

Hampshire and Solent LSIP Update Report: *Our Ecosystem Coming Together*

Executive Summary

The Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) Employer Representative Body (ERB) contracts have been extended until March 2026, with Hampshire Chamber confirmed as the approved ERB for the entire Hampshire and Solent region. This marks a significant consolidation of responsibility and ensures that LSIPs moving forward will be co-owned by ERBs and the strategic authority. Until March 2026, the work will continue as two closely aligned LSIPs before being reshaped into a single plan.

Recent activity has included major events such as the Future Portsmouth Conference, sector-specific focus groups, and the appointment of two new Business Skills Engagement Managers.

Looking ahead, LSIP2 will build on the foundations of LSIP1, shifting from defining the “why” and “what” to exploring the “how.” It will also integrate Higher Education more fully, prioritise high-value local sectors, and place strong emphasis on employer engagement and learning style preferences.

Hampshire Chamber in leading the refresh process, is embedding its work across its teams focusing on third party delivery contracting, skills surveys, business engagement, events, and communications. The Chamber is also working on shaping future initiatives such as flexible skills modules, improved ecosystem navigation, careers pathways, green skills promotion, and providers coming together with skills passports. All these efforts demonstrate ways to deliver continuity, avoid fragmentation, and position the region as a leader in skills development.

Detailed Update

The extension of LSIP contracts to March 2026 provides a vital window of stability and continuity. Hampshire Chamber’s designation as the approved ERB for the whole of Hampshire and Solent represents a significant milestone, ensuring that responsibility is consolidated across the devolved region. From this point forward, LSIPs will be co-owned by both the designated ERBs and the strategic authority. Until 2026, the work will continue as two aligned LSIPs, before being reshaped into a single, unified plan.

Recent activity has demonstrated the vibrancy of the skills ecosystem. The Future Portsmouth Conference on 28 November 2025 (supported by Solent LSIP) brought together stakeholders to discuss priorities for the region. Work on soft skills development is underway with Fareport Training, while the film industry skills focus group at Farnborough Studios on 1 December attracted strong participation, with 36 attendees. To strengthen engagement across the region, two Business Skills

Engagement Managers have been appointed to cover the north and south. These roles will engage businesses informing the refresh and engaging business need with provider provision.

Looking forward, the approach is shifting towards greater continuity. Between October 2025 and March 2026, funding has been provided to develop a new LSIP, scheduled for publication in Summer 2026. LSIP2 will build directly on the insights of LSIP1: where the first plan focused on the “why” and “what,” LSIP2 will also concentrate on the “how.” The foundation for this work is being established through Lichfields’ comprehensive “research of research” across EM3 and Solent LSIPs, creating a new baseline. The intention is to avoid stop-start cycles, instead fostering joint working with partners, nudging and engaging the wider skills ecosystem, and taking deeper dives into nuanced needs.

A notable development is the inclusion of Higher Education within LSIP2, ensuring that skills of significance to high-value local sector strengths are prioritised. These include AI and digital, green technology and energy, maritime and marine, creative industries, supercluster development, and life sciences. Alongside sector-specific skills, there will be a strong emphasis on meta skills — the ability to learn, adapt, reflect, and transfer knowledge. Partnerships between universities and industry will enhance experiential learning, particularly through teamwork challenges, while modular learning and pan-institutional credits will improve flexible access. The plan also seeks to address the innovation and application skills needed by the economy, strengthening understanding of commercialisation strategies, scaling operations, regulatory navigation, sales and marketing, and investor engagement.

Hampshire Chamber is leading the refresh of the LSIP, embedding its work across the process. This includes contracting engagements with ecosystem partners, monitoring delivery through contract controllers, commissioning report production, and undertaking major surveys and group engagements. Business skills conversations are being captured across the Chamber, supported by Chamber Connects and other events, as well as one-to-one engagements led by the Business Skills Engagement team. Communications, resources, and the Chamber’s website are also being upgraded to support this work. In supporting the skills ecosystem to reach out to a wide network of contacts. We are contracting LSIP partnership agreements covering AI, critical skills, construction, maritime, micro businesses, defence, film, NEET, disability and care.

Finally, the Chamber is actively shaping future initiatives. Flexible modules within the Skills Channel will be explored, alongside support for the Get Hampshire Working plans. Green skills promotion is being advanced, and discussions will progress on the creation of skills passports. Together, these efforts demonstrate how Hampshire’s skills ecosystem is coming together, building momentum towards a more integrated and forward-looking LSIP that will serve the region well into 2026 and beyond.