



Dorset Local Skills Report



DORSET
Local Enterprise Partnership

Skills Advisory Panel and Board

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The Dorset Local Skills Report, coordinated by Dorset LEP and developed by the Dorset Skills Advisory Panel and Board in collaboration with partners, provides a useful evidence base for use by any institution or organisation developing skills strategies in Dorset and can be found online at dorsetlep.co.uk

This report incorporates and supersedes the Dorset Skills Action Plan published in 2020.

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Dorset

Local

Skills

Report

The **Dorset Local Skills Report** draws on evidence of our regional skills and labour market strengths, challenges and future prospects.

It is developed through extensive local support and intelligence gathering and aims to act as a springboard for future engagements, creative partnerships and conversations, where a diversity of voices from across the skills spectrum are heard, including employers, educators, learners, and policy makers.

The Dorset Skills Advisory Panel and Board is the owner and custodian of this report, while the Local Industrial Strategy, our comprehensive skills research and rigorous monitoring of the latest economic and societal developments underpins the Dorset Local Skills Report.

Acknowledgements

With special thanks to all our contributors and especially those most closely involved (listed in alphabetical order):

AECC University College, Air Bearing Solutions, Ansbury Guidance, Arts University Bournemouth, Bournemouth and Poole College, Bournemouth Christchurch and Poole Council, Bournemouth University, Careers and Enterprise Company, Dorset and Somerset Training Providers Network, Dorset Council, Kingston Maurward College, NHS University Hospitals Dorset, Pavilion Dance South West, Skills & Learning Adult Community Education, Upton Beach, Weymouth College

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A note on references

Where figures are listed, these refer to Dorset Local Skills Report Annex | Indicators.

Foreword by Professor Emma Hunt



I am delighted to welcome you, on behalf of the Skills Board, to the Dorset Local Skills Report, which outlines our skills journey and our ambitious plans for the future.

Based on strong uniting values as a Board of collaboration and partnership, rooted in research and co-created with employers, educational colleagues and stakeholders, this report tells the story of our regional strengths, challenges and prospects. Building upon the firm foundations of all that is unique about Dorset - the environment, population, industries, education and skills, it provides the setting for our future aspirations, our skills investment and activities that shape the strategic direction of travel.

This report clearly demonstrates Dorset's determination to continue delivering outstanding employment and skills opportunities, which enable people, businesses, and communities to not only recover from the effects of the global pandemic, but also to aspire, thrive and prosper well into the future.

With the shared aim of providing a contemporary skills agenda based on talent retention and development and high levels of economic productivity and aspiration whilst ensuring environmental sustainability for all our sectors. Tackling inequality, diversity, raising aspiration and achieving inclusive growth, where all people, at all ages of their working life reach their productive potential, is at the forefront of our collective growth thinking.

COVID -19 has changed the lives of those living in Dorset in ways that we could not have imagined a year ago. Business resilience and stability have been exposed to lockdowns and losses, with the crisis disproportionately affecting those most vulnerable, and in certain sectors that we are well known for such as hospitality and tourism. Nevertheless, it has also created a significant boost to innovative working practices, opportunities for virtual skills development that didn't exist before and new approaches to business delivery across the region.

We have strong analytical data that shows the emerging evidence of younger workers and those young people about to enter the labour market are among those hardest hit. Almost half of all 16-24-year olds working in Dorset are employed in distribution, hotels and restaurants – those sectors most affected by the recession in terms of vacancies, employment and furlough numbers and the proportion of young people claiming unemployment support has increased more markedly. There is also a growing concern for a number of young people falling out of the education, employment or training systems and the additional support required.

School leavers and graduates hoping to enter the labour market are also expected to face steep competition amidst [latest reports](#) that employers are scaling back recruitment of all types of entry-level roles.

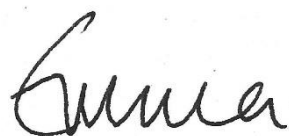
Dorset is also among the most aged parts of the UK (in fact Dorset Council has the greatest proportion of its population aged 65+). One in four of the Dorset LEP population is aged 65+, compared to 1-in-5 of the national population. The figure is even lower in the Dorset Council area, where only 56.8% of the population is of working-age. Older workers are likely to experience significant challenges in keeping and finding employment following the pandemic, and our ambition is to find creative, supportive solutions to ensure older people remain in meaningful employment with the right skills for the jobs available, whilst supporting those entering the market.

These emerging employment challenges are adding to the longstanding productivity, inequality and demographic difficulties in Dorset. Improving individuals' skills is one – if not the primary - route of positively improving life opportunities and outcomes. Creating an equitable society where opportunities are not limited by socioeconomic circumstances is key focus for local partners. While early disadvantage is increasingly difficult to remedy later in life, the acquisition of skills throughout the lifespan facilitates productivity, improves labour market outcomes and prepares for the future.

With a revised skills strategy, focused on recovery, place-based regeneration and future growth, this report outlines our destination, but also it reflects on the journey by celebrating the many success stories, investments and projects across delivery partners in Dorset. In support of our strategy, the Skills Advisory Panel and Board developed a 2- year activity plan of immediate actions focused on talent attraction, retention and skills needed to meet demand and skills for future growth. Through delivery of these actions, we are seeking to improve Dorset's position as we recover, creating a resilient skilled workforce of all ages to support high levels of business output, growth and sector demand.

In summary, our Local Skills Report draws on all the evidence in our region. It reflects on our achievements and challenges and shapes our strategic direction to ensure that Dorset offers its people, businesses and communities the employment and skills opportunities to aspire and flourish. This is a big challenge and I am grateful to the Board members and LEP colleagues who work tirelessly in this area as we collectively strive to provide the very best that our future skills agenda has to offer.

Thank you for reading this report.



Professor Emma Hunt

Chair, Dorset Skills Advisory Panel and Board

Skills Advisory Panels - Introduction

The national context

Skills Advisory Panels (SAPs) bring together employers, skills providers and key local stakeholders to better understand and resolve skills mismatches at a local level. There are 36 SAPs across England as part of Mayoral Combined Authorities and Local Enterprise Partnerships.

The Department for Education (DfE) supports SAPs with grant funding primarily to produce high quality analysis of local labour markets and [Local Skills Reports](#). The Reports set out the local strengths and skills needs and how the SAP proposes its area addresses its key priorities. The Reports aim to influence local partners and feed intelligence to central government, including the national-level [Skills and Productivity Board](#) (SPB).

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 a SAP's remit and responsibilities.

Detailed information on the role, remit and governance of skills advisory panels nationally is available online [gov.uk/government/publications/skills-advisory-panels](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/skills-advisory-panels)

Dorset Skills Advisory Panel and Board (SAPB)

The Dorset Skills Advisory Panel and Board (SAPB) is a local partnership that brings together employers, local authorities, colleges, universities and other learning providers to match skills provision to local employment opportunities and employers' needs. The SAPB helps Dorset LEP understand current and future skills needs, labour market challenges, and direct available funding in support of evidence-based skills delivery.

The Dorset Skills Advisory Panel and Board (SAPB) was established in the summer of 2019 when the roles of a Skills Advisory Panel and Skills Board were merged into a single strategic committee with a refreshed membership.

The committee exists to support the growth of an inclusive economy with a highly skilled workforce where skills and employment provision meets business need and the aspirations of individuals.

- It oversees the development and the delivery of a robust local skills evidence base, a skills action plan and programme of activities across the county that is firmly grounded in the identified skills needs and priorities in Dorset.
- The SAPB is helping to ensure local people are trained for jobs that are available and enabling both businesses and people to grow and thrive, enhancing employment and progression prospects in the county.
- The SAPB provides the collective leadership and a strategic steer for skills and employment activity across Dorset to deliver on this objective.

The coordination of the panel and its work agenda are supported by Dorset LEP's Head of Enterprise, Skills and Industry and the Skills Analytical officer.

Membership and terms of reference are published on Dorset LEP's website – dorsetlep.co.uk.

Dorset Skills Advisory Panel and Board (SAPB)



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Skills strengths and needs

THE PLACE: DORSET'S NATURAL AND ECONOMIC CONTEXT



Mix of rural, coastal and urban

Dorset has more to offer than just beaches. It is setting the standard for 21st century urban lifestyles at the heart of a picturesque coastline and quaint rural countryside. The local councils merged from 9 to 2 in 2019, forming the primarily urban Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council, and predominantly rural Dorset Council, thus facilitating joint working and efficiency of local services, while striving to preserve the unique features of each place.



Population growth

Dorset is an attractive place to live. The population (c.774,000) has grown by 80,000 since 2001 (10%) and together, Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole form the newest emerging city region in UK - the 14th (out of 314) most populated district in England¹ - grown by 12% since 2001 and expected to reach 416,000 by 2026², closely following Bristol.



Economy and productivity

Dorset's economy has been stable, growing at a measured pace over recent years, contributing £18.5 billion per annum to the UK economy and a 4% average annual growth, broadly matching national trends.³ While labour productivity has doubled in nominal terms over the past 20 years, it has seen slower than national growth, resulting in a difference equating to £3.90 per hour worked. This creates an 'output gap' of an estimated £2.3 billion per annum⁴.



Business environment

Dorset's 32,600+⁵ active business enterprises and 408,000 jobs⁶ create exciting innovations in the county and opportunities for local people.

Located in the central south coast of England, Dorset offers its nearly 774,000 residents a unique natural and cultural environment, combining quality rural, urban and coastal life.

Half of the county is a designated area of outstanding natural beauty, home of the Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site, and boasting the vibrant urban centres of Bournemouth and Poole.

With nearly 100 miles of coastline, the award-winning beaches of Bournemouth, Sandbanks, Christchurch, Swanage and Weymouth, and the harbours of Poole, Portland and Christchurch, Dorset is an example of sustainable living, where economic growth is pursued in synergy and not at the expense of the natural environment.

Small and Medium Enterprises (SME)⁷ are at the heart of our economy making up almost 90% of businesses in Dorset (Figure 3). The county offers a fertile environment for young businesses to spring up and prosper, maintaining among the top business survival rates (65% 3-year survival vs 61% nationally).⁸ The 5,627 enterprises created in 2019 placed Bournemouth and Poole in the UK's top start-up cities, trumping Liverpool, Edinburgh and Bristol as entrepreneurial hotspots⁹.



Key established and growth sectors

Dorset has known strengths in tourism, manufacturing, healthcare, financial & professional services, construction and agri-environment. Areas of new growth are emerging in advanced engineering, agri-tech, fin-tech, green tech, defence, security and cyber, health innovation, digital and creative. The top 3 sectors (Annex, Employment by Sector) in terms of employment concentration (Location Quotient) are agriculture (1.7x more concentrated in Dorset than nationally), Property (1.4x) and Finance (1.3x) while the top 5 in terms of economic output are property, retail, manufacturing, health and finance.

1 Population Estimates 2019. ONS

2 BCP Council Population Projections

3 Regional gross value added (current price estimates). 2018. National statistics

4 ONS Sub-regional Productivity Feb 2020

5 ONS UK business: activity, size and location, 2020

6 ONS Job Density, 2019

7 Enterprises employing fewer than 10 people or having a turnover less than £1mn

8 ONS Business demography, 2014-2019 (published 2020)

9 Centre for entrepreneurs. Business Start-up Index.2020

Established and Growing Sectors



Health, Wellbeing & Care

This is the largest employment sector in Dorset accounting for 15% of all employed in the county (51,000 people)¹⁰(Figure 1). Nationally, it is projected to see the highest growth in employment over the coming years and this trend will be more pronounced in Dorset (growth of 7,000 more projected between 2017 - 2027¹¹) largely linked to the county's ageing demographic profile.

Creative, Digital & Cyber

Dorset has potential to be a world-leader in Creative and Digital Technology. The Tech Nation Report concluded that Bournemouth and Poole were home to the highest concentrations of high-growth digital tech businesses in the UK.¹² Recently BCP ranked first in the UK for tech start-ups, making up 28% of all businesses created in the area in 2019, far outperforming the national average (8%) and tech hubs such as London's Camden (13%)¹³.

Tourism, Hospitality & Culture

There is no surprise Dorset is a popular destination for an average of 2.9 million trips each year, 11 million overnight stays, and supporting £557 million in tourism-related spend¹⁴. While the well-established local tourism, food, arts and entertainment services have grown significantly over recent years (with 5000 more employed in 2019 compared to 2015), they were amongst the hardest hit throughout the pandemic and with pre-existing trends in changing consumer behaviours intensifying, there is continued pressure on the sectors.

Finance & Professional Services

Financial services are particularly well established both in employment and economic outputs, employing 16,000 people (Figure 1)¹⁰ and contributing £1.4 billion (8%) to the economy¹⁵. Largely driven by emerging 'Fin-Tech', growth is dependent on software and technical skills availability. Bournemouth and Poole are locations of choice for market leaders Ageas, Barclays, Deutsche Bank, LV= Liverpool Victoria, Nationwide and JPMorgan whose Bournemouth campus has 4,000 employees.

Environment, 'Agri-tech' and Aquaculture

Part of the South West - the region producing more food than Scotland - and housing the largest farm area in England with over 25,000 commercial farm holdings, Dorset has agriculture at its heart¹⁶. With 8000 employee jobs (Figure 1), agriculture is worth £ 740 million. The sector's 'agri-tech' innovations will grow productivity with a shift towards 'clean growth' and environmental preservation. Dorset's sustainable aquaculture is a high potential opportunity¹⁷ likely to create apprenticeships, jobs and growth.

Engineering, Construction & Defence

Dorset is a significant hub for advanced engineering with major companies such as BAE Systems, Draken (previously Cobham), Honeywell, Holt Engineering, Curtis-Wright, Magellan Aerospace and many more supported by the Dorset Engineering & Manufacturing Cluster. The sector employs 29,000 people and contributes £1.9 billion (10%) to the economy. Construction and defence are also growing in employment, innovation and concentration of projects of strategic importance for Dorset.

¹⁰ Business Register and Employment Survey, ONS 2019

¹¹ Working Futures 2017-2027-Cambridge Econometrics

¹² Tech nation report, 2017

¹³ The CFE business start-up index 2020

¹⁴ Visit Britain, 2017-19

¹⁵ Regional GVA by industry, ONS 2018

¹⁶ DEFRA Statistics

¹⁷ Invest In Great, [Aquaculture in Dorset](#), DIT



Population
774,000



Annual Economy
£18.5 bn GVA



32,625
Active Business Enterprises

Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole
14th
most populated district in England

£3.90 less
produced per hour worked
adding up to

Top area for start ups
14 start-ups
per 1,000 population



408,000
Jobs



£2.3 billion
productivity gap per year



28%
of newly created businesses in Bournemouth and Poole (vs 8% in the UK)

High Employment Levels

Entrepreneurial Culture

Among the top business survival rates

78%
vs 76% UK average

62,100
self-employed
(12% vs UK 10%)

65% 3 year survival
vs 61% in the UK

Sector Highlights:

Largest employment sector predicted to grow further:



Health
51,000 employed
7,000 more projected by 2027



Significant hub for
Manufacturing & Engineering



Agriculture
employment **1.7x** more concentrated in Dorset than nationally



Potential to be a world leader in
Creative & Digital
employing 14,000 in Dorset



Financial Services
market leaders location of choice



Popular tourism destination
3 million trips
11 million overnight stays

New growth areas:

- Health and care innovations
- Agri-tech / Aquaculture
- Creative tech
- Digital
- Cyber security
- Fin-tech
- Construction
- Defence

Sources: ONS Annual Population Survey 2020, ONS Population estimates 2019, ONS Job Density 2019, ONS Sub-regional productivity 2018, ONS Inter Departmental Business Register 2020, ONS Business demography 2014-2019, The CFE business start-up index 2020, ONS Business Register and Employment Survey 2020, Visit Britain, 2017-19

Skills strengths and needs

THE PLACE: KEY CHALLENGES



PRODUCTIVITY

Summary of COVID-19 effects on the labour market



Over the past decade, Dorset has enjoyed a labour market of historic employment highs reaching near-full-employment (Figure 5). Fewer job seekers meant employer competition for talent and higher prevalence of hard-to-fill vacancies and skills shortages (Figure 30).

The coronavirus restriction measures however caused a sudden shock to local businesses and labour market. Over a quarter (26%) of people in Dorset are employed in sectors that were largely closed throughout lockdown - tourism, food, arts, leisure, recreation and retail - a proportion much higher than nationally (21%, Figure 1-2). At higher exposure due to its geography and employment concentration in the sectors hardest hit, more jobs in Dorset are at risk¹⁸ (Annex, Employment by sector).

The immediate response to the crisis in the spring of 2020 was striking. Vacancies fell nearly by half (Figure 26), the number of people claiming out-of-work benefits almost tripled (Figure 9), and workers furloughed peaked at 112,400 halfway through 2020, accounting for over a third of the eligible employments in Dorset¹⁹.

Nevertheless, the devastating effects on unemployment, feared earlier in the pandemic have thus far been largely avoided and a higher than average employment (78% vs 76% UK, Figure 5) and lower unemployment (3% vs 4% UK)²⁰ rates have been maintained in Dorset.

While the official projections²¹ warn of a peak in unemployment rates later in 2021 as the full economic impact is revealed, the relatively healthy bounce back of online vacancies²²

Attracting and retaining the optimal skills mix is critical for Dorset's industries to recover and thrive, yet the recent years have been challenging. Dorset has experienced tight labour market, high skills shortages, lower productivity, decline in earnings and pay gaps, an ageing workforce and pockets of deprivation, all dynamically influenced by the global pandemic.

gives a sign for cautious optimism. Unlike previous recessions, with jobs and businesses protected by the support schemes, vacancies and job opportunities are expected to make a swift comeback as the lockdown restriction ease²³.

