

South London Partnership Annex to the London Local Skills improvement plan

2026–2029



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Introduction and Executive summary

The **South London annex** of the **London Local Skills Improvement Plan** (SLP LSIP annex), was published in August 2023.

This refresh spanning 2026–2029 has been developed and written with and on behalf of employers and stakeholders within the boroughs covered by the South London Partnership.

The refreshed South London LSIP annex builds on actions initiated in 2023, to address ongoing and new skills needs and vacancy gaps. It sets out our priorities for delivery over the next three years to develop a skilled talent pipeline equipped to access jobs and drive growth and productivity.

South London Partnership (SLP), a collaboration of five London boroughs: Croydon, Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames, Merton, Richmond upon Thames, and Sutton, is one of the four sub-regional partnerships of London, each having its own annex to the London LSIP. We strongly recognise the power and strength of partnership to develop and deliver a skills and employment system that supports growth and creates a vibrant economy, where people choose to live, work and thrive. The SLP LSIP annex provides a strategic framework for sub regional and borough activity and will ensure the development of skills and employment programme delivery is informed by local business and employers. The SLP LSIP annex also supports delivery of the **South London Growth Ambitions Statement**; our South London vision for inclusive and sustainable growth through to 2035.

Using quantitative analysis from a range of data sets, and through engagement and consultation with employers and stakeholders, our refreshed LSIP annex sets out skills and employment challenges in priority sectors which either have an over representation of jobs and/or are of strategic priority for stakeholders in the South London Partnership area.

Equally at a time of workforce capacity challenges in all sectors, this annex not only focuses on identifying priority skills and skills gaps but also emphasises the importance of supporting the upskilling and reskilling of existing employees through training and development opportunities across SLP.

The South London Annex to the London LSIP aims to support local skills development and reduce skills gaps - drawing together a wide range of data, evidence and insights which, aggregated together, illustrates the current and future skill needs in the area as presented by our employers and stakeholders. We set out how we will facilitate further employer engagement and investment in the skills system to give employers a stronger voice in shaping



skills provision and supporting delivery. It details how we will use this evidence base to support our educational institutions, including schools, alternative provisions, further education and higher education and life-long learning providers to ensure they supply technical education and training that meets employer demand. The annex details how educators and employment support providers will work together to develop a coordinated response, including creating clear progression pathways at and between different academic levels. The South London Annex also helps to inform decision makers how funding (both devolved and non-devolved) and other investment could be used to support skills priorities within South London

In shaping this annex, businesses, employers, and key stakeholders have universally welcomed the opportunity to develop a more tailored and localised approach to skills. The challenge in ensuring that the skills employers require are matched by those possessed by the workforce within the SLP area is ongoing. By developing a more strategic approach, this annex builds on many of the issues identified within the London LSIP but also responds to the specific challenges and opportunities for the existing and future workforce within the SLP sub region. The importance of continuing the skills conversation with all partners will be crucial to this. The South London Partnership itself looks forward to continuing to facilitate opportunities for all partners to shape the skills priorities for our local workforce and, provide a conduit between employers and training providers to take forward the actionable priorities within this annex, over the next three years.

Since its launch, the South London Annex has gained real traction as a coordination and convening mechanism. Stakeholders highlight:

- **Stronger connections between employers and training providers. Targeted and effective investment supported by the Local Skills Improvement Fund (LSIF).**
- **Better alignment around key sectors such as health and social care, construction, hospitality, green skills and creative/digital industries.**
- **Inclusive governance, with the [Skills and Employment Alliance](#) and the associated [Skills and Employment Partnership Charter](#) widely recognised as a model of partnership working across providers, employers and partners.**

These achievements have strengthened South London's voice within the wider London LSIP environment and created a platform for ongoing collaboration and investment.

The following report identifies sectors which are either of importance due to their overrepresentation of jobs in the SLP area or are of strategic importance to the growth of the local economy. We explore current occupation, and skill demands through analysis of data and from consultations with key stakeholders. It is from these findings that we have developed the actions and activities which will insure we develop a local talent pool, equipped with the skills to harness local opportunities, and support growth in south London.

The priority sectors identified for the South London Partnership area strongly link to the London Growth Plan and London LSIP priorities.

Priority Sector	London Growth Plan	London LSIP
Health, Care and Life Science	✓	✓
Construction, engineering, and the built environment: Nature and net zero	✓	✓
Visitor Economy: Retail and Hospitality	✓	✓
Creative and Digital	✓	✓
Education		

The South London Annex to the London LSIP is strongly aligned with the wider London LSIP priorities, particularly in its focus on digital and AI readiness, green skills, inclusive workforce development, employer engagement, modular and flexible training provision, and strengthening pathways into priority sectors. Reflecting South London's specific labour market conditions and stakeholder engagement, the annex places additional emphasis on youth employment, experiences of the world of work, and inclusive pathways into employment, alongside recognising education as a strategic local priority due to workforce shortages and the scale of sector demand across the sub-region. The SLP annex complements and operationalises the pan-London LSIP through a more localised, delivery-focused approach that responds to the distinct opportunities and challenges facing South London.

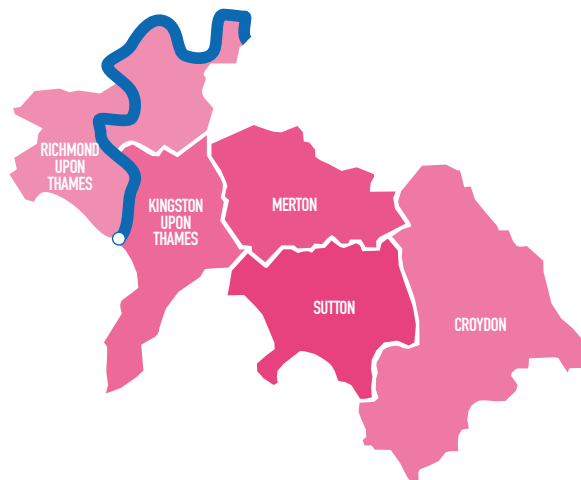
SLP is uniquely place within South London to provide programme and system coordination with existing programmes (such as the Careers Hub) and linking to the delivery and strategic priorities of our member authorities. SLP also works closely with BusinessLDN, the GLA, and wider London LSIP partners through ongoing governance, collaboration, and delivery structures, and will continue to adapt and align sub-regional delivery in response to any pan-London actions, policy developments, or emerging priorities that impact South London employers, residents, and skills provision.

The South London annex to the London LSIP defines clear cross cutting actionable priorities for implementation over the next three years.



Strategic and Economic Context

With a population of over 1.2 million people, the area nurtures a vibrant economy worth more than £30 billion, supporting over 426,000 jobs and home to a growing business base of over 60,000 companies. Our asset base is extensive and diverse, including global reach institutions at the forefront of research and innovation, such as the London Cancer Hub, Kew Royal Botanic Gardens, and the National Physical Laboratory, alongside our unique sporting, heritage, and cultural destinations. By working together, the SLP Boroughs champion and look to build on the strengths of South London as a place for people to live, study, work, invest, and thrive.



The South London Annex to the London LSIP is embedded in delivery of the national **Industrial Strategy**, **Post-16 Education and Skills White Paper** which sets out a vision for the future of the post-16 skills landscape, and **The Clean Energy Jobs Plan** to enable localised steps towards growth in priority sectors, providing young people with good and progressive work opportunities and delivering on net zero ambitions. Nationally, further key publications provide us with steer and direction in shaping the skills landscape locally. These include the **UK Skills Classification**, providing a comprehensive and accessible way of providing consistency in the way we describe and deliver skills provision. Also the **Keep Britain Working** report highlights key national challenges and opportunities for businesses around talent acquisition, market volatility and the changes employers can make to increase retention of workforce.



Regionally the LSIP links to the realisation of the **London Growth Plan (LGP)**, **Inclusive Talent Strategy** and the Get London Working Plan. In Spring 2025, the South London Partnership launched the **South London Growth Ambitions Statement**, setting out a vision for inclusive and sustainable growth through to 2035 and endorsed by employers and training providers. The statement aligns with the London Growth Plan and national economic and industrial policy, highlighting South London's strengths and opportunities in Skills England's priority sectors: creative, digital and technology, and life sciences. It also reflects mayoral priorities in health and social care, and construction and the built environment. The statement identifies four key growth clusters for South London: Health and Life Sciences, Net Zero and Nature, Experience, the Visitor Economy, and Creative/Digital. These clusters were determined by analysing the region's business concentration, knowledge assets, and the research and teaching strengths of local universities and colleges, alongside the potential of major strategic investment

sites. The South London Annex to the London LSIP provides the delivery plan for the ‘people’ theme within this ambitions statement, reframing priority sectors to align with these growth clusters and supporting implementation through borough-level local Growth Plans. Specifically, the South London Annex focusses on the LGP growth sectors of Creative, Digital and Visitor Economy, Health, Social Care and Life Sciences and the London LSIP priorities of construction/ built environment and hospitality. Within South London we also prioritise the education sector due to its proportionate representation and volume of employment opportunities.

