

Releasing our potential



Hertfordshire Skills Strategy to 2017

Foreword

Hertfordshire County Council working with our partners in the Local Enterprise Partnership and Jobcentre Plus have developed this document to address the growing appetite for a skills strategy for Hertfordshire. We need to increase and develop our workforce to ensure we can support a strong economy within which businesses can thrive, whilst enabling all residents of Hertfordshire to maximise their own individual potential and share in Hertfordshire's prosperity.

Our young people are the most valuable asset for developing our future workforce and we want all young people to be inspired to develop the skills to flourish in the workforce. We will continue to identify those at risk of becoming disengaged and work to move them into education, employment and training. There will be a particular focus on priority groups, for example, learners with learning difficulties and disabilities children looked after and care leavers.

With an ever changing workplace environment, residents may face a number of career changes and therefore having core skills and a desire to learn will be a requirement for the management of future careers. We will work to promote a culture of lifelong learning to benefit individuals as well as local businesses providing greater choices and opportunities for both individuals in the workplace and those seeking employment.

Hertfordshire's economy is strong. It has weathered the storm of the recession and is now taking off. This strategy will ensure a shortage of skilled workers does not act as a brake on economic recovery.

Chris Hayward

Cabinet Member with responsibility for Enterprise, Education and Skills at Hertfordshire County Council

A skilled workforce is key to the economic prosperity of Hertfordshire and is part of our overall economic plan for the county. On national benchmarks, Hertfordshire is doing well: its working population is generally well qualified, it has high employment rates and economic activity. Its strategic location at the heart of UK science means that it can drive forward knowledge-based economic growth.

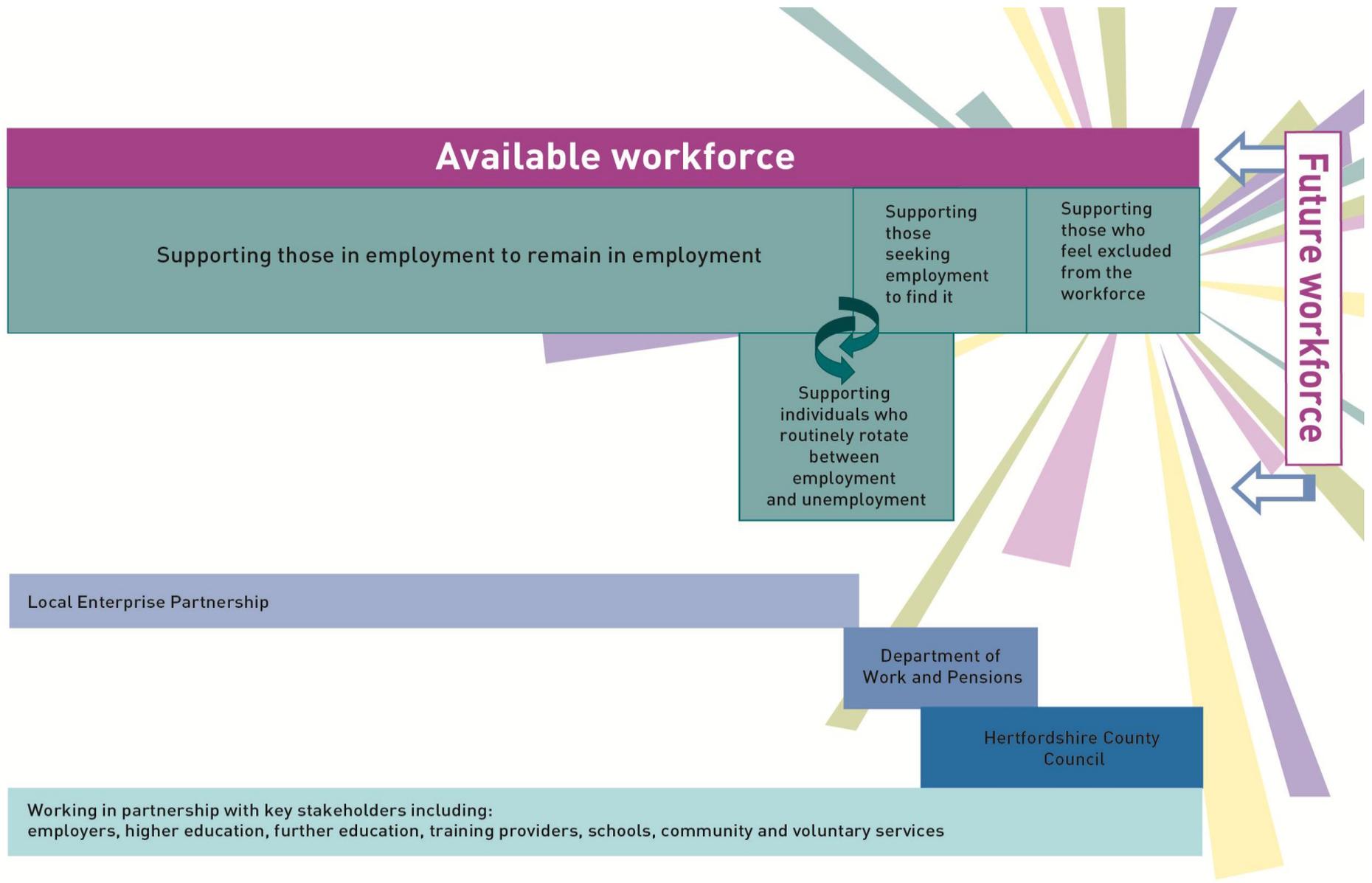
But on closer analysis more needs to be done to meet employer's future needs. The pull of the capital on our residents means that Hertfordshire employers cannot compete with London salaries for its highest skilled workers. Tightening labour markets means that companies are struggling to fill vacancies in a wide range of occupations. This is further compounded by employers reporting that the vast majority of these "hard to fill" vacancies are linked to higher skills shortages.

