

THAMES VALLEY SKILLS UNIT IMPACT REPORT



**Local Skills
Improvement Plan**
2025

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THE THAMES VALLEY SKILLS UNIT

The Thames Valley Skills Unit is a team dedicated to skills and workforce development in the Thames Valley Chamber, the designated Employer Representative Body across Berkshire and Oxfordshire. We work on behalf of local employers, in all the areas we serve, to ensure that education and training providers are delivering skills and training that will improve the local economy and productivity.

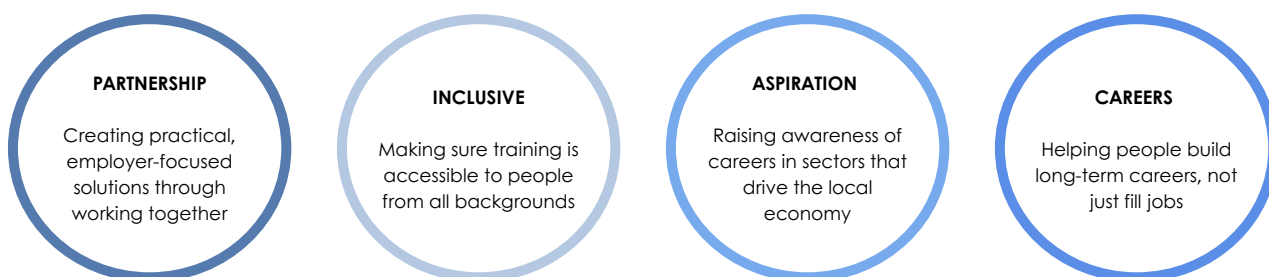
To do this we:

- Provide information to help local education and training providers design and improve courses
- Build connections between business and education
- Signpost and promote training and workforce development opportunities for employers and local people

SUMMARY OF OUR WORK

Since 2022 we have developed Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs) for our region. We have two plans- one for [Berkshire](#), and one for [Oxfordshire](#).

Employers told us they often struggle to find people with the right skills. Many said there is a disconnect between education and business, and that training does not always reflect the reality of the workplace. The LSIPs were designed to tackle this, by putting the voice of employers at the centre of decisions about skills and training. Through thousands of conversations with businesses, four main themes were agreed, and priority sectors were identified.



The LSIPs are now embedded in Berkshire and Oxfordshire's skills landscapes, and we have created a robust model for involving employers in skills, in a meaningful way. This video showcases some of our work: [Thames Valley Local Skills Improvement Plans \(LSIP\) for Berkshire and Oxfordshire](#)

The Employer Board, with representatives from our priority sectors, is well established and oversees the LSIPs effectiveness. Some of our Champions and Board Members are featured in this video [Local Skills Improvement Plans for Berkshire and Oxfordshire](#)

The **Workforce Development Partnerships (WDPs)** are a central part of our work. They were created to respond to a key issue raised by employers: that training and education often do not reflect the real needs of local businesses. WDPs provide a space where employers, training providers, and partners can work together to understand sector-specific challenges, share insight, and co-design practical solutions. Each WDP is led by an Employer Champion and focuses on a priority sector:

Workforce Development Partnership Sectors



Care



Construction and Built Environment



Haulage and Logistics



Hospitality and Visitor Economy



Health and Life Sciences



Manufacturing (Science and Innovation)



Screen Industries

Get involved - if you are an employer, a training provider, or an organisation interested in workforce development and skills, [get in touch](#)