With new policy directives and potential funding to support these ambitions, South London businesses, employers and key stakeholders now have a unique opportunity. This is the moment to shape skills provision that positions South London as a subregion championing inclusive business growth, empowering residents with access to skills and employment, and delivering the necessary skills to support our economy and the future of work. We need to work together to maximise future opportunities to access funding through devolution and to build on the strong South London skills and employment eco-system to communicate our shared voice for what’s best for London within our sub region.

The current national economic climate is having a significant impact on the local labour market, with business confidence unsettled, modest GDP Growth and decreased consumer demand, businesses report too few candidates with the right skills, low interest in roles and competition from other employers. This is reflected in rising unemployment and a decline in job vacancies in London. This means, we need to enable upskilling and reskilling of existing staff to ensure workforce security, initiate sector specific interventions, such as modularised and stackable training, to support industries who are facing unique challenges to adaptation. We also need to work with employers to future proof a talent pipeline through vocational and technical training, such as apprenticeships, and be prepared to harness the opportunities presented through flexibilities within the growth and skills levy.

Data Snapshot

- Unemployment: SLP has an unemployment rate of **4.8%** the lowest rate of the four subregions. However economic inactivity is at **19.4%**.
- SLP has **35,000** people claiming unemployment related benefits an increase of **22%** from 2022. Youth claimant rate in SLP is **4.7%** (around 5500 people age 16-24). However, the growth in unemployment for this age group is increasing. For the period October 2024 to October 2025 the percentage change in claimant count was **13.7%** in SLP, higher than the percentage change across London and UK.
- Claimant rates for older residents (25–49 and especially 50–64) are lower in SLP than in most other sub-regions.
- South London Partnership has **426,000 jobs** (decreasing by 5% since 2022) across **60,400 business**, with **89%** of businesses with less than 10 employees.
- In South London **62% of residents** are qualified to level 4 or above (compared to 69% in Central London).

Further data on London employment and skills needs can be found within the evidence base to London LSIP. Further detail can be found [here](#)

Local Skills Needs

Through extensive engagement as part of the refresh of the South London annex to London LSIP key current and medium term (three-year) skill needs and priority sectors have been identified. South London employers continue to face persistent challenges in recruitment. This includes skills alignment (45% of businesses said that too few candidates with the required skills is a top factor in recruitment difficulty)¹, and workforce readiness across key economic sectors.

Employers require practical, employer-responsive provision with clearer progression pathways and strengthened work experience and early career models, with the need for targeted support for SMEs and under-represented groups.

Youth and Young people.	Inclusive Workforce	Experiences of work	Employer engagement and enablement	Future Ready: Workforce security and opportunity
Youth Guarantee Trailblazers, providing brokerage and specific pathways for young people to enter work. Careers education, information and raising awareness of priority sectors. Careers pathways in priority sectors	Integrated health and care/ supported employment and welfare to work. Soft/transferable skills Inclusive pathways, recruitment and retention strategies and support.	Modern work experience, work trials, placements (social value) Vocational routes and structural barriers Sector image and sector expertise.	Stimulate market demand and engagement in development and uptake of vocational skills provision. Modular stackable skills provision in partnership with industry to meet local demand. Coordinate employer engagement. Social value, s106 and industry specialist tutors	Career and training pathways and progression AI and digital readiness and adoption strategies and support. AI, digital literacy, cybersecurity Innovation and higher technical skills provision

We have engaged with over 600 stakeholders, including over 150 employers across South London² including local authorities, training providers, sector specialists through surveys, 1-1s meetings, employer roundtables, skills summits, and events and the annex has also been informed by national and local data sets. Through the research undertaken in 2023 and as part of this refresh 5 priority sectors have been identified due to their total employment size or relative size within South London, or where they have strategic importance for growth and productivity. These include:

Health, Care and Life Science

Construction, Engineering, and the Built Environment:

Nature and Net Zero

Visitor Economy: Retail & hospitality

Creative and Digital (Information & Communication)

Professional and business services within SLP continue to be our largest sector accounting for 63,000 jobs (14,275 units) (15% total employment). This sector is broad and features prominently in the London LSIP with a wide range of occupations, therefore has not been selected as a priority sector for the subregional annex. Local Authorities feature as some of the largest employers within the subregion, and serve as both anchor institutions and as a corporate parents therefore specific activity has been incorporated into the action plan to recognise this pivotal role and to demonstrate commitment to leading by example in inclusive and early careers pathways.

Over the past three years, the landscape has shifted significantly. While strengthening relationships between employers and providers, improving accessibility and inclusivity, and ensuring that skills training aligns with industry needs all remain essential, emerging local insight has highlighted new priorities. This evidence has enabled us to reframe and consolidate our earlier priorities into five actionable, cross-sector themes that will guide activity over the next three years. Together, these locally defined priorities reinforce and advance South London's contribution to the wider London

priorities and action plan.

Since the writing of the London LSIP and South London Annex in 2023 we know that;

- **Youth unemployment** is rising rapidly in South London (youth claimants up ~13.7% year-on-year, faster than London overall) coupled with a high demand for fewer jobs due to market constriction in some sectors.
- There is a call for co-ordinated **work experience** of residents in South London, both young people and those moving between sectors and the opportunity to get the experience needed to enter or progress in employment.
- There is a greater need for **inclusive pathways** for people who are seeking employment or the support to maintain a job.
- Employers need **modular stackable, subsidised qualifications**, informed by industry practice and be enabled to recruit well from the available local workforce. 15% of employers (SLP Employer survey 2025) cite concerns about the relevance or quality of local training courses, suggesting that even when provision exists, it does not always align with business needs.
- **AI** has become a critical tool in the way we work. Employers have an increased need to improve workforce skills in AI and digital systems.

Additionally, as highlighted in the London LSIP, wider systemic and infrastructure challenges, such as the affordability and accessibility of public transport and the availability of affordable housing continue to act as significant barriers or enablers to skills provision, workforce participation and economic growth.

Specifically, businesses in South London identified;³

- Advanced digital skills, including AI applications, are emerging as the most critical requirement for organisations over the next 2–5 years, with 70% of respondents prioritising these capabilities.
- Transferable skills rank as the second most important future need (65%), highlighting the growing value of adaptability and cross-functional competencies in the workforce. This is followed by leadership and management skills (48%) and sector specific skills (35%).
- Cost is the primary barrier to employee training, cited by 38% of respondents, indicating that affordability remains a significant challenge for upskilling initiatives with time away from work (20%) and relevance (17%, rising to 33% in the BusinessLDN Suration survey).
- Recruitment challenges dominate employer concerns. Businesses report too few candidates with the right skills (45%) low interest in roles (for some priority sectors), and competition



“ We need to build confidence in how we optimise AI alongside sustainability goals. ”

Employer, SLP

from other employers.

South London will continue to strengthen collaboration and partnership to ensure our skills approach is tailored and locally responsive. Our governance arrangements remain robust, with the South London Skills Alliance and the Education Group (South London), with the Alliance expanding their employer and Employer Representative Body membership to reflect our growing priority sectors. We will also maintain close collaboration across London, working with our sub-regional partners under the

leadership of BusinessLDN to drive coordinated action that delivers meaningful impact both locally and London-wide.

The following pages explore both crosscutting priorities and the challenges and opportunities identified within our priority sectors. A roadmap of specific action to be undertaken over the next three years is detailed [here](#), as well as within the London LSIP action plan. With the supporting methodology and evidence base used to inform the SLP annex to the London LSIP [here](#).

CASE STUDY:

Maximising collaboration and partnership through governance and communication

The South London Skills and Employment Alliance brings together a partnership of business leaders, educational providers, local authorities, voluntary and community sector, and employment support organisations to strengthen skills and employment provision in South London. The Alliance is shaping and influencing the delivery of skills and employment programmes across South London and enabling effective engagement across sectors through commonality, collaboration, and collective action. This includes increasing awareness, sharing and pooling of resources and, most critically, strengthening relationships between employers and providers, including initiatives such as the South London Skills and Employment Charter, the partnership's public commitment to creating an inclusive, accessible skills and employment ecosystem.

“ The jobs market is stagnant, with very few new jobs being advertised. Whilst we have seen a decrease in vacancy gaps and a decrease in staff turnover, as an organisation, we have no promotional opportunities to offer existing staff which we anticipate will impact on our existing workforce and our ability to futureproof our business. ”

Large Employer, SLP



Priorities/Cross cutting themes

Consultation with stakeholders has highlighted a range of cross-cutting issues affecting recruitment and retention across all priority sectors. These insights, reflected throughout the you told us sections of the annex, have shaped our sub-regional priorities.

Addressing local skills gaps and shortages requires both targeted sector-specific action and a coordinated response to these wider, systemic challenges. Our focus is on what we will deliver at a sub-regional level to meet both local and London-wide priorities.

Priority 1: Youth and Young people.

