

Outputs from the Hampshire Skills Partnership Working Group workshop

Compiled by Jamie Mackay, Strategic Skills Lead
May 2025

Executive summary

On Wednesday 7 May, 23 representatives from different stakeholders across the local skills system, took part in this workshop at the University of Southampton, as part of the work of the Hampshire Skills Partnership. Led by Jamie Mackay, Strategic Skills Lead at Hampshire County Council, the workshop had two aims:

1. Identify and recommend a number of skills priorities and key sectors for the Hampshire Skills Partnership to consider for inclusion in the Skills Strategy.
2. Outline a proposal for a wider stakeholder engagement event. (This event will focus on the Non/Learner Voice).

The workshop was designed to create a collaborative environment, where attendees could share ideas, provide feedback and make collective, objective decisions. Across four activities, the group worked towards addressing the two aims, above, either as a collective group or in four smaller groups.

Following these activities, the group collectively put forward the following recommendations, in line with the two aims:

Recommendation 1: Rather than identify a number of key sectors, the Skills Strategy should look to focus on broader skills needs; in particular those that are transferable across occupations and sectors.

Recommendation 2: To consider as many of the identified groups identified by the Working Group, as possible in developing a skills strategy that supports an inclusive skills system.

Recommendation 3: To focus on the following six skills priorities, but note these have been adapted from an original long list and are not ranked nor have any further detail at this time:

1. *Curriculum development and planning (including Apprenticeships and Technical Education)*
2. *Barriers to Learning*
3. *Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG) + Employment support + Navigating the skills system (education of employers and individuals)*
4. *Cross-cutting skills (e.g. Digital, Employability, Green)*
5. *Education-Business brokerage / partnership*
6. *Upskilling*

Recommendation 4: Rather than focus on an event at this time, instead look to do some research to capture the non/learner voice. This research could easily feed into a future event.

Background

With reference to [Working Group Outline](#), presented to and agreed by the Hampshire Skills Partnership in March 2025, this was the first meeting of a working group, established to support the work of and report to the Hampshire Skills Partnership.

Aims and objectives of the workshop

The following two aims were shared with the Group:

1. Identify and recommend a number of skills priorities and key sectors for the Hampshire Skills Partnership to consider for inclusion in the Skills Strategy.
2. Outline a proposal for a wider stakeholder engagement event. (This event will focus on the Non/Learner Voice).

During the activities, the following objectives were also shared with the Group:

1. Bring and share knowledge, experiences and perspectives of the skills system (supply and demand) across the area, and use these to inform discussions on skills priorities and key sectors.
2. Consider wide-ranging perspectives and insights on different sectors and use these to help narrow down which ones we feel should be a priority for the area. Where more work is needed, identify what this is.
3. Agree which groups of individuals should be considered, when exploring different skills priorities.
4. Consider wide-ranging perspectives and insights on different skills priorities and use these to help narrow down which ones we feel should be a priority for the area. Where more work is needed, identify what this is.
5. Outline an event proposal (Why? Who? Where? When? What?) that looks at engaging with the non/learner voice and discovering more about the interplay between work, health and skills challenges.

Attendees

23 representatives from business, education and training providers, voluntary sector and public sector took part in this workshop. The attendees, shown below, were split into four groups for the workshop; trying to divide sector representation evenly across each.

First name	Surname	Job title	Organisation
Anita	Esser	Head of Education	University Hospital Southampton NHS Foundation Trust
Carla	Modley	Trade & Investment Manager	Solent Freeport

Charlie	Woodsford	Assistant Principal - Partnerships and Skills	Brockenhurst College
Cheryl	Edwards	CEO	Inclusion Education
Chloe	Braddock	SWAP Adviser	DWP
Chris	Gingell	Senior Partnership Manager	CITB
Claire	Froggatt	Skills Commissioning Manager	Hampshire County Council
Ella	Clapham	Project Officer	Isle of Wight Council
Geeta	Uppal	Senior Access and Widening Participation Officer	Southampton Solent University
Hannah	Haynes	Economic Development Officer	Havant Borough Council
Jo	Landon	Director of Adults Online & Commercial	South Hampshire Colleges Group
Karen	Northover	Head of Service (Hampshire Achieves)	Hampshire County Council
Kelly	Wales	Families Education and Skills Liaison	Forces Employment Charity
Mark	Hammond	CEO	Basingstoke ITEC
Matt	Webster	Pro Vice Chancellor	University of Winchester
Megan	Low	Careers Hub Strategic Lead	Hampshire County Council
Mike	Punt	Head of Employer Engagement and Knowledge Exchange	University of Southampton
Rachael	Randall	CEO	HTP College
Rachel	Sale	LSIP Development Manager	Hampshire Chamber of Commerce
Sheldon	McMullan	CEO	Yateley Industries
Steph	Parker	Employment and Skills Strategy Manager	Portsmouth City Council
Suzanne	Grant	Chief Operating Officer	Sparsholt College Group
Teresa	Hogsbjerg	Strategic Economy Lead	Hampshire County Council