The Skills Strategy puts a framework in place to address these issues by setting out clear, achievable and measurable objectives which will deliver significant outcomes for Hertfordshire's residents and businesses and help us to realise the full economic potential of the assets and opportunities within the Golden Triangle¹.

John Gourd

Chair, Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership

¹ London-Cambridge-Oxford



Introduction

Skills contribute significantly to the economic output of an area and are a dynamic driver of enterprise, investment and new industries. Employers in Hertfordshire view the overall proficiency of their workforce as key to their performance and business competitiveness.

Ensuring our workforce has the right skills to encourage future economic growth lies at the heart of delivering the Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) which has defined the following vision: 'that by 2030 Hertfordshire will be the leading economy at the heart of the UK's 'Golden Triangle'. Skills for growth will be an important element in achieving this vision with over 50% of Hertfordshire businesses being knowledge intensive.

Hertfordshire County Council's (HCC) vision of a 'County of Opportunity'; envisages a county where people have the opportunity to live healthy, fulfilling lives in thriving, prosperous communities. It wants Hertfordshire to be recognised as a great place to do business, with a skilled workforce and infrastructure that supports the developing needs of the local economy. At the same time, it seeks to give every Hertfordshire resident the opportunity to maximise their potential and live full lives as confident citizens.

This document has been developed to address the growing appetite for a Skills Strategy which is attuned to the county's particular needs and brings together key stakeholders strategic plans into a coherent whole. The concept was first proposed at the Hertfordshire Forward Conference in February 2014 and HCC, Hertfordshire LEP and Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) have worked together to formulate this strategy, incorporating the influences, views and needs of employers, training providers, schools and colleges and public sector organisations.

The aim of this strategy is to increase and develop our workforce to ensure we can support a strong economy within which businesses can thrive, whilst enabling all residents of Hertfordshire to maximise their own individual potential and share in Hertfordshire's prosperity.

Background

The scope and formulation of this strategy comes primarily from the Skills Summit 'Releasing our potential' held in September 2014. The event organised and hosted by the LEP and HCC was attended by over 100 people representing more than 70 Hertfordshire employers and key stakeholders. Individuals attending the summit were invited to discuss the findings of the Hertfordshire businesses' skills gap survey² and pledge an action they could implement, as a result of the discussions held. Recommendations for

² University of Hertfordshire – Hertfordshire Businesses' Skills Gap Survey (HBSGS) 2014

key stakeholders including businesses, HCC, Hertfordshire LEP, Skills Funding Agency (SFA) and DWP have been developed to ensure a shortage of skilled workers does not act as a brake on economic recovery.

The skills gap survey showed that nearly half of employers identified skills gaps in their existing workforce and 45% of local businesses considered that skills gaps were important factors affecting their competitiveness. Although 38% of Hertfordshire businesses have experienced more than 5% growth in the last 12 months only 21% of those surveyed had fully proficient staff. The main causes of skills gaps are newness to role, new working practices and new products/services knowledge. The most common skills gaps are job-specific, however the general skills most often cited are: problem-solving, oral and written communications and advanced IT skills.

