

Buckinghamshire's Local Skills Report

March 2021

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Foreword

The world of education, skills and professional development is multi-faceted, and the pace of change within it incredibly rapid. As such, the education and skills landscapes can be difficult to navigate for learners, career changers, employers, parents, learning professionals and policy makers alike.

As Chair of the Buckinghamshire Skills Advisory Panel, I am delighted to introduce the first Buckinghamshire Local Skills Report. This report brings together an analysis of the County's skills priorities and examples of local employer-education collaboration with the actions we believe need to be taken forward to ensure individuals and employers have the skills they need for future success. I hope the report will be used by all organisations involved with the local skills agenda to inform their decision making.

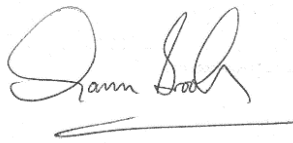
This report is being published in unusual times. As has been the case across the UK as a whole, Buckinghamshire's economy has been hard-hit by the Covid-19 pandemic. Some sectors have been hit harder than others, and we have seen some structural changes to the economy – the acceleration of online retail and education, alongside a greater acceptance of homeworking, for example. Despite these changes, it is anticipated that most of the economic and labour market trends we were witnessing, or had anticipated, pre-Covid will continue when Covid restrictions are finally lifted. As we emerge into the post-Covid world, it is vital that collectively across Buckinghamshire we consider these trends in all that we do. From the rapid growth in demand for digital skills, to the need to ensure Buckinghamshire's growth sectors have the supply of talent they need.

At an individual level, some groups have also been hit harder by the Covid-19 pandemic than others. Young people, for example, have not only been impacted by exam disruption but have missed out on vital real-life experiences of the world of work and the confidence gains that such experiences bring. At the other end of the spectrum, some Buckinghamshire residents with long careers in sectors such as aviation, live events and hospitality, have suddenly found themselves out of work and not knowing how their skills might be relevant in other sectors. Launched in March 2021, the new [Buckinghamshire Skills Hub](#) website, a one-stop shop for all skills and careers related advice in Buckinghamshire, aims to help inspire, support and inform these individuals and others seeking local careers information.

There remain some significant skills challenges for the County to address, including: reducing the mismatch between the demand for skills within the local economy, and the skills held and jobs sought by residents (pre-Covid 53% of vacancies were proving difficult to fill, the highest of all Local Enterprise Partnership areas); reducing the net out-flow of talent from the County; addressing pockets of inequality and poor social mobility; and continuing to ensure the local skills system is working for the County's many Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs).

We have achieved a great deal since the Buckinghamshire Skills Advisory Panel, and associated sector action groups, were established in 2019. Much of this success has been made possible by a strong local collaborative culture and effective partnership working between employers, educators and policy makers. We need to maintain and build upon this strength over the coming months and years to help us achieve our ambition of a highly productive local economy which provides good quality work for all.

Professor Gavin Brooks



Chair, Buckinghamshire Skills Advisory Panel

Chapter 1. About this report

This is the first Buckinghamshire Local Skills Report. It is the 'go-to' document for everything skills-related within Buckinghamshire, bringing together evidence, strategy, information on current and planned initiatives and examples of best practice.

Locally, it is anticipated that the report will raise awareness of the skills needs of the Buckinghamshire economy and will inform investment and curriculum planning decisions. Nationally, the report, along with similar reports being produced across the country, will inform the policy thinking of the [Skills and Productivity Board](#).

Linked resources

Key resources linked to this report are listed below.

- Buckinghamshire Local Skills Report Annex A: Core Indicators
- Buckinghamshire Local Skills Report Annex B: Additional Data
- [Buckinghamshire Skills Strategy 2017-2022, Buckinghamshire LEP - 2017](#)
- [Buckinghamshire Local Industrial Strategy, Buckinghamshire LEP - 2019](#)
- [Buckinghamshire Economic Recovery Plan, Buckinghamshire LEP - 2020](#)
- [Buckinghamshire Skills Hub website](#)

Chapter 2. Introduction

Skills Advisory Panels: the national context

Skills Advisory Panels (SAPs) bring together employers, skills providers and other key stakeholders to better understand and resolve skills and recruitment challenges at a local level. The 36 SAPs across England are co-ordinated by Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) and Mayoral Combined Authorities (MCAs).

The Department for Education (DfE) supports SAPs with grant funding primarily to produce high quality analysis of local labour markets and [Local Skills Reports](#). Local Skills Reports set out local skills priorities, and how the local SAP proposes to address them. The reports aim to influence local partners and feed intelligence to central government.

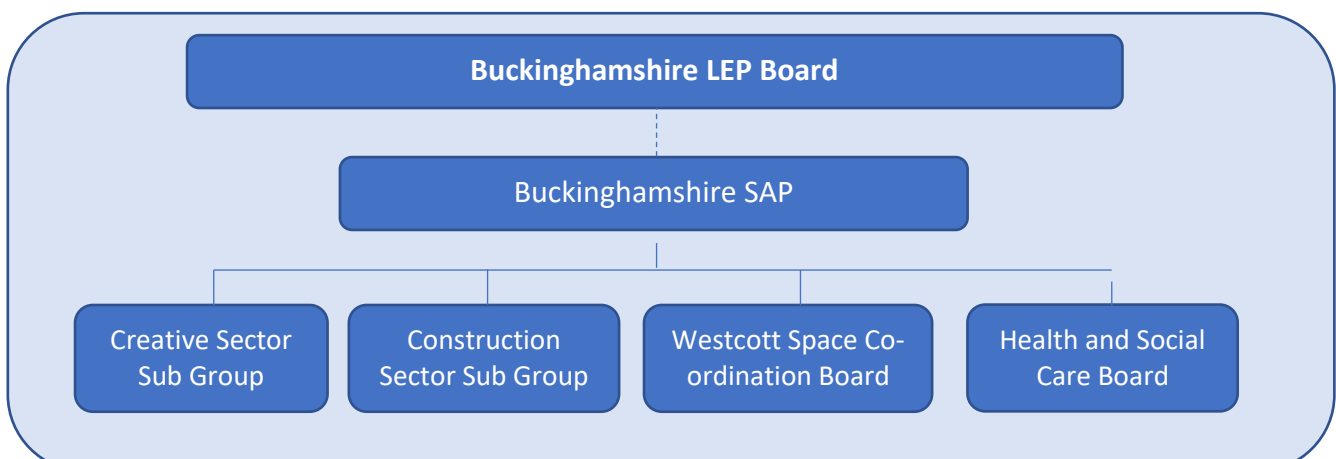
The Buckinghamshire Skills Advisory Panel (SAP)

Buckinghamshire's SAP was established in 2019. It took up the mantle from the Buckinghamshire Skills and Employability Board, which had been providing a skills activity co-ordination role in Buckinghamshire since 2015.

Buckinghamshire's SAP reports to the [Buckinghamshire LEP Board](#). The Chair of the SAP sits as an observer on the LEP Board. Employers sit at the heart of the Buckinghamshire SAP. Four sector sub-groups, made up of employers and learning providers, meet regularly to share information and collaborate on sector-specific skills initiatives (see figure 1). The Chairs of the four sub-groups are members of the SAP.

The Buckinghamshire's SAP, and the sector sub-groups, meet six times a year. The current (March 2021) members of the SAP are provided in [Annex D](#). Some SAP and sub-group members represent national skills bodies (e.g. CITB and ScreenSkills) and some members sit on national skills advisory groups (e.g. trailblazer groups developing apprenticeship standards).

Figure 1: Structure of the Buckinghamshire SAP



In addition to the four sector sub-groups, in May 2020, Buckinghamshire's SAP established a Redundancy Taskforce to co-ordinate redundancy support work in response to the rise in unemployment resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic. Further information on this activity can be found in [Chapter 6](#).

Buckinghamshire's SAP is co-ordinated by the Buckinghamshire Skills Hub, which was established by Buckinghamshire LEP, in partnership with Buckinghamshire Business First (BBF), to promote and optimises links between the local business community and education/training providers. The Buckinghamshire Skills Hub sits alongside the Buckinghamshire Growth Hub, which is the route to market for business engagement.

In addition to its work with the SAP, the Buckinghamshire Skills Hub:

- Co-ordinates the Buckinghamshire Enterprise Adviser Network and Careers Hub (which seeks to improve careers advice in schools and link local businesses and schools to create career inspiration for young people).
- Runs the annual Bucks Skills Show (further details of which are provided in [Chapter 7](#))
- Provides workforce development support to local businesses (in conjunction with BBF Business Advisers).

Buckinghamshire Business First (BBF) is a business-led, business-focused community for new, established and growing businesses across Buckinghamshire. BBF is the authoritative voice of the local business community and provides support and advice to the county's 34,000 businesses. It has a membership of over 13,000 businesses, which collectively employ approximately 70% of the local workforce.