The serious aftermath effects of this extraordinary disruption however cannot be underestimated. The labour market is now very competitive and particularly challenging for the young jobseeker. Having felt the worst economic impact of the pandemic, they have seen their plans put on hold, dreams jeopardised and the effects on their life chances are yet to transpire. Younger people are facing insecurity and steep competition as nearly half of the 18-24-year olds working in Dorset are employed in distribution, hotels and restaurants²⁴.

The increase of available workforce on the market unfortunately has not contributed to a decline in skills gaps and hard-to-fill vacancies for employers either.

The ratio of claimants per job vacancy (4.6) in Dorset more than doubled throughout 2020²⁵ and anecdotal reports of a surge of candidates flooded the media. Yet national reports²⁵ suggest that key skills gaps and shortages have stayed or even deepened: Despite the notably increased pool of talent, 3 in 5 employers reported they still struggled to get the skills they need to compete and these shortfalls meant their business agility was left wanting through volatile times.

Requiring a huge technological leap to adapt to new operating models, employers' need for higher-level digital skills has intensified further throughout the pandemic²⁶.

¹⁸ OECD (2020), Job Creation and Local Economic Development 2020: Rebuilding Better.

¹⁹ Dorset LMI, July 2020

²⁰ ONS Annual Population Survey, September 2020

²¹ OBR Coronavirus Analysis

²² Dorset look-back report, December 2020

²³ Labour market insights, December 2020, Dorset LEP

²⁴ ONS Annual Population Survey

²⁵ Open University Business Barometer 2020

²⁶ Edge Foundation - Skills shortages in the UK economy 2021



Higher employment – lower productivity puzzle

Historically, the high levels of employment in Dorset have not translated into matching growth in productivity – a phenomenon, known as the ‘productivity conundrum’.

Labour productivity in the county is lagging behind the UK’s by £3.90 per hour worked costing the economy an estimated £2.3 billion output gap per year (Figure 6).

This pre-existing productivity gap and the higher prevalence of sectors affected by the pandemic restrictions in Dorset have put our economy in an unfavourable position. Business concerns over labour and supply chain resilience in light of EU transition and recent growth in the number of out-of-work benefits have also intensified.

The sudden breaks in economic activity throughout repeated lockdowns have shaken productivity further and the picture remains dynamic with significant economic ‘dislocation’ taking place. The big question remains whether the declines experienced to date are temporary or represent structural changes and how they will affect the local economy and people.



Tackling the productivity puzzle

An overview of labour productivity literature²⁷ shows that whilst industries differ in their average levels of productivity (with knowledge intensive sectors on average twice as productive as those less knowledge-intensive), industry structure explains a relatively small variation of the ‘productivity conundrum’ (Annex, Employment by Sector).

The key explanation remains the recovery from the previous recession, where many businesses substituted cheap labour for capital investment, particularly in labour intensive and lower wage industries.

Another key factor is variability of productivity across firms, where only a small proportion of businesses, regardless of the sector, have increased their productive growth. There is a ‘long tail’ of businesses however that have seen productivity stall. Our analysis²⁸ ascertains that supporting firm level productivity can have a significant aggregate effect on regional productivity.



Addressing the longstanding trend of low productivity has been a key policy focus for the Local Industrial Strategy. Preventing the looming Covid-related unemployment is essential in avoiding further productivity decline and securing Dorset’s future.

Ensuring Dorset’s people have the right skills mix that can be optimally utilised in high-quality, well-paid jobs is an important lever to solving the productivity puzzle and responding to a challenging economic landscape.

A critical part of this support is ensuring the availability of an optimal skills mix within the ecosystem and across organisations.

While higher productivity tends to correlate with higher skills (Figure 44), there is little benefit in churning graduates in specialisms lacking clear labour market pathways and outcomes. Achieving an optimal skill mix and mapping the aspiration with opportunity as closely as possible while also maximising skills utilisation within organisations is the primary driver for improved productivity.

Sharing best business and management practice, stimulating innovation and optimisation in business, developing and attracting the right skills mix for the industrial structure are all essential activities to driving growth and productivity forward in Dorset.

²⁷ Dorset People and Skills Strategy Evidence Base, 2020

²⁸ Dorset People & Skills Evidence Base, 2020



DISADVANTAGE & INEQUALITY

Dorset takes a holistic approach to the issues of subdued productivity.

It is widely recognised that housing affordability, infrastructure, lower wages, pay gaps and areas of deprivation in Dorset create barriers to productive growth, talent development, attraction and retention and cause the experience of living here to vary widely.



Housing and infrastructure

Dorset is a highly desirable location, as testified by the sheer volume of tourists it attracts. Yet, employers trying to recruit people with the skills they require, struggle to attract them to the area and housing affordability appears to be among the primary barriers.

The ability of residents to enter and remain in the property market is an important consideration for both attracting and retaining talent.

Dorset is an expensive area in which to live and among the least affordable areas for house prices in England²⁹ particularly for younger people, those earning less or suffering disadvantage. The average house prices are 10 times the annual salary of those who live here (compared to 7 in England)³⁰, reaching 13 in Christchurch, 14 in East Dorset and 15 in Purbeck³¹.

Dorset is also among the areas with higher than average travel times to key services and amenities²⁹, the inadequate commuting infrastructure and lack of superfast internet in certain areas adding up to the issue.



Earnings and pay gaps

Average earnings in Dorset are slightly lower than the national reference (Figure 7) and declined by 3 percentage points in 2020, thus widening the difference further.

There are also pay gaps:

- **by gender**

Despite a higher drop in male wages in 2020, a pronounced gender pay gap remains³² (Figure 35). Women in full-time roles earn c.£6,000 less than males and over £2,000 less than their UK counterparts³². The gap in wages increases along the age profile, with women aged between 50 and 59 earning almost 30% less than men (vs 15% nationally).

- **by geography**

Around a quarter of employment jobs in Dorset are earning below the Living Wage, compared to a fifth nationally (Figure 33) and there are profound geographical differences (Figure 34).

Almost half (48%) of those in Weymouth & Portland were earning below the Living Wage in 2018. The higher proportion of low earners is noteworthy, given the housing affordability issues. The indices of deprivation also highlight areas in Dorset falling among the top 10% nationally for income deprivation³⁴.



Inequalities and disadvantage

Living in Dorset is a varied experience depending on where in the county you live. There are significant pockets of multiple deprivation (Figure 10): 15 areas³³ in Dorset, concentrated in Weymouth and Portland, Bournemouth and Poole³⁴ fall amongst the 10% most deprived in England.

Economic downturns disproportionately affect and force into poverty those already struggling with disadvantage and low wages. Issues of deprivation within families have long-term knock-on effects on children who often suffer worse health, fall behind their peers developmentally, and do less well at school.

To emphasise these barriers to participation, aspiration and achievement, there is a notable social mobility challenge in certain areas. Weymouth and Portland for example are defined as a social mobility 'cold spot' and ranked #322, out of 324 local authority areas in the UK in terms of social mobility, while Bournemouth is ranked 245³⁵.

²⁹ LEP Outlook 2019, BEIS, 2020

³⁰ House price to earnings ratio, ONS, 2020

³¹ Social Mobility Index, 2016

³² Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings, 2020

³³ LSOAs - Lower Layer Super Output Areas

³⁴ English Indices of deprivation, 2019

³⁵ Social Mobility Commission, State of the nation 2017

The local areas of disadvantage set challenges for education, participation, attainment and the future talent pipeline for our local economy.

Learning inequality and insufficient social mobility create an unjust society that impedes critical talent within our communities and the wider Dorset economy.

Attainment gap

The gap in attainment between disadvantaged pupils and their peers in Dorset is established even before they enter the educational system with a 4 months gap already gained in early years. The gap subsequently widens as school life progresses, reaching 20+ months at secondary level (Dorset Council and Poole areas)³⁶.

As students leave school, outcomes continue to be considerably less favourable for those experiencing disadvantage. One year after finishing 16-18 studies in Dorset, 1 in 5 entered an unsustained destination compared to 1 in 10 of their non-disadvantaged peers. These gaps are more prevalent in some geographical areas (Annex, Key Stage 5 destinations).

Access to learning

Rural areas within the county have a particular problem with access to learning with two-thirds of secondary school students having within 10% of the longest journeys to school in England³⁷.

Digital access

The coronavirus outbreak caused an unprecedented period of irregular access to educational settings for most pupils and students. Exams were cancelled, sports, work experiences and career events were postponed, and home schooling varied hugely in the quality, support and facilities it offered.

In a virtual learning environment, those who are not engaging effectively with the digital content are being left behind³⁸, their access to education disrupted by digital exclusion and deprivation.

This is particularly relevant for those living in areas without superfast broadband or those with limited access to digital devices. Disadvantaged learners, who are generally less likely to have sufficient hardware and bandwidth to ensure effective engagement³⁹ are therefore more likely to suffer the long-term effects of lost learning.

Low apprenticeship participation.

The evidence is strong that apprenticeships are one of the most effective tools in improving social mobility (16% higher wages for disadvantaged apprenticeship achievers vs 10% for others). Despite their many benefits, apprenticeships have declined nationally, particularly amongst disadvantaged learners, who benefit the most⁴⁰.

A continuous drop in apprenticeship starts in Dorset is mirroring the national trend, with a 10% decline recorded in 2019/20 (Figure 37). Achievements declined even more markedly, falling by a quarter (Figure 14) highlighting the challenges with vocational qualification assessments experienced throughout the pandemic.

Further education participation

Further education institutions play an important role in improving life outcomes and tackling disadvantage. Further education was the most common destination for disadvantaged students while their non-disadvantaged peers tend to progress to school sixth form (Annex A, Key Stage 4 Destinations).

Tackling inequality, raising aspiration and achieving inclusive growth makes business sense and is at the forefront of our collaborative growth thinking.

Empowering all people in Dorset to reach their productive potential will unlock, attract and retain the talent pipeline to secure Dorset's future.

36 Education in England: Annual Report 2020, Education Policy Institute, Geographical Analysis Pack

37 DEFRA statistics

38 Exploring the UK's digital divide – ONS, 2019

39 Digital Inclusion in Dorset – Citizens online, 2019

40 'Apprenticeships and social mobility' – Social Mobility Commission, June 2020

THE PLACE: KEY CHALLENGES

DEMOGRAPHIC 'TIME-BOMB'

Dorset's "One Health" approach to ageing is focused on exploring the innovative ideas of reskilling, flexible working, mentoring, and capturing the cultural and economic value of volunteering and unpaid work to rethink employment opportunities for older people and normalise life-long learning.

Ageing innovation will have a transformational impact on talent retention and productivity.



Ageing workforce

Dorset's demographic profile creates a unique workforce and socioeconomic challenge both for now and for the future.

Dorset has the highest dependency ratio⁴¹ and the lowest proportion of under 50's anywhere in the UK. The proportion of those aged 16-64 (working age) is 58% of all residents and in some parts of the county already as low as 50%, which compares to 62% nationally (Figure 8).

By 2045, almost 40% of the people in Dorset will be over 65 and for every person working there will be a dependent person (young person or a person of pensionable age). The economic role of the older population should not be overlooked— by 2040 it is estimated that the over 50's will be spending 63p in every pound in the UK⁴².



Replacement demand

With our population continuing to age, a key influence on the scale and shape of future labour demand will relate to replacing people leaving the workforce through retirement, the need to 'backfill' those roles (replacement demand) and the risk of losing valuable skills in the process.

Linked to this demographic challenge, Dorset has a projected replacement demand 5 times the expected increase in jobs, driven by

economic growth, indicating that more than 36% of those currently employed may need to be replaced by 2027, leading to a considerable loss of expertise⁴³.

The recent projections estimate 26,000 new jobs to be created in Dorset over the period 2017-2027, while the number of existing jobs becoming available through replacement expected to be over 132,000⁴³.

The scale of our ageing population not only means fewer workers, but also greater demand for public services and suitable housing, raising questions on the sustainability of our current employment and care provision models⁴⁴.



Employer experience

The recent Dorset Employer Skills Survey⁴⁵ found that 17% of all respondents cited an ageing workforce as a recruitment concern.

Sectors with particular concern included agriculture and manufacturing, where the predominantly older workforce alongside a fast-changing technological landscape, generated a crucial need to update the skills of the existing workforce to enable innovation⁴⁵.

Most of the employers citing an ageing workforce as a concern were worried about recruiting suitable replacements and losing valuable skills. Very few however were looking into flexible working, alternative or automated tasks or raising awareness amongst employees on the benefits and opportunities of working during later life - both for the business and the individual.

Dorset is bold in challenging the stereotypes around ageing, approaching the demographic crisis as an economic and social opportunity and discovering 'a way to age' fit for the future.

Our ambition is to enable people of all ages in Dorset to live well and enjoy balanced, healthy and fulfilled lives.

41 LEP Outlook 2019, BEIS, 2020

42 ICL research

43 Working Futures 2017-27— Long-run labour market and skills projections for the UK, 2020

44 Future of an ageing population-Government Office for Science, 2016

45 Dorset 2020 Employer Skills Survey

Skills strengths

High quality of education.

Dorset's wide range of educational providers offering a broad portfolio of learning opportunities across the lifespan is a significant strength for the skills provision in the region. The county is home to universities with global reputations, three strong further education colleges and a wide range of independent training providers.

The Ofsted 'good' or 'outstanding' grades of the larger proportion of schools and colleges is a testament to that as is the Teaching Excellence Framework Gold award for Arts University Bournemouth and Silver for Bournemouth University and AECC University College. Both primary and secondary performance in Dorset is largely in line with the national average, although attainment varies by geography and circumstances.

Generally well qualified workforce

The general trends towards higher qualifications are reflected in Dorset over the past decade. Dorset has lower than average proportion of the workforce without formal qualifications - under 5% with an England average of 7.5% (Figure 11).

The biggest increases since 2010 are in Level 3 qualifications (A Level and equivalent) where Dorset outperformed England, followed by Level 4 and above (CertHE, Diploma equivalent) where Dorset fell slightly behind.

Also, despite the declines in apprenticeship participation, the shift to higher apprenticeships continued. In Dorset over the past two years they increased by a third accounting for almost a quarter (23%) of all apprenticeship starts in 2019/20 from just 5% in 2016/17 (Figure 38).

Wide range of Post-16 provision

For young people aged 16-18, a variety of academic and vocational routes exist, including sixth form, vocational qualifications and apprenticeships. The three further education colleges (Bournemouth and Poole College, Weymouth College and Kingston Maurward College) are the principle

institutions of the 16-18 vocational provision, while the three universities (Bournemouth University, Arts University Bournemouth and AECC University College) offer a broad portfolio of higher education opportunities. This is in addition to the well-established adult education provision from BCP Council and over 200 independent training providers, delivering significant parts of adult learning and specialised training curricula.

Post-16 destinations

Dorset learners' destinations are in line with the national trends with the great majority successfully transitioning into education, employment or apprenticeships.

A year after completing year 11 for example (Key stage 4 - GCSE and equivalent), 95% of learners in Dorset are in sustained education, apprenticeship or employment, which is marginally higher than the national average (94%, Figure 17).

While this trend continues in 16-18 studies (key stage 5 -A Levels and equivalent) with overall proportion of positive destinations in Dorset in line with the England average, the types of destinations in Dorset at this stage deviate markedly from the national trends:

A year after completing their 16-18 studies, larger proportions of Dorset learners are in sustained employment (33% vs 25% nationally) and smaller in sustained education (38% vs 47% nationally, Figure 18).

Naturally, higher rates of early job market entry may be a positive sign, however they might also be indicative of lower skilled - lower paid employment pathways and lack of aspiration in areas of the county.

Apprenticeships destinations

Apprenticeships play a particularly positive role in providing a pathway to sustained employment. In Dorset, 90% of completed apprenticeships ended in a sustained employment destination. This is marginally higher than the rate seen nationally, and such positive differential exists across all apprenticeship levels (Figure 22).

Skills strengths

Research and specialism in HE

Our universities attract global talent to Dorset. The high demand for places is a testimony to the quality of their provision, with applications to placements ratio broadly equating to 5:1 – although differing across subject areas. Their contribution to the skills mix of the local economy is significant, with higher than average numbers in creative arts and design, business and communications, as well as subjects allied to medicine and computer science, reflecting the specialist areas of our local institutions (Figure 16).

Graduate outcomes

The proportion of graduates from universities in Dorset who move into employment is considerably higher than the level experienced at a national level (Figure 23). A year after graduating, 92% of those who studied in local HE institutions were in employment or unpaid work (with national reference of 82%).

Graduate retention

There is evidence of greater propensity of those graduating from HE institutions in Dorset to remain in the South and South West in particular (Figure 42), clearly highlighting the role of Dorset universities in attracting and retaining a flow of high skilled talent to the local area. Whilst a great many graduates still flow out to London, there is positive net gain of talent to the area through our universities with higher proportions of graduates employed in Dorset after graduation (23%) than originating from the area (20%). The evidence suggests that work placements for students are an important tool to help graduates remain in the area, highlighting the importance of early employer engagement.

Adult learning

High proportions of those who complete adult learning courses in Dorset move into either employment or further learning, demonstrating the effective pathway that adult learning provides to many, often providing a stepping-stone to better opportunities (Figure 21).