Key themes

The round table discussions from the Skills Summit provided the following themes for this strategy:

- Developing our future workforce - supporting young people aged 16-24 years in the transition from school to employment
- Towards fuller employment - supporting vulnerable adults into employment, increasing the available workforce and enabling priority groups to maximise their potential
- Enhancing opportunities through lifelong learning, adopting a culture of lifelong learning to benefit individuals as well as local businesses
- A leading economy – skills to drive growth. Working with businesses and training providers to improve the skills of both the existing workforce and the future labour market in order to sustain economic growth.
- Skills to grow small and medium size businesses (SMEs), providing targeted support to SMEs and their workforce in order to facilitate growth.

The support we can provide to our available workforce, both employed and unemployed, both economically active and inactive, will increase and develop our workforce to ensure we can support a strong economy in which businesses can thrive.

By March 2016 we expect to see:

- An increase in the percentage of young people opting to stay in education and training
- Development of support for vulnerable adults to compete in the labour market
- Specific support for jobseekers aged 50+
- Negotiations underway with the SFA to gain a greater share of Adult Skills Budget funding for Hertfordshire to support development of English and maths skills

By March 2017 we expect to see:

- An increase in the delivery of impartial independent advice and guidance and career education for young people
- An increase in the number of businesses that undertake formal training and development of their workforce with a particular focus on apprenticeships
- An increase in the take up of training by SMEs with a particular focus on higher level skills in priority sectors
- An increase in the percentage of working age residents with English and maths at level 2 or above

Monitoring the strategy

The action plans included in this strategy will be progressed by those organisations detailed on the plans. The progress of the action plans will be monitored by HCC Enterprise, Education & Skills Cabinet Panel and the Skills and Employment Programme Board of the LEP, which includes senior representation from DWP. It will be reported to Hertfordshire Forward, the county Local Strategic Partnership and a second Hertfordshire Skills Summit is planned for March 2016. A review and refresh of this strategy is planned for 2017.

A detailed action plan can be seen from page 19 of this strategy.

Developing our future workforce

Our young people are the most valuable asset for developing our future workforce. Our aspiration is for young people aged 16-24 years to be inspired to develop the skills to flourish in the workforce:

Current situation

The vast majority (over 90%) of Hertfordshire young people either stay on in school or go to Further Education College at the end of compulsory age schooling (16 years)³. Only 1.7% (232 young people out of a total cohort of 13,396) of 16 year olds who had completed Year 11 were categorised as 'Not in Education, Employment, or Training' (NEET). Jobseeker's Allowance Claimant Count for 18-24 year olds across Hertfordshire has reduced by 38% from 3,665 in June 2013 to 2,255 in June 2014.

This data is encouraging but it does hide a number of underlying issues which need to be addressed as part of this Skills Strategy.

Although our NEET total for 16 and 17 year olds (as at November 2014)⁴ is low (3.8% compared to the national average of 4.6%) there were still 1082 young people not in any form of learning. This includes young people with additional needs such as care leavers, young people with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities (LDD) and young offenders all of whom are the most likely to remain NEET beyond their 18th birthday.

Hertfordshire's young people perform well in terms of GCSE results with 66.3%⁵ achieving 5 or more A*- C grade GCSEs or equivalent including English and maths compared to the national average of 59.2% for all schools. However, 32.9% of the Year 11 cohort did not achieve both English and maths GCSE or equivalent. A grade 'C' in English and maths GCSEs is widely recognised by employers as vital for a young person's future education and employment.

The Hertfordshire Businesses' Skills Gap Survey (HBSGS) identified the most common skills gaps reported by businesses are job-specific, however the general skills most noted are: problem solving, oral and written communications and advanced IT skills. Too often a lack of work experience and work-related learning combined with limited employability skills exacerbates the concerns

³ Activity Survey for Year 11 cohort 2013

⁴ LA CCIS Data (November 2014) Academic Age Data

⁵ DfE Performance Tables 2013

identified by employers. Equally, the lack of employer involvement in certain sectors or geographical areas often results in a lack of awareness of young people's potential, especially those without traditional qualifications.

Data collected by Hertfordshire County Council showed that in March 2014, 3.6% of young people aged 16-18 years (1,108 out of a cohort of 31,072) were on an apprenticeship programme. This compares to 6.9% for England. The Hertfordshire data shows a 9.7% increase in apprentices enrolled on programmes between the ages of 16 to 17 years of age (482 aged 16 years compared to 949 at 17 years)⁶. This may indicate that some young people find they have made the wrong choice and drop out in Year 12 and then take up an apprenticeship. Schools have a statutory duty to provide Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) for years 8 to 13 and this Careers Education and Information Advice and Guidance should include information about all the possible educational and training pathways.