Activity 1: Challenging assumptions

Aim: To challenge assumptions that people routinely make to improve creative thinking skills, problem solving and innovation skills.

This activity was designed to help set the scene and expectations and there were no specific outcomes from this activity related to the aims and objectives.

Activity 2: Sector priorities

Aim: Identify and recommend a number of key sectors for the Hampshire Skills Partnership to consider for inclusion in the Skills Strategy.

For this activity, the group was provided with some background and supporting materials were referenced, including the Priority sector mapping exercise (<https://documents.hants.gov.uk/hampshire-prosperity-partnership/HSP->

[PrioritySectorsMappingExercise-March2025.pdf](#)), a list of common LSIP priority sectors (2023-24) <https://d4hfzltwt4wv7.cloudfront.net/uploads/files/AoC-LSIPs-report.pdf> (page 25) and Enterprise M3 (including all of Surrey) LSIP key sector factsheets <https://www.surrey-chambers.co.uk/future-skills-hub/sectors-listing/>.

The Priority sector mapping exercise resource included a long list of 14 sectors. These were divided amongst the four groups:

Group 1 was assigned:

- Health and social care
- Life sciences
- Tourism (incl. Hospitality, cultural and visitor economy).

Group 2 was assigned:

- Construction
- Land based / rural (incl. Animal health and wellbeing, natural capital and nature-based solutions)
- Low carbon / green skills (incl. Clean / green energy, renewable energy).

Group 3 was assigned:

- Advanced manufacturing and engineering
- Aerospace, space & satellite and defence
- Marine and maritime
- Retail.

Group 4 was assigned:

- Creative
- Digital (incl. AI and IT)
- Professional services (including Financial services)
- Transport and Logistics.

Each group was asked to discuss and capture shared insights into each of their assigned sectors such as skills demands and challenges, connectedness in the local skills system and sector profile / links with talent pipeline. Groups were also asked to try to rank the sectors and then come together to agree a short list of priority sectors for the Hampshire Skills Partnership.

Appendix 1 presents the notes from each of the groups. During the whole group discussion, each group fed back on some of their observations, including some common skills challenges faced across multiple sectors. A motion was put forward that perhaps the Skills Strategy might not need to identify key sectors (these are already identified in the Economic Strategy) and instead focus on more cross-cutting skills (e.g. digital, green, professional) that are needed across multiple occupations and sectors and to help maintain a more sustainable career. This motion was discussed at length and carried.

Recommendation 1: Rather than identify a number of key sectors, the Skills Strategy should look to focus on broader skills needs; in particular those that are transferable across occupations and sectors.

Activity 3: Identifying groups

Aim: Identify groups of individuals to consider for inclusion in the Skills Strategy.

The group were presented with an initial list of groups of individuals that the Skills Strategy might like to consider. The group worked together to consider the list and identify any additional groups that should also be included.

Appendix 2 presents the final list, and some additional comments received after the event from one of the attendees.

Recommendation 2: To consider as many of the identified groups, identified by the Working Group, as possible in developing a skills strategy that supports an inclusive skills system.

Activity 4: Skills priorities

Aim: Identify and recommend a number of key sectors for the Hampshire Skills Partnership to consider for inclusion in the Skills Strategy.

For this activity, the whole group was provided with the three headline priorities taken from the previous skills strategy for Hampshire (2022). The group was also shown a long list of 12 skills priorities, drawn from local, regional and national skills priorities. This list was divided amongst the four groups:

Group 1 was assigned:

- Barriers (to learning and to employment)
- Digitalisation
- Upskilling.