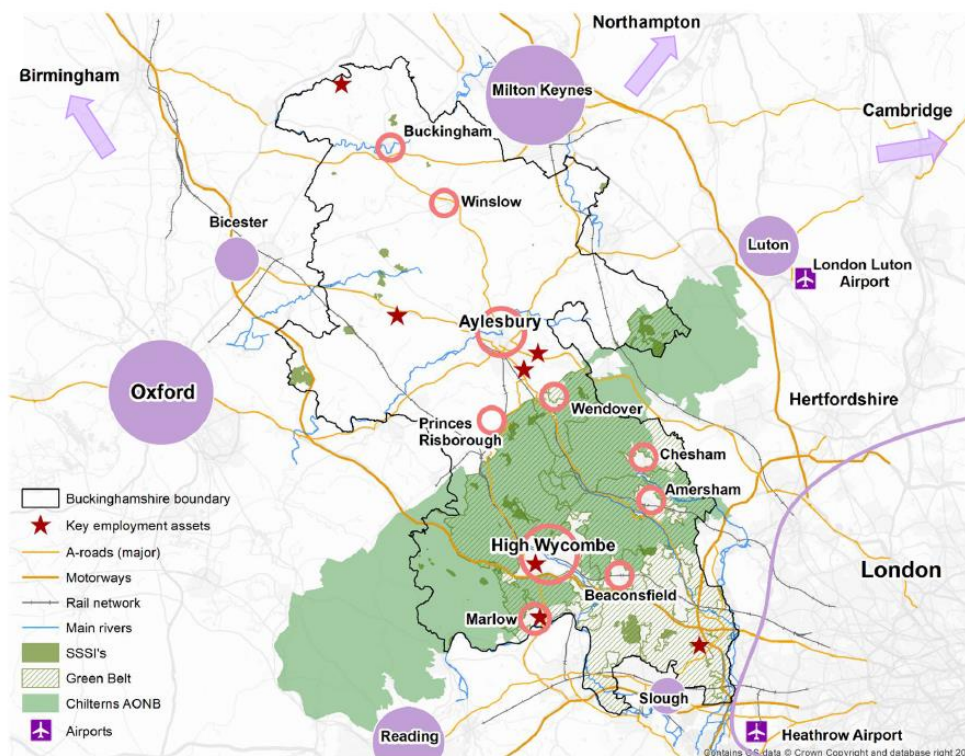
BBF has been appointed by Buckinghamshire LEP to deliver the Buckinghamshire Business Growth Hub. It delivers a wide range of business support activity including business growth programmes; grant funding schemes; leadership and management initiatives; programmes to reduce carbon emissions; and advice and support on a vast range of topics by way of regular workshops and events.

About Buckinghamshire

Situated in the South East of England, Buckinghamshire neighbours London and is located close to the UK's main international gateway at Heathrow. Sub-regionally, Buckinghamshire sits within both the Oxford-Cambridge Arc and the Thames Valley economic areas.

There are no major urban conurbations within Buckinghamshire, with the county's two largest towns, [High Wycombe and Aylesbury](#), having populations of 124,000 and 89,000 respectively. Much of the county is rural.

Figure 2: Map of Buckinghamshire



Source: Buckinghamshire Council, 2021

The Buckinghamshire LEP covers the same geographic area as the unitary Buckinghamshire Council. Buckinghamshire has five parliamentary constituencies: Aylesbury, Buckingham, Beaconsfield, Chesham and Amersham, and Wycombe.

Chapter 3. Skills strengths and needs

At a glance

Buckinghamshire's skills strengths

- Clear long-term economic growth aspirations set out in the Buckinghamshire Local Industrial Strategy.
- Significant job growth anticipated in a variety of sectors.
- High levels of employer involvement in the local skills agenda.
- A strong collaborative culture (between education institutions, and between employers and educators).
- Further and Higher Education Institutions with a strong history of business engagement, and a focus on applied learning and employability.
- A top performing Careers Hub.
- High performing schools.
- High levels of qualifications amongst residents.
- Individuals with cutting edge engineering, technology and creative skills that cross sectors and can create opportunities for innovation.

Buckinghamshire's skills challenges

- Retaining and attracting talent (school leavers, graduates and high skilled residents).
- Greater gap between the demand for skills and labour within the local economy, and the skills and jobs sought by local residents than elsewhere in the country.
- Temporary and permanent shifts within the labour market (due to the Covid-19 pandemic) and related shifts in skills requirements.
- Pockets of inequality and poor social mobility.
- A large proportion of SMEs, for whom it can be more difficult to engage with the 'skills system'.
- The 'work-readiness' of young people, exacerbated by Covid-19.
- The ever-growing and evolving demand for digital skills.
- Low take-up of apprenticeships.
- A lack of engineering training provision within the county.
- Low levels of interest in construction and health and social care careers, resulting in employers struggling to fill vacancies.
- The need to ensure strong talent pipelines for growing sectors (including life sciences, health and social care; creative industries; construction; high performance engineering and space).

The local economy

Buckinghamshire's economy generated £16.7bn of GDP in 2018¹. On a per-head basis, this is in-line with the national average. Going into the Covid-19 pandemic, the local economy had not been firing on all cylinders. The county was experiencing slow growth in economic output, having the third lowest 5-year growth rate of all 38 LEP areas,² and was being out-paced by other parts of the country on productivity growth³.

As with most of the developed world, Buckinghamshire's economy is dominated by the service sector, which provides 85% of all local employee jobs⁴. Three in every five jobs in Buckinghamshire exist in the 'foundational economy'⁵ with the remainder being within the 'tradable economy'⁶.

Defining features of Buckinghamshire's economy are:

- The predominance of small businesses⁷
- High levels of self-employment (second highest of all 38 LEP areas), particularly within the county's creative and construction sectors⁸
- A small public sector (the smallest of all 38 LEP areas)⁹
- World-class economic assets and high performing clusters of business activity in the areas of film and TV, high-performance engineering, space and MedTech.¹⁰
- A large wholesale sector (particularly the wholesale of pharmaceutical goods, machinery and equipment, computers and software)¹¹
- A larger than average digital sector¹²

¹ Source: [Regional GDP](#), ONS, February 2020

² Source: [Regional GVA](#), ONS, February 2020

³ Source: [Buckinghamshire Economic Recovery Plan Evidence Base](#), Buckinghamshire LEP, September 2020

⁴ Source: [Business Register and Employment Survey](#), ONS, 2019

⁵ The element of the economy that provides goods and services to the local population

⁶ The element of the economy that produces goods and services that are, or could be, traded outside of the local area, including internationally

⁷ With 42% of employees working for micro (fewer than 10 employees) or small (10-49 employees) companies in Buckinghamshire compared to 32% nationally. Source: [Inter Departmental Business Register, ONS, 2020](#)

⁸ Source: [Annual Population Survey, ONS, 2020](#)

⁹ Source: [Inter Departmental Business Register, ONS, 2020](#)

¹⁰ Source: [Buckinghamshire Local Industrial Strategy](#), Buckinghamshire LEP, July 2019

¹¹ Source: [Business Register and Employment Survey](#), ONS, 2019

¹² Ibid

It is important to note that Buckinghamshire has one of least 'self-contained' labour markets in England. Pre-Covid-19, around a third of working residents travelled out of the county for work whilst 28% of all those working within the Buckinghamshire economy travel into the county from elsewhere ([Figure B4 in Annex B](#)). In total, 34,000 Buckinghamshire residents usually work in London.

This context matters when undertaking local labour market and skills analysis, particularly when trying to compare data on the demand for and supply of skills. For example, whilst Buckinghamshire may have a large number of highly qualified residents, high levels of out-commuting, often for high paid jobs, means that the skills of many of these residents are not available to Buckinghamshire employers, nor are these individuals directly contributing to the output and productivity of the local economy. This issue is explored in more detail in [Annex A](#).

Skills supply and demand

Mind the gap

Pre-Covid-19, Buckinghamshire employers reported that 53% of vacancies were proving difficult to fill, the highest figure of all 38 LEP areas. Buckinghamshire employers were more likely than average to report difficulties filling vacancies due to applicants lacking the required skills (28% versus 25% nationally) and due to 'not enough people interested in the role' (25% versus 12% nationally) ([Chart A38 in Annex A](#)). Local intelligence suggests the latter to be a particular problem for the county's health and social care, construction and manufacturing sectors.

This may change in the short term as more people seek work as a result of Covid-19 related job losses, long-term however the mismatch is likely to require both demand and supply side interventions.

Proximity to the London job market, the high cost of housing, the perceived lack of vibrancy of Buckinghamshire's urban centres, a smaller than average cohort of young people taking-up apprenticeships and perceptions of certain sectors are all likely to contribute to the recruitment challenges of local employers.

The next generation

Young people have been particularly impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. Many have been unable to undertake work inspiration activity, whilst the number of Buckinghamshire-based apprenticeship and internship opportunities were estimated to be 45% lower in 2020 than in 2019¹³. The reduction in 'real world' opportunities is likely to impact the 'work readiness' of young people as they enter a competitive job market and make it more difficult for them to make informed career decisions.

¹³ Source: Labour Insight, Burning Glass Technologies, 2021

Digital, digital, digital

A key skills issue within Buckinghamshire (and indeed globally) is the need to raise digital skills across the board. According to the Employer Skills Survey (DfE, 2019) pre-Covid-19:

- A third of Buckinghamshire employers with employees deemed ‘not fully proficient’ stated that these employees lack the required IT skills.
- A third of Buckinghamshire employers struggling to recruit people with the required skills said that applicants lacked the required digital skills.
- Nearly three quarters of Buckinghamshire employers anticipated the need for new skills within their business over the next 12 months. Of these, 45% anticipated the need for new digital skills.