Many employers provide work experience opportunities but there are gaps in job sectors and locations meaning that young people do not have the opportunity for placements in certain industries or parts of the county. Gaps identified include: science-based fields, specific IT such as game development, construction including most trades i.e. plumbing/plastering/carpentry & joinery, engineering companies, agricultural and public services and these gaps are countywide. The lack of employer involvement in certain sectors or areas may in turn mean that they lack awareness of young people's potential, especially those without traditional qualifications.

Our goals

- We must ensure that all young people have access to impartial Careers Education and independent advice and guidance and are made aware of all the learning pathways that exist in Hertfordshire.
- We will raise awareness among employers of the potential of young people and forge stronger links between employers and young people through face to face learning opportunities, work experience, events and usage of the web.
- We want employers to provide young people with greater opportunities for apprenticeships, traineeships and workplace training, particularly at higher skill levels such as advanced apprenticeships, when they leave school.

⁶ October 2014 SFA LEP Operational Data Suite In Year Data Cubes showing Final Quarter 4 results for 2012/13

- We will identify those at risk of becoming NEET and those who are NEET and maintain and develop quality services and provision to move them into education, employment and training. There will be a particular focus on priority groups, for example, Learners with learning difficulties & disabilities (LDD), children looked after, care leavers and the hard to reach and where possible link with the County Council's 'Thriving Families' work.
- We need to promote the growth of quality learning provision that reflects the needs of both the young people and the economic growth of Hertfordshire building on existing best practice and creating new education and training opportunities.
- We want to reduce the number of young people who may be underemployed in their current role and are not maximising their current or potential capabilities and capacity.

In order to meet our aspiration we have set targets which align with the county's 16-24 Education, Employment and Training Participation Strategy. The remit is to maximise the number of young people in Education, Employment, or Training (EET) and to achieve identified targets to reduce the number of young people who remain NEET or at risk of becoming NEET. We will also progress the Hertfordshire LEP's Apprenticeship Strategy which aims to increase employer participation in apprenticeship and traineeship.

Towards fuller employment

In Hertfordshire approximately 80% of working age residents are in employment. Maximising our pool of available labour will both support an increasing demand for labour and create a strong economy; our aspiration is to aim for full employment to support a strong economy within which businesses can thrive:

Current situation

Hertfordshire's labour market profile has seen a reduction in the number of unemployed Jobseekers of around 32% between July 2013 and July 2014. This reduction has been most marked in the 18-24 age categories with a drop of 38%. The lowest drop has been in the 50+ age category with a reduction of 23%. The 50+ age category, as a percentage of the total unemployed Jobseekers register, is increasing.

Of all benefit claimants known to Jobcentre Plus 23% are Jobseekers Allowance (JSA) claimants and this has gradually reduced over the years. However, the number of those claiming Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) is 50% and those claiming Income Support (IS) is 27%. ESA claimants are typically those that are harder to engage and require discreet and/or targeted provision to help them re-engage with learning and employment.

Hertfordshire has a number of people who are out of work for reasons including poor health, disability, ex-offenders, caring responsibilities, families with multiple problems, care leavers and being homeless. Whilst it is difficult to categorise a whole group as being vulnerable, as individual circumstances will vary, it is acknowledged that the barriers to employment for certain groups tend to be more complex. Jobcentre Plus will support every vulnerable adult, looking to move nearer the labour market, with a named Work Coach to help the claimant design a package of support to help them overcome any barriers and meet their individual needs to gain full employment.

A significant issue facing vulnerable adults is not only securing employment, but sustaining this status, as their personal circumstances or resilience may cause issues that can lead to individuals rotating between employment and unemployment. This can only be overcome by increasing in-work support.

A number of organisations work with adults across priority groups in Hertfordshire including HCC Hertfordshire Adult Family Learning Service (HAFLS), Work Solutions, Herts Mind Network, DWP, Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS). By working in partnership, these organisations look to reduce the barriers that vulnerable adults face in competing in the labour market. Support will include

working on improving skills set, confidence building, access to work experience, sector based work academies, apprenticeships, work trials and volunteering. Volunteering provides valuable real life experience as well as supporting community initiatives. DWP Jobcentre Plus in partnership with local employers also offers initiatives such as Work Experience, Work Trials and Sector Based Work Academies. Jobcentre Plus (JCP) works with employers to put in place workplace adaptations to help support and retain vulnerable adults, with health conditions, in employment.

Currently 81% of supported 'Thriving Families' have at least one adult in receipt of an out of work benefit. In Phase two of this initiative it is our aspiration to make paid employment ultimately an outcome for all families receiving support.