You told us:

- Youth unemployment is rising rapidly in South London (up ~13.7% year-on-year, faster than London overall)
- Barriers include transport, mental health, lack of confidence, lack of experience within a workplace and unclear employer expectations. Young people want real-world exposure, but barriers (like a lack of genuine placements) limit this.
- Inappropriate labelling of young people: 'anxious generation,' 'meh generation, Gen Z. Young people are not a homogenous group, the needs of a 16-year-old and 24 differ dramatically. Concerns that education is not providing the skills needed for work.
- Employers need help to integrate training with actual work: our data suggests London employers are looking for transferable, specialist and digital skills, so early work-placements and live projects in schools should reflect that demand. Employers increasingly favour vocational routes over purely academic ones providing opportunity to champion T-levels, apprenticeships and links with colleges and universities.
- Parents/carers, and wider community are unsure of vocational education to employment pathways and opportunities across South London.
- Young people lack information on growth and priority sectors; career pathways and Local Management Information is not clear and consistent. Growth sectors and in demand roles need to be clearly articulated to educators, young people and their wider network to ensure there is a connect between these sectors and the ambition of young people.



- Young people require support to gain the skills needed within the current and future workforce, in addition to technical skills and qualifications. This includes essential skills such as communication and self-motivation, but also financial literacy, creativity, self-employment and entrepreneurial skills.
- There is an opportunity to share, expand and maximise pathway work being undertaken by schools, further education and higher education institutions.

Together we will:

- Create youth focussed pathways and support to increase youth employment through delivery of the Youth Guarantee Trailblazers, Youth Integration Network and South London Careers Hub, and enhance existing pathways to retain more young people in learning and progression to employment.
- Strengthen careers education about our priority sectors (green, digital, care, hospitality) embedding employability and career pathways early (from Key Stage 3) to raise awareness of key growth and priority sectors with educators, linking careers to curriculum.
- Work with employers (starting with local authorities) on subregional early careers and work experience, apprenticeship, T Level policies, aligning with the government commitment to provide young people with quality work experiences – and help employers deliver them by addressing hurdles like DBS funding, early recruitment and modular training aligned to local demand.

Priority 2: Experiences of the world of work

You told us:

- Employers feedback that there is an experience gap and alongside sector insights, skills such as communication, team working need to be incorporated into career insights and events. The essential/softer skills are a key part of the puzzle that people are often missing alongside meaningful experiences of the world of work in addition to actual experience of being within a workplace.
- Residents, especially young people are not getting experiences of the world of work with a variety of employers to imagine themselves in the workplace. Work experiences and placements are still often dependent on the 'social glue' or network a young person has around them. Young people may have the skills or be qualified however the lack of experience makes gaining employment especially challenging.
- There is decline in availability of apprenticeship placements and low completion rates.
- Some employers do not understand what makes meaningful experiences of the world of work, creating confusion and lost opportunities. Additionally structural or system challenges (such as insurance and early careers support) complicate employer's ability to offer opportunities.

Together we will:

- Engage employers to deliver modern work experience models, standardise job trials and placements and align social value outcomes within growth sectors to boost employer participation and deliver on the SL Skills and Employment Charter commitments.
- Strengthen vocational routes from schools, colleges into work through T-level, V-Levels, placements and apprenticeships, and access to funding to support structural barriers and reduce risk.
- Improve sector image through campaigns and case studies highlighting progression and maximise opportunities provided by sectoral hubs for expertise and employer engagement.

Priority 3: Inclusive Workforce

You told us:

- People with a disability or long-term health conditions continue to face significant barriers to gain and retain employment opportunities and disproportionately feature within unemployed, economically inactive population data. Initiatives that assist people with disabilities, individuals who are economically inactive, and those seeking flexible, modular learning pathways are needed.
- Some sectors, especially priority sectors have disproportionate representation across protected characteristics.
- Barriers for neurodivergent applicants, slow Access to Work support, and low wages impact diversity and retention. There is an increased need for work trials and amended HR practice by businesses to support those unable to access the workforce.
- Workforce access is impacted by factors such as transport costs, post-COVID work preferences, and the affordability of lower-paid, in-person roles. These issues disproportionately affect priority sectors where physical presence is essential.
- Supported Internships are impacted by limited job placements, anxiety about work and socialising, travel difficulties, fear of losing benefits. Additionally, employers cite limited time/capacity to support interns, and misconceptions about people with SEND and productivity.
- The recruitment practice and extensive interview processes faced by individuals for jobs acts as a barrier. This impacts individuals with limited work history, specific learning needs, or those re-entering the workforce.
- Difficulty for SMEs to find the right candidate using jobs boards/recruitment sites or being swamped with 1000s of applications coupled with less HR resource and capacity.

Together we will:

- Deliver supported employment programmes and expand inclusive employment pathways, including practitioner upskilling, for people who are neither working or actively seeking employment, people seeking work and those struggling to stay in employment, including practitioner upskilling.
- Work with educators to deliver inclusive training through flexible pathways like short, modular courses that build essential (soft) skills, confidence, digital skills, customer service, and work readiness for economically inactive residents, with clear routes to LSIP priority sectors and future FE or HE qualifications.

- Work with employers to explore a fit for future inclusive and skills-based recruitment and retention strategies.

CASE STUDY:

Polka Theatre Merton, Case Study: Fostering Workforce Inclusivity

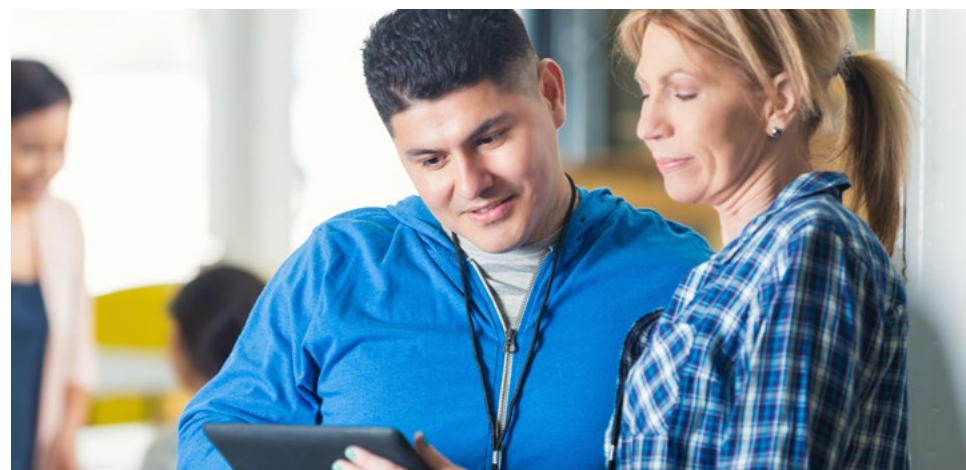
Polka Theatre embeds diversity and equity into its creative workforce through actively diverse casting and targeted artist development programs that remove barriers for underrepresented groups. Initiatives such as Catapult and Next Steps provide seed funding, rehearsal space, mentoring from senior staff, and showcase opportunities for artists from the global majority, disabled, LGBTQ+ and lower socio-economic backgrounds. These schemes not only help diversify talent in the children's theatre sector but also support sustainable career pathways for emerging and established talent. Additionally, Polka prioritises local students from Merton, Wandsworth, and Croydon for work experience placements, encouraging engagement with the wider theatre industry beyond performance roles. By embedding representation into recruitment and development strategies, Polka continually strives to ensure its workforce reflects the diversity of the community it serves.

- Issues of language around skills. 30% of employers were not sure whether skills shortages were affecting recruitment. Employers do not necessarily realise they have 'skills gaps' and consider staff shortages, career development, CPD. There is a need for skills providers and to use the language of businesses to increase engagement.
- There is a need for dedicated support for SMEs to help support and grow their business and not just signpost.
- 30% of employers report that limited time available within the business restricts their ability to release employees for training. Employers feel that they cannot host lengthy placements and need workers who can perform safely and confidently from day one.
- HR limitations, DBS costs, safeguarding pressures, and lack of supervision capacity were cited as reasons employers can't take learners on work trials/placements.
- High vacancy pressure, predominantly SME workforces, and roles that require immediate, practical, job-ready skills rather than long formal qualifications.
- Missing modular, stackable qualifications (especially Level 4–5) and ongoing gaps in maths and English, and digital skills especially for adults and Level 2–3 learners aiming for technical or higher education.
- A contraction of employer uptake of modular course that have been created and the need for collective market stimulation.
- Essential skills and work-readiness gaps, especially for young people, employers highlight gaps in creative thinking, communication, confidence, problem-solving, resilience, empathy and basic "life skills" (organisation, time management, workplace behaviour).

Priority 4: Employer engagement and enablement

You told us:

- Persistent difficulty connecting employers with local skills providers coupled with engagement fatigue for employers and unclear skills funding streams. Yet 20% of employers say they struggle with knowing where to find the right training, reflecting ongoing issues around navigation and signposting suitable opportunities. There is a perceived lack of employer awareness of support options (e.g., Skills Bootcamps, recruitment pipelines from FE/HE).
- Need for messaging that links skills support to business security market share, and staff retention.
- Smaller firms find it harder to engage citing time and capacity as barriers. 25% of SLP employers highlighted a lack of time within the organisation overall, suggesting that operational pressures are a notable constraint on workforce development.