Group 3 was assigned:

- Curriculum development and planning
- Education-Business brokerage / partnership
- Talent pipelines (Attraction, recruitment, retention).

Group 2 was assigned:

- Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG)
- Cross-cutting skills (e.g. Digital, Employability, Green)
- Employment support.

Group 4 was assigned:

- Apprenticeships and Technical Education
- Job creation
- Navigating the skills system (Education of employers and individuals).

Appendix 3 presents the notes from each of the groups. When the whole group came back together, each group fed back on their discussions and observations on

their respective priorities but also the long list. In trying to reduce the long list down, it was identified 1) it was difficult to discount any of the priorities and 2) there were some that had similarities with other priorities and therefore could be combined together to help create a reduced list.

These observations helped the group put forward a suggested short list of six priorities – although it was noted the exact wording and detail underpinning each would require further work:

Recommendation 3: It was recommended by the Group to focus on the following six priorities, but note these have been adapted from the original list and are not ranked nor have any further detail at this time:

1. Curriculum development and planning (including Apprenticeships and Technical Education)
2. Barriers to Learning
3. Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG) + Employment support + Navigating the skills system (education of employers and individuals)
4. Cross-cutting skills (e.g. Digital, Employability, Green)
5. Education-Business brokerage / partnership
6. Upskilling

The following list of implementation considerations was also received by one of the attendees, after the event:

- **Commissioning Across Borders:** Careful coordination is needed to ensure coherence across devolved and non-devolved areas.
- **Employer Engagement:** Ongoing dialogue with employers—especially SMEs—to ensure relevance and responsiveness.
- **Flexible Delivery Models:** Training offers must not be constrained by qualification frameworks alone; they must respond to actual skill gaps.
- **Avoid Duplication:** Design a system that supports shared intelligence and avoids repetitive or fragmented provision.
- **Aligning with DWP:** Strengthen alignment between DWP and providers to create clearer, more efficient pathways to work.

Discussion: External engagement event:

Aim: Outline a proposal for a wider stakeholder engagement event. (This event will focus on the Non/Learner Voice).

Due to limited time, the Group was invited to contribute to an interactive discussion about the idea of an event that would directly engage with the non/learner voice (i.e. they would play an active, participatory role in the event). Invited attendees would then discover more about non/learners' understanding of the skills system, their aspirations for progression pathways and navigating through the labour market.

The Working Group talked through the suggested theme and approach and raised concerns that it would be difficult to bring a group of individuals together to actively participate. Instead, the discussion moved towards existing data on these insights and/or ways to capture relevant data and then perhaps present back at an event. (**Appendix 4** includes feedback captured during and after the Workshop).

Examples of data sets mentioned included: The Big Ask (<https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/about-us/the-big-ask/>),

As part of this research, the Group also suggested engaging with communities and the charities to capture common barriers to learning.

Hence the final recommendation, below, was put forward.

Recommendation 4: Rather than focus on an event at this time, instead look to do some research to capture the non/learner voice. This research could easily feed into a future event.

Appendix 1: Group notes from the Sector Priorities activity

General notes from the discussion

- The 'Career for life' has disappeared
- A move away from (technical) skills specialisation and move towards more generalist, transferable skills
 - Difference between sector specific skills and where they are needed and transferable skills and where they can be utilised: Matching the skills with the opportunities.
- A need to strengthen engagement with employers to help them understand about changes within the skills system and insights into future pools of talent (see also notes in **Appendix 3** about 'Education of employers')
- Similarly, engagement with and messaging to parents and carers about the significance of transferable skills and different pathways into and through the labour market
- Consideration of careers education activity with schools and colleges – supporting more employer involvement in this to move away from (e.g.) CV-writing and instead raise awareness of labour market changes and opportunities
- A cautionary note was shared about the dangers of focusing on occupations and sectors that attract investment and wealth and losing sight of those that provide critical inputs and infrastructure to growth.
 - NOTE: Related to this, '[Invest 2035: the UK's modern industrial strategy](#)' makes the distinction between *growth-driving sectors* and *foundational sectors*.
- Draw from examples:



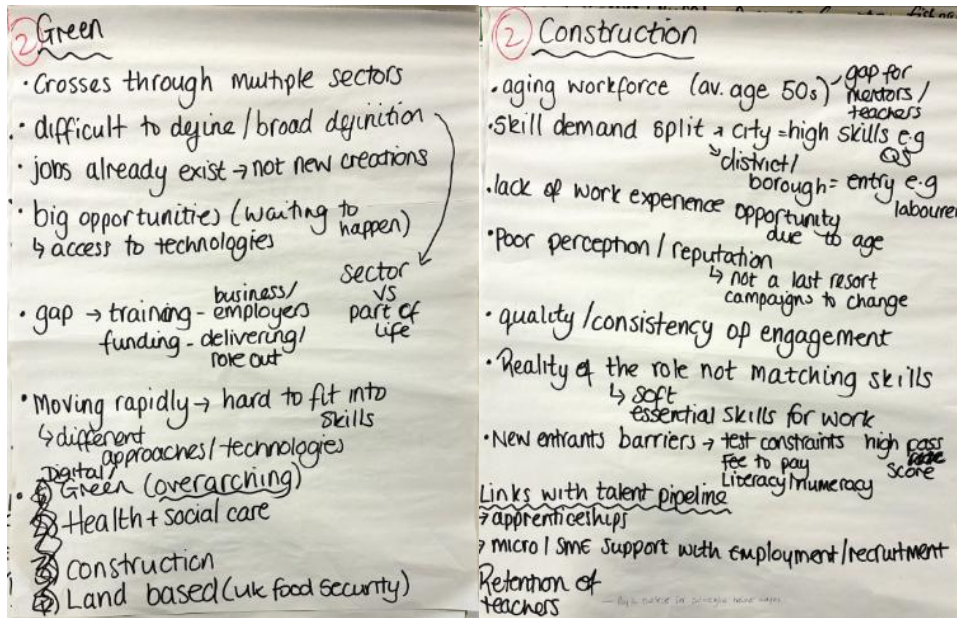
○

Group 1: Health and social care; Life sciences; Tourism (incl. Hospitality, cultural and visitor economy)



- A point was also raised about supporting employers to move away from traditional (now outdated, in some instances) moulds of (e.g.) '5 x GCSEs including English and Maths' which can discriminate and discourage talented individuals who bring desirable skills and aptitudes needed for roles.
- Another point suggested three areas to consider:
 - Core skills
 - Practical application of these skills
 - Evidence of a well-rounded citizen

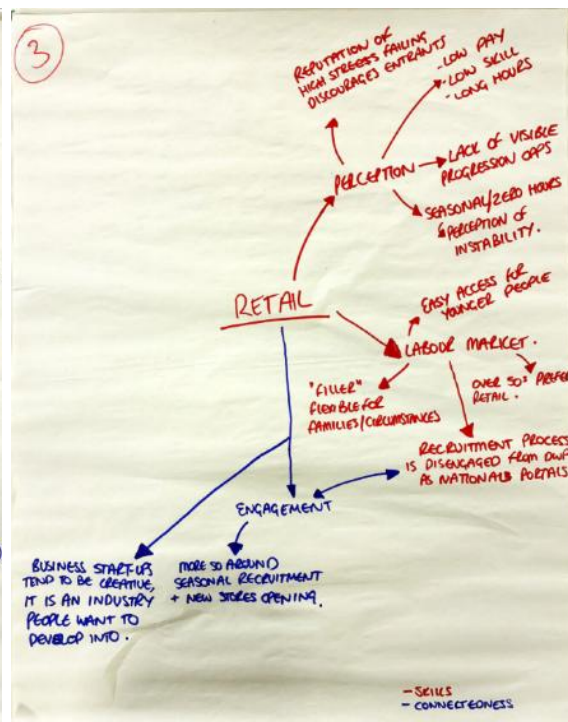
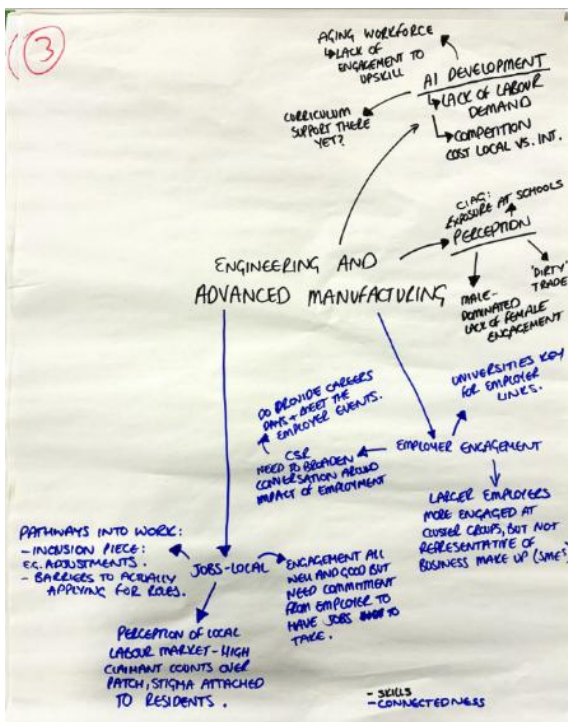
Group 2: Construction; Land based / rural (incl. Animal health and wellbeing, natural capital and nature-based solutions); Low carbon / green skills (incl. Clean / green energy, renewable energy).