Our goals

- We aim to increase the number of economically active individuals in the community by supporting those most vulnerable into work.
- We will encourage continued and greater co-ordination between key agencies i.e. JCP, HAFLS and VCS in order to promote the positive impact that sustained employment has on many health and social issues.
- We will encourage partnership working between Jobcentre Plus and learning providers to target specific geographical areas with high levels of JSA claimants aged 50+ or high levels of ESA claimants.
- We will work to reduce the differential between the numbers of 50+ aged Jobseekers and other age groups.

Enhancing opportunities through lifelong learning

With an ever changing workplace environment, residents may face a number of career changes and therefore having core skills and a desire to learn will be a requirement for the management of future careers.

Our aspiration is to develop a culture of learning for Hertfordshire residents and in particular for those who are of working age. Adopting a culture of lifelong learning will benefit individuals as well as local businesses. It will provide greater choices and opportunities for both individuals in the workplace and those seeking employment.

Current situation

Lifelong learning is about personal fulfilment and enterprise; employability and adaptability; active citizenship and social inclusion. It encompasses post-compulsory education, training and learning and covers the whole range of learning: formal and informal, workplace, and the skills, knowledge, attitudes and behaviours that people acquire in day-to-day experiences.

Further Education Colleges, private training providers and Higher Education Institutions are the most common and larger providers of lifelong learning opportunities. However, informal and community-based learning plays a crucial role in supporting people to engage in or to return to learning and can often be a first step back into more formal further or higher education for people who have become disengaged from learning. Community centres, smaller or local learning providers (e.g. VCS) and local libraries play an important role in supporting learning in less institutionalised settings, through the use of informal education approaches to address people's interests and concerns.

In Hertfordshire there is a gap in participation in learning between those in low skilled employment and those in high skilled jobs and between the skills of those in work and those who are not. Evidence shows that a greater percentage of those individuals who struggle to secure sustainable employment have little or low skills levels. Encouraging this group to invest time and effort in learning could increase the number of individuals likely to remain in sustainable employment.

Whilst many Hertfordshire residents have high levels of qualification, labour market profiles show that there are quite significant variations across the county with the St Albans area having the highest percentage of adults with level 2 qualifications⁷ or above (85.9%) whilst other areas such as Broxbourne and Welwyn Hatfield show the lowest with 71.6% and 71.3% respectively.

Hertfordshire employers report that their skills gaps are having a negative impact on the business and that generic skills such as oral and written communications are frequently quoted as being not fully proficient.

Our goals

- We will work to raise the level of literacy and numeracy of Hertfordshire's adult population, focusing initially on adults with no qualification or below level 2.
- We will support the development of learning programmes with Community Learning providers, including the voluntary and community sector, to design and deliver discreet provision for those residents who are hard to engage.
- We will deliver more targeted programmes to support those who are unemployed to help gain access to and retain employment.
- We will support partnership working between learning providers and employers to promote the benefits of work-based learning including traineeships and apprenticeships up to level 4 and level 5.

⁷ GCSEs at grade A* - C

A leading economy, skills to drive growth

The Hertfordshire economy has been relatively resilient to recession. There are now clear signs that both labour and skills demands in Hertfordshire have and will continue to increase with further demand pressures ahead. Developing skills for growth will be an important element in Hertfordshire becoming the leading economy at the heart of the UK's 'Golden Triangle'.

Our priority focus will be on developing skills within the following knowledge based sectors;

- Science/technology
- Engineering & manufacturing
- Film & media
- Financial & business services
- High end logistics
- Sports, leisure & tourism

Current situation

Although Hertfordshire has a relatively weak jobs growth rate compared to the national average, it has exceeded a number of other local economies surrounding London, including the Thames Valley and Buckinghamshire. A number of Hertfordshire districts (St Albans, Watford and Welwyn Hatfield) have enjoyed strong employment growth. Hertfordshire's working age residents have higher than national average skills levels, however the skills levels of Hertfordshire's workforce is in line with the national average.

Hertfordshire is already showing signs of labour market pressures. Participation in employment is high and growing, and unemployment is low. Vacancies have increased sharply over recent years and the London economy has created a high number of jobs over the past 10 years.

Hertfordshire's population has grown significantly over the past decade, and this is projected to continue. Whilst this goes some way towards meeting future labour market demand in the county, a high proportion of the additional workforce are likely to be attracted to work in London.

Hertfordshire has a growing productivity gap with productivity rates significantly below peer economies in the south of England. It seems unlikely that the supply of qualified workers is behind this trend. However, a contributing factor may be that Hertfordshire's employers are less likely to train their staff than the leading local economies.