Together we will:

- Build strong partnerships across FE, HE, Adult Community Learning, Independent Training Providers, and industry to stimulate market demand for and delivery of modular, stackable, and future-ready training (e.g. apprenticeships) aligned to meet local demand, employer needs, and competency across all priority sectors. (incl. retrofit, construction, care)
- Better coordinate strategic employer outreach across South London regionally and reduce engagement fatigue,
- Empower and support employers and supply chain to realise s106 and social value commitments, utilise local education provision and address shortages of industry-specialist tutors.
- Support business with access to training and support access through frameworks, levy or grant flexibility, expand networking and communication opportunities and access to funding sources and affordable workspaces.

Priority 5: Future ready: workforce security and opportunity

You told us:

- There is an ongoing need to identify training, career and progression pathways for residents with clear mapped options for key sectors such as green skills, construction and health/social care. This includes new entrants to sectors as well as reskilling and upskilling existing workforce. There is existing best practice that could be expanded across South London (e.g. retrofit mapping from FE to HE).
- Pathways from education to employment at key transition points (16,18 and 21) can be unclear.
- There is a mismatch between employers wanting vocational pathways and a lack of market interest and employer take up of vocational and apprenticeship opportunities, with low completion rates.
- AI and cybersecurity are rising priorities, but digital literacy, confidence and AI adoption are lagging behind employer needs. 29.1% of employers⁴ in South London identified basic digital skills as a top skill needed in the next 2-5 years, digital skills are essential but not consistently embedded in training.
- AI is reshaping entry-level roles and recruitment, creating opportunities but also anxiety and widening skills gaps. Digital competence is inconsistent across key sectors (hospitality, retail, care, construction). Some businesses fear AI replacing jobs, others are embracing change, businesses struggle to find and fund upskilling of the workforce.



- Limited coordination of real-time employer data, leading to poor workforce trend insights. buy-in is needed).
- There is opportunity to accelerate innovation and increase productivity through ever closer collaboration between Boroughs, businesses and partner universities and colleges, building on the success of BIG South London. To offer study programmes and specialist courses that lead to high-quality jobs, especially in priority sectors such as health & life sciences, digital & data, creative industries, and clean energy technologies.

Together we will:

- Promote priority sector careers as sustainable, fulfilling with progression routes to higher salaries (both within and across sectors), including skilling of new entrants and upskilling existing workforce.
- Increase employer AI and digital confidence through targeted support and foster collaboration between education provision (FE, HE, ACE, ITP) and industry to accelerate innovation partner employers with universities for tailored higher technical skills courses. Explore how educators can embed Digital/Cyber/AI in all vocational courses.

The following pages detail specific skills needs and challenges within each of our 5 priority sectors.

Workforce Demographics

Health, Care and Life Science

62,000
employee jobs
14.6% of SLP total

Croydon 19k – Kingston 13k – Merton 8k Richmond 8k – Sutton 15k

3,640 Local
units

13% of London sector total,
71% less than 10 employees:
increase from
3285 in 2022

Croydon 1170
Kingston 525
Merton 670
Richmond 705
Sutton 570

8,959 online job postings

3m average London declining
from over 17,000 in 2022

82% female **18%** male

36% from ethnic
minority
backgrounds

39% across all sectors

42% of workforce born outside of the UK

Current and projected demand for occupations

- Care workers & home carers.
- Social workers
- Health care practice managers
- Specialist medical practitioners
- Health associate professionals n.e.c
- Health/public health managers and directors
- Medical and dental technicians
- Therapy professionals n.e.c
- Registered specialist nurses
- Youth and community workers

Local Insight: Personal assistants (personal health budgets)/shared lives carers.

Direct care workers, Clinical Trial Support, Laboratory Scientists, Data/Analytical roles. Translational Scientists, Lab Technicians in biotech / pharma partnerships. Domiciliary carers, mental health nurses, AHPs, maternity support workers, and clinicians trained in LD/ autism and suicide prevention. Pathology e.g. bio-medical scientists and geneticists, diagnostics – e.g. radiotherapy.

Skills in demand

Technical

- Auditing
- Mental health
- Nursing
- Psychology
- Social work

Transferable

- Communication
- Management
- Leadership
- Research
- Teaching

CASE STUDY:

Strengthening Inclusive Re- cruitment in South- West London Social Care

The South-West London Social Care Academy Hub promotes careers in social care and supports residents into training and employment, helping more than 1,200 people between 2023–2025. Using DHSC funding, the Hub has provided vital support for international recruits, assisting victims of unethical practices and enabling 170 care workers to secure new roles with ethical sponsorships while strengthening employers' responsible recruitment processes.



You told us:

- Increasing and aging populations along with a shift to community-based care will increase the demand on the current workforce capacity and shift the roles and skills required to provide neighbourhood health practitioners.
- Social care and some areas of health across clinical and non-clinical roles (GPs, nurses, pharmacists, paramedics) experience persistent recruitment and retention challenges, linked to pay and progression opportunities. There are high vacancy volumes but declining interest, with the sector failing to attract new and early careers employees or carer changers.
- Health and Care has relied on overseas workers, however changes to immigration and visa requirements will accelerate the need to develop domestic talent pipelines. We need to make it easy for people to find a pathway into health care and life science but also consider how to support displaced care workers with no right to remain or access training and enable them to access jobs.
- Skill gaps include specific digital competencies (e.g. EMIS, SystmOne), health, safety and wellbeing, inclusion, communication and interpersonal skills. There is a need to standardise competencies across health and care programmes to meet the changing approach to neighbourhood care and the growing needs for digital literacy and AI readiness across health and care.)
- Work-experience is seen as vital but hampered by safeguarding logistics (DBS checks and funding for checks) therefore employers require support to develop alternative option to provide experiences of the world of work.
- Employers find the skills system difficult to navigate, and reduced development funding has limited leadership, workforce capability and digital upskilling programmes. They would benefit from stronger support from educational institutions to design and deliver effective learning and development.
- Employers are committed to technical and vocational routes into health, social care, and life sciences, including apprenticeships, but face challenges such as backfilling roles and associated costs. They are seeking innovative ways to use the growth and skills levy to create stepping stone and bridging qualifications that build apprentice competence.
- Educators want to collaborate more closely with employers to design curricula and strengthen the talent pipeline, but inconsistent engagement, complex systems and unclear vacancy routes make this difficult. Current recruitment processes can also prevent suitable candidates from progressing into roles.

- In social care there is the need to recognise the skills that people have (fair pay) and challenges of commissioned payment rates.
- There is growth in life sciences and new opportunities with expansion in R&D, oncology, clinical trials, biotech start-ups, and data-heavy research roles driven by the London Cancer Hub and related institutions so we need to ensure that we are skilling a talent pipeline for new opportunities.

CASE STUDY:

Driving Growth Through the London Cancer Hub Expansion

The London Cancer Hub is expanding to deliver one million square feet of advanced laboratory space, strengthening its role as a world-leading research and treatment centre. The development will create 3,000 high skilled jobs in R&D and life sciences manufacturing, forming part of a wider district expected to support 13,000 jobs and generate £1.2 billion in GVA.

Together we will:

- Embed Core & Digital Skills: Integrate communication, compassion, life skills, and digital literacy (including AI) into health and social care curricula; align training with employer needs through modular, stackable courses and competency frameworks.
- Strengthen Pathways & Employer Support: Develop clear career progression routes (FE–HE–employment), expand internships and placements, and simplify employer engagement via hubs, pooled funds, and frameworks; promote social care and life sciences as rewarding careers through campaigns and summits.
- Convene employers, education providers, and sector boards to co-design recruitment pipelines, shared infrastructure, and scalable workforce programs; increase visibility of health and life science careers through single job portals and inclusive pathways.