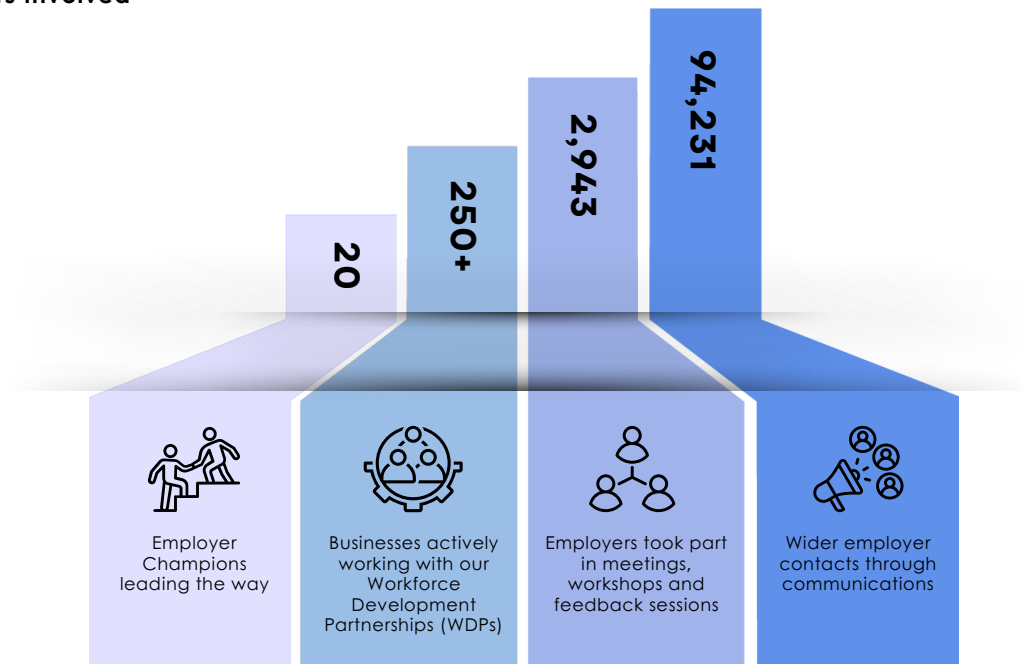
SKILLS THAT WORK: REAL CHANGE FOR OXFORDSHIRE AND BERKSHIRE

What We've Achieved

In 2025, the Thames Valley Skills Unit has helped reshape how employers and colleges work together. Through the Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs) for Oxfordshire and Berkshire, we have made real progress in closing skills gaps and preparing people for the jobs local businesses need.

KEY NUMBERS

Employers Involved



Skills and Training

£5 million invested in new training through the Local Skills Improvement Fund (LSIF)

45 new courses created

1,408 people accessed new training

2,190 learners used new training facilities

116 employers helped design courses



NEW OPPORTUNITIES

New Courses Developed:

T Levels: Engineering, Manufacturing, Process and Control; Media Broadcast and Production
Apprenticeships: Media Industries: Content Creator and Production Assistant Building Services
Engineering Service and Maintenance Engineer
Modern Methods of Construction
HNC in Modern Methods of Construction
Access to Higher Education in Computing
Certificate in Warehousing and Storage
Level 3 Diploma in Hair and Makeup for Film and Theatre (Berkshire)

Short Courses- Flexible, fast-track training designed to address priority sector skills gaps:

Heat Pump Installation
Domestic Retrofit
Green Sustainability
Solar Photovoltaic Installation
Domestic Ventilation
AI and Machine Learning
Coding and Cyber Security
Virtual Production and Sound Production
Collaborative Robotics (Cobots)
Data Analytics

Laboratory and Science Skills:

Laboratory Assistant Skills
Laboratory Technician Skills
Hospitality Supervision Skills
Warehousing and Storage Skills
Sustainability for Managers
Sustainability for Strategic Decision-Makers
Carbon Literacy and Circular Economy Practices

Investment has supported the creation and upgrade of real-world, industry-standard training environments:

Upgraded film studios, editing suites, and green screens at Windsor College
Sustainability and green skills labs at Activate Learning
New retrofit and heat pump training facilities at Abingdon & Witney College
Robotics and Digitisation Training Lab at The Henley College
New Building Services Engineering workshops at Newbury College

SPOTLIGHTS ON THE SECTORS

Bridging Perception and Reality: Student Engagement in the Adult Social Care Workforce Development Partnership

Students are invited to attend the WDP. In November 2024, learners from The Windsor Forest Colleges Group, Activate Learning and The Henley College were welcomed with a tour of the home. They spent time with different department heads, learning about the wide range of roles available in a care setting, from care workers to catering, maintenance and management. This helped to open their eyes to the real variety within the sector.

