



LSIP THAMES VALLEY
SHAPING THE FUTURE WORKFORCE

THE LSIP BRIEFING

Everything you need to know about the
Thames Valley Local Skills Improvement Plans

2026





FOREWORD

Berkshire and Oxfordshire are home to some of the UK's most productive and innovative businesses, with strengths spanning digital technology, life sciences, advanced engineering, manufacturing, clean energy and professional services.

While each county has its own economic strengths and workforce needs, employers across both consistently identify access to skilled people as a key factor affecting their ability to grow and innovate. Rapid technological change, an ageing workforce and increasing demand for specialist and technical skills are creating new challenges for businesses and the local skills system.

The Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs) for Berkshire and Oxfordshire have been shaped through extensive engagement with employers, alongside education providers, local authorities and other partners. They set out the skills priorities identified by businesses and provide a framework for working together to address current and future workforce needs.

As the designated Employer Representative Body (ERB), Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce is proud to lead this work and ensure the employer voice remains at its heart. Through our Workforce Development Partnerships, Skills Champions and wider engagement, we will continue bringing businesses and education together to turn these priorities into practical action.

By working collaboratively, we can help ensure Berkshire and Oxfordshire have the skilled, adaptable workforces needed to support future growth and opportunity.

Paul Britton
Chief Executive
Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce

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INTRODUCTION

The Thames Valley is one of the UK's most productive and innovative economies.

Businesses across Berkshire and Oxfordshire are leading growth in life sciences, digital technology, advanced manufacturing, defence, clean energy, construction and creative industries. These sectors generate high-value jobs, attract investment and contribute significantly to the national economy. In addition, our foundational economy in areas such as health, care, logistics, retail and the visitor economy employ thousands and provide essential services.

This document summarises the priorities of the [Berkshire](#) and [Oxfordshire](#) Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs) as the combined Thames Valley LSIP.

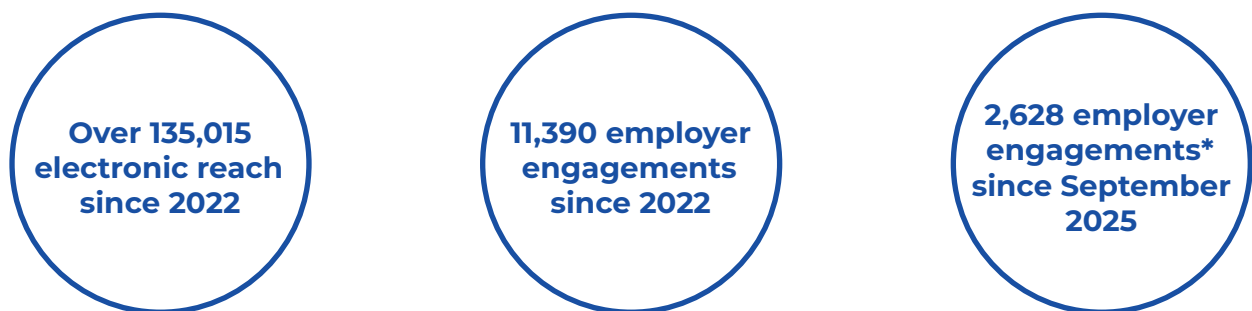
The success of every sector depends on people.

Across the Thames Valley, employers are telling us that finding and developing skilled workers is becoming more difficult. Recruitment challenges, changing technologies, an ageing workforce and growing demand for specialist skills are creating pressures for businesses of all sizes.

Our Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIP) set out the skills priorities identified by employers and the actions needed to build a stronger workforce across Berkshire and Oxfordshire.

The plans are based on extensive employer engagement and focus on practical solutions that help businesses recruit, develop and retain talent.

Across Berkshire and Oxfordshire, the LSIPs have reached:



*Of which 77% were SMEs and 70% non-Chamber members

Why this matters to employers

Skills influence every aspect of business performance.

They affect productivity, innovation, customer service, growth and competitiveness.

Employers told us they need:

- Better access to skilled workers
- More flexible training opportunities
- Stronger digital and AI capability
- Better management and leadership skills
- More work-ready recruits
- A greater role in shaping training provision

The Thames Valley has a significant opportunity to strengthen its workforce and maintain its position as one of the UK's leading economic regions. Achieving this depends on employers, education providers and partners working together.

The biggest workforce challenges

- Persistent shortages in technical and specialist occupations
- Growing demand for digital, data and AI skills
- Difficulty recruiting engineers, technicians and skilled trades
- Workforce shortages in health, care, hospitality and logistics
- Leadership and management capability gaps in SMEs
- Limited workplace experience among many new entrants
- Increasing demand for green and sustainability skills
- Rapid technological change across all sectors

“The future of work is changing fast, and Skills England is leading the charge in making better skills for better jobs.

Our vision is to create better skills for better jobs building the nation's world-class skills and enable growth and opportunity. Recognising that every area has unique strengths, challenges, and opportunities to unlock, delivering this vision in regions, like the Thames Valley, is particularly important to the UK.