Covid-19 has accelerated the need for individuals to raise their digital skills (be that within current roles or to access new employment opportunities) and for employers (particularly SMEs) to adopt new technology.

Key sectors and occupations

Key growth sectors (from an employment perspective) within Buckinghamshire over the next 10 years will be:

- Construction (in part due to HS2, East West Rail, Aylesbury Garden Town related construction activity, and a large house building programme)
- Creative industries (linked to expansion plans at Pinewood Studios, plus the continuing growth of the West of London Screen Cluster with many new sound studios opening within the next few years)
- Life sciences, health and social care (linked to both the health needs of an ageing population and the need to respond to the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic)
- Space (it is anticipated that the 10-year plan for the Westcott Space Cluster will create over 2,000 jobs)
- High performance engineering (linked to expansion of the Silverstone Enterprise Zone and an increasing focus on the need for green technologies to combat climate change)

Table 1 below summarises why these sectors are a priority for skills initiatives in Buckinghamshire, and lists examples of occupations in high demand or experiencing skills shortages. At a sector level, there are many examples of Buckinghamshire education and training providers working effectively with local employers to create pipelines of talent for the local economy. From raising awareness of career opportunities within the local economy, to collaborating on course content. Some examples of these activities are provided in [Chapter 7](#) and [Annex C](#).

Table 1: Priority sectors and occupations for skills initiatives

Sector	Reason why priority					Occupations in high demand or with vacancies that are difficult to fill
	High number of jobs currently	High Location Quotient*	Significant job growth predicted	Employers struggle to fill vacancies	Drives economic growth (productivity / wages)	
Construction	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	HS2: Civil engineering operatives at Level 3 (e.g. site managers, steel fixers, people in off-site manufacturing for concrete sections etc). Plant operatives at Level 2 (e.g. 360 degree excavators, articulated dump truck operatives etc). Generally: Wet trades (ceramic tilers, bricklayers etc), groundworkers, plasterers, basic electricians, stonemasons/blacksmithing, scaffolders, IT and office-based staff, wood trades & interior fit-out, painters & decorators, plumbing & heating, ventilation & air conditioning trades, construction process managers, senior, executive & business process managers, glaziers, architects. Occupations related to energy efficient retrofitting, offsite / modern methods of construction and digital construction skills.
Creative industries	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Within the film and TV sub-sector, demand is currently high for production managers and co-ordinators, camera / sound operatives, visual effects professionals, location managers, production accountants and editing roles.
Life sciences, health & social care	✓		✓	✓	✓	Health and social care: Adult nursing, health care assistants that can convert to nursing associates, midwives, occupational therapists, podiatrists, social workers, learning disabilities nurses, mental health nurses, psychologists, GPs, general practice nurses, physicians' associates, dentists, paramedics, domiciliary care staff and care home workers. Medtech: Data scientists, designers, testers, Quality Assurance and regulatory professionals, business development and marketing professionals.
High performance engineering			✓	✓	✓	Mechanical engineers, electrical engineers. Occupations related to R&D, prototyping and testing.
Space			✓	✓	✓	High end technician and development test engineers, rocket engineers, performance engineers, systems analysts, mechanical engineers electronic, control engineers, development engineers (level 4 or degree), propulsion engineers. Occupations related to 5G, drones, cryogenics and space capabilities.

Sources include: Business Register and Employment Survey 2019, ONS, local intelligence from SAP sector groups, data from sector bodies, the Employer Skills Survey 2019, DfE, Labour Insight, Burning Glass Technologies. *Higher concentration of jobs in the local economy than in the national economy.

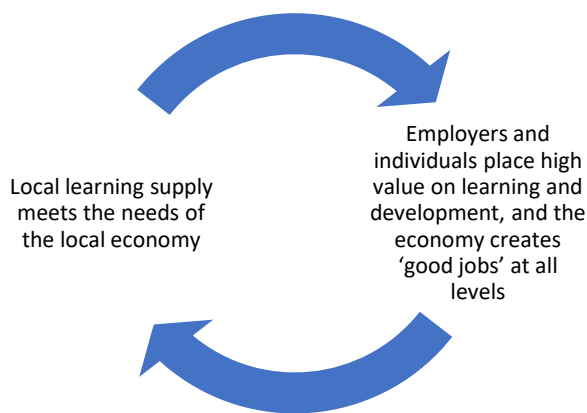
Chapter 4. Skills strategy

Ambition

The ultimate ambition that the Buckinghamshire SAP is aiming to achieve is that:

“Buckinghamshire employers, learning providers and other stakeholders collaborate effectively to ensure the current and future workforce are equipped with the skills required of the local economy, which in turn raises productivity and creates ‘good jobs’ for all”.

Figure 3: Skills ambition



Local skills strategy

A ‘skills and inspiration revolution’ sits at the heart of Buckinghamshire’s long-term [Local Industrial Strategy \(LIS\)](#). The Buckinghamshire LIS recognises that people, and the skills they have, are a key driver of productivity. To facilitate long-term local economic growth, Buckinghamshire LEP has targeted its skill-related investments towards sectors it is seeking to grow in Buckinghamshire over the next 10 years, to help create the required talent pipelines. These ‘strategic growth sectors’ are: space, creative, high performance technology and health (MedTech). In addition, investment has been targeted at the construction sector (which is a growing sector locally that traditionally suffers from skills shortages) and towards raising digital skills across the economy.

LEP investment in skills (or skills related) projects over the last five years is summarised in [figure 4](#). Evidence provided through the Buckinghamshire SAP has helped inform these investment decisions and will continue to do so.

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Figure 4: Buckinghamshire LEP investment in skills initiatives to strength talent pipelines for local growth sectors (2016 – 2021)



[Buckinghamshire’s Skills Strategy](#) was published in 2017 and covers the period 2017 to 2022. A refreshed strategy, which takes into account recent local developments, the latest national skills policy, the latest evidence, and the implications of the Covid-19 pandemic, will be produced in 2021/22.

The core themes of the current Strategy remain relevant in 2021. These being:

- Developing the future workforce by improving the work preparedness of young people and helping them make informed career choices.
- Addressing skills gaps through continuous professional development.
- Developing a pipeline of talent for priority growth sectors.
- Supporting recruitment into, and skills development within sectors experiencing recruitment difficulties / skills shortages.

Driving recovery and growth

More recently, the [Buckinghamshire Economic Recovery Plan](#) recognises the significant impact the Covid-19 pandemic has had on both the local labour market and on the provision of education and training across the county .

It highlights the need to:

- Support people into jobs in recruiting / growing sectors (including supporting re-training initiatives, the Kickstart programme and job brokerage).
- Co-ordinate redundancy support across the county.
- Share best practice in terms of digital and blended learning provision.
- Fast-track the development of a new Skills Hub website for Buckinghamshire.
- Support skills development for business leaders through BBF's business start-up programme and peer-to-peer networks.

Further information about activities are provided within the Buckinghamshire Skills Action Plan ([chapter 5](#)).

Whilst much can be achieved through current structures and programmes, in early 2021, the [Buckinghamshire Growth Board](#) submitted a Recovery and Growth Deal proposition to central government to make the case that more could be done, at pace, with a devolved skills budget for the county.

The proposition included:

- A devolved Adult Education Budget for Buckinghamshire, to accelerate re-skilling to meet local demand.
- Streamlining local delivery of national employment programmes such as Kickstart.
- Greater freedom in the apprenticeship levy system to meet the needs of local SMEs.
- Developing a county-wide Apprenticeship Training Agency with a dedicated Buckinghamshire Skills Fund that could be responsive to local needs.
- Acting as a test-bed area to pilot new national skills initiatives.

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Skills priorities

Underpinning the strategies and plans listed above is a wealth of local skills analysis and insight. Some of which was gathered pre-Covid-19, but largely remains valid, and some since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic in March 2020. Much of this evidence can be found in, or is signposted from, [Annex A](#) and [Annex B](#) of this report.

The evidence led to the SAP identifying five broad skills priority areas for Buckinghamshire. These are set out in [table 2](#), along with supporting rationale.

Table 2: Skills priorities for Buckinghamshire

Skills priority	Priorities and supporting rationale
1. The Future Workforce. Including young people, career seekers and career changers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recovery support to help individuals navigate the impact of Covid-19 on the job market. • Ensure those seeking jobs and careers have access to comprehensive, high quality information about the opportunities available in Buckinghamshire. • Improve the work-readiness of students leaving education. • Increase local take up of pathways leading to in demand occupations.
2. A Skilled and Productive Workforce. Programmes to support employers and the existing workforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure businesses have access to the information they need to manage their workforces effectively during the Covid-19 pandemic. • Strengthen the talent pipeline for strategic growth sectors and key skills shortage occupations. • Workforce development support for SMEs, start-ups and the self-employed
3. An Inclusive Workforce. Cross-cutting themes to support the entire population	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure residents have access to the information they need to gain access to opportunities to improve their knowledge and skills for both work and life. • Mobilize potential of current population. • Attract and retain talent. • Promote skills for green growth.
4. An Informed Approach. Maintaining up to date information on skills needs through research and employer networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximize the impact of national skills policy on the local economy. • High quality LMI and research. • Maintain sector sub groups to inform policy, strategy and actions plans and share good practice. • Update Skills Strategy.
5. A Digitally Able Population. Ensuring access to digital programmes for the whole population for work and life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure residents are able to develop their digital literacy so they can access the services they need to meet their basic health and well-being needs. • Ensure residents have access to education and training programmes enabling them to develop their digital skills and take up emerging digital careers. • Champion the adoption of new technology and development of employee skills amongst SMEs as a lever of growth.