② Land Based / Rural farming forestry fishery
 horticulture
 animal care / equine

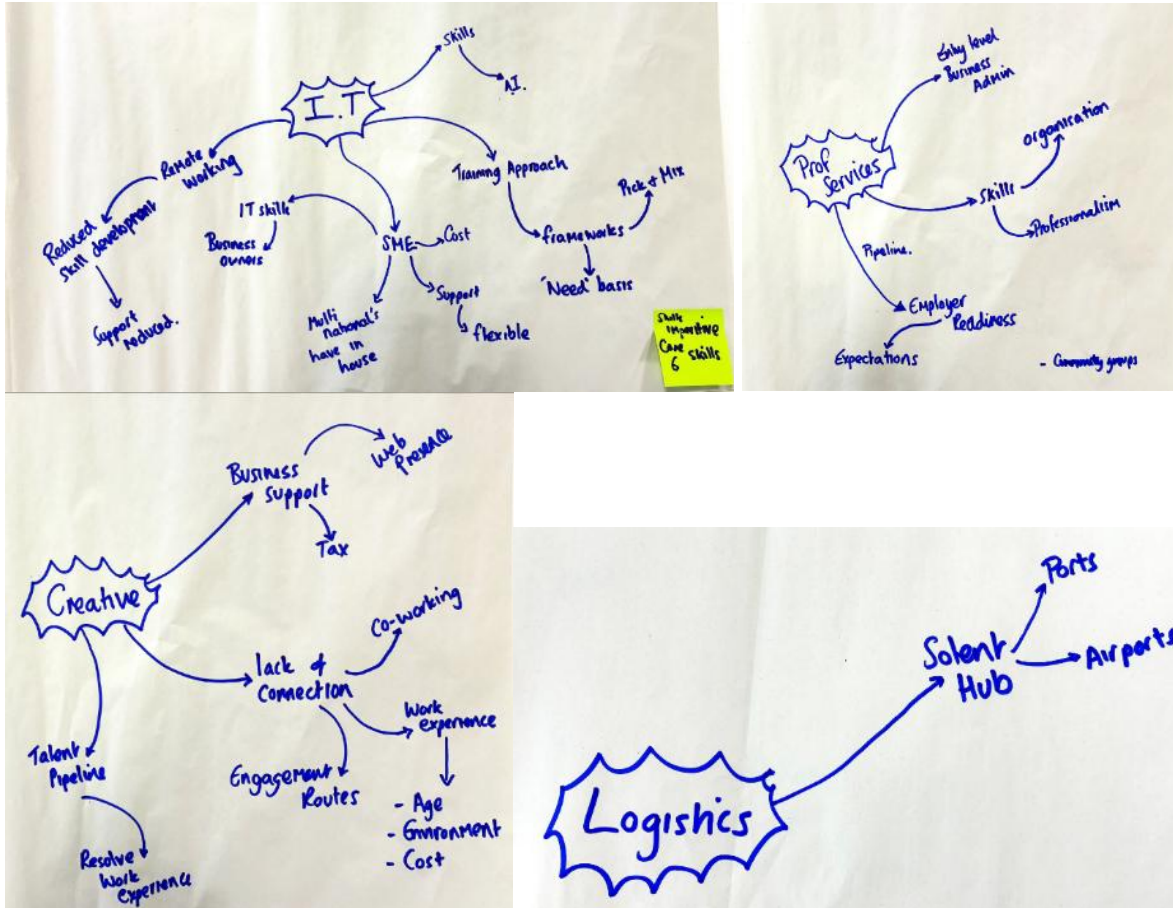
- smaller pool of teachers to recruit from
- Specialist + SME based (approx 97%)
- moving to digital skills → conventional vs Robotic
 ↓
 lack of investment
- new entrants need to influence industry
- perception of old skills
- ↳ needs innovation and moving at a fast pace
- 96% into employment (sparshott)

Group 3: Advanced manufacturing and engineering; Aerospace, space & satellite and defence; Marine and maritime; Retail.