Workforce Demographics

Construction, Engineering, and the Built Environment

21,750
employee jobs

Croydon 6k
Kingston 3k
Merton 4.5k
Richmond 2.25k
Sutton 6k

4.9% of SLP total

7,935 Local
units

Croydon 2420
Kingston 1060
Merton 1675
Richmond 960
Sutton 1820

97% less than 10 employees:

8,719 online job postings

3m average London rising from 7,000 in 2025

37% female

63% male

17% from ethnic minority
backgrounds

38% across
all sectors

48% aged over 50 years
27% across all sectors

15% reported a disability
14% across all London sectors

Typical annual pay (gross median)

£46,800 vs **£43,200** all
industries in London

5% of jobs paying below LLW
vs 13.8% all industries in London

Current and projected demand for occupations

- Engineering technicians
- Quantity surveyors
- Health & safety managers & officers
- Electricians & electrical fitters
- Mechanical engineers
- Construction supervisors
- Chartered surveyors
- Electrical engineers
- Civil engineers
- Skilled metal, electrical trade supervisors

Local Insight: Site Labourer, roofers,
carpenters/joiners, plasterers

Ground worker, Bricklayer, Plumbers,
Electrician

Gas engineer, Site Supervisor/ Safety
Supervisor, project managers

Foreman, Surveyor

Skills in demand

Technical

- Project management
- Construction
- Plumbing
- Subcontracting
- Carpentry

Transferable

- Communication
- Management
- Problem solving
- Detail orientated
- Customer service



You told us:

- There is a persistent shortage of skilled construction teachers and assessors impacting the growth in construction in FE. Recruiting FE teachers into construction and green skills is hindered by low pay compared to industry high workloads, and lack of awareness that this is an option for those retiring from trades. Addressing these barriers is essential to meeting green skills and construction training demand.
- SMEs understand the need to upskill and retrain to ensure they have competencies to deliver new and emerging technologies (e.g. retrofit) however find it difficult to find staff with the right competencies or to upskill staff so they can access the right supply chains due to time capacity. Employers welcome shorter, modular and knowledge intensive training which would provide the flexibility to mitigate against potential loss of earnings and ensure they can harness new and future opportunities.
- The traditional apprenticeship model poses challenges particularly for SMEs, as it can be long and costly, with apprentices dropping out before completion. Employer would like to consider how apprenticeships can be delivered more flexibly and in shorter timescale to improve retention and productivity.
- Although evidence from Future Skills Questionnaires show there is an increased interest in construction and engineering between Y7-Y11, engagement with schools need to be maintained and we must highlight the breadth of opportunity available, particularly in new and emerging roles such as biodiversity, retrofit, creative design and digital innovation in construction and engineering.
- Longer term, by 2050, energy efficiency is projected to be the largest employing green/low carbon, followed by low-carbon services (which includes financial, IT, and advisory services). Demand is projected to increase significantly in roles related to the transitioning economy and decarbonisation. The most pressing short-term skill gaps for 'green' jobs are in low-carbon heat and energy efficiency, which needs to embed across the education curriculum and specifically in FE and HE.
- With a predominately white male workforce, the built environment sector is keen to explore how they can provide more inclusive pathways to employment, this includes providing appropriate work environments and creating talent pathways for underrepresented groups, but they require a workforce with the right skills therefore must work with education providers to develop focused skills and talent pathways. Educational institutions want to work systemically and strategically

with the sector employers but can struggle to harness consistent engagement with employers. Conversely employer can find it hard to navigate through skill support and provision and cannot always access the skills support they need when they need it.

Together we will:

- Help schools and careers teams promote construction, engineering, green and built environment and sector opportunities by raising awareness earlier on.
- Explore S106 and SV opportunities to support providers to develop their educational teams and fulfil the educator gap.
- Work with the sector talent board to continue focus on sectoral priorities including development, promotion and funding for modular courses and micro credentials, matchmaking to ensure employers and educational institutions can work more effectively together. Consider the growth and skills levy to develop modules and working with local colleges to offer quick upskill programmes (funded via discretionary levies or grants) and inclusive recruitment policy and practice.

CASE STUDY:

Expanding Green Skills Through the Retrofit Skills Centre

The Retrofit Skills Centre boosts awareness of green career pathways by offering clear signposting to Level 1–5 training, modular courses and specialist programmes in retrofit and green technologies. Working with local colleges, employers, and industry partners, the initiative has engaged 100+ employers and 6,700 residents, supported 400 people into green jobs or training, and launched resources including the Retrofit Careers House and Green Skills Careers Tree.

Workforce Demographics

Digital

23,000

employee jobs

5.4% of SLP total

Croydon 4.5k
Kingston 3.5k
Merton 5k
Richmond 7k
Sutton 3k

6,600 Local units

95% less than 10 employees:

Croydon 1565
Kingston 1020
Merton 1195
Richmond 1785
Sutton 1030

11,583 online job postings

3m average London reducing from nearly 16000 in 2022.

29% female **71%** male

41% from ethnic minority backgrounds
38% across all sectors

28% aged over 50 years
27% across all sectors

7% reported a disability
14% across all sectors

Typical annual pay (gross median)

£59,800 vs **£43,200** all industries in London

7.9% of jobs paying below LLW
vs 13.8% all industries in London

Creative

25,000

employee jobs

5.9% of SLP total

Croydon 1.2k
Kingston 4k
Merton 5k
Richmond 9k
Sutton 2.5k

8th highest proportion creative % of total employment compared to all LSIP regions (BRES)

8,800 Local units

96% less than 10 employees:

Croydon 1975
Kingston 1360
Merton 1535
Richmond 2735
Sutton 1165

7,337 online job postings

3m average London rising after a dip to 7000 in 2024, lower than peak in mid-2022.

38% female **62%** male

34% from ethnic minority backgrounds
38% across all sectors

25% aged over 50 years
27% across all sectors

11% reported a disability
14% across all sectors

Typical annual pay (gross median)

£30,200 vs **£43,200** all industries in London

22.8% of jobs paying below LLW
vs 13.8% all industries in London

Current and projected demand for occupations

Digital

- Programmers, software development professionals IT
- business analysts, architects, system designers
- Data analysts
- Database admin, web content technicians
- Cybersecurity prof.
- IT Managers
- IT network professionals
- Actuaries, economists, statisticians
- Web design professionals
- IT operations technicians

Creative

- Advertising/marketing associate professionals
- Marketing/sales/advertising directors
- Public relations & comms directors
- Marketing/commercial managers
- Web design professionals
- Art officers, producers & directors
- Authors, writers & translators
- Events managers & organisers
- Carpenter & joiners
- Graphic & multimedia designers

Local Insight:

Film and video, set building, props, lighting, Sustainable costume design, Creative and digital data

Skills in demand

Digital

Technical

- Python
- Scalability
- SQL
- Amazon web services
- Agile methodology

Transferable

- Communication
- Problem solving
- Management
- Leadership

Creative

Technical

- Marketing
- Project management
- Social media
- Customer relationship management
- Digital marketing

Transferable

- Communication
- Sales
- Detail orientated
- Management
- Leadership

Local Insight:

Digital Adaptation/AI adoption
AI literacy and ethical usage

Design thinking, user experience (UX), and AI-driven

You told us:

- 85.7% of employers identified advanced digital skills as a top skill needed in the next 2-5 years, while 71.4% of employers in the same sector identified that too few prospective candidates have the required skills*.
- Employers, especially SMEs operating within tight margins, risk aversion, and lack of capacity for onboarding. Fewer projects, longer sales cycles, pressure to “do more with less” (AI impact).
- Geographical spread of the different subsectors (ICT, media and advertising were typically the largest) but the distribution of subsectors and historical ties to cultural and creative assets across SLP will impact localised delivery of skills.
- Understanding the specific needs of freelancers and SMEs and challenge for freelancers to fund studies, with the need to explore lifelong learning entitlement, explore modular and stackable opportunities.
- Limited structured opportunities for SMEs, freelancers, and startups to connect, network and collaborate. Scarcity of affordable collaboration, specialised tools/software, retail, and exhibition spaces further reduce networking and mentoring opportunities.
- Lack of awareness about funding sources, existing government and industry support programs and difficulty navigating application processes, constraints on investment for established businesses (penalised for success).

Together we will:

- Embed Digital & Cyber Skills Across Curricula: Integrate IT, digital and cyber basics into all vocational programs (e.g., CRM and POS systems in hospitality, data tools in care) and promote essential (soft) skills and digital literacy as core competencies, supported by a “Digital Readiness” framework for employers.
- Strengthen Partnerships & Advanced Training: Position universities and colleges as AI and digital translators through formal partnerships delivering sector-specific workshops; scope technical and higher-level skills gaps in creative and digital and develop modular training for businesses covering technical skills, business strategy, marketing, and AI usage.

- Expand support, collaboration and alumni networks through mentoring schemes, regional networking and mentoring opportunities; provide guidance on funding applications and establish resource hubs; promote affordable collaborative workspaces, leverage creative networks/alumni, and boost academic-industry links through clusters and taskforces focused on skills and innovation.

CASE STUDY:

Accelerating Creative and Digital Innovation in South London

South London’s Creative and Digital Innovation Cluster, established by Kingston University and UAL Wimbledon, supports growth across the region’s thriving creative and digital sectors. More than 200 businesses have engaged in programmes focusing on innovation, industry connection, and skills development—strengthening collaboration, unlocking expertise, and building a robust talent pipeline for content creation, gaming, and emerging digital platforms.



Workforce Demographics

Retail

42,000

employee jobs

9.9% of SLP total

Croydon 14k
Kingston 8k
Merton 7k
Richmond 7k
Sutton 6k

5,600 Local units

84% less than 10 employees:

Croydon 1605
Kingston 1095
Merton 1045
Richmond 1075
Sutton 780

9,618 online job postings

3m average London reducing from nearly 16000 in 2022.

57% female

43% male

43% from ethnic minority backgrounds
38% across all sectors

20% aged over 50 years
27% across all sectors

21% reported a disability
14% across all sectors

Typical annual pay (gross median)

£30,000 vs **£43,200** all industries in London

31% of jobs paying below LLW

vs 13.8% all industries in London

52%

cite no opportunities for progression

Hospitality

32,000

employee jobs

7.5% of SLP total

Croydon 8k
Kingston 6k
Merton 5k
Richmond 8k
Sutton 4k

3,725 Local units

75% less than 10 employees:

Croydon 1110
Kingston 605
Merton 675
Richmond 765
Sutton 570

9,164 online job postings

3m average London rising after a dip to 7000 in 2024, lower than peak in mid-2022.