It is clear that employers responding to the Hertfordshire Businesses' Skills Gap Survey have accepted a responsibility for upskilling staff, both new and existing. This is particularly true of larger and medium sized businesses with over 70% of businesses having a training plan/budget. Of those businesses who offer little or no training, the majority of whom are small or micro businesses; the two main cited reasons are financial costs and lack of knowledge of available training provision.

Our goals

We will work with businesses, Higher Education (HE), Further Education (FE) and other training providers to improve the skills of both the existing workforce and the future labour market ensuring a better matching of skills to business needs in order to sustain economic growth.

In order to meet our aspiration of upskilling both residents and our workforce the Hertfordshire LEP's Strategic Economic Plan identifies clear targets for an increase in qualifications held by all by 2030. To achieve this we will address three key strategic themes;

- Upskill the workforce to ensure it has the skills required to address technological change and to grow our economy prioritising those in the key growth sectors
- Strengthen succession planning for our business base ensuring we are developing the leaders and managers of tomorrow
- Sustain employment opportunities for new entrants to the workforce and reduce the number of vulnerable individuals who routinely rotate between employment and unemployment

Skills to grow small and medium size businesses

The growth of small and medium size businesses (SMEs) is key to the economic prosperity of Hertfordshire. Studies show that 55% of all employment in Hertfordshire is within SMEs and that economic growth as well as employment growth rates within SMEs are greater than within micro or larger businesses. Countywide there are small and medium size businesses that struggle to access the support they need to grow.

Our principal aspiration is to address this issue and provide targeted support to SMEs and their workforce in order to facilitate growth.

Current situation

Hertfordshire has a sound economy with around 50,000 businesses which collectively generate Gross Value Added (GVA)⁸ in the region of £27 billion, with approximately 530,000 employees.

Approximately 99% of all businesses in Hertfordshire are categorised as being small or medium sized enterprises; micro businesses (1-9 employees) account for 89.9% of the total, small businesses (10-49) account for 8.1% of the total and medium size businesses (50-249) account for 1.5% of the total number of businesses in Hertfordshire. Our percentage of small and medium size businesses is lower than our neighbours in the East of England and lower than the rest of the UK and therefore growing this base is a key priority within the Hertfordshire LEP's Strategic Economic Plan.

Nationally 50% of SMEs were predicting a moderate rate of annual growth that is less than 10% whilst a further 20% of SMEs were predicting a significant annual growth of more than 20%. Locally results gathered from HBSGS indicate that 62% of small size businesses and 22% of medium size businesses recorded more than 5% increase in turnover in the past 12 months which is comparable to the increase in turnover achieved by larger businesses.

Equally according to the findings of HBSGS 55% of SMEs reported an increase in the recruitment of new staff over the past 12 months, far greater than micro businesses at 20% and even large businesses at less than 5%.

⁸ Gross value added is a measure in economics of the value of goods and services produced in an area, industry or sector of an economy.

Both the HBSGS and national data indicate that micro size businesses (55%) and small size businesses (12%) are less likely to either have a training plan/budget or offer formal training to their staff, whilst 14% of medium size businesses only produce a training plan/budget every two years.

British Chamber of Commerce research has shown that 52% of large businesses surveyed employed at least one apprentice in the past 12 months, compared to 32% of medium size businesses, 20% of small size businesses and just 11% of micro size businesses.

SMEs in Hertfordshire are more likely to report that skills gaps in their business had a negative impact on their business than for England as a whole, i.e. 75% of SMEs in Hertfordshire compared to 63% in England.

Of those SMEs that provide no formal training to their employees, 27% cited financial costs as a reason whilst a further 20% cited a lack of knowledge of available training provision as the reason for not training employees.

Our goals

We will focus support including aligning funds from the European Structural Investment Fund (ESIF) on supporting the development of the skills that SMEs require for both their current and future workforce needs.

We will introduce independent face to face advisory support that will assist SMEs to identify training and development needs for their employees, to assist them to prioritise identified needs and to identify appropriate solutions to ensure their skills and development needs are met. Whilst we wish to address the skills needs of all growth potential SMEs we realise that improving the skills of SMEs within our priority sectors will have a greater impact on the GVA of the county and ensure greater business economic growth.