Skills strengths

3 universities

3 Further Education Colleges

200+ Independent training providers

High demand for university placements

- 5:1 application to placements ratio

Higher representation of HE qualifiers in:

- creative arts and design,
- business and communications,
- subjects allied to medicine
- computer science

Low proportion of workforce with no formal qualifications:

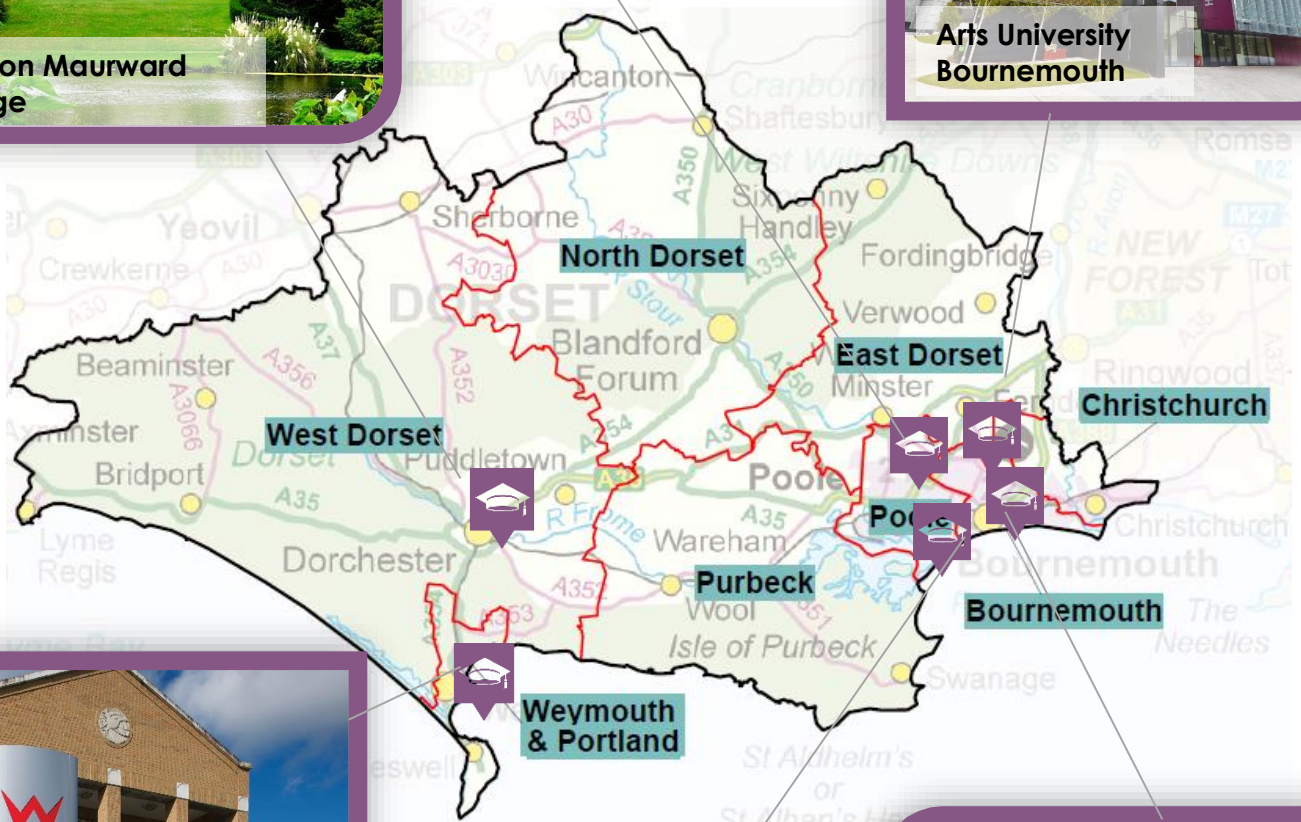
- 4.9% of workforce vs 7.5% in England
- 20% - of workforce qualified to Level 3 (A Level equivalent) vs 17% in England

Apprenticeships prevalence of technical subjects and higher apprenticeships:

- Achievements in engineering and ICT 45% vs 24% in England
- 1380 Higher Apprenticeships started in 2019/20 – almost triple the numbers from 2017/18

Positive destinations

- 95% in sustained positive destination after key stage 4 (vs 94% in England)
- 33% in employment after 16-18 studies in Dorset (vs 25% in England)
- 92% of graduates from Dorset's universities were in employment or unpaid work
- 67% of those graduating from Dorset's Universities remain in the South and South West
- A quarter of those who graduated from local universities were employed in Dorset



Skills needs

TALENT ATTRACTION AND RETENTION



Employer Engagement

Shaping future skills solutions through effective collaborations between businesses, local partners and educational providers will help our new identity to emerge as we recover from the pandemic and transition from the EU. The recently published White Paper 'Skills for jobs' puts employers firmly at the centre of the skills system, emphasising that a focus on employer demand is now critical.

- **Removing barriers for employers**

With high quality educational institutions on their doorstep, businesses across Dorset can access the skills they need directly. The evidence suggests however that few of them are making the most of this opportunity and barriers to investment in training, apprenticeships and productive partnerships exist. Only a quarter of employers engaged with colleges and private providers in meeting their skills needs and even fewer (14% and less) worked with universities and schools⁴⁶. Local employers report issues with accessibility of training, lack of funding and insufficient relevance of courses, highlighting the need for improved collaboration, removal of barriers and responsive provision⁴⁶.

- **Supporting transitioning from the EU**

Britain's exit from the EU has caused angst among employers over future labour supply. The Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole area has a higher proportion of its workforce represented by non-UK labour (1.8%), which has fallen (from 2.5%) after the Brexit vote⁴⁷. Recent national figures illustrate significant decline (16.5%) of EU nationals in employment⁴⁸ throughout the pandemic. Nationally, some industries employ larger proportions of EU workers, such as hotels and restaurants (13% of workforce), manufacturing (10%) and administration

(10%), transport (8%) and construction (7%) and 5% of the healthcare workforce is made up of EU migrants⁴⁹. These are all critical sectors in Dorset, some exhibiting skills shortages already with potential for further implications post Brexit and post COVID-19.

- **Reinvigorating apprenticeships**

Apprenticeships are a key policy instrument and an effective tool to developing crucial skills for the local economy, addressing skills gaps and improving social mobility, employability and earnings.

The evidence is clear that apprenticeships act as an effective pathway into sustained employment, and that average earnings for those that complete apprenticeships – particularly at a higher level – are competitive. Those who complete their apprenticeship are more likely to transition to work and/or study successfully and be in a job linked to their area of study than those who achieve classroom-based technical qualifications⁵⁰.

Apprenticeships are associated with occupations that are growing and essential in responding to employer need – with manufacturing, engineering as well as health, public services and care most prevalent in Dorset in 2019/20 (Figure 14). This suggests the benefits extend to businesses with around 70% of employers stating that apprenticeships and work-based learning are vital to their organisations' recovery from disruption⁵¹.

There are concerns however both for the continuation rates of apprenticeships currently underway and the reduced opportunities in the pipeline. In our recent [employer survey](#), only 8% of in Dorset employers were currently employing an apprentice⁴⁶. Apprenticeships have seen a drop both nationally and in Dorset and more pronounced decline is noted in subject areas affected by the pandemic (tourism, hospitality and retail).

The decline in apprenticeships is therefore acting as a constraint to wider policy aspirations and the aspirations of individuals. Rebuilding business confidence and employer understanding of apprenticeships appear to be key to reinvigorating apprenticeship participation.

⁴⁶ Dorset 2020 Employer Skills Survey

⁴⁷ National Insurance registration data

⁴⁸ Employment by country of birth and nationality, ONS 2020

⁴⁹ Migration Observatory analysis of Labour Force Survey 38 Post-16 pathways at level 3 and below, DfE 2020

⁵¹ Open University. Build the Future, January 2021



Addressing skills gaps, shortages and hard-to-fill vacancies

Skills gaps and talent mismatches are a known concern for employers both nationally and globally, referred to as “global skills dilemma”, which affects most businesses.

Nationally, skills shortages cost businesses £4.4 billion⁵² and affect confidence in pursuing digital transformation⁵³, which is critical for Dorset’s businesses to succeed, compete and address key productivity and economic challenges.

In a recent survey⁵⁴, local businesses signify the stifling effects skills gaps have on their success; 71% of surveyed employers reported a marked impact on productivity, and over a half on profitability and growth.

- **Higher prevalence of skills shortages and hard-to-fill vacancies**

Dorset scores high on a range of indicators that point towards an overall unmet demand for labour and challenges in recruiting the right talent,⁵⁵ ranking among the top 3 LEP areas for the proportions of hard-to-fill and skills shortage vacancies reported by employers (Figure 30).

The national Employer Skills Survey 2019 reported that 61% of Dorset employers had at least one vacancy that is hard to fill (national average 44%) and 50% of all vacancies were hard-to-fill (national average 36%). One-third of vacancies – compared to one-quarter nationally – were vacancies specifically caused by skills shortages.

Among the ‘Skills Shortage Vacancies’ employers mention were manufacturing/ engineering, sales and marketing, human health, chefs and other hospitality and Professional services roles - accounting / finance/ legal roles⁵⁴.

- **Skills utilisation issues within current workforce**

Skills utilisation issues within the existing workforce are also widely prevalent.

Together, staff proficiency, significant prevalence of skills gaps and staff utilisation provide some explanation for the productivity conundrum (Figure 29).

A third of employers reported their staff were under-utilised which appears to be marked in hotels & restaurants (63%) and education (53%) sectors suggesting significant misalignment of skills in some sectors.

- **Skills gaps**

Skills gaps were common in Dorset with over half of employers (56%) surveyed in the [Dorset Employers Skills Survey 2020](#) reporting at least one type of skills gap across their existing workforce with 1 in 3 (36%) being affected by multiple skills gaps. The skills issues most commonly experienced across industries were in digital and analytical skills, sales and marketing, leadership and management skills as well as technical and practical and job specific skills.

Half of the employers in Dorset also indicated their staff needed to develop knowledge and skills of products and services offered by their company and specialist skills required to perform their role. Also, large proportions needed to learn and adapt to new equipment (45%) and solve complex problems (38%), while higher than average proportions were lacking advanced IT skills.

Yet, despite these gaps in skills, Dorset employers were less likely to offer staff training.

With the pandemic disruption significantly increasing the available labour resource, these indicators highlight that digital and higher skilled shortages in knowledge intensive jobs are particularly pronounced and are unlikely to be met by the workforce released from affected sectors without further focus on reskilling.

52 The Edge Bulletin, July 2019, Skills Shortages in the UK
53 The Hays Global Skills Index 2019
54 Dorset 2020 Employer Skills Survey
55 LEP Outlook 2019, BEIS, 2020



Skills needs

SKILLS TO MEET THE DEMAND



Meeting employer demand

Despite the economic uncertainties and disruptions caused by the pandemic and EU transition, Dorset's vacancy figures and future projections have demonstrated some resilience and outline opportunities going forwards. The pandemic has resulted in an overall 8% decline in the number of vacancies in Dorset over 2020, compared to the previous year, but relatively quick bounce back of recruitment activity upon ease of lockdown restrictions. Having in mind the scale of the disruption to the economy, these figures give some cautious cause of optimism.

Demand by industry

The largest employment sectors in Dorset are healthcare, retail, tourism and hospitality, manufacturing, education and professional, scientific and technical activities (Figure 1), which are also the sectors with largest recruitment demand although the volumes of vacancies do not necessarily correspond, particularly over the past year.

Health and residential care. Given Dorset's demographic makeup and the accelerated need for healthcare workers throughout the pandemic, it is unsurprising there were over 14,000 jobs advertised in Healthcare in Dorset throughout 2020, marking a 25% increase on the previous year (Figure 45). NHS was by far the largest recruiter and the top jobs in demand in the sector were various care roles (3,800) and registered nurses (3,500 vacancies) but also a large variety of medical and other professionals⁵⁶.

Education. Despite seeing a decline of 11% in 2020 (3,800 jobs), Education is a strong employment sector in Dorset, consistently coming second in terms of demand.

The demand is predominantly for *teaching and educational professionals*, which is an area of skills shortage nationally.

Manufacturing vacancies (3,400 jobs in 2020), fell by a fifth over the past year, however the sector remains a critical focus for Dorset and its future growth is dependant on the availability of skills in areas of increased demand, such as engineers, technicians, programme and software developers, production managers, quality professionals, welding trades⁵⁷.

Professional, science, technology and IT jobs largely maintained their level of demand (3,600 jobs) and were largely enabled by homeworking. The largest proportion (42%) of jobs were in professional occupations, such as Solicitors, Veterinarians, Programmers and Project Managers, a further 18% in associate professional such as Legal and Marketing associates and 9% were managers and directors⁵⁸.

Retail, wholesale and vehicle repair (2,500 jobs) declined by 16% over 2020 and the sector demand profile has significantly shifted away from sales and customer service occupations and increased demand for vehicle technicians⁵⁹.

Tourism, food and beverage sectors were most affected by the restrictions and vacancies dropped almost by half (1,800 jobs). Chefs are the most sought-after occupation and there is higher proportion of elementary occupations in demand including food preparation, waiting and cleaning⁶⁰.

Finance (1,800 jobs) demand was maintained over the past year with over 40% of the jobs in professional occupations related to finance, IT and sales- programmers and software developers, business analysts and data researchers, finance and insurance sales, project managers⁶¹.

Projections for future employment growth across industries are mainly concentrated in professional roles and further notable increase is expected in healthcare, green economy, business and STEM.

⁵⁷ Manufacturing and Engineering Sector Dashboard, Dorset LEP

⁵⁸ Professional, Science, Technology and IT Sector Dashboard, Dorset LEP

⁵⁹ Retail, Wholesale and Vehicle Repair Sector Dashboard, Dorset LEP

⁶⁰ Tourism, Food and Beverage Sector Dashboard, Dorset LEP

⁶¹ Financial and Insurance Sector Dashboard, Dorset LEP

⁵⁶ Health and Social Care Sector Dashboard, Dorset LEP

Demand by occupation

A major trend for the future is shift of demand in favour of higher skilled occupations - most professional, associate professional, and management occupations are set to grow and currently almost half of Dorset people (49%, 182,000) are employed within these. Shortages are expected in health, social and residential care within a post-Brexit climate. Decline in demand is projected for administrative & secretarial, skilled trade occupations and process, plant and machine operatives. The single most required occupation remains nursing – 7% of all jobs, while the second most significant occupation group in demand are STEM occupations (9,600 jobs in 2020) with software developers/ engineers highly sought after.

The occupations expected to see the largest net requirement within Dorset over the next few years projected by the Working Futures study include Caring Personal Service occupations, Corporate Managers and Directors and Health Professionals.

Key areas of focus post-pandemic will include readiness and protective, green, remote, logistics and automated economies.⁶²

Demand by skills

Analysis of the top skills in demand in Dorset shows clear themes for now and in the future.

General skills - soft skills such as personal productivity, human interaction, problem solving, personal attributes are an essential addition to the core competencies required.

Digital and Technical Skills – these skills are essential to resource our growing 'tech' sectors. Examples include Microsoft Office, software development and engineering, programming languages and productivity tools for managing enterprises and customers

Specialised Skills –this category represents the wider occupational demand in Dorset with major skills clustered around healthcare, education, manufacturing and engineering.

Demand summary

Sector wide: STEM occupations

-17% of all jobs in Dorset in 2020

- predicted to grow in demand across all sectors
- software developers/ engineers, web developers, computer specialists

Health, social and residential care

- Nursing: most sought after occupation (7% of all vacancies).
- wide range of occupations and e-health an emerging growth area;
- demand ahead of supply, shortages in Dorset
- predicted expansion in professional and care occupations including carers, healthcare assistants, physicians, healthcare managers.

Education

- teaching assistant and professionals, all levels from school to further and higher education

Manufacturing and Engineering

- systems, technical engineers, programme and software developers, analysts and quality professionals, growth areas in cyber security and defence

Professional, science, technical and IT

- lawyers, solicitors, veterinarians, programmers, project managers

Finance

- programmers and software developers, business analysts and data researchers, finance and insurance sales, project managers
- fin-tech an emerging growth area

Construction

- plumbing, electrical work, carpentry
- green jobs growth

Retail, wholesale, vehicle repair

- mainly vehicle repair technicians, mechanics, store managers
- Decline in CSR and sales professionals.

Tourism and hospitality

- chefs, food preparation, waiting and cleaning jobs

Agriculture

- Farm workers, manufacturing and technicians.
- Agri-tech and aquaculture – growth areas

Skills needs

SKILLS FOR FUTURE GROWTH

Occupational projections suggest that employment demand will continue to shift in favour of higher skills and agile life-long learning solutions. In that sense, it is important to understand the extent to which the people in Dorset are prepared for the shifts in demand expected in the future.



Up-skilling and higher qualifications achievement

Requirements for higher qualifications are on the rise amongst employers and projections indicate these trends would accelerate and would be driven further by candidate competition because of the pandemic.

Digitalisation and automation remain key drivers of workforce transformation⁶³ and the major trends behind further increases in higher skills demand. While mid-level skills (typically non-HE qualified) would still be required, often through the replacement route, the new jobs becoming available in the county would mainly shift towards higher skilled roles with some activities at the lower end of the skills spectrum. This increases the polarisation of demand (Annex A, Employment by Occupation).