The following note was also received after the event by one of the attendees: “One industry area that wasn’t covered yesterday was the Civil Service. Given the many bases/ports in Hampshire, they would be a big employer and have a very unique hiring process, they also have many pathways for young people.”

Group 4: Creative; Digital (incl. AI and IT); Professional services (including Financial services); Transport and Logistics.



The following notes were received after the event from attendees:

- Another point to raise is vetting and security clearance. Many employers that specialise in high tech, IT, and Cyber take on people who have a level of security clearance, as this makes them more attractive to recruit, because the employer doesn't have to pay for this process, which is costly and lengthy. One way in which people can upskill, change career could be to join the reserves.
- Whilst we spent some time looking at skills that cross many sectors. I have given some thought of my own sector and how Digital/IT and in particular Ai is going to be a massive disrupter across all the sectors.
 - I think it is critical that we put Ai skills and learning at the top of the list. There are lots of relatively easily learnt skills that will support many businesses. Particularly utilising Ai Agents.
 - I have some good employer contacts from across the industry from micro to national employers enabling us to get a deeper sense of requirements.

Appendix 2: List of groups of individuals for consideration by the Skills Strategy

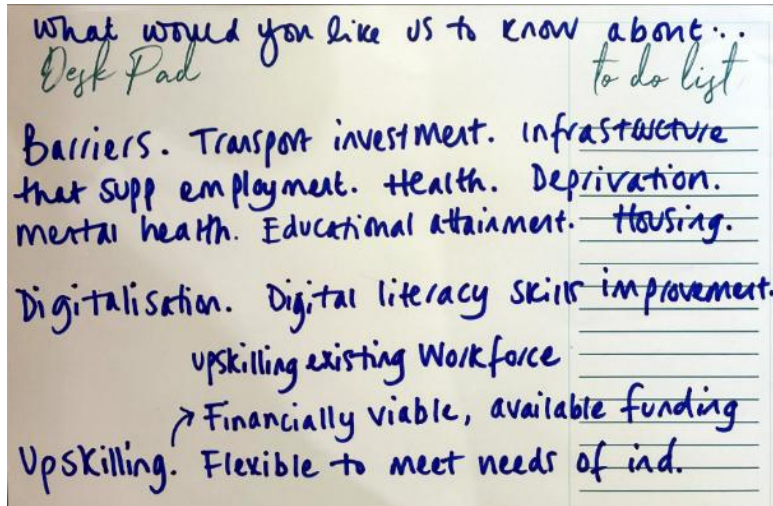
- Age 55+ (ageing workforce / early retired)
- Armed forces: veterans and those serving with partners / spouses and / or children
- Benefit claimants choosing not to return to work due to 'limbo' status (can't afford to work; can't afford not to...)
- Career changers / returners (including those who are returning to work following a long period of ill health or other factors)
- Care leavers
- Those in deprived communities / areas
- Disabled incl. Neurodiverse
- Economically active (but facing challenges in the labour market)
- Economically inactive
- Ethnic minority groups
- Ex/offenders
- Expats
- Graduates Home-educated
- Those Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEETs)
- Remote workers
- School / college avoiders (i.e. those enrolled but not attending)
- School / college leavers
- School / college participants
- Single parents / carers
- Sole traders
- Those in temporary accommodation / homeless
- Transient individuals
- Travelling communities
- Ukrainians & Refugees
- Unemployed
- Young carers

The following, related notes were received from attendees, after the event:

- Young people, particularly those transitioning from education to the workforce.
- Individuals from underrepresented or disadvantaged backgrounds.
- Adults seeking to upskill or reskill, especially in response to technological advancements and changing job markets.
- An emphasis on communities:
 - Consideration of community based access to information
 - go to the need and engage directly

Appendix 3: Group notes from the Skills priorities activity

Group 1: Barriers (to learning and to employment); Digitalisation; Upskilling.