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Investment in skills to support Buckinghamshire's strategic growth sectors

A key priority for the Buckinghamshire SAP is to further strengthen and sustain talent pipelines for the county's growth sectors (as set out in the Buckinghamshire Local Industrial Strategy). This includes ensuring high quality learning provision is embedded within key employment locations. Some ambitions for significant investment are listed below.

Creative Industries

- The potential creation (subject to planning permission) of an education and skills hub at Pinewood Studios, as part of its Screen Hub UK proposition. This would include school outreach, film production / craft / crew training, adult education, re-skilling, and community outreach.
- Potential expansion of the National Film and Television School at Beaconsfield.

Space

- Creation of an [Apprentice School](#) at the Westcott Space Innovation Park. The plan is to create a high-tech teaching facility and learning space to ensure the next generation of space innovators are educated and embedded within the industrial landscape. The school will focus on developing skills in engineering, design, marketing, and management.
- Potential for facilities to enable greater cutting-edge industry / academia collaboration.

Life Science, Health and Social Care

- Creation of a Digital Health Innovation Centre at Buckinghamshire New University.

High Performance Engineering

- Greater industry / academia collaborative innovation activity at Silverstone Enterprise Zone (linked to green technologies such as electric vehicles and clean fuel) to grow the pool of individuals with cutting edge prototyping and advanced technology skills.
- Embedding skills facilities within plans for growth in the south of the county.

Construction

- Potential new facilities to increase the supply of construction talent into the Buckinghamshire economy. With a particular focus on the current need for plant operatives, ground workers and scaffolders, along with rising demand for energy efficiency retrofitting, off-site/modern methods of construction and digital skills.

Actions required to support these ambitions are set out in the Buckinghamshire Skills Action Plan ([Chapter 5](#))

Chapter 5. Buckinghamshire Skills Action Plan

This chapter sets out the Buckinghamshire Skills Action Plan, as agreed by the SAP. Each action seeks to address one of the five skills priorities set out in [Chapter 4](#). Organisations cited within the Action Plan are listed below, along with the current stage of activity and timescales involved. The SAP will monitor progress towards the action plan on a regular basis.

Organisations cited within Skills Action Plan

Organisation	Abbreviation
Buckinghamshire Business First	BBF
Buckinghamshire Council	BC
Buckinghamshire College Group	BCG
Buckinghamshire Local Enterprise Partnership	BLEP
Buckinghamshire New University	BNU
Buckinghamshire Skills Hub	BSH
Construction Industry Training Board	CITB
Department for Work and Pensions	DWP
Enterprise M3 Local Enterprise Partnership	EM3 LEP
Health Education England	HEE
Bucks Health and Social Care Academy	HSCA
National Careers Service	NCS
University of Buckingham	UoB
Community and Voluntary Sector	VSO
Westcott Space Co-ordination Board	WSCB

Current stage of activity

Stage of activity	
Stage 1	Preparation
Stage 2	Start
Stage 3	Early
Stage 4	Advanced
Stage 5	Completed

Timescales

Timescales	
Short term	Up to 6 months
Medium term	6 months to 1 year
Long term	1 year or more

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1.The future workforce

Priority	Action	Partners	Stage	Timescale
1. Recovery support to help individuals navigate the impact of Covid-19 on the job market	1.1 Establish a Redundancy Taskforce - bringing resources and support available for individuals in the County into a single portal.	BBF, all SAP partners	3	Short term
	1.2 Aviation to Screen Redeployment scheme - support and promote the Skills to Screen: Aviation scheme to help workers displaced from the aviation sector take-up roles in TV and film production.	ScreenSkills, BLEP, EM3 LEP, Pinewood Studios	4	Ongoing
	1.3 Hospitality to Care Redeployment scheme – working in partnership with People 1 st International, explore the feasibility of establishing a scheme to enable people displaced from the hospitality, leisure, retail and aviation sectors find new careers in the health and social care sectors.	BSH, People 1st, HEE, HSCA	1	Med term
	1.4 Manufacturing to Construction Redeployment scheme – working in partnership with CITB, explore the feasibility of establishing a scheme to enable people displaced from the manufacturing sector to find new careers in the construction sector.	BSH, CITB, Construction Sector Group	1	Med term
2. Ensure those seeking jobs and careers have access to comprehensive, high quality information about the	2.1 Develop a new Buckinghamshire Skills Hub website – aimed at young people and career seekers providing up-to-the-minute information about the jobs and careers in Buckinghamshire.	BBF, BSH	4	Ongoing
	2.2 Expand and consolidate the Enterprise Adviser network – to complete coverage across Bucks secondary schools, maintain levels of support for these schools and continue to strengthen relationships. Currently, Bucks has 80 Enterprise Adviser volunteers from businesses supporting 46 schools. The target is to have two Enterprise Advisers per school.	BSH	4	Ongoing. National CEC campaign in Jan 2021

Priority	Action	Partners	Stage	Timescale
opportunities available in Buckinghamshire	2.3 Organize and Host the Bucks Skills Show 2021 – BSH has established the county’s largest interactive and experiential skills festival which helps young people explore careers and work out how to get there. The 2020 event took place virtually in November, with a focus on careers in the curriculum, and saw over 5,000 people attend online. In 2021 the aim is to go back to a face-to-face skills festival, but also retain the virtual careers in the curriculum model, which provided a workplace reality into the classroom.	BSH, employers	1	Ongoing
	2.4 Expand the Careers Hub – in line with the Government’s Careers Strategy, to ensure the Gatsby Benchmarks are delivered in each school and college within the Careers Hub and that careers outcomes are improved for all young people. The Buckinghamshire Careers Hub covers all mainstream secondary schools in the county, plus the Bucks College Group and UTC.	BSH	4	Ongoing
	2.5 Create a Special Educational Needs and Disability community of practice to bring together educators to share good practice and resources.	BSH	4	Ongoing
	2.6 Continuous Professional Development of Careers Leaders in school – to ensure all are trained in their role and local CPD sessions run are relevant to the local need	BSH	4	Ongoing
	2.7 Explore ways to upskill school staff to become Careers Advisers - including through the use of apprenticeship funding	BSH	1	Long term
3. Improve the work-readiness of students leaving education	3.1 Devise a Work-Readiness “Bridging Programme” – to address the concerns of business that school-leavers in Bucks, especially those from non-selective schools, and some graduates, are not work-ready. Work with education and private training providers, review current programmes and explore the need for a standardized offering for Buckinghamshire. Build on work already underway by Bucks College Group and Buckinghamshire’s universities. Ensure there is good provision for SEND job seekers.	BSH, BBF	1	Med term
4. Increase local take up of pathways	4.1 Workforce skills advice and support for employers – The Buckinghamshire Growth Hub to actively support and advise businesses on all workforce needs including training plans, apprenticeship opportunities etc.	BBF	3	Ongoing

Priority	Action	Partners	Stage	Timescale
leading to in demand occupations.	4.2 Facilitate flexibility in apprenticeship funding – through identifying opportunities for apprenticeship levy transfer and seeking out opportunities for collaboration between businesses.	All SAP partners	3	Ongoing
	4.3 Support introduction of T Levels – through a promotional campaign amongst businesses in Bucks, persuade employers to offer work placements to T Levels students.	BBF, All SAP partners	1	Short term
	4.4 Encourage and support work placements, Traineeships and internships – alongside the campaign to support the introduction of T Levels. Focus on explaining the various initiatives and promoting the benefits.	All SAP Partners	1	Short term
	4.5 Support programmes for career changers, returners and encore careers – to help facilitate career longevity and encourage the economically inactive to take advantage of opportunities in Bucks.	All SAP partners	1	Med term
	4.6 Promote subjects which lead to careers in priority sectors – Science, Engineering, Digital, Creative. Explore the feasibility of delivering an online STEAM festival in summer 2021 to promote STEAM pathways and careers.	All SAP partners	2	Med term

2. A skilled and productive workforce

Priority	Action	Partners	Stage	Timescale
1. Ensure businesses have access to the information they need to manage their workforces effectively during the Covid-19 pandemic	1.1 Develop a Redundancy Support website – to identify resources and services available in the County to support businesses making redundancies as a result of Covid-19 and provide access to these resources via a single portal that businesses can use as a first port of call. Signposting of services to include: employment initiatives such as Kickstart, HR Support, legal advice and workplace health and well-being.	BBF	3	Ongoing
	1.2 Provide direct business support for businesses affected by impact of Covid-19 – including 1-2-1 support from BBF business advisers to support them through the Covid-19 pandemic and for recovery thereafter.	BBF	4	Ongoing
	1.3 Identify gaps in delivery and seek funding to bridge gaps – where there are significant areas in which existing provision is not meeting an important need, seek funding from government and relevant agencies to provide solutions.	All SAP partners	2	Short term
2. Strengthen the talent pipeline for Buckinghamshire's Strategic Growth Sectors and key skills shortage occupations	2.1 Support plans to create high-tech teaching and learning facilities at the Westcott Space Innovation Park to educate the next generation of space innovators	BLEP, BSH, WSCB, providers partners	1	Long term
	2.2 Support innovation at the Silverstone Enterprise Zone through improved links with universities on green technologies such as electric vehicles and clean fuels.	BLEP, BSH	3	Ongoing
	2.3 Support initiatives designed to widen and strength the talent pipeline for the creative sector such as the expansion of the National Film and Television School at Beaconsfield and skills activities at Pinewood Studios	BLEP	3	Ongoing
	2.4 Support initiatives to recruit and train people to take up new jobs in the Construction sector , resulting from HS2 activity and the expansion of house building across the County e.g. through the proposed EKFB plant operation training facility, and raise skills for the future.	BBF, BSH, BLEP, Construction Sector Group /Empl	3	Ongoing
	2.5 Promote careers in Health, Social Care and MedTech – through close working with the Health and Social Care Academy, support skills development and careers initiatives to encourage more people to take up jobs in the sector.	BLEP, HEE/HSCA	3	Ongoing

