need:
 - Shorter courses
 - Modular, flexible delivery
 - Online / hybrid options

d) Leadership, Succession & Workforce Development

- Employers lack **succession planning** and are focused on the 'here and now'.
- There is a shortage of **next-level leadership skills** within businesses.
- Few employers systematically identify skills already in their workforce and build from them.

- Upskilling from within is underused.

2. Solutions & Practical Ideas

a) Rethinking Recruitment & Entry Routes

- Replace or supplement CVs and interviews with **paid work trials**, especially for apprenticeships and entry-level roles.
- Expand structured **work experience and placements**, which lead to higher progression and success rates.
- Create ‘stepping stone’ roles for those not yet fully skilled but with potential.

b) Building Skills Earlier

- Skills development must start **before secondary school**, not just at college and HE level.
- Pilot partnerships with **primary schools** should be expanded.
- Focus on foundational literacy, numeracy, and communication as the base of all technical training.

c) Supporting Employers to Engage

- Employers need to clearly see: **What’s in it for them?**
- Benefits to emphasise:
 - Talent pipeline
 - Reduced recruitment costs
 - Increased retention
 - Better-prepared staff
- LSIP should act as a **connector at place level**, linking businesses with local provision.

d) Sector-Focused, Granular LSIP

- LSIP must be:

- Sector-specific
- Data-driven
- Local and granular
- Major infrastructure projects need clear skills pipelines.
- Use tools like **STEP Surrey** to help residents and businesses find the right provision quickly.

3. Getting Intel on Future Skills Needs

a) Employer-Led Forecasting

- Use 2–3-year business plans to inform skills needs.
- Talk to the **right people** in businesses, those who manage staff and hiring, not just senior leadership.
- Employers are often reactive; forecasting needs to be made **simple and practical**.

b) Sources of Intelligence

- Institute of Student Employers (ISE) conferences
- Employer forums and networks
- Guest lectures and workplace visits
- Academic research
- Community engagement through town centres, third sector, and skills bootcamps

c) Technology & AI

- AI is a tool for efficiency, not a replacement for people.
- There is a lack of understanding and some reluctance due to environmental concerns.
- Opportunities:
 - Use AI or psychometrics to help employers identify skill gaps

- Turn tools like ‘Career Set’ around to diagnose **employer needs**, not just student skills

4. Communication & Engagement with Employers

a) What Works

- In-person conversations and relationship-building
- Webinars for information-sharing
- Delegates lists after events
- Newsletters
- Networks to create belonging and trust

b) What Employers Want

- Impact: they want to see outcomes from engagement
- Bespoke approaches:
 - 1–2–1s
 - Business skills roadmaps
 - Tailored bootcamps
- Clear, targeted emails, cut down the noise

c) Core Principle

Sell the benefits, not the service.

Not:

“Here’s our programme.”

But:

“Here’s how this helps your business grow, recruit, and retain talent.”

5. Strategic Themes Emerging

1. **Skills development must start earlier** – foundational before technical

2. **Employers need support to nurture talent, not just consume it**
3. **LSIP must be local, sector-specific, and practical**
4. **Young people need clearer pathways into meaningful careers**
5. **Engagement only works when employers see value back**