- **Higher qualifications falling behind**

As outlined, higher productivity in the economy tends to correlate with higher qualification levels (Figure 44).

While higher qualifications have increased over the past decade, the proportion of Dorset workforce qualified to Level 4 and above has fallen behind over recent years, forming a 2% gap from the national average (Figure 11).

The growth in qualification levels has not been uniform with Purbeck, Weymouth and Portland seeing a fall in the proportion of their workforce qualified to higher level over the past 10 years (Figure 36).

Furthermore, up to a quarter of the working age people in Dorset do not have a Level 2

(GCSE equivalent) qualification, which is regarded a benchmark for employability.

- **Decline in adult learning participation**

The decline in adult participation in further education over recent years (Annex A, FE Education and Training) is a warning sign for further widening of that qualification achievement gap.

These important trends need reversing to ensure the people of Dorset are ready for work in the future.

- **Deepening of higher skills shortages with projected qualification demand**

Forecasting models show continued shift to high-level qualifications with 55% of those employed in Dorset expected to be qualified at graduate level by 2027, whilst the proportion of those with no formal qualifications shrinking further from 14% to under 8% in 2027. This growing demand is clearly reflected in the net jobs projected to become available in Dorset over the coming years⁶⁴, over 88% of which, equivalent to circa 144,000 jobs will require graduate level (Level 5+).

These projections make it clear that Dorset needs to develop and attract a pipeline of more highly skilled people.

Qualification needs

Lower workforce qualifications:

38% qualified to Level 4+ (graduate level) vs 40% in England

23% do not have a Level 2 'benchmark for employability' qualification

+88% projected demand for Level 5 + qualifications by 2027

-10% in 2020 apprenticeship starts compared to 2018/19

-18% in apprenticeships achieved in 2020 compared to 2018/19

-6000 FE learners in 2018/19 compared to 2014/15

-5180 adult learners in 2016/17 compared to c.10,000 in 2013/14.

⁶³ McKinsey & Company, May 2017, What's now and next in analytics, AI, and automation

⁶⁴ Net demand is the sum of projected expansion/decline in jobs and replacement demand according to the Working Futures 2017-27 study

Re-skilling & Life-long learning



Longer working lives, shorter job cycles, emerging jobs, remote and gig work, diminishing expertise shelf life and the latest economic and social disruptions all call for creative lifelong re-and up-skilling solutions to counteract “time-lag” between emerging skills needs and educational response.

Quickly emerging technological advances, new models of working and the increased importance of uniquely human skills determine the needs for educational agility.

- **Automation and AI**

By 2025, the time spent on current tasks at work by humans and machines will be equal ([WEF, 2020](#)). Adoption of big data and cloud technology, combined with breakthroughs in robotics, machine learning, and AI are set to enhance productivity, resulting in up to 45% of jobs in certain industries potentially automated by 2030 ([Statista, 2020](#)), giving rise to entirely new jobs.

There are likely to be job losses where algorithms can be used to undertake routine tasks, but a matching increase in jobs where human skills are used to foster innovation and raise productivity are projected ([WEF, 2020](#)).

This is especially important for Dorset as our key and growth areas include financial services, advanced manufacturing & engineering, the agritech & aquaculture sectors, which will face significant change.

- **Sector based pandemic disruptions**

The sudden labour market shifts caused by the pandemic are a stark illustration of the importance of reskilling and lifelong learning to support matching available workforce with emerging job opportunities, and to avoid the cycle of long-term unemployment ([Dorset LEP Look back at 2020 report](#)).

- **Disruption of education**

The prolonged period of the rapidly developing pandemic also had its toll on the world of education, skills and employment in Dorset, deepening the pre-existing challenges of learning accessibility, attainment and achievement gaps, employer engagement and relevance of provision.

These have all put strain on schools and families and caused detrimental effects to young people's development, motivation, knowledge and skills. Catching up would be a challenge, as would be reskilling of those falling out of work due to large parts of the economy being closed. At the same time, many who are studying or training at any level may see the scale of employment opportunities currently available to them significantly diminished.

Concurrently, similar to the developments with apprenticeship participation, FE Education and Training participation also show marked declines in achievements across all subject areas (Figure 12).

The decline in FE participation provides implications and policy questions at local level– partly to address the ‘replacement demand’ issue, as well as aiming to move more of the workforce into more (existing or new) productive jobs. It could be argued that these local economic development aspirations are constrained by changes in national adult educational policy (and associated funding).



Photo: Dorset Innovation Park Aerial



The skills that were in short supply before the crisis, have become increasingly sought after. Technology will play a major part in the future of work, which will create further polarisation of jobs and incomes based on the skills that are most sought after.

- **Digital skills and emerging economies**

Digital skills are now a necessity, as organisations made a huge leap in technology adoption while there has been no corresponding increase in the number of people with these skills. Digital and STEM skills will become even more critical for the recovery, within areas such as cybersecurity, biotech, advanced logistics, internet of things, infrastructure, advanced manufacturing and pharmaceuticals, big data, green and remote economy, ed-tech, cloud technology, e-commerce, artificial intelligence, robotics and virtual reality, to create chains both efficient and resilient.⁶⁵

- **Adaptability and transferable skills**

Adaptability and ability to learn, together with transferrable skills, are priorities for many organisations who want their workforces to be ready for whatever the future holds.

- **Unique human skills**

People will create the jobs of the future, not simply train for them and it is the unique human skills which AI and machines cannot replicate that will be highly desired.

Skills currently beyond the reach of smart machines include; emotional intelligence, critical thinking, abstract & systems thinking, teamwork, conflict resolution, creativity, problem solving, collaboration, customer service orientation and active learning.

- **Adapting to new ways of working**

The pre-existing workplace trends have also been influenced by the pandemic.

For example, cross- generational differences in work attitudes are changing. Over half of millennials - the generation born between 1980 and 2000, which is currently comprising

more than 50% of the UK workforce, expect to move jobs within two years, are much more concerned by the social dimension of business, and value work-life balance and flexibility more than their older colleagues.⁶⁶ Prior the pandemic they were oriented towards gig, entrepreneurial and flexible working models. While the importance of the social aspects of work remain highly relevant, it has been questioned whether the COVID-19 pandemic has shifted some of these attitudes. Many of the digitalised gig jobs do not provide security and have been disproportionately exposed to economic vulnerability. It is therefore possible that the pandemic will place value back on job security and more traditional working models.

Home and flexible working on the other hand - a relatively minor share of employment prior the pandemic - saw a steep rise in April 2020 and very few homeworkers returned to the office when restrictions were eased in the summer. It looks likely that homeworking is here to stay. However, some issues exist as reported by IES research warning of health and wellbeing issues including decline in musculoskeletal health, sleep loss, long/irregular hours, decline in protective health behaviours, mental health issues. The report also finds employee happiness dropped dramatically during lockdown, and reveals a sharp rise in e-presenteeism.

Yet, going forwards, three quarters of company directors expect to keep increased homeworking with half of them planning to reduce office space. Nine out of ten workers would like to continue working at home in some capacity with around one in two employees wanting to work at home often or all of the time.

Companies have a new opportunity to re-imagine how and where work is done, thinking through specific work arenas and occupational activities. Speedy and effective worker redeployment will be needed, prioritising equitable access to digital infrastructure as well as new ways of enabling occupational mobility. The pandemic will eventually diminish, but the agility and creativity of policy makers and businesses, evident during the crisis, will need to continue to find effective responses to the workforce challenges.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ The Institute of Leadership and Management - Workforce 2020: Managing Millennials, 2017

⁶⁷ The future of work after COVID-19 - McKinsey Global Institute, 2021

Our Vision: Skilled, Productive & Resilient

Skills strategy Strategic ambitions



Increasing productivity

It is vital that we tackle the productivity issue by fully understanding the implications around skills utilisation, talent retention, future automation, the application of creative digital skills & creative thinking, fresh careers training and new further and higher education courses that attract and keep talented people in Dorset.

We will develop a smarter and more productive workforce, producing more with fewer resources. We want to replace skills/expertise with an emphasis on quality to address the vacancy requirement over the next 15 years.



Living well

Our focus is on developing pioneering solutions to healthcare, social care and wellbeing in the region in order to address our future demographic crunch head on.

We want to ensure that innovative approaches to ageing are wholly understood, including rethinking employment opportunities for older people such as reskilling, flexible working, mentoring, capturing the cultural and economic value of volunteering and unpaid work. We believe that innovation here could affect productivity outcomes and talent retention.



Removing inequality

Switching on this driver for change will unlock talent across Dorset. We need to build on excellent careers guidance in schools and adult education, particularly in our more deprived areas. We want to deliver new replacement skills and expertise and explore technology to make learning and jobs accessible across the region. The focus is firmly on inclusive prosperity and unlocking talent in Dorset to ensure all communities play an active role in the recovery to ensure inequality is reduced.

Dorset's STRATEGIC SKILLS AMBITIONS directly stem from the KEY CHALLENGES identified locally.

Our future PRIORITIES have been designed to meet Dorset's SKILLS NEEDS firmly grounding our interventions in the skills needed by our local people and economy, ensuring we invest our energy in tackling our key local challenges.



Unrivalled Opportunity

It is clear that the challenges we face are not unique but tackling them as a dynamic system provides an unrivalled opportunity to make a sizable impact.

Key lines of enquiry include how addressing ageing and inequality impact on productivity; how increasing productivity attracts prosperity among the most disadvantaged and how skills influence productivity, ageing workforce and deprivation.

Our strategic skills ambitions are the drivers for change, focusing on 'where' we want to be and 'why', while our skills priorities and activities allow us to 'switch on' those drivers.

Dorset total skills solution



- **Our strategic ambitions** are setting out the destination – ‘**Where we want to be**’ – they are aspirational drivers for change and potent enablers operating in a dynamic system.
- **Our mechanisms** shape the guiding principles that will navigate our way, directing our activity planning and execution – ‘**How will we get there**’
- **Our skills priorities** outline a framework for the key areas of activity in reaching our destination – ‘**What are we doing**’

Mechanisms

Emerging from the challenging times that we live in, these mechanisms are designed to focus our energy and resources in ways that make the biggest impact. We will ensure that everything we do is addressing Dorset's:

Place based regeneration

Focusing on areas hardest hit, with low aspiration and difficult to reach, we will dive deep into issues, plan for regeneration and raise ambition of young people.

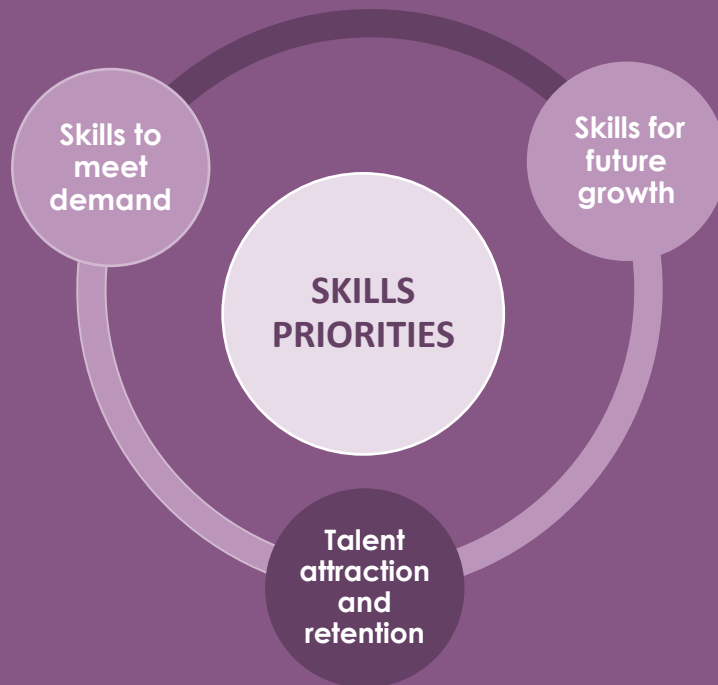
Recovery

Action-driven recovery for post-Covid generated employment issues across Dorset with focus on targeted interventions to support sectors and groups hardest hit and provide skills retraining, upskilling, reskilling, career support.

Future growth

Future focused interventions, backed by research evidence, ensuring we develop the skills, employment attributes and experiences required for future growth and successful life and business outcomes.

Skills priorities



Talent attraction and retention

We want to develop a new demand-led skills programme in close collaboration with employers, offering innovative pathways to high quality jobs and curating bespoke training, recruitment, Continuing Professional Development and progression solutions that will increase productivity and sustain growth by:

- **Unlocking, attracting and retaining talent**

Removing barriers to collaboration within our educational and business communities while creating an inclusive infrastructure and showcasing the region as the natural place to excel.

- **Workforce excellence**

Addressing skills gaps and shortages by providing the ability to recruit, develop and progress workforce capability and productivity that meets demand. While considering the immediate needs, we want to focus on unlocking expansion and investment in new services and capacity – closing the existing productivity gap.

- **Leadership and management**

Supporting our growing sectors by providing their leaders with the ability to introduce and embed best practice, technology advancement and innovation that drives productivity and competitiveness and ensures all communities in Dorset can play an active part in the economy and all people are inspired, regardless of age, into meaningful careers.

Skills to meet demand

We want to develop skills innovation and inclusion by working with business leaders, education, skills support and Research, Development & Innovation (RD&I) institutions to support the concept of a Dorset '**total skills solution**' through:

- **Inspiring younger generations into meaningful careers**

Ensuring an inclusion programme targeting Dorset's most deprived communities in the first instance.

- **Retraining or retaining older people into meaningful careers**

Unlocking older talent to support valued economic activity later in life.

- **Replacement labour demand in skills sets**

Addressing critical replacement labour demand in priority skills sets such as IT/professional/healthcare/social care).

- **Innovative resourcing**

Working with Government, national and regional organisations, local authorities, anchor institutions and funding bodies to secure skills budget 'economies of scale', align activity with Government initiatives and develop innovative funding opportunities.

Skills for future growth

We want to work with emerging businesses, their supply chains, academia and skills providers to prepare a comprehensive future skills programme through:

- **Growth Cluster Collaboration**

Creating the mechanism by which emerging sectors and institutions can share common expertise, capacity and innovation, thus supporting the development of hubs of knowledge and expertise that can benefit the wider business community and inform skills strategy development.

- **Business Education Links**

Extending investment and scope in the local academic centres of innovation & research expertise and developing a new level of collaborative partnership that embeds the needs of future industry at all academic levels. Creating placement and project opportunities that deliver solutions and a future 'talent pool'.

- **Supply chain development**

Building skills development programmes, collaboration networks and infrastructure that enables and supports the local supply chain capacity and capability to develop as natural partners in new growth clusters. Understanding how skills can accelerate the cross-fertilisation of priority clusters leading to a network of supported supply chains and an economy of scale for Dorset.

- **Growth accelerator capability**

Building the specialist skills to support leadership, expansion, finance, collaboration and research & development that will support new business growth.

Skills action plan*



Our skills PRIORITIES provide the framework for our action plan, mapping 'what we are doing' in order to achieve our strategic AMBITIONS and get 'where we want to be'.

These are the key areas of activity under Dorset's skills action plan: the projects, investments and collaborations we are committed to in order to remove inequalities, increase productivity and ensure that Dorset's people of all ages are living well.

Talent attraction and retention

Programme of activities under this theme include strategic investment to upgrade facilities and capabilities within educational providers, delivering targeted careers interventions based on local intelligence, growing skills required to boost key established and growth sectors and nourishing powerful employer networks.

For full list of initiatives, visit '[Dorset Skills Activities 2020-2022](#)'.



These activities are developing innovative recruitment, attraction, employability and retention solutions for Dorset's key skills needs, enhancing employer engagement and industry collaborations, as well as improving facilities, curricula and (virtual and physical) access to study in Dorset.

These activities are supporting Dorset's growing sectors by strengthening leadership and resilience within local business with targeted support for SMEs. They help to introduce and embed best practice, technology advancement and innovation that drives productivity and competitiveness.