Priority	Action	Partners	Stage	Timescale
3. Workforce development support for SMEs, start-ups and the self-employed	3.1 Create a series of free Webinars on key training and development topics – including how to employ Apprentices and how to train and develop your team.	BBF	1	Med term
	3.2 Identify programmes to support Leadership and Management – including Peer Networking programmes and new national initiatives	BBF, provider partners	1	Med Term
	3.3 Work closely with BBF Business Advisers to embed business support advice particularly business planning, with that of skills and workforce development plans so that business growth is not hindered by the lack of skilled labour	BBF	3	Ongoing
	3.4 Identify specific solutions for start-ups and the self-employed – seek opportunities and funding to provide training and support for self-employed people.	BSH, provider partners	2	Long term

3. An inclusive workforce

Priority	Action	Partners	Stage	Timescale
1. Ensure residents have access to the information they need to gain access to opportunities and to improve their knowledge and skills for both work and life.	1.1 Ensure the Skills Hub website maintains up to date information on all learning opportunities available in the County from all key providers. BSH should fully resource the continued use, development and promotion of the site as the “go to” resource for careers and training support in Buckinghamshire.	BSH, BBF, provider partners	4	Short term
2. Mobilize potential of current population	2.1 Promote opportunities for economically inactive people to update their skills and re-enter the workforce. Reach out directly to hard-to-access groups through networks such as the Buckinghamshire BAME Group, Community Impact Bucks and via disability networks, as well as through the Buckinghamshire Community Boards.	All SAP Partners	1	Medium term
	2.2 Work with training providers and other partners to develop accessible career change programmes to enable people to change careers or develop encore careers.	BSH, all provider partners	1	Long term
3. Attracting and retaining talent	3.1 Work with Buckinghamshire Council to promote opportunities created by town centre redevelopments and new affordable housing to attract people to live and work in Bucks.	BBF, BC	3	Ongoing
	3.2 Ensure the Skills Hub website has up-to-the-minute information on jobs and careers in Bucks	BSH, BBF	3	Ongoing
4. Promote Skills for Green Growth	4.1 Support the development of training in green construction techniques e.g. installation of photovoltaic solar panels, ground source heat pumps, insulation techniques and carbon neutral homes	Training providers	1	Long term
	4.2 Seek to provide training opportunities for SMEs to demonstrate the practical steps they can take to move towards zero carbon or offset their carbon footprint	BLEP, BBF,	1	Long term

Priority	Action	Partners	Stage	Timescale

4. An informed approach

Priority	Action	Partners	Stage	Timescale
1. Maximizing the impact of national skills policy on the local economy	1.1 Establish a Bucks training provider network – to disseminate good practice, encourage the development of a market for training in Bucks responsive to the needs of Bucks businesses, extend provision, increase resources for skills initiatives, remove duplication in the system and identify gaps in training provision.	BSH	1	Med term
2. High quality LMI and research	2.1 Maintain an up-to-date and comprehensive evidence base on local skills needs to ensure that local skills policy and funding decisions are based on the needs of the local economy.	BLEP/BBF	4	Ongoing
	2.2 Produce local Labour Market Intelligence for young people, job seekers and career changers, to nudge individuals to consider careers in jobs where local demand is highest. This includes embedding up-to-date LMI within the Buckinghamshire Skills Hub website and producing content for the annual Buckinghamshire Skills Show.	BSH/BBF/BLEP	3	Short term
3. Maintain Sector Employer groups to inform policy, strategy and actions plans and share good practice	3.1 Extend the Construction Sector Group – to cover Tier 2 and 3 employers, SMR and micro businesses and ensure skills needs of all are met. Work with CITB to explore the establishment of the group as CITB training group. Showcase great examples of employer-led skills development.	BSH	3	Med term
	3.2 Maintain the Creative and Cultural Sector Group – continue the work of the existing group promoting careers and skills in the sector and showcasing great examples of employer-led skills development.	BLEP, BBF	3	Ongoing
	3.3 Explore the need for a Digital Skills Partnership and/or work to ensure that the range of local digital training provision (including apprenticeships and T Levels) in Buckinghamshire is meeting the needs of local employers.	BSH/BBF	1	Med term
	3.4 Maintain a Space Sector Group – for the Wescott Space Cluster to oversee, facilitate and deliver an action plan for training and skills development.	BLEP, WSCB	3	Long term

	3.5 Maintain a Health and Social Care Sector Group –continue to support the work of the Health and Social Care Academy board in promoting careers and skills in the sector and identifying skills needs and seeking solutions.	BLEP, BBF, HEE/HSCA	3	Ongoing
4. Update Skills Strategy	4.1 Update the Buckinghamshire Skills Strategy – to incorporate latest strategic developments.	BLEP	1	Long term

5. A digitally able population

Priority	Action	Partners	Stage	Timescale
1. Ensure Buckinghamshire residents are able to develop their digital literacy so they can access the services they need to meet their basic health and well-being needs.	1.1 Support the roll-out of the Buckinghamshire Digital Strategy to enable people to gain access to IT facilities and high-speed access to the internet e.g. through the development of community facilities such as libraries and digital cafes.	BLEP, BBF	1	Long term
	1.2 Continue to signpost to digital skills providers such as Digital Boost, Google Digital Garage and Microsoft to provide online training courses in key digital skills.	BBF	1	Ongoing
	1.3 Ensure where possible access to digital provision for SEND learners that meets the latest requirements for people with special educational needs, disability and age-related issues	BSH, all provider partners	1	Long term
2. Ensure Buckinghamshire residents have access to education and training programmes enabling them to develop their digital skills in order to take up emerging digital careers	2.1. Inspire Bucks residents to develop advanced and specialist digital skills through highlighting local assets such as the University of Buckingham School of Computing and Centre for Artificial Intelligence, the Institute of Technology at Bletchley Park and the proposed MK:U in Milton Keynes.	BSH	3	Ongoing
	2.2 Work closely with all FE, HE and private training providers to ensure programmes in the County meet the requirements for existing and future digital careers. This includes exploring opportunities emerging from the Skills for Jobs White Paper for a local digital bootcamps and Institutes of Technology.	BSH	1	Medium term
	2.3 Champion the setting up of career change programmes which enable people to develop new careers in the wide range of businesses requiring high level digital skills	BBF, BSH	1	Long term
3. Champion the adoption of new technology and development of employee skills amongst small and medium-sized businesses as a lever of growth	3.1 Explore the creation of the Digital Skills Partnership or Digital Skills Employer Group in order to involve employers in shaping local digital skills provision and raise awareness amongst residents and local businesses of the importance of keeping up with new technologies.	BBF	1	Long term
	3.2 Establish networking, peer groups, events and webinars to raise awareness amongst SME businesses in Bucks of the opportunities provided by new technology	BBF	4	Medium term
	3.3 Encourage the region's business leaders to become Digital Leaders who can confidently champion the value and investment in workplace digital skills development.	BBF	1	Long term

Chapter 6. Assessment of progress

The journey so far

Buckinghamshire’s SAP was established in 2019. It took up the mantle from the Buckinghamshire Skills and Employability Board, which had been running in Buckinghamshire since 2015. Funding provided by the Department for Education (DfE) to establish SAPs enabled more granular local skills analysis to be conducted than had previously been possible. This enabled the SAP to build upon the foundations and relationships that had been developed in the preceding years with a greater clarity regarding where activity should focus.

In early March 2020, following extensive research and consultation, the Buckinghamshire SAP was poised to publish a plan for delivering initiatives to address key skills priorities. However, as the scale of the impact of Covid-19 quickly became apparent, publication was paused.

Over the subsequent months, research was undertaken to ascertain how Covid-19 had impacted the labour market and the provision of learning (see [Annex A](#) and [Annex B](#)). The Buckinghamshire Skills Action Plan (set out in [Chapter 5](#)) reflects the seismic shift in short-term needs.

The research was also used to inform the development of the [Buckinghamshire Economic Recovery Plan](#) (Buckinghamshire LEP, 2020) and has informed local redundancy support activity, including career changer provision developed by Buckinghamshire College Group and Buckinghamshire Adult Learning.

Figure 5: Where we’ve been and where we’re going – a summary



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Key achievements

The Buckinghamshire SAP, and wider economic development activity across Buckinghamshire, benefits from strong cross-organisation working between Buckinghamshire LEP, Buckinghamshire Business First (the Growth Hub) and Buckinghamshire Council.