53% female

47% male

53% from ethnic minority backgrounds
38% across all sectors

31% aged over 50 years
27% across all sectors

21% reported a disability
14% across all sectors

Typical annual pay (gross median)

£26,300 vs **£43,200** all industries in London

48.4% of jobs paying below LLW

vs 13.8% all industries in London

Current and projected demand for occupations

Retail

- Managers/directors in retail and wholesale
- Advertising/marketing associate professionals
- Customer service roles n.e.c
- Buyers & procurement officers
- Sales & retail assistants
- Marketing managers
- Sales supervisors – retail & wholesale
- Roundspersons & van salespersons
- Customer service managers
- Warehouse operatives

Hospitality

- Chefs
- Kitchen/catering assistants
- Waiters/waitresses
- Bar staff
- Receptionists
- Coffee shop workers
- Housekeepers & related occupations
- Bar & catering supervisors
- Restaurants & catering managers
- Events managers & organisers

Local Insight:

Retail Assistants / Customer Sales Assistant.

Skills in demand

Retail

Technical

- Marketing
- Key performance indicators (KPIs)
- Customer relationship
- Business development
- Project management

Hospitality

Technical

- Restaurant operation
- Food safety & sanitation

- Cooking
- Food preparation
- Housekeeping

Transferable

- Communication
- Sales
- Customer service
- Management
- Retail Detail oriented/Hospitality: Operations

You told us:

- Challenges of high staff turnover, low wages, and negative perceptions, yet they offer accessible entry-level roles and progression opportunities.
- Lack of digital literacy, sustainability awareness, and leadership skills in the sector.
- Some services and menus are being “deskilled” to match lower skill levels of available staff.
- 83% of hospitality and visitor economy employers consulted stated that management and leadership skills are among the top skills needed in the next 2-5 years.
- Limited training, progression routes, and employer capacity for upskilling and lack of funding for targeted training and apprenticeships.
- Impact of AI and digitalisation: growing need for digital literacy (CRM systems, online booking, sustainability tracking), management, leadership and emotional intelligence.
- Qualifications can be inconsistent and need updating to remain fit for purpose. Vocational pathways from schools into hospitality employment should be clearer.
- Poor sector reputation, perceived as unstable and low-paid, deterring young people and career changers resulting in declining student numbers in hospitality courses.
- Economic factors: employer confidence, inflation and rising operating costs (energy), shifting consumer behaviours, with changes to immigration rules impacting labour supply.
- SMEs need clearer access points for training due to lack of HR capacity within their organisations and can find it hard to navigate education and skills providers.
- Traditional recruitment methods (e.g., job boards) are ineffective for entry-level roles (volume of applications).
- Employers continue to request higher level qualifications or years of experience for entry level roles rather than skills or strength-based recruitment methods.
- Difficulty retaining staff at managerial level due to lack of investment in development.
- In hospitality, basic IT skills gaps report (e.g. managing business systems, CRM software) and the need for advice that AI should support rather than replace staff.

- Issues and opportunities with gig economy, seasonality, cash in hand and desire for flexibility mean workforce can lack stability or lose skilled staff for a ‘better offer.’

Together we will:

- Update hospitality qualifications to include digital tools (e.g., reservation systems, social media marketing), green practices, and emotional intelligence as core competencies; expand Skills Passport programs to certify essential skills and improve job readiness.
- Create clear vocational routes from schools/colleges into hospitality through hands-on experiences and funded outreach; work with trade organisations to improve the image of hospitality careers; promote employer involvement in curriculum design and training delivery.
- Help SMEs access training and share best practices; utilise funding to support underrepresented groups; encourage businesses to adopt people strategies, invest in apprenticeships and offer CPD; provide leadership training for managers and maintain collaboration forums to drive innovation.

CASE STUDY:

Removing Barriers to Work Through City Changer Projects

City Changer Project in Kingston delivers targeted employability programmes for people facing significant barriers to work, including migrants and returners. Its barista training and accredited Level 2 Food Hygiene programme has supported over 20 participants to gain practical skills and recognised certification, helping them build confidence and progress towards sustainable employment opportunities.

Workforce Demographics

Education

45,000 employee jobs **10.6%** of SLP total

1,515 Local units
61% less than 10 employees: Croydon 400
Kingston 225
Merton 315
Richmond 355
Sutton 220

12,310 online job postings
3m average London declining from 18,00 peak in mid-2025 and 2023.

68% female **32%** male

29% from ethnic minority backgrounds
38% across all sectors

37% aged over 50 years
27% across all sectors

27% reported a disability
14% across all sectors

Typical annual pay (gross median)
£39,500 vs £43,200 all industries in London

9.6% of jobs paying below LLW
vs 13.8% all industries in London

47.8% cite no opportunities for progression

Early Years

5,800 employee jobs
Croydon 1750
Kingston 900
Merton 900
Richmond 1250
Sutton 1000

515 Local units
Croydon 175
Kingston 55
Merton 90
Richmond 110
Sutton 85

Higher Education

4,290 employee jobs
Croydon 25
Kingston 2500
Merton 250
Richmond 1500
Sutton 15

35 Local units
Croydon 5
Kingston 10
Merton 5
Richmond 10
Sutton 5

Current and projected demand for occupations

- Teaching assistants
- Secondary education teaching professionals
- Special & additional needs education teaching professionals
- Primary education teaching professionals
- Teaching prof.
- Early education & childcare practitioners
- Higher education teaching professionals
- Education managers
- Early education & childcare assistants
- Higher level teaching professionals

Local Insight: FE tutors: Accountancy, finance, counselling, construction, electrical and plumbing, engineering, ESOL and, Nursery Practitioner (Level 2 & Level 3)/Room Leader

Skills in demand

Technical

- Working with children
- Special education needs, neurodiversity,
- Classroom management
- Learning support
- Psychology

Transferable

- Teaching
- Communication
- Management
- Planning
- English language

You told us:

- There is a lack of industry specialist tutors (e.g. electrical) restricting ability to respond to skills needs and challenges in employing tutors for adult learning, impacting opportunities for adults re-entering the workforce, or careers changers.
- Growing youth unemployment and FE/HE mission shift from qualifications to job outcomes/progression to work requiring greater partnership and support for post 16 providers.
- Challenges in engaging with employers /lack of employer incentives resulting in a lack of T level and apprenticeship placement and low completion rates.
- Lack of student demand for some priority areas, with challenges in attracting future workforce into careers in hospitality, childcare and adult social care
- Constrained ASF funding and lack of strategic integration between providers, including local authorities delivering small ASF contracts.
- Significant SEND demand with ever-growing complexity, plus need for greater mental health leadership to support students through education and into work.
- Need for enhanced salary rates, both generally and for hard-to-fill roles
- Ongoing demand for capital investment and employer engagement for industry informed facilities and curricula for key priority sectors.
- Increasing demand and lack of childcare provision limiting access to education coupled with a declining learner demand for childcare courses.
- Providers report uncertainty and system constraints, e.g. funding volatility, tutor shortages, and regulatory friction.

Together we will

- Maintain employer engagement and further coordinate with subregional approaches; explore FE's role in job brokerage for young people into priority sectors (including childcare workforce) and maximise adult employability provision through partnerships and supported employment pathways.
- Strengthen transition management between schools, HEIs and employment; launch collaborative recruitment campaigns for tutors and trainers to attract talent into the education sector and address shortages.
- Tackle specialist tutor shortages with enhanced remuneration packages and explore additional funding streams for curriculum development in priority sectors.
- Explore additional funding streams for curricula development in priority sectors.
- Work with FE to develop the pipeline of early years practitioners.



Changes and Actions Needed

The South London LSIP annex sets the foundation for skills and employment delivery over the next three years.

Achieving its ambitions requires **sustained collaboration across employers, providers and stakeholders—no single organisation can do this alone**. South London employers and stakeholders have highlighted the need to target digital & AI upskilling, strengthen recruitment pipelines through apprenticeships and work experience, make industry informed training easy to access by addressing cost and time barriers, tailor solutions to sector nuances and monitor AI workforce impact and provide guidance on responsible adoption. Through the South London Skills and Employment Alliance and Education Group (South London), we will drive accountability, measure impact and ensure priorities are delivered. Our Skills and Employment Charter will underpin structural and operational changes needed for a demand-led skills system. Together, we will act on five key priorities to transform South London's workforce.

1. Youth Employment (Pan London and South London):

- Create youth focussed pathways and support to increase youth employment through delivery of the Youth Guarantee Trailblazers, Youth Integration Network and South London Careers Hub, and enhance existing pathways to retain more young people in learning and progression to employment.
- Strengthen careers education about our priority sectors (green, digital, care, hospitality) embedding employability and career pathways early (from Key Stage 3) to raise awareness of key growth and priority sectors with educators, linking careers to curriculum.
- Work with employers (starting with local authorities) on subregional early careers and work experience, apprenticeship, T Level policies, aligning with the government commitment to provide young people with quality work experiences – and help employers deliver them by addressing hurdles like DBS funding, early recruitment, and modular training aligned to local demand.