Group 2: Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG); Cross-cutting skills (e.g. Digital, Employability, Green); Employment support.

The following notes were received from attendees, after the event:

- Digital literacy and advanced IT skills, given the increasing reliance on technology across all sectors.
- Soft skills such as communication, teamwork, and problem-solving, which are highly valued by employers.
- Industry-specific technical skills that align with the identified growth sectors
- Balancing aspiration vs reality – will the jobs be there upon qualifying?
- Similarly, an ‘expectation mismatch’ between employers and applicants (and vice versa) that could be frustrating opportunities.

The following data were shared after the workshop: Seven examples of industries in Hampshire where ‘Sales’ and ‘Customer Service’ skills are sought after:

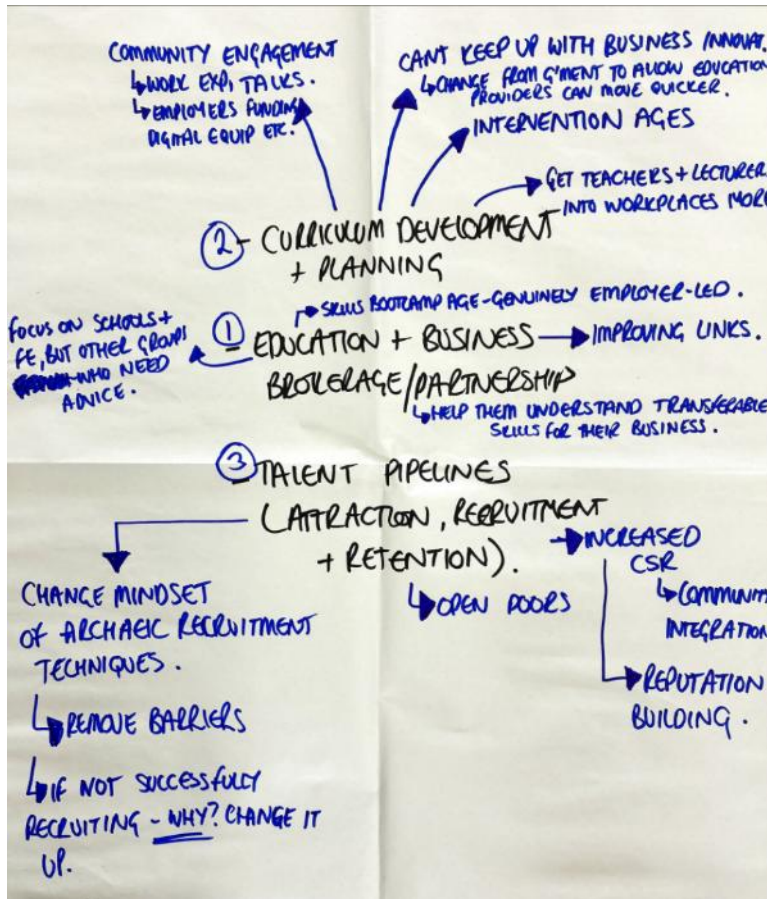
1. **Marine and Maritime Sector** - This sector includes commercial ports, shipyards, marinas, and the cruise industry.
 - a. Sales representatives for marine equipment, customer service agents for cruise lines, and marina managers.
2. **Aerospace and Defence** - Companies like BAE Systems and GE Aviation Systems are part of this high-tech cluster.
 - a. Sales engineers, customer support for defence contracts, and technical sales representatives.
3. **Tourism and Hospitality** - This includes hotels, restaurants, and recreational facilities.

- a. Hotel sales managers, front desk staff, and customer service representatives in tourism offices.
4. **Retail** - From large shopping centres to local boutiques.
 - a. Retail sales associates, customer service representatives, and store managers.
5. **Technology and IT Services**: Includes software development firms and IT support services.
 - a. IT sales consultants, customer support specialists, and account managers.
6. **Education and Training** - Universities and training institutes.
 - a. Admissions officers, student services coordinators, and training program sales representatives.
7. **Healthcare** - Hospitals, clinics, and medical equipment suppliers.
 - a. Medical sales representatives, patient service coordinators, and customer support for medical devices.