The immense impact the Covid-19 pandemic has had on the local economy, workforce and learners has focused the minds of all involved with the skills agenda in the county. It has led to closer collaboration and a greater impetus to work together for a common good.

The main SAP and sub-group meetings, which have been held virtually since March 2020, have been extremely well attended and have led to a great deal of joint working.

Some of the key achievements of the SAP and its sector groups since 2019 have been to:

- Undertake extensive research to develop a solid understanding of the Buckinghamshire labour market, how it has been impacted by Covid-19, and the current and future skill needs of the local economy.
- Promote and support the Buckinghamshire Skills Show (see [Chapter 7](#)) to raise awareness amongst young people of the career opportunities within the local economy.
- Produce LMI resources for schools (including presentations, booklets and a video)
- Establish the Buckinghamshire Redundancy Taskforce.
- Support the development of a new [Buckinghamshire Skills Hub](#) website, providing support for job seekers and career changers of all ages.
- Increase opportunities for employers and learning providers to meet regularly to discuss skills issues and initiatives, and to share best practice.

In addition to the above, Buckinghamshire LEP and Buckinghamshire Business First have:

- Invested funding to support skills initiatives within the creative, high performance engineering, construction, digital and health and social care sectors (see [figure 4](#)).
- Expanded the Buckinghamshire Careers Hub to cover all mainstream secondary schools in the county, plus the Buckinghamshire College Group and Buckinghamshire UTC.
- Expanded and consolidated the [Buckinghamshire Enterprise Adviser](#) network. Buckinghamshire now has 80 Enterprise Adviser volunteers from businesses supporting 46 schools.
- Supported the Skills to Screen: Aviation programme. The DWP funded programme run by ScreenSkills, in partnership with Pinewood Studios and Buckinghamshire and Enterprise M3 LEPS, was developed to help workers displaced from the aviation sector and its supply chain apply for potential new roles in the film, television and games sector. 350 people participated in the pilot scheme with over 100 completing the programme.
- Undertaken an apprenticeship levy transfer pilot (see [Chapter 7](#)).

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- Supported the establishment of the Buckinghamshire Health and Social Care Academy.
- Provided increased support to businesses on training and skills issues through the employment of a dedicated Workforce Skills Manager, working alongside Buckinghamshire Business First Business Advisors.

The Buckinghamshire Redundancy Taskforce

Since the advent of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Buckinghamshire Skills Hub has focused efforts on redundancy support. In May 2020, a Redundancy Taskforce was established to co-ordinate the efforts of all the agencies, voluntary organizations and providers seeking to support:

- Individuals who may be facing redundancy.
- Businesses who may have to make redundancies.

Sub-groups were formed to identify resources available and bring them together in a single portal. The sub-groups also considered gaps in provision and immediate actions that needed to be taken. The sub-groups covered:

- Personal Support for Individuals – CV writing, interview preparation and personal support
- Young People – support for Apprentices and school leavers
- Support for Employers – HR Support, Legal advice
- Training and Re-skilling – career change and work taster programmes
- Construction – a key employment growth sector with many new jobs being created
- Health and Social Care – a key employment growth sector with significant vacancies.

So far, the Redundancy Taskforce has established close collaborative working between agencies and organisations and has set up a [redundancy support portal](#) for employers which is hosted by Buckinghamshire Business First and can be accessed through the Buckinghamshire Skills Hub website, where further support for individuals can be found.

Building on the success of the Skills to Screen: Aviation programme, the taskforce is exploring sector redeployment initiatives for hospitality to care and for manufacturing to construction. In each case the intention is to support individuals with transferable skills who have been displaced from their own sector to find a new career in a sector which has current vacancies. Each of these initiatives includes skills matching, 1-2-1 support, counselling and job brokerage.

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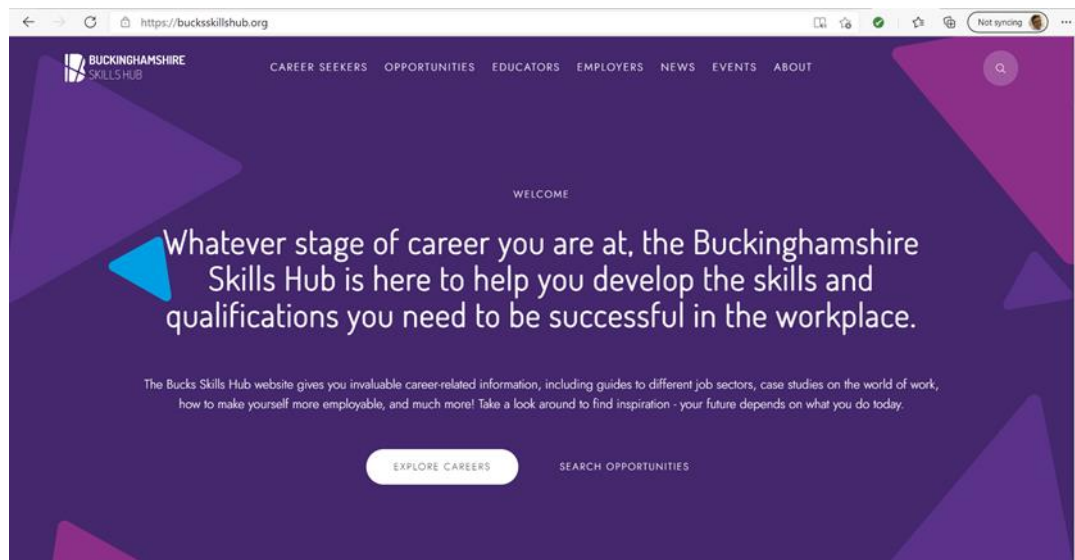
Bucks Skills Hub Website

In March 2021 Bucks Skills Hub introduced a [new website](#), intended to be a “one-stop shop” for all skills and career-related advice in Buckinghamshire. It is designed to inspire, support, and inform students, career seekers, career changers and educators.

Historically Buckinghamshire had various websites intended to do this work representing different organizations and different activities. These included:

- Wannabe Bucks - aimed at students looking for jobs and work placements.
- Opps in Bucks - a communication platform providing information about jobs and careers in Bucks, toolkits for schools and a service matching young people with employers.

These websites worked well for a number of years, but with the introduction of the Bucks Skills Hub, Buckinghamshire now had a number of different brands all working in the same area causing confusion for everyone. Over the last few years due to the success of the Enterprise Adviser network and the Bucks Skills Show it is the Bucks Skills Hub brand that has become synonymous with jobs and careers in Buckinghamshire, so it made sense to combine all the websites into a single portal for everything to do with jobs and careers in the county. The requirement for the new website was heightened by Covid-19 related job losses meaning that more people were seeking careers information.



The website highlights job opportunities in key sectors across Buckinghamshire and shows 1000s of live job vacancies. Career seekers can also find the latest resources and advice on career choices and skills development, as well as redundancy support.

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The Buckinghamshire Health and Social Care Academy

The Buckinghamshire Health and Social Care Academy is a non-profit partnership between Buckinghamshire Council, Buckinghamshire NHS Healthcare Trust, Bucks New University, University of Bedfordshire, Health Education England, Buckinghamshire Local economic Partnership, Buckinghamshire College Group and the University of Buckingham. Its purpose is to optimise the health and social care workforce's education, training and skills development through partnership-working across systems, ensuring the best possible delivery of care to the population of Buckinghamshire. Further information is available on the Academy's website – www.bhsca.co.uk



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Chapter 7. Case studies

This section provides three case studies of local skills activities that have been undertaken within Buckinghamshire since the establishment of the SAP. Additional examples of activity highlighted by SAP members can be found in [Annex C](#).

Case Study 1. Bucks Skills Show Goes Virtual: Raising awareness of career opportunities in the Buckinghamshire economy

The annual Bucks Skills Show is the county's largest interactive and experiential skills event. It helps young people explore career opportunities and understand the pathways available. The decision was made not to cancel the 2020 event in light of Covid-19 restrictions, but to instead take it online. With a focus on 'careers in the curriculum', the aims of the 2020 Skills Show were to:

- Help motivate students after lockdown.
- Show students why school subjects are relevant to real life.
- Inspire students to be positive about their futures.

The event was delivered by the Bucks Skills Hub, in partnership with Pathway CTM who facilitated sessions.

The event was split into two parts. The first part, '**Bringing Lessons to Life**' involved live streaming inspirational speakers from local businesses (including McAfee, Esri, Sodexo, Capgemini, ANT Telecom, Pinewood Studios and Ngage Solutions) into lessons to show how they use curriculum subjects in their every-day-job. Lessons were aimed at Year 9 students, enthusing them about subjects and their potential and relevance to their future careers – without teachers having to give up precious curriculum time.

The second part of the event '**Student/parent webinars and 1:1 careers advice**', offered two live webinars for 16-18 year olds held on two separate evenings. The first focused on 'Where next: employment, education or apprenticeship' and the second on 'Understanding the job market: what's on your doorstep?'.

All lessons and evening events were recorded with content made available post event via [YouTube](#).

Marina Jackson, Under 19 Skills Manager & Careers Hub Lead, Buckinghamshire Skills Hub, said:

"Careers support and guidance will play a critical role now more than ever before and we are delighted to have the support from our amazing employers. Covid-19 has created unprecedented times in the jobs market, and we want to help young people navigate the many paths available to them from higher and further education to training, apprenticeships and employment. Above all, we want to help every individual student understand what's right for them."