2. Experiences of Work (South London):

- Engage employers to deliver modern work experience models, standardise job trials and placements and align social value outcomes within growth sectors to boost employer participation and deliver on the South London Charter commitments.
- Strengthen vocational routes from schools, colleges into work through T-level, V-Levels, placements and apprenticeships, and access to funding to support structural barriers and reduce risk.
- Improve sector image through campaigns and case studies highlighting progression and, opportunity and strengthen sectoral hubs for expertise and employer engagement.

3. Inclusive talent (South London):

- Deliver supported employment programmes and expand inclusive employment pathways for people who are neither working or actively seeking employment, people seeking work and those struggling to stay in employment, including practitioner upskilling.
- Work with educators to develop for inclusive training through flexible pathways like short, modular courses that build soft skills, confidence, digital skills, customer service, and work readiness for economically inactive residents, with clear routes to LSIP priority sectors and future FE or HE qualifications.
- Explore a fit for future inclusive and skills-based recruitment and retention strategies.

4. Employer engagement and enablement (South London):

- Build strong partnerships across FE, HE, Adult Community Learning, Independent Training Providers, and industry to stimulate market demand for and delivery of modular, stackable, and future-ready training (e.g. apprenticeships) aligned to meet local demand, employer needs, and competency across all priority sectors. (incl. retrofit, construction, care)
- Better coordinate employer outreach across South London regionally and reduce engagement fatigue,
- Enable and support employers and supply chain to realise s106 and social value commitments, utilise local education provision and address shortages of industry-specialist tutors.
- Support business with access to training through frameworks, levy or grant flexibility, expand networking and communication opportunities and access to funding sources and affordable workspaces.

5. Future-Ready: Workforce security and opportunity (Pan London and South London):

- Promote priority sector careers as sustainable, fulfilling with progression routes to higher salaries (both within and across sectors)
- Increase employer AI and digital confidence through targeted support and foster collaboration between FE, HE, and industry to accelerate innovation partner employers with universities for tailored higher technical skills courses.

Explore how educators can embed Digital/Cyber/AI in all vocational courses. The London LSIP and the South London annex to the LSIP provides an opportunity for employers to act, to review the way they transform how they train, recruit, and retain talent to build a resilient, future-ready business. For training providers, use funding flexibilities and partner with industry to deliver the practical, high-demand skills people need to succeed. For stakeholders, to lead change by promoting employment opportunities and opening clear pathways into priority sectors. Together, we can create a skills ecosystem that drives growth, innovation and opportunity for all. We recognise that there is much to do, but through the power of our committed partnership approach we have set an ambitious plan for delivery over the next three years.

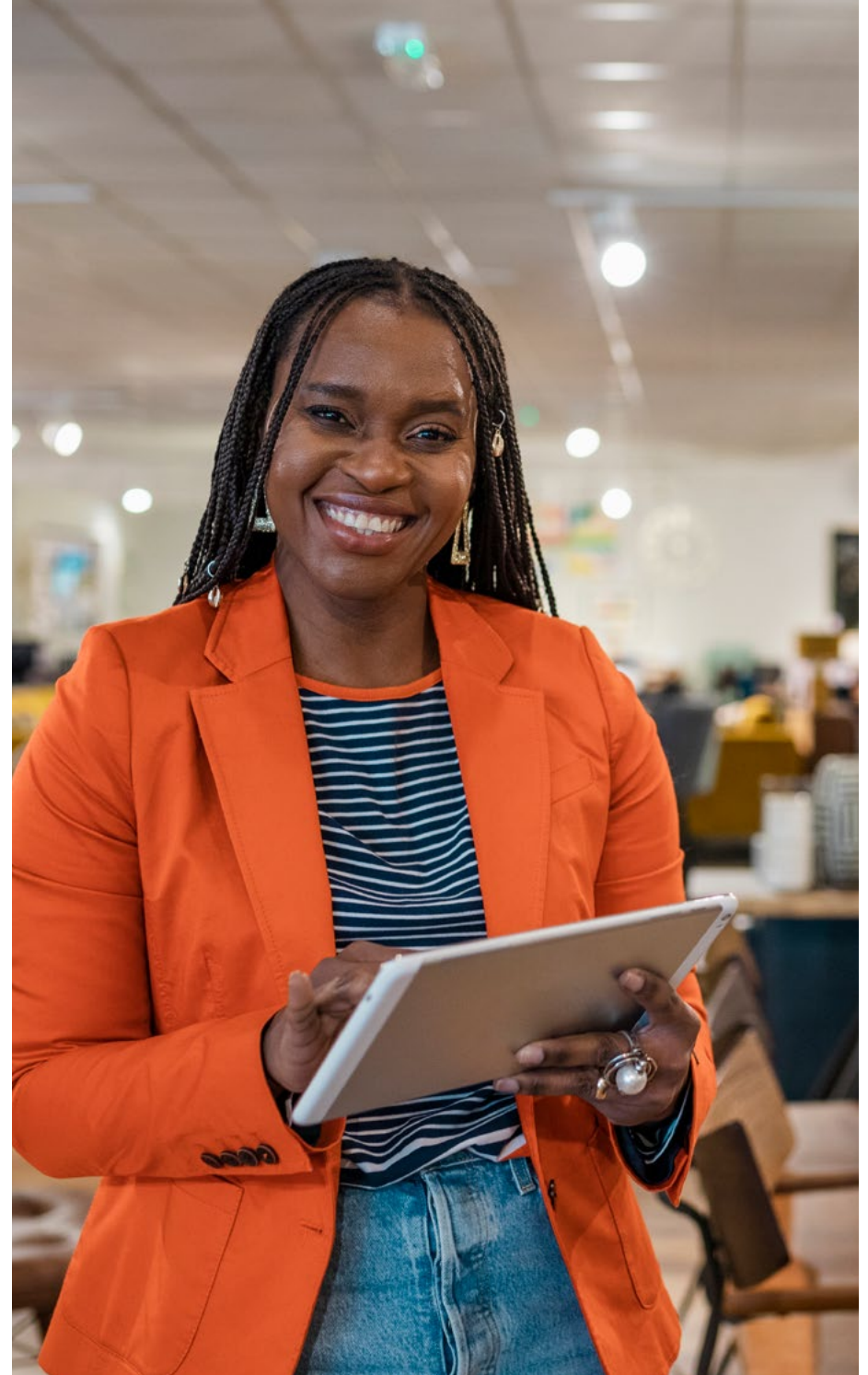
Further detail on specific activities associated with this plan can be found in **Annex B: South London annex to the London LSIP Action Plan.**

To read more about our Local Skills Improvement plan journey and get involved click [here](#).



Further explanatory information on skills needs.

Further information on skills needs can be found here. [South London Skills Improvement Plan - South London Partnership](#)



South London annex to the London LSIP Action Plan

This action plan translates the “Together we will” commitments into deliverable activities, owners, timelines and measures. It is structured by cross-cutting themes however includes activity specific to our priority sectors. It includes both activities defined within the London LSIP action plan and subregional specific activity. This will be updated regularly and treated as a live document. Please see the London LSIP action plan and the South London Annex to the LSIP Action Plan here: [South London Skills Improvement Plan - South London Partnership](#)

No.	Action or change	Specific activity	Lead org(s)	Supporting partners	Timescales	Expected outcomes	Monitoring & measurement
Priority: Youth and youth employment							
1	Create youth focussed pathways and support to increase youth employment through delivery of the Youth Guarantee Trailblazers, Youth Integration Network and South London Careers Hub and enhance existing pathways to retain more young people in learning and progression to employment.	1. Deliver Youth Guarantee Trailblazers and Youth Integration Network to tackle youth unemployment in South London. 2. Maximise partnerships with FE/ HE partners to jointly develop opportunities to support young people who are NEET including CPD and co-delivery 3. Develop and deliver on a South London Youth Employment Strategy and establish a South London Youth Taskforce to lead on implementation.	South London Partnership (SLP), South London Careers Hub,	Youth Guarantee Trailblazers (South Thames Colleges Group & University of Roehampton), FE (Further Education colleges), HE (Higher Education Institutions, universities), Adult Community Education (ACE) , Independent Training Providers (ITPs) Education Group, South London, Youth Integration Network, South London Colleges and Universities Partnership, Employers	1. Apr 26 – Mar 27 2. Apr 26 - Mar 29 3. Apr 26 -Mar 29	Increased pathways for young people to enter employment. Greater strategic and operational integration of youth employment support provision Establishment of youth leadership taskforce and youth employment strategy.	Youth Leadership taskforce reporting to Skills and Employment Alliance
2	Strengthen careers education about our priority sectors (green, digital, care, hospitality) embedding employability and career pathways early (from Key Stage 3) to raise awareness of key growth and priority sectors with educators, linking careers to curriculum.	4. Work with the Careers Hub, informed by the future skills questionnaire and local LMI, to shape and deliver quality careers education, focusing on LSIP priority sectors	SLP, South London Careers Hub,	Schools, FE, HE, ACE, ITP, Education Group, South London, South London Colleges and Universities Partnership, Employers, ERBs (e.g. CITB Go Construct, Skills for Care)	4. Apr 26- Mar 29	Increased knowledge of sectoral pathways Production, distribution, of young person friendly LSIP (priority sectors) Promotion and information activity to increase awareness and stimulate interest,	Careers Hub monitoring of production, distribution and usage of LMI, toolkits, and resources. Production, distribution, of young person friendly LSIP (priority sectors) Promotion and information activity to increase awareness and stimulate interest,