Building on the foundation of some tremendous strengths, TVCC is leading the way with two LSIPs, and through partnership, successfully co-creating solutions to regional skills challenges. The presence and depth of the eight growth sectors of the UK's modern industrial strategy, found in the Thames Valley, means we should expect 'super-things' from a region with the capability of turning local success into national impact and 'super-growth.'

TVCC is helping more people into good jobs and building the skills the Thames Valley community and UK needs. I commend their work to all stakeholders.”

Phil Smith Chair of Skills England, and Honorary Life Member, TVCC



THE PRIORITIES FOR ACTION

Employers identified seven priorities that cut across every sector.

Share responsibility for skills and workforce development

Industry and education working together across the Thames Valley.

Build digital and AI capability

Digital skills are now essential across almost every occupation and sector.

Reduce skills shortages

Priority sectors need stronger pipelines of technical and specialist talent.

Improve productivity through workforce development

Businesses need easier access to flexible training and upskilling opportunities.

Strengthen leadership and management

Better managers support stronger businesses.

Prepare for net zero and emerging technologies

New technologies are creating new skills requirements across the economy.

Improve work readiness

Employers want recruits with stronger practical, professional and workplace skills.



BECOME A THAMES VALLEY SKILLS CHAMPION

Shape the skills your business needs

One of the most important opportunities within this plan is becoming a Thames Valley Skills Champion.

Skills Champions help influence training, workforce development and future skills priorities across Berkshire and Oxfordshire.

They work alongside employers, colleges, universities and training providers to ensure the skills system reflects the realities of modern business.

Why get involved?

Help shape training

Your insight helps providers understand the skills, behaviours and knowledge businesses need.

Build a stronger talent pipeline

Help influence the training and development of future employees.

Improve recruitment outcomes

Support the development of more work-ready candidates with relevant skills and experience.

Influence future workforce planning

Identify emerging skills needs before they become critical shortages.

Connect with employers and providers

Work alongside business leaders, colleges, universities and training organisations across the Thames Valley.

Raise your profile

Demonstrate leadership within your sector and contribute to the future success of the regional economy.

A small commitment with significant impact

Most Skills Champions contribute through:

- Workforce Development Partnership (WDP) meetings
- Becoming a Skills Board Member
- Employer roundtables
- Careers events
- Curriculum discussions
- Placement and apprenticeship support
- Sharing workforce intelligence

Even limited involvement can help shape opportunities for thousands of learners and hundreds of businesses.

“Being a Thames Valley Skills Champion for the Creative Industries WDP has enabled my business to network with other SMEs and larger businesses within my sector. It’s enabled us to share best practice around HR, recruitment and retention challenges - whilst also influencing schools, colleges and local universities to align curriculum to business needs. We’ve been connected directly to new talent coming straight out of FE and HE and been able to participate in research and raise the public profile of our work.”

**Dom Unsworth, Resource Productions,
Creative Industries Thames Valley
Skills Champion**

Become a Thames Valley Skills Champion



Scan the QR code or email
TVLSIP@tvchamber.co.uk to find
out how you can get involved.



WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIPS (WDP)

The delivery of the LSIP is driven through employer-led WDP meetings.

These partnerships bring together employers, providers and stakeholders to tackle workforce challenges and shape practical solutions.

Current partnerships include:



Thames Valley Digital WDP

To lead on cross-sector skills priorities on AI and digital transformation



Thames Valley Health and Life Sciences WDP

Embedded within the [Health and Life Science Working Group](#)



Thames Valley Technology and Innovation WDP

To lead on skills for green technology, energy, advanced manufacturing and quantum computing



Thames Valley Creative WDP

Aligned with [Screen Berkshire](#)



Thames Valley Defence and Security WDP

Embedded within the [Defence and Security Working Group](#)



Thames Valley Construction WDP

Aligned with the Thames Valley Electrotechnical Training and Careers Alliance



Thames Valley Visitor Economy WDP

Continuing work with [UK Hospitality](#) on Skills Passport and other initiatives to improve talent pipelines



Thames Valley Care WDP

Continuing work with partners, such as [Skills for Care](#) and local Care Associations, on initiatives to improve knowledge and attractiveness of social care careers



Thames Valley Logistics WDP

Aligned with Banbury and Bicester College initiatives to train and develop the future workforce

These groups provide employers with a direct route to influence skills priorities and workforce development activity.

Interested in joining a Workforce Development Partnership?

We welcome employers, education providers and industry partners who want to help shape future skills.

Get in touch today TVLSIP@tvchamber.co.uk

THE OPPORTUNITY

The Thames Valley's future success depends on the strength of its workforce.

Every employer has the opportunity to influence how that workforce develops.

Whether through becoming a Thames Valley Skills Champion, joining a WDP, offering placements, supporting apprenticeships or sharing workforce insight, employer involvement makes a difference.

The businesses that help shape the skills system today will help shape the future workforce of Berkshire, Oxfordshire and the wider Thames Valley.

Now is the time to get involved.

Every employer can help shape the future workforce. Whether you can offer strategic insight or practical support, your contribution matters.