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The event was hailed by students, teachers, parents, employers and local MPs as a huge success. In the region of 5,000 people attended online, with more than 20 schools and 35 employers participating in the show.

"Well done all and thank you...such an eye opener" (Student)

"Thank you, great content and very inspiring!" (Student)

"It was a pleasure to take part in the Skills Show Online - a wonderful opportunity for us to talk to students about the fantastic careers available in our industry, and the pathways into employment from where they are now in the classroom. The technical side of presenting online was well-organised and effective. We were well prepared going into the event to make sure our message was something students would remember." (Employer)

'This [the Bucks Skills Show] shows that we should not see education in isolation from the rest of the economy or the rest of the community, because all those elements, by working together, provide so much more opportunity. That is a brilliant example of how people can inspire children to make them understand that what they are learning in the classroom has a real relevance to the world of work, giving them the enthusiasm to look at different careers and different opportunities that they might not have considered before.'

Gavin Williamson, Secretary of State for Education

Many of the benefits of delivering the show digitally (such as producing content that can re-used and be viewed later) will be embedded within the delivery of future shows.

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Case Study 2. Developing new programmes to address skills shortages within Buckinghamshire’s health and social care sector – the Nurse and Social Care Cadet Programme

The Nurse and Social Care Cadet Programme offers young people studying health and social care the opportunity to take their first steps towards working in the sector.

The programme provides placements in a variety of settings allowing students to gain valuable hands-on experience and exposure to different settings and roles whilst working alongside staff in caring for patients in care homes, Adult Social Services and in the Buckinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust hospitals at Stoke Mandeville, High Wycombe and Amersham.

Buckinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust and Buckinghamshire Council are working in partnership with Buckinghamshire College Group (BCG) and the Buckinghamshire Health and Social Care Academy (BHSCA) to deliver on-the-job experience to future health and social care workers and create career pathways for young people. This is innovative and the first joined up health and care cadet scheme in the South East.

In 2018-2019, a pilot Nurse Cadet programme was offered to a few students from BCG’s High Wycombe campus. The Nurse Cadet programme was designed to offer health and social care students, with aspirations towards Nursing or Allied Health Care professions, a chance to experience these roles for real, before going to University to continue their training.

The pilot programme was an outstanding success and for 2019-2020 it was expanded to both health and social care placements.



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Following a comprehensive corporate and clinical induction programme in February, BCGs second year Nurse Cadets cohort were devastated when their programme had to be put on hold just a week before they were due to start on the wards, due to the national lockdown. Since then, Bucks Healthcare NHS Trust and Thames Valley Nurse Cadets have worked tirelessly with the College to ensure that the programme can go ahead, even though the hospitals are still in the unprecedented position of having to deal with a global pandemic. In October 2020, the Cadets underwent stringent PPE training at the HealthTec Centre at Bucks College Group's Aylesbury campus, and with this vital aspect of their preparation in place, were finally able to start their placement on the wards at High Wycombe General and Stoke Mandeville Hospital. The Social Care Cadets were able to commence their placements virtually so had a different but nonetheless valuable experience.

BCG's Placement Officers have received excellent feedback on the Cadets' professionalism and passion for learning. In March 2021 it was announced that the Nurse Cadet Project had been shortlisted as a finalist for the Health Service Journal (HSJ) Value Awards in the [Value Pilot Project of the Year](#) category.

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Case Study 3. Helping SMEs employ apprentices: apprenticeship levy matching pilot

Background

The project emerged from a series of conversations between the Buckinghamshire Skills Hub and local apprenticeship levy-paying organisations regarding the feasibility of ‘pooling’ unspent apprenticeship levy fund and redistributing them to non-levy-paying (smaller) firms in the county.

As a proof of concept, the Buckinghamshire Skills Hub ran a pilot project between 9th January and 31st March 2020 using Buckinghamshire County Council’s unspent levy to test the model with a view to extending the scheme from 1st April onwards.

It was anticipated that a levy transfer scheme would have the following benefits:

- Create additional apprenticeship starts in Buckinghamshire which may not have been possible without a levy transfer subsidy.
- Contribute to the development of Buckinghamshire skills base, supporting objectives described in the Buckinghamshire Local Industrial Strategy.
- Create a practical ‘workaround’ where a levy transfer can enable a training provider (e.g. Buckinghamshire New University) holding a ‘levy’ contract to deliver to a non-levy business.
- Provide community and social responsibility value to levy-paying organisations.

The Pilot

Criteria for the levy transfer were agreed between the Buckinghamshire Skills Hub and Buckinghamshire County Council, these included:

- The need for an apprenticeship to be in a sector or occupation identified through the Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) or Skills Advisory Panel (SAP) analysis as being a local priority.
- The need to provide ‘additionality’. I.e. The new apprenticeship must be dependent on the transfer to proceed, as opposed to one that was already going to happen.

The official launch was delayed and did not take place until late January 2020, and effectively ended in mid-March due to Covid-19 which impacted significantly on the life of the pilot.

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However, in the active phase of the project, a marketing campaign, combined with employer events resulted in good level of response from local businesses. Expressions of interest were received from businesses from a range of sectors including childcare, hospitality, engineering, construction, and accountancy. Five companies were ultimately approved for a transfer of funds.

Outcomes

- One engineering firm in Aylesbury benefitted from £54,000 worth of funded training for two degree apprentices. The transfer also enabled them to access their provider of choice, Buckinghamshire New University, which would not have been possible without the funding from a levy-paying organisation.
- A landscaping firm had approval for two apprentices and subsequently recruited one (as a result of Covid-19).
- Interest was received from other levy-payers who would like to make funds available, which suggested an appetite for an expanded scheme.

Challenges

The pilot did encounter some challenges. These included:

- Complexities of funding rules made it difficult for employers to understand what the 'offer' was. The information events run helped to clarify for those who attended, but some employers did misunderstand what was being offered despite good messaging.
- Covid-19 halting the project prematurely with interest noticeably tailing off across March. It also halted recruitment for three of the organisations that had been approved.
- A number of employers expressing an interest required considerable support to form their apprenticeship proposal. Greater resource would be needed to deliver this service on an expanded scale.
- Buckinghamshire Council could not themselves (through their Adult Learning team) deliver apprenticeship training to any employer receiving a transfer.

Conclusion

The scheme attracted interest, and it would have been more meaningful to have had the full three-month period, which even in itself was probably too short, but it is felt that the potential for a longer-term scheme was visible from the interest generated. To have approved over £100,000 of apprenticeship training in a short period is significant and it would almost certainly have been more had the project been able to be delivered as planned.

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There is value to the county in establishing a scheme but with more partners as 'donors' of levy funding to ensure a wider pool is available. If there is interest in establishing an Apprenticeship Training Agency (ATA), this could be an appealing option from a cost, time and resources perspective.

Contact for further information: John Browning, Buckinghamshire Skills Hub
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Chapter 8. Looking forward

Below are some areas of focus for the Buckinghamshire SAP in 2021/22:

Locally led activity

In 2021/22, the Buckinghamshire SAP will:

- Monitor progress of the delivery of the Buckinghamshire Skills Action Plan
- Steer an update of the Buckinghamshire Skills Strategy
- Promote the new Buckinghamshire Skills Hub website
- Steer the direction of research to fill evidence gaps, such as undertaking sector deep-dives and understanding the long-term implications of Covid-19 on job prospects for young people.
- Advise on new ways of disseminating research findings (such as twice-yearly events with learning providers), to further embed intelligence on the skills needs of the local economy within curriculum development processes.
- Work closely with businesses to support them through and beyond the pandemic with their changing skills, recruitment, and employment needs.

Making national initiatives work for Buckinghamshire

In addition, the Buckinghamshire SAP, along with Buckinghamshire LEP, Buckinghamshire Business First, Buckinghamshire Skills Hub and Buckinghamshire Council, will continue to work to ensure national skills initiatives benefit Buckinghamshire residents and employers. Some areas of focus are discussed below.

Local Skills Improvement Plans

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

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

Employers are already at the heart of Buckinghamshire's SAP, and the structures and organisations that exist locally (including Buckinghamshire Business First), make the county well-placed to create Local Skills Improvement Plans when the time comes.

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Work placements

Over the coming years there will be an increased demand for employers to provide work placement opportunities for young people. A key impetus for this activity being the upcoming roll-out of T Levels within the county, and their requirement for 45-day work placements. Buckinghamshire College Group intends to shift their vocational provision to T-levels.

Members of Buckinghamshire's SAP will therefore support activity to streamline learning provider engagement with local employers, to reduce duplication and provide consistent, comprehensive messaging on skills initiatives, particularly work placements. This is likely to include producing information sheets for employers.

Apprenticeships

During 2021/22, Buckinghamshire Skills Hub and Growth Hub will focus increased effort on supporting businesses to be able to offer apprenticeship places to young people. In an economy with a high proportion of micro businesses, extra support is essential if Buckinghamshire is going to significantly increase the number of places in the County. The employment of a dedicated Workforce Skills Manager will create a vital working relationship between the Buckinghamshire Skills Hub the Growth Hub to provide advice to SME businesses on how to overcome the perceived challenges of employing young people and finding a suitable training provider. The changes to the apprenticeship incentives in the 2021 budget will provide a significant boost to this effort. A series of apprenticeship workshops for employers was launched during National Apprenticeship Week in February 2021 and workshops will continue to run throughout the year.