The students also played a role in the main meeting. They joined a roundtable discussion alongside employers, colleges, training providers and sector experts. The topic was how to deal with ongoing challenges in recruitment and how to better prepare people for careers in care. The students' contributions were insightful and honest. They spoke clearly about how little they had known about social care before the visit. Several said that careers in the health service were more visible to them, and that there was very little positive information about adult social care in the media. Some even said they had never considered working in care before but were now more open to the idea. This directly addresses priorities and actions in the Road Map.

Driving Change: Co-Creating a New Logistics Curriculum Through Employer Partnership

As a direct outcome of strong employer engagement and collaboration through the Workforce Development Partnership (WDP), Activate Learning has developed a new Haulage & Logistics curriculum ["Moving the World"](#) launching in 2025 at Banbury and Bicester College.

This new curriculum was shaped through ongoing conversations at WDP meetings, where employers from across the sector highlighted urgent skills shortages, particularly in warehousing, transport operations, and supply chain management. Key input from the Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport (CILT) and local businesses helped define the skills and knowledge most needed, from inventory control and dispatching, to leadership, communication, and digital fluency.

At a recent WDP meeting, Joshua Thorne from Activate Learning outlined how the curriculum was designed in direct response to these sector needs. The aim is to offer a practical, employer-informed route into the industry, with flexible entry points for school leavers, career changers and upskilling professionals. The curriculum is also being supported by new partnerships with logistics employers and professional bodies, ensuring learners gain industry-relevant experience from day one.



Creating Career-Ready Talent: [Windsor College](#)

Windsor College's partnership with Cube, formed through the Screen Industries Workforce Development Partnership (WDP), is a strong example of how education and industry can work together to prepare students for careers in film, television, and digital media. The partnership helps make sure students are learning the skills they actually need in today's creative industries.

Cube, a well-known company in the screen sector, works closely with the college to shape learning that reflects real workplace standards. They provide students with advice, mentoring, and the chance to work alongside professionals on real projects. Because of this, the courses at Windsor stay up to date and relevant to what employers are looking for. New courses that have now been introduced include the **T level in Media Broadcast and Production- Events and Venue Technician**, and **Apprenticeships in Media Industries (Content Creator and Production Assistant)**, and a **Level 3 course in Hair & Makeup for Film and Theatre**. These directly address priorities in the Road Map and the recruitment gaps identified in the original LSIP report in 2023.

One of the biggest strengths of this partnership is the quality of Windsor College's facilities. The college has top-level equipment and spaces, enhanced by LSIF funding, including film studios, editing rooms, and green screens, that are similar to what students will find in the industry. These facilities are also used by Cube and other professionals, so students often train in the same space as people already working in the field. This gives them valuable hands-on experience and helps them feel more confident when they move into work.



WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING

"The LSIP partnerships have brought industry and education together. It's made real connections and sparked ideas that will last."

Sarah Powell, Le Manoir aux Quat' Saisons

"One of the most inspiring sessions I've attended this year. The insights will have a real impact at the college."

FE College, Care Workforce Development Partnership

"Thank you for your email, it was a great meeting and lovely to connect with so many wonderful people who are trying to make radical changes in order to bring everyone together and show others what an incredible industry we are all part of. It was lovely speaking to the young students in our particular group, I gave them my business card and said they are more than welcome to come and spend time with my amazing team."

I was delighted to receive an email from them on Wednesday to say that they would love to come next week.

Hopefully they will join us at the next meeting to share if their perceptions have changed; even if it was by just 1% that is success in itself!!"

Acacia Home Care

"Amazing course; I was challenged to think outside the box and awaken my enthusiasm to learn more."

Employee, Oxfordshire County Council, Environmental Awareness Heat Pump course, Abingdon & Witney College



LSIPBERKSHIRE

SHAPING THE FUTURE WORKFORCE



LSIPOXFORDSHIRE

SHAPING THE FUTURE WORKFORCE