Increasing training and development spend per employee and the number of SMEs that allocate annual training plan/budgets will be a key aspiration as will be increasing the percentage of SME businesses that employ at least one apprentice. We will also seek to increase the number of SME businesses who employ higher level apprentices. This will support our final aspiration to reduce the number of SMEs citing skills gaps as having a negative impact on their ability to grow their business. Our strategic goals will be to focus funding and support on assisting and supporting skills training, enhancing the overall business performance of SMEs which in turn will lead to employment and GVA growth in Hertfordshire. Our priorities are:

- Increase the number of SMEs who employ one or more apprentices within a 12 month period.
- Increase the number of SMEs who have annual training plans/budgets and who provide formal training for their workforce.
- Reduce the number of SMEs who cite having a skills gap in their existing workforce as a negative impact on growth.
- Increase the proportion of SMEs in the business stock by 2030 (currently less than 10%).

Hertfordshire Skills Strategy Action Plan

Developing our future workforce					
Ref no	Action	How	Lead	Source of funding	Timescale
1	Increase delivery of impartial independent advice and guidance (IAG) and career education for young people	Promote statutory duties and responsibilities to all Post-16 providers.	HCC	Education Funding Agency (EFA)/ HCC/ Schools/ ESIF (TO9)	Year 2 +
		Target young people at risk of not progressing to a suitable and sustained positive outcome e.g. further education or work with training			
		Ensure appropriate IAG delivery is available to all education providers.			
		Provide focussed intensive support to those who are NEET.			

Developing our future workforce					
Ref no	Action	How	Lead	Source of funding	Timescale
2	Build greater links between employers and education to promote the progression of young people both within the education and training system and their transition to the labour market, apprenticeships including traineeships, further and higher education.	Deliver a co-ordinated project giving young people the skills and attributes local employers want and for employers to better understand the potential of young people.	HCC	HCC/ ESIF (TO8)	Year 2
3	Increase the number of young people who undertake an apprenticeship pathway to 4.6% by 2017 from 3.6% in 2013 for 16 – 18 years.	Delivery of the LEP's revised Apprenticeship Strategy with actions.	LEP	SFA/ ESIF (TO9)	Year 2
4	Increase the % of young people who opt to stay in education and training and are participating at age 16 to 98% (not including lost contact) by 2015 from 96.5% in 2012.	Delivery of the 16-24 EET Participation Strategy with particular focus on specific groups to include NEETs, Young Lone Parents, Looked After Children (LAC)/care leavers, ex-offenders, young People with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities.	HCC	EFA/HCC/Schools /ESIF (TO9)	Year 1

Toward fuller employment, supporting vulnerable adults into employment					
Ref no	Action	How	Lead	Source of funding	Timescale
5	Encourage, support and help claimants with mental health conditions compete in the labour market.	Develop with partners a joint offer to support vulnerable adults with mental health conditions fulfil their potential in the work environment.	JCP	DWP/ ESIF (TO9)	Year 1
6	Support 50+ Jobseekers compete in the modern labour market	Review skills requirements in the workplace.	JCP	DWP/ ESIF (TO8)	Year 1
		Establish employer's needs and attitudes to employing 50+ Jobseekers.			
		Consider conversion of obsolete qualifications into certifications that have relevance for modern employers.			
		Identify transferable skills and technological change for claimants aged 50+			
7	Support vulnerable adults to remain in employment by building resilience to life events that may lead to the loss of employment.	Explore the scope, potential partners and funding stream to develop a volunteer based and professional mentoring scheme to support clients.	JCP	Big Lottery/ ESIF (TO9)	Year 2

Toward fuller employment, supporting vulnerable adults into employment					
Ref no	Action	How	Lead	Source of funding	Timescale
		Explore opportunities to develop Thriving Families 'community aspirations' approach to localised skills audit, training provision and links to local job market.	HCC	DWP/ Big Lottery/ ESIF (TO9)	Year 2
8	Encourage greater participation of economically inactive individuals into the labour market	Develop programme to aid economically inactive individuals to move into labour pool and into employment	JCP	ESIF (TO8)	Year 2

Enhancing opportunities through lifelong learning					
Ref no	Action	How	Lead	Source of funding	Timescale
9	Improve adult English and maths levels	Negotiate with the SFA a greater share of Adult Skills Budget funding for Hertfordshire to support development of English and Maths skills	HCC	SFA/ EFA	Year 1
		Offer free skills analysis service to employers across Hertfordshire (linked with action 18)			Year 2
		Offer discrete and on-site provision to employees to raise English and maths levels			Year 2