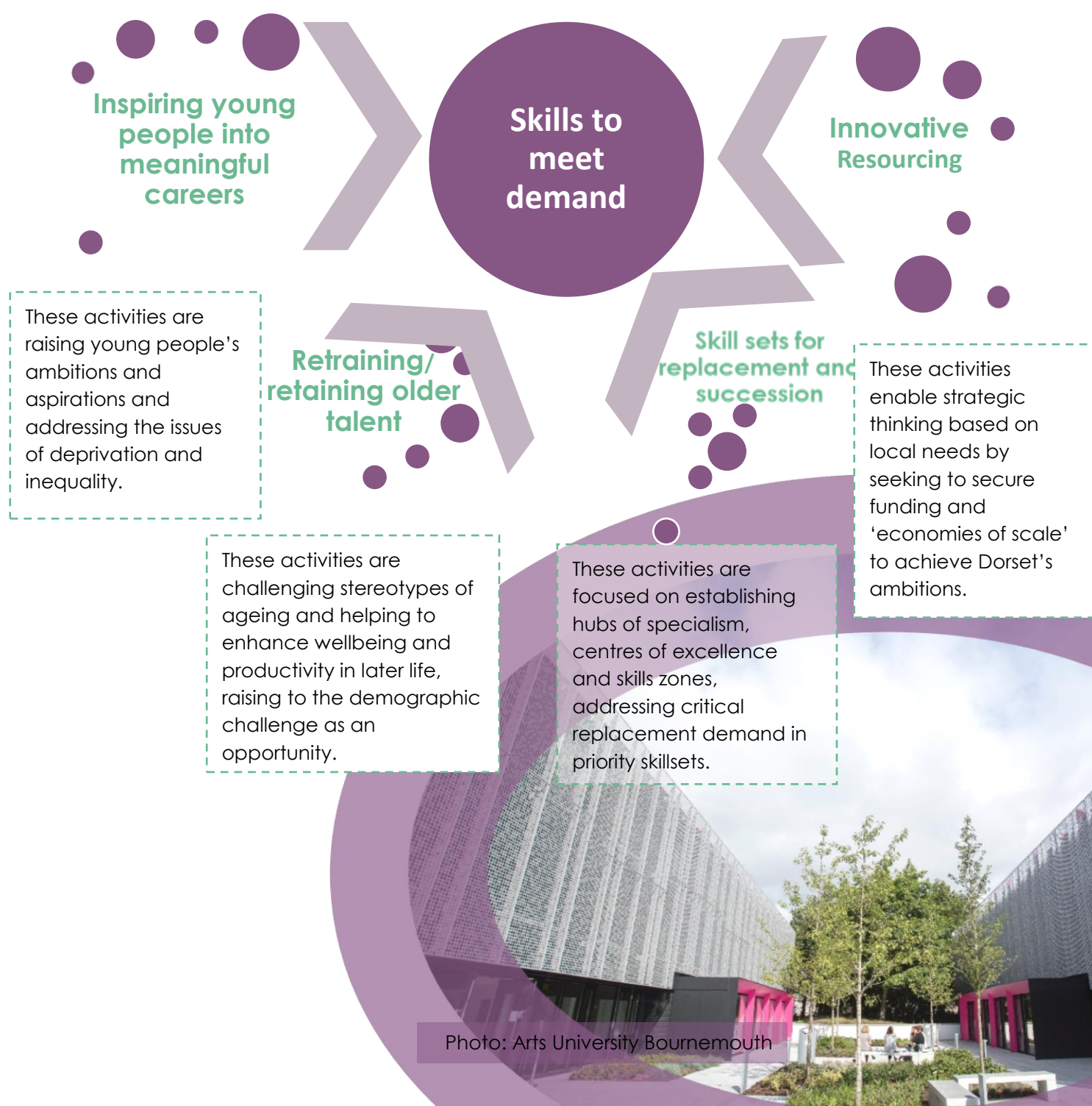
These activities are focused on supporting the recovery through developing the optimal skills mix, reskilling and maximising the utilisation of existing skills and capabilities while unlocking expansion and investment for future growth.

Skills action plan

Skills to meet demand

Programme of activities include research and delivery of innovative widening participation and outreach initiatives, engaging key local stakeholders in joint action against inequalities and disadvantage, as well as delivery of tailored and inspirational careers programmes and immersion events across local geographies and across the lifespan.

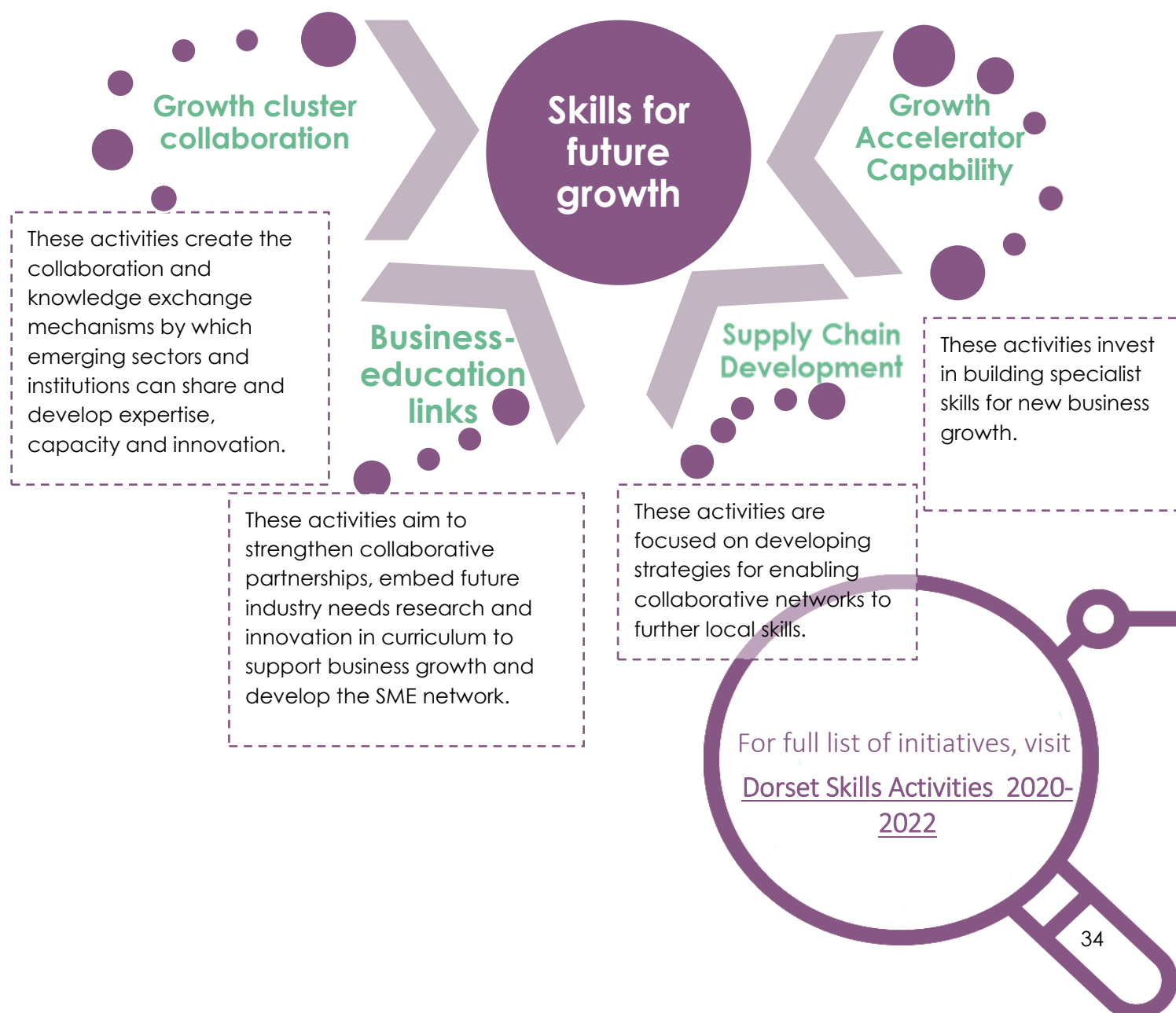
For full list of initiatives, visit '[Dorset Skills Activities 2020-2022](#)'.



Skills action plan

Skills for future growth

In line with the "Skills for Jobs: Lifelong Learning for Opportunity and Growth" white paper, the work under this theme involves strengthening the links between employers and education providers to develop flexible alternative pathways to successful careers. The focus is on partnership working across employers, strategic bodies and academia to build accelerator support networks, supply chains, training programmes and talent attraction initiatives that are bespoke, enhance business growth and meet Dorset's future skills needs.



Assessment of progress

Established in the summer of 2019, Dorset's Skills Advisory Panel and Board (SAPB) brought together local employers, educators, and policy and decision makers in a partnership to support a highly skilled workforce and inclusive economic growth in Dorset.

The key common goal is to ensure skills provision and aspiration in the county meet business demand and opportunity.

Taking a local leadership role

With members representing a range of professional areas and considerable decision-making power within key organisations across the local skills system, the SAPB is an extensive catalyst of energy, expertise, local insight and coordination.

It is a natural incubator of leadership ideas in Dorset, well suited to discuss a 'total skills solution' for the county and influence skills provision, curriculum and future projects.

Over its first months, the partnership oversaw the development of Dorset's skills research and reviewed the emerging evidence of key challenges and skills needs locally. Demonstrating a real passion to addressing these challenges, the SAPB worked on a set of strategic ambitions and interventions to enhance the local skills mix, unlock local talent and growth potential across the county.

Discussions also guided the analysis into areas requiring deeper dive and exploration.

- **Engaging local partners**

One such area of interest was the employers' perspective and experience of the skills system, leading to the commissioning of the Dorset Employer Skills Survey at the start of 2020 – a piece of work that considerably enhanced local insight into the workforce needs and skills challenges that stifle productivity and growth of local firms and sectors.

The findings from this survey highlighted one of the weaknesses within the local skills system, pointing out barriers to training and apprenticeship investment experienced by employers and the need for proactive collaboration and productive partnerships between employers and educators to solve Dorset's pronounced skills gaps and shortages. These findings form an important part of the evidence base and a strategic priority focus area for SAPB's local leadership role in Dorset.

"We would like to see improvements in the accessibility of skills and training locally..."

I don't know what is out there, there seems to be a disconnect between training providers and small businesses."

*Employer,
Dorset 2020 Employer Skills Survey*



Photo: County Gates, Bournemouth, LV= Headquarters

- **Improvements in response to Employer Skills Survey findings**

The SAPB is offering a space for sharing local developments, opportunities and challenges, enabling fruitful discussions and joint initiatives, skills solutions and emerging big ideas for the world of skills, employment and education in Dorset. Through enhanced employer membership, representation of key sectors was ensured and even wider reach on essential areas of work sought via members' networks and communication channels.

The employers' skills survey and follow up communications were used to engage almost 250 Dorset employers from a range of sectors in the skills agenda and to inform local skills providers of the needs and challenges experienced by employers. A range of stakeholders are also regularly updated through the SAPB's local labour market and skills research and our regular bulletins.

The Dorset's Careers Hub, overseen by the SAPB, has developed the committed networks of Dorset's Cornerstone Employers and Enterprise Advisors representing key sectors and groups of private and public sector employers, heavily involved and interested in skills and careers pathways in the county.

Access to wider business network is also available through the Dorset Chamber of Commerce, which, while not directly involved in the SAPB, is Dorset LEP's key partner in delivering business support across the county through Dorset Gateway and other initiatives and is a Dorset LEP Board member.

Finally, the recent appointment of a Head of Enterprise, Skills and Industry is a clear step forwards and demonstrates commitment to closer integration of the business and skills agendas in Dorset, addressing the barriers to engagement and making the voice of employers more prominent.

The launch of this Local Skills Report is an opportunity to re-invigorate our engagement with stakeholders and will be used as a tool to boost connections and inspire joint projects in a proactive manner.

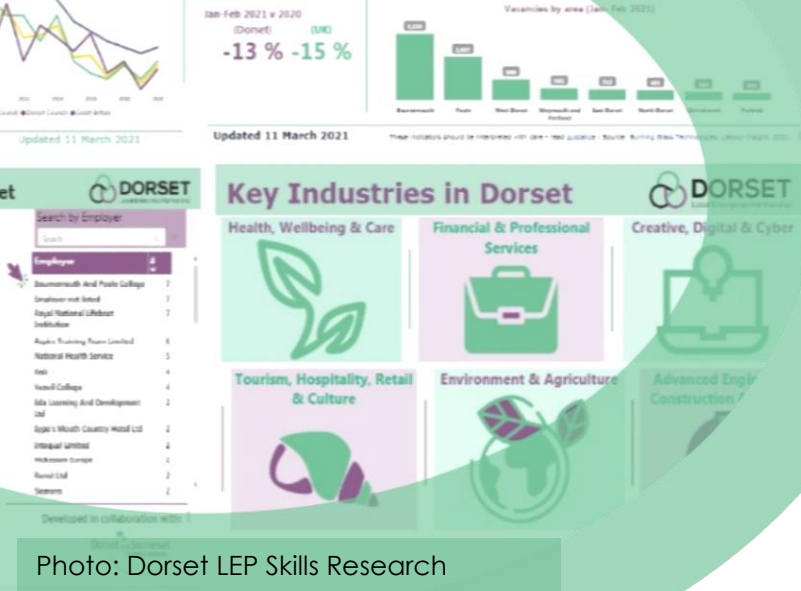
- **Strategic direction**

As the SAPB was getting ready to launch its skills strategy and actions at the end of Quarter 1 of 2020, the COVID-19 global pandemic hit the UK and created an unprecedented disruption to the local economy, businesses and people in Dorset. The SAPB focused on monitoring the labour market shifts and reassessing its priorities and strategy. An updated version of the plan was published in November – a version now retired and replaced by this report, which brings stronger strategic focus on recovery brought by the pandemic developments.

The SAPB has agreed the Skills Strategy and Action Plan included in this report, underpinned by the Government's education and skills ambitions and by the Local Industrial Strategy, while also designed to work alongside Dorset's Investment Prospectus and local economic and FE/HE strategic plans.

This report is a culmination of many months of productive engagement and significant efforts to align strategies and approaches across stakeholders, incorporating an all-inclusive programme of activities, co-owned and delivered across partners.

The Dorset Local Skills report marks a significant milestone of a joint intervention for Dorset, owned by the Dorset Skills Advisory Panel and Board and giving direction to the local skills agenda, while also testifying to the SAP Board's established local leadership role.



• Monitoring of the pandemic developments and effects

As the coronavirus pandemic caused an unprecedented shock to the educational system, the labour market and the economy, both nationally and locally, our research focus has shifted to monitoring the dynamic developments and local effects.

In response to the rapidly evolving picture, we worked with local partners to develop labour market and industry based interactive dashboards including latest local insights. They give a visual representation of recent opportunities, trends, jobs and skills in demand within our key established and growth sectors and help ensuring job seekers are effectively signposted to employment and skills opportunities.

Developed in collaboration with the Dorset Carers Hub, Department for Work and Pensions and Dorset and Somerset Training Providers Network, these tools have proven a popular source of local labour market intelligence informing the critical work of careers specialists, work coaches and decision makers across Dorset. Dedicated CPD sessions and workshops with local partners and educational providers enhanced the efficient integration of labour market intelligence into careers interventions locally.

Enhancing local knowledge

• Skills and labour market research

Over the past two years, several research deep dives were undertaken to inform Dorset's Local Industrial Strategy (LIS), Skills Action Plan, and Investment Prospectus.

The Skills Advisory Panel and Board has overseen the development of a webpage hosting the wealth of skills related research - dorsetlep.co.uk/labour-market-and-skills-research. This page is the home of the Dorset Skills Research Evidence Base⁶⁸, incorporating the LIS evidence, the Dorset Employer Skills Survey⁶⁹, COVID-19 reports on the pandemic effects⁷⁰ and a wide range of national and local surveys, thought pieces, policy documents, published datasets and provider intelligence. The SAPB guided the inquiry to deep dive into areas of particular interest, such as drivers of labour productivity, shifts in adult learning and apprenticeships, future of work, intergenerational differences at work, EU transition, etc. This resulted in a substantial piece of skills research, considerably enhancing the insight into Dorset's supply and demand of labour and overall skills landscape and allowing the key strategic priorities and ambitions to naturally emerge.

The findings from this work informed the Dorset Skills Action Plan, now superseded by this and the [two year Activity Plan](#)⁷¹ which remains an accurate representation of our immediate skills initiatives.

"We use the Dorset LEP LMI website regularly and find it invaluable.

Fresh information on the top recruiting employers, industries and occupations in Dorset is very valuable to us.

Additionally, seeing the skills in demand and where the gaps are helps us to create targeted training to meet the labour market need."

*Sarah Pateman,
DWP Employer Adviser
Poole Jobcentre Plus*

⁶⁸ Dorset People and Skills Strategy Evidence Base, 2020

⁶⁹ Dorset 2020 Employer Skills Survey

⁷⁰ 'COVID-19 and the Labour Market in Dorset' report and '[Look back at 2020](#)' report

⁷¹ Dorset Skills Action Plan Activities 2020-2022

Agility of skills delivery response is key, as is the ongoing monitoring and future gazing, while remaining firmly rooted in the uniqueness of the place, respecting what is special about its people and unique about its culture.

The sheer amount of published research illustrates the significant role of the Skills Advisory Panel and Board in building analytical strengths and capabilities and gaining rich local insight.

- **Do we now have a comprehensive picture of the current and future skills needs in Dorset?**

The picture on the challenges faced by employers locally with skills gaps and hard-to-fill vacancies is much clearer now, as is our understanding of Dorset's strengths and challenges on the supply side.

However, our work and the recent shifts in the labour market and industries have signified the difficulties in reconciling the supply of skills with the needs of the local economy and employers.

This is difficult to achieve given the changing situation. It is important to recognise that the needs of employers and individuals will be different now, when compared to even a few months ago. The needs will differ on an employer-by-employer basis, across sectors and over time. This is particularly evident one year into a health and economic emergency, when skills gaps and shortages have accelerated for employers, while claimant numbers almost tripled, a third of the eligible workforce was furloughed and many are facing unemployment, with heightened risk of scarring effects on our youth.

Impact on local skills provision

Alignment of business and skills agendas across Dorset remains essential for closing the skills gaps and support local businesses to develop resilience for the future, particularly for the large number of micro and SMEs Dorset houses.

The Skills Advisory Panel and Board has driven significant progress in the area of curriculum and policy response in efforts to tackle disadvantage, graduate retention, apprenticeships development and adult life-long learning provision in support to the skills ambitions and priorities outlined earlier.