GET INVOLVED

The success of the Thames Valley LSIP depends on employers, education providers and partners working together.

Across Berkshire and Oxfordshire, a range of initiatives are creating opportunities to shape training, develop future talent and strengthen workforce skills. Whether you can offer strategic leadership, industry insight, workplace experiences or specialist expertise, there are many ways to contribute.

The opportunities below are open to businesses, industry specialists, colleges, universities and training providers who want to help build the workforce the Thames Valley needs for future growth.

Opportunity	What This Involves	Why It Matters
Become a Thames Valley Skills Champion	Work alongside employers, colleges, universities and training providers to identify workforce challenges, shape priorities and support local skills development.	Gives employers a stronger voice in shaping the skills system and helps ensure training reflects the needs of the local economy.
Join a Thames Valley WDP	Participate in sector-based groups that bring together employers, providers and partners to share insight, identify priorities and develop solutions.	Creates a direct link between business needs and skills provision, helping training keep pace with industry change.
Thames Valley Industry Associates Network	Industry professionals work with colleges and training providers to support teaching, mentoring, curriculum enrichment and real-world projects. Participants receive training to develop the skills needed to teach, coach and inspire the next generation of talent.	Brings industry expertise directly into the classroom, helps learners understand modern workplaces and supports colleges in areas where recruiting specialist teaching staff can be challenging, including Creative Industries.
Thames Valley AI and Digital Skills Framework	A shared framework developed by employers and education providers to identify the digital, data, cyber and AI capabilities needed across the Thames Valley economy and embed them consistently into training and workforce development.	Creates a common foundation of digital skills for learners and employees, helping businesses adapt to technological change and make the most of new opportunities.
Thames Valley Careers Festivals	Develop a programme of sector-focused careers festivals across priority industries including defence, engineering, advanced manufacturing, health and life sciences, construction and care. Employers, colleges, universities and training providers will work together to showcase career opportunities, skills pathways and future workforce needs.	Raises awareness of local career opportunities, helps attract more people into priority sectors and strengthens future talent pipelines across the Thames Valley.
Thames Valley Skills Prospectus	Providers will collaborate to create a coordinated regional training offer, informed by employer insight on current and future skills needs.	Gives employers a clearer route to finding training and development opportunities for their workforce and supports a more responsive skills system across the Thames Valley.

Opportunity	What This Involves	Why It Matters
Help Shape New Approaches to Work Experience	Employers, education providers and partners collaborate to develop more flexible and innovative workplace experiences for young people, including project-based experiences, virtual opportunities, employer challenges and industry encounters.	Helps more young people gain meaningful exposure to the workplace, improves work readiness and enables employers to engage with future talent in ways that work for modern businesses.

Some Sector Specific Opportunities

Opportunity	What This Involves	Why It Matters
Thames Valley Electrotechnical Training and Careers Alliance	Collaborate with employers, providers and industry bodies, including the ECA, to strengthen electrical, technical and green skills provision.	Supports growth in construction, infrastructure, electrification and low-carbon technologies.
Thames Valley Hospitality Passport	Hospitality employers, providers and industry partners will collaborate to create a recognised Skills Passport that records training, qualifications and workplace experience, helping individuals build careers across the visitor economy.	Creates clearer career pathways, supports recruitment and retention, and helps position hospitality as a skilled profession with long-term career opportunities.
Thames Valley Quantum and Superconducting Technologies Skills Review	Employers, universities, research organisations and training providers will work together to explore future workforce needs in quantum computing, cryogenics and superconducting technologies. The review will identify emerging occupations, skills requirements and potential training pathways, helping inform future investment and skills planning across the Thames Valley.	Builds a stronger understanding of future skills demand in one of the UK's most important emerging technology sectors, helping ensure businesses can access the specialist talent needed for growth, innovation and commercialisation.
Creative Industries T Level Placement Pilot	Screen Berkshire, Resource Productions, employers, schools and colleges will collaborate on a supported placement programme that helps more creative businesses offer meaningful industry experience to T Level students.	Helps develop future talent for the creative industries, improves learner work readiness and reduces barriers for employers offering placements.
Teacher Industry Exchange Programme (Construction)	Teachers get to go into industry and keep their knowledge up to date. Industry professionals work with college staff and students on curriculum development and delivery.	Ensures teaching staff and students have up-to-date understanding of industry practices, technologies and career pathways, strengthening the relevance of learning and improving employer engagement with education.

Your input. Their skills. **EVERYONE'S FUTURE.**

The Thames Valley LSIPs are built on employer insight and collaboration. Every conversation, partnership and opportunity helps shape the skills businesses need today and the workforce our region needs tomorrow.

Whether you're an employer, education provider, training organisation or industry partner, we'd love to hear how you'd like to get involved.

Get involved by

- Becoming a Thames Valley Skills Champion
- Joining a Workforce Development Partnership
- Sharing your workforce insight
- Supporting careers events, placements or apprenticeships
- Collaborating on future skills initiatives

Let's start the conversation



Scan to find out more or get in touch
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