The following '*Core Competency Framework*' was received after the event from one of the attendees:

- To support these priorities, the strategy will embed the following six cross-cutting skills in all training and development initiatives:
 1. **Collaboration** – Fostering strong partnerships between learners, providers, employers, and communities.
 2. **Communication** – Developing clear, effective verbal and written communication for personal and professional contexts.
 3. **Creative Thinking** – Encouraging innovation and problem exploration, especially in new and growing sectors.
 4. **Information Literacy** – Building the ability to find, assess, and use information accurately and ethically.
 5. **Organising, Planning & Prioritising** – Teaching practical approaches to managing time, resources, and responsibilities effectively.
 6. **Problem Solving & Decision Making** – Equipping individuals to assess challenges, consider options, and make informed choices.

Group 3: Curriculum development and planning; Education-Business brokerage / partnership; Talent pipelines (Attraction, recruitment, retention).



Group 4: Apprenticeships and Technical Education; Job creation; Navigating the skills system (Education of employers and individuals).

Regarding 'Education of employers', the following prompts were put forward:

- Access to work
- Un-employed does not mean Un-skilled
- Disruption of recruitment practices
- Ask for what you want, not what you think you should ask for
- Disconnect between employers/ senior leaders "wants" in an employee and what they are actually requesting in recruitment
- Using the right language – make it clear
- Experience vs qualifications
- Make more out of CSR opportunities – especially with the new procurement act, lets support businesses make a real impact
-

The following list of suggested strategic priorities was received after the event from one of the attendees:

1. Getting People into Work or Back to Work

- a. Focused support for individuals through basic skills training, such as communication, customer service, and mental health support.
- b. Tailored pathways that support re-entry into the workforce with wraparound services to address confidence and readiness.

2. Support for ESOL Communities

- a. A comprehensive ESOL offer from family-level support to advanced English, ensuring improved integration and better employment prospects.
- b. Recognition of the diverse language needs across communities, with flexible delivery and support models.

3. Green Skills for a Sustainable Future

- a. Equip learners and businesses with the knowledge, skills, and behaviours needed for a green economy.
- b. Targeted training in maritime, marine, logistics, and construction to support Hampshire's leadership in these growth sectors.

4. Empowering Young Learners

- a. Accessible and relevant education pathways for young people, tied directly to both local and national skill demands.
- b. Ensuring that feedback from youth is gathered and embedded in programme design through partnerships with educational institutions.

5. Community-Informed Development

- a. Engage all community groups to ensure inclusive, representative training that reflects real local needs.
- b. Use existing feedback, combined with new outreach mechanisms (e.g., QR code surveys), to continuously improve the offer.

6. Responsive and Localised Provision

- a. Skills offers should reflect geographic and sector-specific demands (e.g. maritime in Solent vs. inland priorities in EM3).
- b. Collaborate with employers, DWP, and SMEs to co-design training that avoids duplication and meets precise economic needs.

Appendix 4: Feedback regarding an external engagement event

- We have had success in Havant running focus groups through our Youth Hub to support with local consultations etc. This could consist of roadshow style workshops or providing a presentation for those working directly with learners and non-learners to deliver and collate feedback for you. I personally felt your idea of an event was ambitious but could be hugely positive. From experience, it is important for us to know what we are hoping to achieve and what feedback / viewpoints we are seeking so we can shape the intervention / events to support participants to be constructive and recognise what potential outcomes of their input might be.
- In relation to getting feedback from the younger people, I also suggest that you reach out to local charities, the King's Trust, and a selection of schools and colleges with a QR code and some specific questions. As we spoke about at the end of the meeting, the DWP is already undertaking surveys and this may be very useful feedback.
- Re. how to capture the voice of young people, focus groups in schools and colleges would be good, and we could facilitate that at Brock. To reach non-learners, I wonder if the King's Trust could help through their NEET programmes?
- In terms of capturing voices of learners and non-learners, my recommendation would be to create a link that can be shared easily by all stakeholders, that individuals can complete via social media, mobile phones etc.
- Capturing and Communicating Young People's Voices: Depending on how we do this, and how impactful it can be there are a few different methods. I got the feeling there was less support, or at least, less belief that this would yield any significant insights not picked up elsewhere (although probably all the more reason to check our bias!).