- **The three further education colleges are essential in addressing the gap for disadvantaged groups:**

Bournemouth and Poole College is the largest provider of further education and apprenticeships in Dorset, catering for around 11,000 students. The College collaborates with over 2,000 businesses to deliver an ambitious apprenticeships programme. The College has a focus on engineering, computing, digital, construction, healthcare and business subjects in line with the identified growth and established sectors. It is also working towards the provision of higher skills with around 600 students studying towards degree level qualifications. Fruitful partnerships with a range of universities allow the College to open up opportunities and give access to specialist facilities. Notably 17% of its learners come from the 20% most deprived communities.




Photo: Bournemouth and Poole College Students

Going forwards, there is a need to identify and develop a range of skilled pathways into high-quality well-paid jobs based on the emerging evidence.



Photo: Weymouth College Students

Weymouth College, based in the West Dorset Coast with many of its 3,000 students travelling from the surrounding rural areas, specialises in Level 3 and industry-relevant vocational courses and apprenticeships. Key specialist areas include engineering, automotive, manufacturing and construction as well as creative and visual arts. The College also includes the Dorset Centre for the Creative Arts and the Dorset Training Academy working directly with businesses to support their growth needs. Located in one of the most deprived areas in Dorset, it provides employment pathways to students from a variety of backgrounds.

Kingston Maurward College, which is Dorset's specialist land-based college offering 750 acres of gardens and practical teaching facilities in the heart of Dorset, is one of the few institutions nationally specialising in applying digital technologies to aquatic & land management. The college offers its 2,000 students work-related training and study, up to and including degree-level, in its specialist areas of agriculture, aquaculture, horticulture and farming. New investments on the estate include the Dorset Studio School offering practical land-based studies, an agri-tech centre and a state-of-the-art Animal Science centre supporting the regional training hub for the Royal Veterinary College, currently the world's leading vet school.

Our universities demonstrate their civic engagement by working closely with local communities and businesses to enable cross-sector collaborations and unlock innovation, while also heavily investing in outreach, work experience, career development and graduate retention activities.

Bournemouth University – a large generalist university with over 18,000 students, offers a wide range of specialisms aligned with the demand of the local economy - from business to subjects allied to medicine and computing. Graduate employment and retention are high

on the agenda with 23% of graduates employed in Dorset. Medical science is one of the strategic investment areas for the University and among its many local partnerships, Bournemouth University works with the NHS and industry with the ambition to improve workforce education, healthcare outcomes and enhance Dorset's position as a leading area for research in transformative healthcare nationally.

Arts University Bournemouth, which is a leading specialist arts, design, media and performance institution with more than 3,400 students, is well known for preparing graduates for direct career entry in the creative industries. It engages with the local employers, community and economy and has an embedded culture of collaboration and entrepreneurialism. The University investments in the latest technology, equipment and facilities has attracted funding to support research and innovation projects with Dorset industry and develop an Innovation Studio to support local start-ups.

AECC University College - an institution dedicated to offering world-renowned courses in health sciences, AECC enrolls over 800 students on courses ranging from chiropractic, psychology, sport, exercise and health-science and medical-imaging including: ultrasound and radiology.

In addition, Adult Community Education and Training, charity, not-for-profit and commercial independent training and employer providers account for significant proportions of learning for those aged 25+ (30%) as well as over 40% of all the apprenticeships starts. They are also key education and skills providers for businesses, but also deliver information advice and guidance, pre-employment support, coaching, Special Educational Needs support, internships, study programmes, traineeships, apprenticeships, community learning, and skills support for the workforce.

COVID-19 recovery and renewal plans

COVID-19 has changed lives across the globe and of those living in Dorset in ways unimaginable a year ago.

Business resilience and stability were exposed, and the crisis affected disproportionately the youngest and those most vulnerable. Nevertheless, it has also created a significant boost to innovative working practices, opportunities for virtual skills development that did not exist before, and new approaches to business delivery across the region.

Throughout the pandemic, we have listened to Dorset's business and education communities, evolving the offerings to support these groups, putting new initiatives and investments in place and compiling a series of recommendations to government to inform recovery action in response to the impacts of COVID-19 on Dorset's economy. The [Dorset LEP COVID-19 Recovery Action and Recommendations to Government booklet](#) outlines the impact of COVID-19 on Dorset's economy, the action taken and planned, and the recommendations for recovery.

The response over recent months has been on targeted skills investment, focused on rebuilding the economy and recovery. Most recent examples include:

- **£2.7m towards a state-of-the-art [Integrated Rehabilitation Centre](#) at AECC University College bringing up capacity for services, intensified by the need to support the recovery during and after COVID-19.**

"The new facilities will enhance placement opportunities and allow us to grow provision into new areas in allied health, advanced clinical practice and other specialism areas in response to the demands of the local and regional health and care workforce."

Professor Lesley Haig, Vice-Chancellor AECC University College

- **£3.5 million towards [University Centre and Rural Business Hub](#) at Kingston Maurward College to enhance higher education opportunities for young people in rural Dorset and enable growth in small rural businesses.**

"It has long been recognised that progression to higher education is less good from the rural part of the county. This ambitious intervention, driven by the college, aims to help improve social mobility and opportunities for knowledge transfer... It is extremely exciting and a game-changer for both the college, Dorchester and the rural county."

Luke Rake, Chief Executive of Kingston Maurward College

- **£1.5 million towards [vital equipment and facility upgrades](#) at local colleges to improve skills provision and support key business sectors:**
- HE Centre at Weymouth College

"This is the first year of our BSc Hons in Professional Studies which provides further progression opportunities for our students, and as an HE cold-spot it is critical that our HE offer is strategically aligned with our core curriculum. Even during these challenging times, we have seen growth in our HE student numbers, and this centre will significantly enhance the student experience and continue to grow our provision."

Nigel Evans, Chief Executive of Weymouth College

- IT equipment, infrastructure, delivery of online teaching and digital access at Bournemouth and Poole College

"The recent pandemic has brought into sharp relief the importance of digital skills and digital infrastructure. This investment will benefit our students and staff enormously. Not only will it support the continuation of education even during lockdown periods, but it will also enhance our ability to help our students develop the digital skills they need to thrive in tomorrow's workforce"

Diane Grannell, Chief Executive of Bournemouth and Poole College

- **£350,000 towards [pioneering innovation](#) for the creative industries at Arts University Bournemouth (AUB) in addition to £1.5 million investment in the AUB's new entrepreneurial space, the Innovation Studio.**

"As a top sector specialist and leading arts university for the creative industries, we are always looking to innovate, collaborate and connect in ways that turn creative talent into careers."

Professor Emma Hunt,
Deputy Vice-Chancellor at AUB

"Dorset is one the fastest growing creative and digital hubs in Europe and a destination of choice for digital entrepreneurs... This funding will support local businesses to get back on their feet, while also helping to harness local creative talent and translate this into high quality jobs."

Luke Hall MP, Minister for Regional Growth and Local Government

- **£1.4 million towards [Institute for Medical Imaging and Visualisation](#) at Bournemouth University to contribute to new medical product and intellectual property developments and house the research for the next wave of 3D medical imaging, meeting the needs of industry, the healthcare sector and of technical education.**

"Medical imaging has become a central component of modern healthcare. Our ambition is to develop a portfolio of world-class research, education and professional development programmes based around this fantastic new facility at BU. We will be collaborating with partners across the University, with the NHS, and with industry, to further knowledge and practice in this rapidly evolving field."

Dr Jamie Franklin,
Clinical academic & Consultant Radiologist
at Royal Bournemouth Hospital

Throughout the pandemic, Dorset's universities have been working collaboratively with Public Health Dorset, local authorities and Dorset Clinical Commissioning Group to ensure steps are taken to implement safety advice, understand regional context, and work for the benefit of staff, students, and Dorset residents.

The Skills Advisory Panel and Board re-evaluated Dorset's skills strategy, and added the mechanisms for change to the aspirational model of Dorset's Total Skills Solution (see Skills strategy), maintaining strong focus on recovery, placed-based regeneration and future growth.

These mechanisms of change were among the key considerations in the development of big ideas for the future of skills in Dorset submitted by the SAPB for [Dorset's Living Better 10 year Investment Prospectus](#).

The SAPB has also been collaborating closely with stakeholders from local authorities to support their recovery plans and with the Department for Work and Pensions to support the 'plan for jobs'. A regular bi-monthly SAPB subgroup is also coming together to discuss with DWP latest statistics, updates, support and local coordination of the various initiatives. Individual providers have also collaborated in skills bootcamps, kickstart schemes and youth hubs applications. The development of the labour market and key industry monitoring dashboards with latest job opportunities and skills requirements has also enabled support of the DWP work coaches in identifying local opportunities.



Photo: Bournemouth University

Progress on our skills action plan

Talent attraction and retention

With an ambitious programme of activities under this theme's key focus areas, the SAPB has made progress in removing barriers to engagement within Dorset's educational and business communities and creating a more inclusive environment for all people and communities to participate and achieve their full potential.

Key areas of focus:

- 🔗 **Unlocking, attracting and retaining talent**
- 🔗 **Leadership and management**
- 🔗 **Workforce Excellence**

Key aims:

- Reducing skills gaps and shortages through research, strategic investment, business support and training to recruit, develop and improve workforce capability and productivity within firms
- Creating partnerships and an inclusive infrastructure where all communities can play an active part in the economy and all people, regardless of age, are inspired into meaningful careers
- Showcasing the region as the natural place to excel, unlocking expansion and investment in new services and capacity
- Supporting growing sectors by providing their leaders with ability to introduce and embed best practice, technology advancement and innovation that drives productivity and competitiveness



Visit [Dorset Skills Activities 2020-2022](#) for a full list of initiatives

Key achievements:

Unlocking, attracting and retaining talent

- **Strategic investment in skills, facilities and capabilities within educational providers:**
 - £13m Growth Deal Fund, £11m of which in educational institutions, enabling 628 new jobs, 4535 apprentices, and 140 new startups, supporting 17,084 learners
 - £11.5m Getting Building Fund, £8.5m of which directly supporting educational institutions, enabling 130 new jobs, 5 new business startups, supporting 10,000 learners
- **Enhancing local knowledge:**
 - £150,000 invested in building analytical capability and developing local intelligence - expanded our evidence base and engaged audiences with intelligence and analytical tools.
 - 6 Dorset labour market insight dashboards and reports created monitoring COVID-19
 - 8 key industry dashboards
 - Dorset Apprenticeship finder dashboard
 - LMI CPD Workshops delivered for careers leaders and DWP coaches
 - Consolidating employment support: Developing employer support and virtual learning web resources to promote available careers and redeployment support, e.g. NCS, Adviza
- **Nourishing powerful employer networks and partnerships:**
 - 50 Dorset Ambassadors
 - 6 Cornerstone Employers
 - 70 Enterprise Advisors
- **Attraction and outreach programmes delivered across partners:**
 - Universities – proactive attraction and recruitment activities bringing UK and international talent to the region
 - Universities – widening participation, inspirational and enrichment activities within schools
 - Southern Universities Network (SUN) widening participation work

Progress on our skills action plan

Talent attraction and retention

- **Targeted careers interventions based on local intelligence**
 - Delivery of Dorset's Careers Hub to align careers education with local skills needs
 - Working with 35 companies to deliver virtual work experience for 1,800 students
 - Delivering Dorset's online careers show with 60 exhibitors and focus on apprenticeships
 - CPD for careers professionals on online delivery
 - Gaining further funding to expand the Hub from 40 to 71 Dorset schools and offer an all-inclusive careers provision in the county.

Leadership & Management

- **Business support provided through Dorset Gateway**
 - Additional funding secured to expand business support – Dorset Gateway business relationship officers and advisors increased from 4 in 2019/20 to 9 FTE in 2020/21
 - £790,000 investment into various business support initiatives, including Peer Networks, COVID-19 response and EU transition support
 - 2,500 businesses supported
 - 450 businesses brokered into business growth services,
 - 80%+ satisfaction from service users across all business support programmes,
 - 250 businesses engaged in bid writing support per annum totalling around 500 hours of support
 - Over £500,000 of Innovate UK grant funding secured for Dorset businesses in 2020/21 so far via the bid writing support service - £1.2m secured since the service launched in June 2018
 - 30 scale-up/high-growth SME businesses engaged in support programmes
 - Over 180 participants supported through the Peer Network Programme

Workforce excellence

- **Understanding and addressing employer training needs**
 - Dorset 2020 Employer Skills Survey - 242 Dorset Employers surveyed/ interviewed
 - Weymouth College Back2Business Initiative - proactive employer support and engagement
- **Growing skills required to boost key established and growth sectors**
 - Delivering the Skills Support for the Workforce programme to upskill SME staff
 - Delivering and enhanced adult learning offer through Skills and Learning Adult Community Education
 - Supporting the Bournemouth University Social Entrepreneurs Forum (BUSEF)
 - Women Leaders South West programme - empowering women into the arts industry



Photo: Bournemouth Beach

Progress on our skills action plan

Skills to meet demand

The programme of activities under this theme has made progress in delivering a demand-led skills provision with focus on addressing inequalities and disadvantage in Dorset.

Key areas of focus:

- 🎯 Inspiring younger generations into meaningful careers
- 🎯 Retraining or retaining older people into meaningful careers
- 🎯 Addressing replacement demand
- 🎯 Innovative resourcing

Key aims:

- Targeting the most deprived communities
- Exploring ageing workforce innovation
- Identifying and addressing critical replacement demand
- Develop and align funding opportunities



Visit [Dorset Skills Activities 2020-2022](#) for a full list of initiatives

Key achievements:

Inspiring younger generations into meaningful careers

- **Targeted action to address deprivation and inequalities**
 - Delivering effective children and young people services across the two Local Authorities – targeted NEET & SEND support
 - Enhanced Careers Hub investment and provision for Weymouth and Portland
 - Collaborative work with the Local Authorities and supporting local projects
 - o Kings Park Activity & Learning Hub
 - o Digital Skills & Innovation Learning Centre– Boscombe
 - Partnerships for schools: Jobcentre Plus Support for Schools service and DWP's Mentoring Circle
 - Widening Participation and Outreach Activities - Universities widening participation teams and SUN network
- **Developing Open Campus – Arts University Bournemouth (AUB)**
 - A new faculty at AUB, Open Campus delivers the university's agenda of widening access and participation to higher education, lifelong learning, executive education and innovation. Launched in 2021, the faculty promotes innovation through industry collaboration and expands AUB's civic engagement activities, providing support for research and development, start-up residency via AUB's new Innovation Studio, as well as global provision of short courses.
- **Local skills and careers support delivered via Dorset-based charity Ansbury Guidance in 2020**
 - 12,000+ young people and adults supported with employment and training goals
 - 46 schools supported across Dorset
 - Developing and delivery of "Digital confidence building" courses based on local intelligence of digital skills gaps and 100% retention rate was achieved across all courses



"The tipping point for me was during the first lockdown. I had to help my daughter access online learning for school, which was giving me panic attacks, as I just did not have enough digital skills. Now I can support my daughter confidently, I know my way around a computer and my typing, email and MS Teams skills have improved. I feel so much more confident!"

Parent testimonial "Digital confidence building" course

Progress on our skills action plan

Skills to meet demand

- **Developing collaborative interventions to support employability – Skills & Learning Adult Community Education delivery of Sector Based Work Academies (SWAPs) in collaboration with Job Centre Plus (JCP) and Employers**
 - SWAPs help those in receipt of unemployment benefits to reskill and apply for jobs in an area of work that meets local employers' immediate and future needs
 - Skills & Learning have designed and started providing the SWAPs pre-employment training (PET) package in collaboration with local employers and are working on a parallel programme for the longer term unemployed, 'Breaking the Cycle'.
 - This has resulted thus far in 60 SWAP enrolments, 38 Completions, 31 Interviews, 8 employed



" Hello..., I GOT THE JOB 🙌🙌🙌 I'm over the moon, thank you all for all your help ... you were all great "

- SWAP Learner

- **Graduate Employability Programme – Bournemouth University 2019/20**
 - Initiatives to encourage entrepreneurship, networking and business development:
 - o Dynamo challenge in partnership with 5 south coast universities
 - o Dorset Spark Challenge in partnership with Dorset Growth Hub
 - o Santander Internship Programme offering 10 weeks' paid employment
 - o 200 students signed up for an Institute of Directors subsidised student membership
 - o 1500 careers appointments
 - o 200+ workshops and lectures including CV Labs, Psychometric Tests, 'LinkedIn' labs
 - o 751 students registered and 1100+ engaged in events for the Global Talent Programme Extra-Curricular Award delivered in collaboration between lead academics and industry practitioners
 - Annual 'Your Career Week' - a five-day programme of careers and inspiration activities including
 - o 100+ guest speakers/ exhibitors
 - o Careers Fair with 70 exhibitors, 2,000 + students
 - o "Get Into Teaching" Fair
 - o Inspirational speakers, including Ben Fogle and Dr Anne-Marie Imafidon- 1,000+ students
 - o CV Surgery, Volunteering, Wellbeing and Careers day
 - o 'Spotlight on...' sessions on key growth areas, e.g. Cyber Security
 - Health and Social Sciences Careers Fair - 45 exhibitors and 300 students
 - Part-Time Jobs Fairs – raising in popularity each year with 25 exhibitors, 1,165 students
 - Spring Recruitment Fair 40 employers and 951 students, with roles across many industry sectors with SMEs and larger employers offering 'live' graduate and placement roles



" The careers fair was a very valuable resource for me. It introduced me to a number of local companies that I had not heard of before and talking to the representatives for each company helped me to get a much better idea of how the job role would be. It also allowed me to get a picture of which companies I had the correct skill-set for, and those for which I would have to consider further personal development if I wanted to pursue them."