Enhancing opportunities through lifelong learning					
Ref no	Action	How	Lead	Source of funding	Timescale
10	Improve the quality and consistency of information for adult learners and employers through a database of learning opportunities to be the gateway for information to learners	Liaise with existing IAG services currently funded in Hertfordshire and explore possibilities of partnership to deliver effective IAG more widely	HCC	NCS/ ESIF (TO8)	Year 1
		Liaise with other national services such as National Careers Service, National Apprenticeship Service			Year 1
		Update hertsdirect website with accurate sign posting for learning and progression routes			Year 2
11	Encourage greater focus on training in specific geographical areas i.e. Broxbourne, Stevenage, Dacorum and North Hertfordshire where there are high numbers of residents with low qualifications	Set up a referral system from Jobcentre Plus (JCP) to key learning providers to target specific geographical areas or profiles of adults who would benefit from discreet provision	LEP	JCP / ESIF (TO8)	Year 1
		Fund discrete provision aimed at upskilling the unemployed in response to specific labour market gaps			Year 2

Enhancing opportunities through lifelong learning					
Ref no	Action	How	Lead	Source of funding	Timescale
12	Develop a joint FE/HE/Community Learning (CL) strategy and implementation plan to identify a coherent programme of learning opportunities and progression within Hertfordshire that aligns with Hertfordshire's key drivers	Set up a working party	LEP	ESIF	Year 1
		Map out existing learning opportunities and progression routes			
		Map out gaps in line with Lifelong Learning Strategy			
		Identify target groups and target aims according to strategy			
		Set up a tender system			

A leading economy – skills to drive growth					
Ref no	Action	How	Lead	Source of funding	Timescale
13	Establish baseline data for funded provision in Hertfordshire and determine outcome targets	Analysis of SFA/DWP data to establish baseline positions	LEP	LEP/ SFA	Year 1
		Determine annual targets for Hertfordshire in line with local Apprenticeship Strategy and the Strategic Economic Plan			Year 1

A leading economy – skills to drive growth					
Ref no	Action	How	Lead	Source of funding	Timescale
		Establish sector based groups to identify sector specific needs and possible solutions			Year 1
14	Encourage greater investment in higher skills development to meet skills gaps in growth sectors	Encourage greater take up of STEM ⁹ related higher level apprenticeships amongst business base and in particular SMEs, creating career progression pathways to HE	LEP	SFA – Adult skills budget ESIF (TO10)	Year 2
		Develop the supply side to better deliver higher level skills provision			Year 2
15	Establish County based Hubs of excellence for delivery of key growth related higher level skills i.e. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Advanced manufacturing - Enviro Tech - Agri Tech - Life sciences - Film & media - Advanced IT skills 	Work in partnership with key stakeholders i.e. FE, University of Hertfordshire (UH), University Technical Colleges (UTCs), SFA to establish a joined up approach to providing high quality industry led skills provision	LEP	Local Growth Fund (LGF) /ESIF (TO10)	Year 1
		Agree lead organisation for each subject area and prepare business case for investment			Year 1

⁹ STEM is an acronym for science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

A leading economy – skills to drive growth					
Ref no	Action	How	Lead	Source of funding	Timescale
16	Increase the number of businesses that undertake formal training and development of their workforce with a particular focus on apprenticeships	Increase the number of businesses investing in apprenticeships/work based learning at levels 2, 3 and 4+	LEP	SFA – Adult skills budget/ ESIF (TO10)	Year 2
		Provide access to funding to encourage involvement of those businesses who had previously not engaged			Year 1
		Set up or promote existing Approved Training Agencies (ATA)/Group Training Association (GTA) schemes to provide alternative engagement options for employers			Year 1

Skills to grow small and medium size businesses (SMEs)					
Ref no	Action	How	Lead	Source of funding	Timescale
17	Employ Skills Advisors, based within Herts Growth Hub (HGH) to provide generic and sector skills support	Allocate funding via LGF/ESIF for recruitment of Advisors	LEP	LGF/ESIF (TO10)	Year 1

Skills to grow small and medium size businesses (SMEs)					
Ref no	Action	How	Lead	Source of funding	Timescale
18	Increase take up of training by SMEs with a particular focus on higher level skills in priority sectors (linked with action 9)	Allocate European Social Fund (ESF) for upskilling of existing workforce	LEP	ESIF (TO10)	Year 2
19	Develop supply side provision to improve engagement with SMEs to provide solutions that meet specific needs of SMEs	Working in partnership with Beds and Herts (Training) Providers Network to identify a development programme and encourage involvement of all providers	LEP	ESIF (TO10)	Year 2
20	Introduce an incentive for SMEs to recruit both trainees and apprentices	Allocate ESIF funding as an incentive pot for SMEs	LEP	ESIF (TO10)	Year 1
		Investigate the establishment of a Hertfordshire Apprenticeship Hub (one stop shop) to provide information to businesses and individuals			

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