Buckinghamshire's Skills and Growth Hubs will also focus on encouraging apprenticeship training providers to tailor their offer to the specific needs of Buckinghamshire employers through the provision of good labour market intelligence and networking.

UK Community Renewal Fund

In March 2021, the UK Government announced a [UK Community Renewal Fund](#) to provide £220 million additional funding to help places across the UK prepare for the introduction of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. A key focus of the fund is to provide investment in skills and help people into employment. Projects eligible for investment include work-based training initiatives, retraining / upskilling initiatives, and digital skills initiatives. Whilst Buckinghamshire was not identified as one of the 100 priority areas for funding, the county (via Buckinghamshire Council) is eligible to bid for pilot funding.

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And finally, some asks..

To help Buckinghamshire achieve its skills ambition, Buckinghamshire SAP has the following asks of local employers, learning providers and other stakeholders. These are:

- To support the roll out of the new [Buckinghamshire Skills Hub website](#) to ensure it has a high profile and is used to maximum effect by individuals and organisations alike to match local talent to local employers.
- To highlight any known skill shortages not highlighted within this report and supporting materials to the SAP research team (Caroline Perkins, Buckinghamshire LEP, caroline.perkins@buckslep.co.uk)
- To share examples of good practice in relation to work inspiration, training and development that others could learn from within the county and beyond.
- To provide work inspiration, work placements, apprenticeship, internship, traineeship and / or kickstart opportunities.
- To consider diversifying recruitment and re-designing jobs to address skills gaps and attract local residents.

For more information about the Buckinghamshire Skills Advisory Panel, please contact Heather Dean, Head of Skills and Business Support – heather@bbf.uk.com

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Annexes

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Annex A: Core Indicators

About

This Annex provides data and intelligence on key aspects of Buckinghamshire's labour market and skills landscape. It has been published as a separate document that can be accessed [here](#).

The indicators presented within Annex A have been defined by the Department for Education (DfE), to ensure consistency between the Local Skills Reports being produced by Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) and Mayoral Combined Authorities (MCAs) across England.

Buckinghamshire LEP has drawn on local intelligence to provide commentary around these indicators. This local intelligence has been gathered from: Buckinghamshire LEP board members, Buckinghamshire Skills Advisory Panel members, Buckinghamshire Creative Sector Group members, Buckinghamshire Construction Sector Group members, Buckinghamshire Space Sector Group members, local employers working with the Buckinghamshire Skills Hub on careers initiatives and Buckinghamshire Business First members.

As per the Department for Education guidance for Local Skills Reports, additional data analysis and local intelligence is provided within (or sign-posted from) Annex B.

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Annex B: Additional Data

About

This Annex provides additional tables and charts. It has been published as a separate document that can be accessed [here](#). Links to accompanying documents are provided below.

- [Impact of Covid-19 on the Buckinghamshire Economy](#)
- [Buckinghamshire Economic Recovery Plan Evidence Base](#)
- [Claimant Count Report](#)
- [Job Postings Report](#)

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Annex C: Buckinghamshire education and employer collaboration - examples

About

This Annex provides some examples of recent employer and learning provider collaboration activity that has been undertaken to help meet local skills needs.

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HS2 Construction Skills

In summer 2020, Eiffage, Kier, Ferrovial and BAM Nuttall, working together as the EKFB JV on the HS2 high-speed rail project offered free construction plant training courses to local people in Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire, Northamptonshire and Warwickshire.

The four firms are building the 80km section of the railway between the Chilterns and Warwickshire, and are co-ordinating up to 200 free places on the training programme, thanks to funding awarded by [the Construction Industry Training Board](#)'s Construction Skills Fund.

The accredited plant operator training programme, which takes a week to complete, is being delivered in partnership with local training providers, [Apple Construction](#) and [Buckinghamshire College Group](#).

Weekly training courses were offered up until March 2021. The free training course was accredited by the Construction Plant Competence Scheme (CPCS).

Health Care Assistant pathway programme

In response to local intelligence identifying a high and increasing demand for health care professionals, Buckinghamshire College Group and Buckinghamshire Healthcare Trust collaborated to develop a new Healthcare Assistant Pathway to fast track individuals into the NHS.

Starting in February 2021, this full-time intensive course blends classroom learning with on-ward experience and employability skills within one of Buckinghamshire Healthcare Trust's hospitals, and will see students working alongside fully qualified NHS professionals delivering real care to real patients.

Learners will gain a BTEC qualification and gain vital employability skills delivered within the HealthTec centre in Buckinghamshire College Group's Aylesbury Campus.

Further information, including registration details, can be found on the Buckinghamshire College Group [website](#).

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Buckinghamshire College Group's Apprenticeship and T-level offerings

As the sole FE college within Buckinghamshire, Buckinghamshire College Group gathers local intelligence from employers and the Buckinghamshire Skills Advisory Panel to ensure training provision is aligned to meet the needs of the local economy.

This has led to apprenticeship provision focusing on the following sectors:

- Construction
- Health and Social Care
- Childcare and Education
- IT
- Business and Building Services

And, from September 2021, T levels being offered in:

- Digital, Design & Development
- Education & Childcare
- Supporting Healthcare
- Laboratory Science

Monkey Puzzle Day Nurseries

Monkey Puzzle is the UK's largest childcare franchise network, with Buckinghamshire nursery's being located in Aylesbury, Wycombe and Chesham.

Monkey Puzzle have invested in apprenticeships to create career pathways into early years roles, and at management level, to help retain qualified Apprentices.

In 2020 they introduced a room leader programme to support nurseries carryout succession planning into their management tiers. Their level 4 & 5 management courses enable team members to gain transferable skills and embed leadership within their nursery settings.

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Adapting academic timetables to meet the needs of individuals and local employers

In the 2020/21 academic year, Buckinghamshire New University (BNU) made a number of time tabling changes to meet the needs of individuals and employers impacted by Covid-19.

Examples included:

- Increasing the number of January and February starts for degree and apprenticeship programmes e.g. Nursing Associate Apprentices.
- Introducing [accelerated degrees](#) in Business, Law & Computing in response to individuals delaying studying decisions in light of Covid-19. These enable some students to start their first year in January 2021 and be ready to start their second year in September 2021.
- Introducing accelerated Foundation Year programmes (starting in January 2021) enabling catch-up to Year 1 entry to a degree programme in September 2021.
- Offering a Post Graduate Certificate in Business Leadership (free for graduating BNU students).

Police Apprenticeships

Buckinghamshire New University have worked in partnership with Thames Valley Police to provide the Police Constable Degree Apprenticeship (PCDA) so that driven and talented individuals can apply to be Thames Valley Police Apprentice Constables and gain a degree whilst working and earning.

Further information can be found on the Bucks New University [website](#).

Helping job seekers into warehouse roles

Locally, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) have worked with a large employer who required skilled staff for their logistics warehouse. After discussion with the employer to identify their needs, DWP established there was no appropriate local training provision and therefore worked with other providers to negotiate a package that matched the employers requirements, specifically around pace of delivery. This ultimately led to benefit claimants gaining the required skills and accessing employment.

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Annex D: Members of the Buckinghamshire Skills Advisory Panel (March 2021)

Member	Role and organisation	Type of member
Prof Gavin Brooks (Chair)	Provost and Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Buckinghamshire New University	Education
Dave Oxley	Software Security Architect, McAfee	Employer (Digital Group Chair)
Mark Wood	COO and Engineering Director, Reaction Engines (representing the Westcott Space Co-ordination Board)	Employer (Space lead)
Maria Butler	SiteReady Ltd	Training Provider (Construction Group Chair)
Ailie Smith	CEO, Creative Media Skills	Training Provider (Creative Group Chair)
Martina Porter	Director, All Spring Media	Bucks LEP board member
Juliette Anderson	Implementation Director, Buckinghamshire Health and Social Care Academy	Skills partnership (Health lead)
Ian Barham	Partnership Director, Buckinghamshire LEP	Buckinghamshire LEP
Heather Dean	Head of Skills and Business Support, Buckinghamshire Business First	Buckinghamshire Business First
Bev Kelly	Head of Advancement Services, University of Buckingham	Education
Ian Harper	Director of Apprenticeships, Buckinghamshire New University	Education
Karen Mitchell	Principal and Chief Executive, Buckinghamshire College Group	Education
Jo Meloni	Headteacher, The Misbourne School	Education
Lucy Bowman	Senior Partnership Manager, DWP - Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire District	Government Department
Nadine Edwards	Partnership Manager (Buckinghamshire), DWP	Government Department
Kevin Hctor	Area Lead, Cities and Local Growth, BEIS	Government Department
Dena Read	Intermediaries Manager, DfE	Government Department
Cllr Anita Crammer	Cabinet Member for Education, Buckinghamshire Council	Local Authority
Shabnam Ali	Head of Local Economic Growth, Buckinghamshire Council	Local Authority
Katie Higginson	Chief Executive, Community Impact Bucks	Community
Kerry Senatore	Regional Lead, Careers and Enterprise Company	Government Agency
Sally White	Director, Sylo Beyond HR	HR Agency
Sue Cross	Regional Manager, Adviza	National Careers Service Provider

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