- Student testimonial, Bournemouth University

Skills to meet demand

■ Graduate Employability Programme – Arts University Bournemouth 2019/20

- Increased capacity of the Careers & Employability service with a new member of staff
- 347 careers appointments (31% increase)
- 99 hours of careers education within the curriculum, reaching 2507 students (36% increase)
- Part-time jobs fair - 460 students, 12 employers – most of them local
- The first Creative Industries Fair with speakers from local industry in March 2020 unfortunately had to be cancelled due to COVID 19 and replaced by portfolio reviews with local creatives
- Online delivery throughout the pandemic - "Top Tip" videos, workshops, industry speakers, Business start-up Plan.Make.Do courses - have all seen higher attendance virtually
- Career starter Kickstarter -a week of events targeted at graduate careers, including "Connecting with Industry in the Pandemic", "Presenting yourself" and "Staying Confident through the job hunt" workshops
- Adobe Associate Certificates offered –120 students achieved their Adobe qualification
- AUB Creative Futures Fest with themed days aimed at informing and inspiring students involving the Arts Council, local Councils and industrial partners.



"Online we generally have above average sign-ups for events but many students then don't come, relying on recordings to catch up later. Many students also don't turn their cameras on and are often reluctant to enter break out rooms thus missing opportunities to talk to different people or practice communication skills as that they would on campus. It is much easier to remain in their comfort zone. The advantage of the zoom world is that we have been able to attract a broad range of speakers who might not otherwise be able to come to an event in Dorset. It has also reduced our costs in terms of travel expenses. But we wonder if zoom fatigue is taking over..."

Alison Zorraquin, Senior Employability Officer, Arts University Bournemouth
- reflecting on virtual careers delivery

■ Careers programmes at schools and colleges

- Colleges and schools offer a variety of initiatives, many supported by the Dorset Careers Hub, including expert independent careers and employability information, advice, guidance, support, training and signposting to successful local career pathways. Events that over the past year include virtual careers fairs, enterprise advisers and employer engagement, virtual work experience. These activities have resulted in remarkable improvements on Dorset's schools and colleges overall Gatsby Benchmarks rankings.



Progress on our skills action plan

Skills to meet demand

Retraining or retaining older people into meaningful careers

- Successfully gaining 50 plus Choices Mid Life MOT pilot funding – developing a week of virtual sessions, resources and support on personal health, wealth and development.
- Collaborative work - BCP & Dorset Councils delivery of a lifelong learning strategy to support work and well-being, incorporate culture and arts, sustainable living, high-quality careers education, and opportunities to retrain
 - o Kings Park Activity & Learning Hub
 - o Digital Skills & Innovation Learning Centre– Boscombe
- Focus on short courses and life-long learning across Dorset's universities
 - o For example, between August 2019 and July 2020 578 individuals participated in an Arts University Bournemouth upskilling workshop or public design skill lecture. The university has also launched their new Open Campus faculty in 2021

Innovative resourcing

- Creating leadership collaborations - lobbying government, SAPB, LEP network

Replacement labour demand in skills sets

- **Investing in Local hubs of specialism - £9.24m allocated investment to deliver specialist training facilities**
 - Centre of Excellence for Engineering and Advanced Manufacturing - Bournemouth and Poole College
 - Centres of Excellence for Motor Vehicle Technology, Engineering and Construction skills - Weymouth College)
 - Higher Education Centre and Rural Business Development Hub - Kingston Maurward College
 - Institute of Medical Imaging and Visualisation and Orthopaedic Research Institute - Bournemouth University
 - Integrated Healthcare Centre - AECC University College
 - Innovation Studio – Arts University Bournemouth
 - Green Classroom - Kingston Maurwood College and Hengistbury Head
 - Defence Innovation Centre - Dorset Innovation Park



Photo: Innovation Studio

Progress on our skills action plan

Skills for future growth

The programme of activities under this theme has delivered significant strategic investment in emerging growth areas enabling collaborations and partnerships and developing related future-proved skills provision and supply chain development.

Key areas of focus:

- 🎯 **Growth cluster collaboration**
- 🎯 **Business-education Links**
- 🎯 **Supply chain development**
- 🎯 **Innovative resourcing**

Key aims:

- Creating mechanisms for knowledge sharing, collaboration and grass roots development
- Investing in local hubs of knowledge and centres of excellence in specialisms of future importance and the supply chains around them



Visit [Dorset Skills Activities 2020-2022](#) for a full list of initiatives

Key achievements:

Growth Cluster Collaboration

- **Investing in strategic growth cluster collaboration projects - £20.8m :**
 - Innovation Studio (Arts University Bournemouth)
 - Defence Innovation Centre (Dorset Innovation Park)
 - Institute for Medical Imaging and Visualisation (Bournemouth University)
 - Orthopaedic Research Institute (Bournemouth University)
 - Clinical Trials Unit (Bournemouth University)
 - Integrated Healthcare Centre (AECC University College)
- **Investing and developing Wessex Fields** – a science park where innovative medical training and research will meet leading edge technology in Healthcare

Business Education Links

- **Programmes strengthening the relationships with employers:**
 - SWAP sector-based work academy programme (Department for Work and Pensions)
 - Dorset wide Enterprise Advisor Network (EAN) and Careers Hub expansion (Dorset LEP and CEC)
 - Business Forum (Dorset LEP)
 - Employer relations transformation project (Weymouth College)
 - Dorset Engineering and Manufacturing Cluster – supporting Dorset's engineering and manufacturing community of over 2,000 companies, creating opportunities to collaborate, create and innovate and linking with industry partners, schools, colleges and universities.

Progress on our skills action plan

Skills for future growth

Business Education Links

- **Collaborative partnerships, research and innovation to support SMEs – Arts University Bournemouth (AUB)**
 - Since 2017 AUB have supported over 150 local SMEs with research and innovation projects
 - AUB have awarded nearly £100k in innovation grants to businesses
 - The university also supported local SMEs to create 50 new products or services

Supply Chain Development

- Designing skills pipeline for identified clusters and working across partners to create new courses (e.g. clinical trials, marine aquaculture, aviation and health and community), innovative delivery solutions (e.g. AUB Open Campus) and programmes (Ferndown School T-Levels)

Growth Accelerator Capability

- Funding to deliver specialist skills including:
 - Creation of an Agritech Centre
 - Providing specialist equipment - Digital Design project and LapSafe Learning project



Photo: University workshop

Case studies

Dorset Careers Hub

Dorset LEP, BCP Council, Dorset Council,
Careers & Enterprise Company

Identified need: Employer engagement and skills gaps & employer and industry demand

Key Priority area: Talent attraction and retention (Unlocking, attracting and retaining talent) and Skills to meet demand (Inspiring young people into great careers)

The Project

The Dorset Careers Hub is led by the Dorset LEP and has played an important role in the past 12 months in aligning careers education with local skills needs, and in responding to the Covid crisis with innovative solutions that provide young people with continued careers support. In response to the crisis, the Hub has put in place a range of solutions to ensure young people still have the support they need, including:

- Virtual work experience for 1,800 students, provided by 35 different companies.
- An online career show with 60 exhibiting companies focusing on apprenticeships.
- CPD for careers professionals on how to deliver their services to students online.
- Online delivery of careers guidance to supplement the statutory advice given in schools, to meet the increased need arising from Covid's impact on student progression routes.

Rationale

The Covid crisis and resulting disruption in schools has severely affected careers education in the county and the exposure of young people to employer contact has suffered immensely.

How was it completed

To align careers education with local skills needs, the Hub has used two main approaches.

- Firstly, the Hub has leveraged the Dorset LEP's resources and capabilities in labour market analysis. This has been used to review all careers education support and ensure it is aligned with Dorset's biggest employment sectors and growth industries, making sure these industries are well represented in events, networks and projects. The information has also formed the basis of labour market CPD training which has been delivered to school staff across the county to ensure that students are given relevant information about local employment prospects.
- Secondly, the Hub has formed and developed a local business steering group of 'Cornerstone Employers'. This gives businesses an input into the priorities and work of the Hub and allows the Hub to involve employers with projects which benefit young people in the county, such as running a series of aspiration-raising careers webinars where students can learn about local opportunities. The group has also been a forum to identify issues for long-term collaboration, such as creating more employment opportunities for young people with SEND.

Challenges

The COVID-19 restrictions and large number of stakeholders.

Impact

As a result of the Dorset Career Hub's strong performance, the number of schools in the Hub has expanded and it has received additional funding to achieve full coverage of all state-funded schools and colleges in the county. New schools added this academic year have been supported with targeted funding to assist them to quickly develop their careers delivery, and in the most recent data they have made rapid progress, doubling the number of schools which have satisfactory careers education programmes in place.

"To receive confirmation of renewed funding for Dorset Careers Hub, in competitive times, is extremely encouraging.

Studies have shown that good careers support, including employer interactions from a young age, help students from all backgrounds to better achieve their potential.

We are ambitious, and I'm extremely happy to increase the work we do with schools, colleges, training providers and public sector bodies, to ensure every young person in Dorset has the best possible life chances."

Luke Rake, Chair of Dorset Careers Hub Steering Group



Photo: Dorset Cornerstone Employers

Case studies

Developing apprenticeships with local employers

The Bournemouth and Poole College

Identified need: Employer engagement and skills gaps

Key Priority area: Skills for future growth

The Company

3 Sided Cube are a mobile app development agency who create tech for good.

Based in Bournemouth they work with global clients pioneering disruptive technology.

Their award-winning work on disaster preparedness and emergency apps has seen them work with organisations including high street retailer Boots and humanitarian charity British Red Cross.

Their proudest work includes collaborations with the American (and International) Red Cross, and the World Resource Institute. They've had quite a bit of success, with over 30 million downloads, across over 80 countries. Their apps have been translated into 55 different languages.

The Challenge

One of 3 Sided Cube's biggest difficulties is around talent acquisition and in particular the recruitment of software developers. Graduates often leave university with little or no actual experience of work, and those that have, will often have been an intern where they are asked to work around the edges of a project.

The key to a good developer isn't the technical skills that they teach at university. Being good at a coding is the baseline. What makes a great developer is the ability to work well in teams. That involves technical knowledge of the tools involved and the softer interpersonal skills required to compromise and work together to deliver the best solution.

To overcome these recruitment issues, 3 Sided Cube decided to investigate Apprenticeships as a way to bring new talent in to the agency. They wanted members of the team that they could develop from the ground up and help shape them to be a valuable part of the local talent pool.

Solution

3 Sided Cube have worked with The College for a couple of years, regularly attending the Digital Advisory Board (DAB). The DAB brings together local employers to consult on the latest college initiatives and courses. These links to the college enabled them to find out about the process of engaging in Apprenticeships and to also utilise their expertise to help secure their first apprentice.

They are a firm believer that a high tide raises all boats, and the better the quality of the local talent pool, the higher the chance of their future team being better.

Results

Apprenticeships have offered the perfect balance of having an extra member of the production team who can help and support as a productive resource, alongside them also being able to help the apprentice prioritise their learning.

Thanks to their scheduling methods and building in some additional time for the apprentice to learn as they go, they have found it straightforward to offer the right balance of on-the-job learning as part of the Apprenticeship training programme.

A key success factor for 3 Sided Cube was that they built a relationship with their apprentice over time. By offering work experience and internships, and then keeping in touch, they were able to continue talking to them while they were considering options. This relationship allowed them to be able to bring them in to the team with a specific and focussed role and because they knew them, they were already confident that they would fit in to the wider team.

"Having the Apprenticeship as a way to attract and bring in local talent to grow with us as a business is a huge benefit for us. And it has certainly allowed us to nurture our relationship with the college and opened our eyes to how flexible and relevant Apprenticeships are for the STEM industries.

They also bring with them flexibility - it allows us to bring in extra capacity into the team - resource that can be productive even whilst their journey of learning is continuing. It is also a fantastic way to ensure you're giving your existing team opportunities to develop in mentoring and coaching on existing ways of working. And done correctly - with the right understanding of how much time should be "learning" vs "doing" and a commitment to invest in someone's development through mentoring and knowledge sharing, Apprenticeships can provide a fantastic longer-term strategy to recruiting into some of the more technical disciplines.

The college have been fantastic. The process of taking on apprentices hasn't been too rigid or onerous. That means it's allowed for us as a company to create and build a really strong relationship with our current apprentice. That helps from both a cultural and a conceptual point of view, in terms of the apprentices having the true experience of employment and knowing that they are an equal member of the team.

We're looking forward to continuing to offer more Apprenticeships in the future and in particular supporting developer Apprenticeships. And we're also keen to encourage more females into the industry too.

Rich Strachan, Managing Director, 3 Sided Cube



Photo: 3 Sided Cube

"Things change so quickly in this industry and I'd heard so many companies and leaders say that you don't need a degree anymore and that learning on the job offered better opportunities. Choosing to do an Apprenticeship seemed to be the ideal way for me to get into the industry.

I have a real passion for software development. I spent two years studying a BTEC, which gave me the background, but also the time to mature and cement my passion. Continuing the Apprenticeship through the College meant that I could also continue studying in an environment I was familiar with being taught by the same tutors too.

My current role at 3 Sided Cube is Android Developer Apprentice and is 100% the best decision I've ever made. I originally came to the company back in Year 10 on work experience, then last year on an internship. I'm so grateful they've had me back for my Apprenticeship and to be the company's first apprentice is a real honour.

I am treated as a full member of the team. I am involved on all projects and meetings. For me the best part has been getting to work on a live project after just three weeks of being here! It has given me such an insight into how the company works while developing apps.

The role is much more collaborative than I ever thought it would be. I get to work with other members of the team, ask questions and get feedback. Seeing what I've created come to life and being used is just amazing!

I think doing an Apprenticeship has made me much more confident and helped me to understand how I fit into a business. I get to apply the knowledge I have learnt, get direct feedback from senior members of the team and it's that feedback which has helped me hugely. It's helped me to get the skills I'll need to hopefully one day secure my dream role as a senior developer.

To be a good apprentice you need dedication, but remember the work- life-college balance. When I finish, I want to stay on at this company and broaden my developing skills – including iOS and specialise in React Native and other developer languages.

If you're more practical and value gaining skills in the workplace then an Apprenticeship is 100% the right choice for you. There are lots of companies who are seeing the benefits of on-the-job learning. You can be academically minded and refer to your notes while making a live product. You get greater flexibility to learn how you want to learn rather than in a set way. No matter what industry you want to go in to there will be an Apprenticeship that's right for you."

Case studies

Partnership for healthcare skills for Dorset Bournemouth University

Identified need: Addressing skills gaps, shortages and hard-to-fill vacancies

Key Priority area: Talent attraction and retention (Unlocking, attracting and retaining talent) and Skills to meet demand (Inspiring young people into great careers)

The Project

Developing a long-term partnership between Bournemouth University and health and social care providers in Dorset to meet the high demand for highly qualified healthcare professionals in Dorset.

The Rationale

The NHS is the largest employer in Dorset. The demand for health and social care professionals is already exceeding supply and is only set to expand further in the coming years with the aftermath of the pandemic adding to the pressures of an ageing population in Dorset. The sector's staffing needs are a key priority for local partners, as outlined in local authorities' and educational providers' strategy documents and [Dorset's Living Better 10 year Investment Prospectus](#) highlighting health and wellbeing as a key area for future investment. Strong collaboration with local educational providers is therefore critical to develop the pipeline of skills and talent so that Dorset residents continue to benefit from the research, skills and infrastructure such investment and collaboration will bring.

How was it completed

The collaboration between Bournemouth University and Dorset's health and social care providers has evolved over the years forming strong partnership across all aspects of the care system, including:

- **Joint research projects and technical innovation**

With a shared goal of helping people live better for longer, the two organisations collaborate on a number of research projects – tackling everything from nurse retention to how best to support patients with hip osteoarthritis. The hospital match-funds several PhD studentships and there are members of staff who work between BU and the hospitals through visiting positions, committee memberships and joint appointments.

- **Professional development for staff**

Hospital staff can develop their skills at BU, as the university is the hospitals' leading Higher Education CPD provider, with the vast majority of their continuing professional development (CPD) activities organised through BU.

- **Student placement opportunities**

BU students from across healthcare disciplines undertake placements at the hospitals, giving them the chance to put their learning into practice with support and guidance from a mentor or practice supervisor.

Impact

These partnerships support the care of patients locally, nationally, and internationally.

The local healthcare sector directly benefits from the skills gained through a Bournemouth University education, in courses such as nursing, midwifery and paramedic sciences.

These benefits are also felt by those living in Dorset, many of whom are directly cared for by BU graduates or students as a part of the region's health and care provision.

Many graduates go on to work for the hospitals, such as [Cancer Care Matron at University Hospitals Dorset Marie Miller](#), a BSc (Hons) Nursing and MA Advanced Practice graduate, featured in this case study.

The university hospital status given to University Hospitals Dorset NHS Foundation Trust (formerly the Royal Bournemouth and Christchurch Hospitals and Poole Hospital NHS Foundation Trusts), formalises this relationship and will lead to additional benefits and partnership working.

With both organisations working to develop and grow the skills of staff and students to the benefit of Dorset's residents in their care, the university hospital status provides an exciting and unique opportunity for both organisations to make a real difference to the health of the region, nation and the world.

"BU gave me better insight into how I am as a person, and how my skills and knowledge are enhanced by theory and thinking about how I put the things that I have learnt at university into practice. What you learn at university never leaves you, and my time at BU has given me the skills and knowledge to be a better person and make the hospital a better place for everyone else."

*Marie Miller
Cancer Care Matron University
Hospitals Dorset*



Photo: Marie Miller,
Bournemouth University

Case studies

Engineering Centre of Excellence Weymouth College



Photos:

Weymouth College

Identified need: Employer engagement and skills gaps

Key Priority area: Skills to meet demand

The Project

- Enhanced engineering workshop and resources to allow delivery of new Apprenticeship Standards
- Worked with local employers for advice on machinery required to suit local demand
- Developed new full time curriculum to suit local employers needs
- Invested in future technologies to raise the department profile within the local community

Rationale

The engineering workshop in Weymouth College was in need of investment to bring it up to current engineering industry standards. The equipment was old, in need of service and was well overdue an update. With the introduction of the new engineering apprenticeship standards, there was a need to improve the resources to be able to deliver the standards.

In a challenging world, the College needed to ensure the student numbers are maintained and a professional and exciting environment is created for the students.

How was it completed

The College developed and submitted a bid to Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership to improve the workshop and facilities and was successful in securing the funding to make their vision for an engineering centre of excellence a reality.

They also created a new classroom equipped with top of the range computers.

To make sure they were purchasing the right equipment, they arranged an employer advisor group to visit the College.

The feedback they received from the employers on the facilities and the equipment purchased to suit the mechanical engineering needs were excellent.

Challenges

As they were about to start purchasing the equipment, the pandemic hit, creating a challenge for both the completion of the project and the launch of the centre. The team successfully arranged the required machinery, and resources ready to be installed in readiness for face to face teaching in the new academic year.

Impact

- The new equipment and resources have been greatly received by the students.
- The new computer suite and advanced technologies have proven to be very popular.
- The new facilities in the workshop have allowed Weymouth College to accommodate more students, and in turn allow them to have more apprentices.
- They are now fully equipped to deliver the new BTEC RQF Engineering Qualifications, & the new Engineering Apprenticeship Standards.
- The feedback from employers that have already seen the equipment is very good.
- They are looking forward to coming in to see it in place, and in use.
- The College is in conversations with new employers potentially looking to take on new apprentices.



Case studies

Digital Learner Support Skills & Learning Adult Community Education

Identified need: Skills gaps

Key Priority area: Skills to meet demand

The Project

A flexible team 18 Digital Learner Support Assistants (DLSAs) recruited, trained and mentored by Skills & Learning to respond to the needs of learners lacking digital skills and confidence and allow them to access online learning programmes, engage in activities and make the most of the resources, while facilitating tutors to focus on course delivery.

Rationale

- The ethos of adult & community education is about engagement, reducing isolation, supporting hard to reach learners, removing barriers and giving adults opportunities they haven't previously had or been confident enough to access.
- The March 2020 lockdown however threw the usual delivery models and this engagement ethos up in the air.
- The team successfully identified and developed provision for online delivery and offered alternative support to learners lacking the required equipment to access online sessions.
- It quickly transpired that access to equipment did not necessarily mean smooth delivery as a significant number of learners started disengaging due to their lack of digital confidence.
- Valuable learning time was being lost with tutors supporting learners to get into the online sessions, engage in the sessions and fully utilise the various tools and resources.
- Digitally enabled learners were getting frustrated about the lost time and tutors were running out of solutions to keep all engaged and progressing...

How was it completed

- The team identified learning support assistants (LSAs) with demonstrated digital skills and positive approach to embedding technology in practice and the essential digital skills required to access and engage in online learning platforms and various workarounds for common issues.
- The LSAs were put through a crash course in essential digital skills for learning, troubleshooting broadband and Wi-Fi connection problems, using various devices to get online.
- The training was developed using learning modules from the Education & Training Foundation (ETF), the HOLEX digital ACE project, YouTube and other video tutorials, mentoring, IT Technician support and operating system training videos.
- A coordinator was assigned, and systems and processes developed to recognise learners at risk of disengaging, slipping behind or disrupting online classes and match them up with a digital learning support assistant.
- Office 365 business voice lines were purchased to allow DLSAs working from home to contact learners and support them with step-by-step guidance. Laptops were also purchased to enable the DLSAs to develop their own skills and have the means to support learners.

- DLSAs made contact with learners before the start of their course and guided them by phone to join their class online. They then accompanied them virtually during the class and for on average 3 sessions until the joining and engagement with learning resources became smoother. Some learners have continued to need digital support beyond the initial sessions.

Challenges

- With no additional funding to support this initiative, there was the accepted risk that the engagement, retention and achievement of digitally weak learners would justify the expense.
- Despite several years of supporting the workforce to embrace technology to enhance learning, they were at a relatively low starting point, having been classroom based historically, working under the direction of a tutor and supporting individual learners with mostly paper-based learning activities.
- With 60% of learners being unemployed, under-employed or on a low wage and 35% reporting additional learning needs, a significant number of learners did not have access to digital devices and reliable internet connection to support effective online learning.
- Large numbers also had to manage home schooling and prioritising their children for access to available devices. Alongside the development of the DLSA support, the team also had to find ways to support some learners with devices and data packages and the guidance to use them.
- The November and January lockdowns provided the additional challenge of supporting a larger group of online learners, many joining courses to reduce social isolation and mental health strain.
- Embedding online safety and appropriate 'netiquette' was also a challenge with a group of learners who have had little exposure to similar workplace practices.
- The digital skills support often extended into providing other types of information, advice and guidance and referrals to health, wellbeing and financial support services.
- The additional costs of providing Covid-secure learning centres, the increased spend on tech and digital support plus the reduction in learner fees, employer fees and funding income have resulted in a forecast budget shortfall of £350,000 for the service.

Impact

- Since the start of Jan 2021, digital learner support has been provided in 125 online classes.
- The project allowed learners on traditionally classroom-based courses (e.g. those support health & wellbeing (Tai-Chi) and art) to move to online versions of their courses and engage effectively.
- The feared reduction in attendance expected did not materialise. In fact, attendance on adult education budget funded courses increased from 82% in Jan 2020 to 85% in Jan 2021.
- In addition, the workforce itself has greatly upskilled in a short period of time, preparing them for inevitable further changes to business delivery.
- Learner digital confidence has increased, and this will support progression into further learning or employment and there is an opportunity to encourage learners into digital based qualification courses, helping to plug the skills gaps identified by local employers.
- Anecdotally, some learners feel confident to explore career options they hadn't previously considered, feel more resilient when overcoming technical challenges and fewer are disengaging when things get difficult.

"It is no exaggeration to say that without the Digital Learner Support initiative we would not have succeeded in getting as many courses up and running this year.

Many learners would have missed the opportunity to participate in remote learning at this time when connections with others and keeping minds active are so important to maintain well-being."

Sarah Rice

Curriculum and Quality Manager
Skills & Learning Adult Community Education

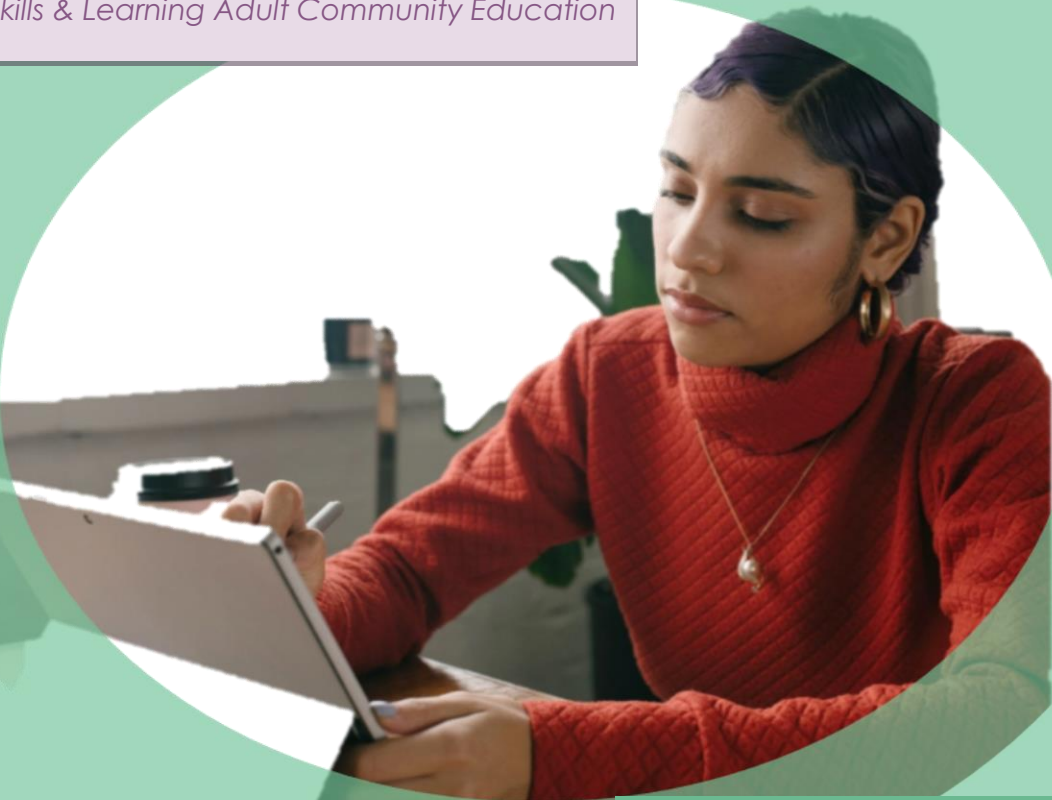


Photo: Surface, Unsplash

"Thank you for your help! It made a big difference to be able to talk through the issues of setting up and accessing the work I need to do. And here I am on Teams!"

Learner

Skills & Learning Adult Community
Education

Case studies

Start-up Innovation

Arts University Bournemouth (AUB)

Identified need: Employer links

Key Priority area: Skills for future growth

The Company

IoT Solutions is a start-up business based in Dorset providing end-to-end solutions for the digital Internet of Things (IoT) sector.

The business specialises in the design, delivery and support of IoT projects.

They use multiple technological solutions to design the devices, build bespoke software and manage the processes that fit private and public organisation needs.

These services can have wide ranging applications and effects from parking to waste management and water safety.

For example, IoT Solutions have been working on devices that monitor how full bins are and whether unauthorised use of parking zones is occurring, which can drive efficiencies and bring more money to public services.

The Challenge

Among the difficulties young and promising businesses as IoT Solutions face is around accessing technology, skills and resources to prototype their creative solutions and bring their ideas through to fruition.

Solution

AUB has invested in state of the art technologies including Selective Laser Sintering (SLS) 3D printing. This additive manufacturing technology is a popular choice for engineers and manufacturers and uses high power laser to sinter small particles of polymer powder into a solid structure based on a 3D model.

The university has also been successful in attracting a £1.2m investment from the European Regional Development Fund to support research and innovation projects with Dorset Industry and £1.4 million from the Dorset Growth Deal to develop an Innovation Studio to support start-ups in the region.

To facilitate engagement and enable businesses to work with talented staff and students on solutions to their design problems, AUB has developed a series of workshop events, introducing the benefits of these technological advances for local businesses.

For example, "Meet the Maker" workshops are run in conjunction with local business and focus on applications of technology and design theory, such as the Introduction to 3D printing in collaboration with industrial designer Studio Wood and experts at AUB's Museum of Design in Plastics.

Linked to the workshops, AUB also facilitates match-funded Innovation Vouchers which support businesses undertaking Research and Innovation projects. Access Vouchers also support businesses to access AUB's world-class facilities, which include SLS 3D printing, CNC routing, 3 and 5 axis CNC milling for prototyping and testing.

All these collaborative approaches help businesses to realise their potential, develop new skills, experiment with new equipment, and make contacts with like-minded professionals across the region.

Results

In 2018, Emma Mahy, founder and Director of IoT Solutions, attended one of AUB's industry outreach events on SLS 3D printing, hosted by industrial design agency Studio Wood and the Museum of Design in Plastics (MoDiP).

Deciding that SLS prototyping was right for their stage of product development, the business was awarded an Access Voucher that enabled them to prototype MVP (minimum viable prototype) device casings in AUB's workshop.

The finished prototype went on to secure their place in the Digital Catapult LPWAN Testbed and is now part of their Future Networks Lab.

This relationship has helped IoT Solutions secure several local authority contracts in the UK.

As a result, the business required investment in production and was awarded an AUB-ERDF innovation grant to test their first injection moulded product, using the services of a specialist local company.

The business has gone on to secure new contracts in a highly competitive market and win a 2019 Digital Catapult Platinum Award.

"The primary challenges we needed to overcome were associated with moving our engineering research and development programme onto the next phase; moving from prototype hardware to production ready devices. Without learning about the possibilities available for prototypes and without the support of the broader AUB team we would have struggled to develop and refine a production ready product – that support has been invaluable to us."

Emma Mahy, IoT Solutions

"We have the unique opportunity to realise ideas with great commercial potential by bringing together exciting new talent with state of the art equipment."

*Fran Conrad
MA Design and Innovation Course Leader*



Photo: Arts University Bournemouth

Looking forward

Our Vision for the Future: Skilled, Productive & Resilient

Dorset's vision is for a highly skilled workforce that meets the needs of the local economy and priority business sectors.

We want our people to become better skilled, more resilient and productive so that our future economic growth is driven by greater worker productivity not just relying on workforce growth.

By 2030, our ambition is that:



Dorset's labour market is recognised as smarter, with more agile workforce, producing more with fewer resources.



New businesses see Dorset as a leader in delivering growth opportunities – driven by the availability of new and emerging skills within an enabling infrastructure.



Dorset is a region of opportunity, achieving a net inflow of talent – built on an increased 'opportunity for a great career' combined with an increased 'opportunity to live' in a high quality, dynamic and inclusive region.



Dorset is achieving stronger replacement labour force levels – with increases in availability of skill sets demanded by the new growth clusters alongside increases in volume to support broader business growth.



Dorset is embracing the demographic crunch – and identifying innovative and inclusive approaches that address the challenges and benefit the entire region, unlocking the talent within an older workforce and tapping into a rich expertise.



Dorset is at the forefront of training and skills development for the jobs of the future and the unique highly desirable human skills which artificial intelligence (AI) and machines cannot replicate.



There are well-defined pathways into work for school and college leavers, supported by excellent, current and evidenced careers advice.

Our Local Skills Report gives detailed evidence to support actions on our journey to achieve our 2030 ambitions. The Dorset Investment Prospectus outlines the skills priorities for economic recovery and rebuilding linked to Covid-19 together with the future look to enable business, inspire thinking and be naturally creative.

Our immediate skills priorities for 2021/22 are:

- 🕒 **Recovery** – pan-Dorset, focused on economic recovery, upskilling and retraining
- 🕒 **Place based regeneration** – scale and Dorset wide focus
- 🕒 **Future growth** – talent and attraction including innovation and enterprise

We will develop a talent and skills pipeline for identified clusters with a focus on transferable skills and innovation across sectors. We are developing a talent programme identifying clear employment access routes and building on the innovation ecosystem framework with universities, colleges and specialist centres across Dorset, with a focus on:

- Business access and engagement;
- Communicating existing opportunities;
- Aligned to future business support for innovation.

Working with partners, we will achieve a future skills pipeline for identified needs through activity such as the development of new courses, i.e those in clinical trials, marine aquaculture, aviation and health and community. We continue to offer a stimulus/investment package for local growth/scale up companies and inward investors in both the cluster and its supply chain and aligning a new 'investor academy' alongside to support business access to finance, while driving the acceleration of the £1bn Smart Place Investment Plan and aligning the digital strategies across Dorset.

The Skills Advisory Panel and Board will continue to work with local partners to support our future work and help to overcome the challenges we face. Our partners will champion the work of the SAPB to others and continue to utilise our rich evidence base, growing it through data contributions, case studies and analysis. Our partners will inform of developments relative to the activities and priorities in this report and continue to deliver strategies based on the values, priorities and ambitions outlined in this report.

We will create a lifelong learning skills ecosystem for Dorset where employers, educational providers, communities and policy makers work together in a joint effort to deliver evidence based interventions. This will address both the supply and demand for people and skills, whilst tackling the significant issues of social disadvantage and business productivity, increasing job satisfaction, stimulating investment and innovation. This will involve liaison and networking with the full spectrum of businesses, ranging from freelance and micro businesses to large employers and will in turn narrow Dorset's productivity gap, increase economic growth and improve living standards for people in Dorset.

The Dorset Local Skills Report details the rationale behind our vision, our priorities and the headline actions to achieve our ambitions. It sits alongside the Local Industrial Strategy and Investment Prospectus to reflect a holistic view of not only the skills needs which are required to propel Dorset into economic growth, but also the infrastructure to ensure our region can access the education and training it requires to build, retain and attract a skilled workforce both now and in the future.

Champion Dorset skills

We encourage local partners to support the work of Dorset's Skills Advisory Panel and Board by:

- Utilising the evidence base and growing it through data contributions, case studies and analysis
- Informing us of developments relevant to the activities and priorities outlined in this report
- Tailoring delivery strategies based on the priorities and ambitions outlined in this report

Are you or your organisation contributing to the delivery of Dorset's skills priorities?

Would you like to share your case studies and feedback AECC?

Send your insight to

DorsetLEP@bournemouth.ac.uk



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