No.	Action or change	Specific activity	Lead org(s)	Supporting partners	Timescales	Expected outcomes	Monitoring & measurement
3	Work with employers (starting with local authorities) on subregional early careers and work experience, apprenticeship, T Level policies, aligning with the government commitment to provide young people with quality work experiences – and help employers deliver them by addressing hurdles like DBS funding, early recruitment, and modular training aligned to local demand.	5. Engage local authorities to review and commit to work experience and early careers policies and provide training for employers on recruiting and supporting early talent	SLP, Local Authorities (LAs)	YE-UK Youth Guarantee Trailblazers, Employers, BusinessLDN, Chambers, BIDs	5. Mar 27–Mar 29	Increased provision of opportunities for young people and adoption of amended early career policies.	No. of opportunities for young people provided by SLP boroughs and early careers policies.
Priority: Experiences of Work							
4	Engage employers to deliver modern work experience models, standardise job trials and placements and align social value outcomes within growth sectors to boost employer participation and deliver on the SL Skills and Employment Charter commitments.	6. Support commissioners, employers and supply chains to fulfil social value and s106 commitments to provide work experience and youth opportunities, by providing resources and matchmaking services to full contractual obligations 7. Work with employer representative organisations to increase the number of opportunities for young people by streamlining and supporting the process.	SLP, LAs	Multi sector hub, South London Careers Hub, Employers, ERBs (e.g. CITB, Skills for Care)	6. Apr 26–Mar 29 7. Apr 26–Mar 27	Increased provision of opportunities for young people	No of work experience, job trials and placements delivered, of which those associated with social value commitments. No of Charter signatories offering opportunities

No.	Action or change	Specific activity	Lead org(s)	Supporting partners	Timescales	Expected outcomes	Monitoring & measurement
5	Strengthen vocational routes from schools, colleges into work through T-level, V-Levels, placements and apprenticeships, and access to funding to support structural barriers and reduce risk.	8. Create and/or aggregate clear vocational routes from schools/ colleges into jobs across a range of sectors highlight where employer support is required, with a view to creating more T level and apprenticeship opportunities; promote employer involvement in curriculum design and training delivery and create placement opportunities.	Education Group South London, SLP	FE, HE, ACE, ITPs Employers, ERBs (e.g. CITB, Skills for Care), sector talent boards, South London Colleges and Universities Partnership,	8.Apr 26-Mar 28	Increased awareness and uptake of vocational pathways for residents into priority sectors	No. employers engaged in development of vocational pathways. Working with the Careers Hub to engage in development of vocation pathways. Creation of resources to highlight vocation routes (posters, toolkits) (working with the Careers Hub). Production, distribution, of young person friendly LSIP (priority sectors) Support the Careers Hub, working with schools to meet Provider Access Legislation and Gatsby Benchmark 7. Promotion and information activity to increase awareness and stimulate interest,
6	Improve sector image through campaigns and case studies highlighting progression and opportunity and strengthen sectoral hubs for expertise and employer engagement.	9. Targeted campaigns for young people & career-changers; aligned with existing pathway support sector talent boards and multi sector SLP 10. Support the expansion of the Skills Passport program(s) to certify essential priority sector skills and improve job readiness. 11. Deliver a Life Science occupational analysis and Skills Summit to map entry routes aligned to London Cancer Hub	SLP, Education Group South London, London Borough of Sutton	SL Careers Hub, FE, HE, ACE, ITPs, Employers, ERBs, sector talent boards, South London Colleges and Universities Partnership, Chambers/BIDs	9. Apr 26-Mar 28 10. Apr 27-Mar 28 11. Apr 26 – Mar 27	Increased awareness of and perception of progression and pathways into and across sectors. Increased knowledge, awareness and adoption of Skills Passport.	Production of resources and communications campaigns, activities and events. Increased perception through surveys. Increased usage of Skills Passport (assessing baseline usage year 1). Commissioned research on life science entry pathways (year 1), Life Science skills summit (year 2)

No.	Action or change	Specific activity	Lead org(s)	Supporting partners	Timescales	Expected outcomes	Monitoring & measurement
Priority: Inclusive talent							
7	Deliver supported employment programmes and expand inclusive employment pathways, including practitioner upskilling.	12. Delivery of subregional programmes of support (Trailblazer and Connect to Work) and support delivery of the London Inclusive Talent Strategy and Get London Working plan such as through delivery of supported employment, employment support and job brokerages models. 13. Continued employment support for social care displaced workers (those with sponsorship but no recourse to public funds or right to remain)	SLP	LAs, FE, HE, ACE, ITPs Health partners, social care, South London Colleges and Universities Partnership, Employers	12. Apr 26-Mar 27 Connect to Work: Apr 26-Mar 29. 13. Apr 26-Mar 27	Increased opportunities for residents with barriers to employment.	Programme referrals, starts and job outcomes. No of social care displaced workers supported.
8	Work with educators to develop inclusive training through flexible pathways like short, modular courses that build essential (soft) skills, confidence, digital skills, customer service, and work readiness for economically inactive residents, with clear routes to LSIP priority sectors and future FE or HE qualifications.	14. Explore opportunities through the growth and skills levy to design short modular qualifications (sector specific) and ensure that new technologies, skills, knowledge and experiential competencies and built into training programmes, specifically health and care, hospitality and the built environment	Education Group, South London	SLP, LAs, ERBs (e.g. CITB and Skills for Care), FE, HE, ACE, ITPs, South London Colleges and Universities Partnership, Employers	15. Apr 26-Mar 29	Greater provision of modular courses designed to meet employers' skills needs.	No of modular courses created, delivered.
9	Explore fit for future inclusive recruitment and retention strategies	15. Develop frameworks, toolkits and support for SME on inclusive HR practice in partnership with businesses 16. Engage recruitment practitioners to improve workforce intelligence, use of language and inform responsive provision and explore skills-based recruitment and usage of UK Standard Skills Classification.	SLP	Employers, ERBs (e.g. CITB/Skills for Care), FE, HE, ACE, ITPs, Chambers BIDs, SE Alliance,	16. Apr 26-Mar 29 17. Apr 26-Mar 29	Amended recruitment practice by employers linking to skills pipeline and usage of skills-based recruitment.	No of resources, activities delivered. No of employers engaged to engage in inclusive recruitment practice

No.	Action or change	Specific activity	Lead org(s)	Supporting partners	Timescales	Expected outcomes	Monitoring & measurement
Priority: Employer engagement and enablement							
10	Build strong partnerships across FE, HE, Adult Community Learning, Independent Training Providers, and industry to stimulate market demand for and delivery of modular, stackable, and future-ready training (e.g. apprenticeships) aligned to meet local demand, employer needs, and competency across all priority sectors. (incl. retrofit, construction, care)	17. Deliver the Education Group, South London incorporating FE and HE partners with a remit to deliver increased no. of modular and stackable qualifications. 18. Formalise HE and FE collaboration through development of a partnership and memorandum of understanding (MOU)	SLP, South London Education Group	FE, HE, ACE, ITPs, Awarding bodies, SLP; employers, ERBs (Skills for Care/ CITB), South London Colleges and Universities Partnership, ERBS, Chambers, BIDs, Employers	18. Apr 26-Mar 29	Closer alignment and clearer pathways for learners from FE to HE into work. Increased market interest and uptake in modular provision/ apprenticeships	Evidence of partnerships between FE, HE and industry Campaigns to promote modular provision to industry
11	Better coordinate strategic employer outreach across South London regionally and reduce engagement fatigue.	19. Through the multisector hub provide capacity and support to enable a more coordinated approach to employer engagement and provide a single point of contact for employers to support system navigation	SLP	LAs, FE, HE, ACE, ITPs, sector bodies, South London Colleges and Universities Partnership, ERBS (e.g. ERBs (CITB – New Entrant Support Team NEST & Apprenticeship/ Training Grants), Chambers, BIDs (e.g. Love Wimbledon), Employers	19.Apr 26-Mar 29	More integrated employer engagement Increased employer awareness and access to support resources.	Delivery of subregional hub coordinating employer navigation across South London
12	Enable and support employers and supply chain to realise s106 and social value commitments, utilise local education provision and address shortages of industry-specialist tutors	20. Provide a resource that will enable the realisation of skills and employment obligations through s106 agreements and social value commitments to ensure consistency and provide match making service between business and educational institutions	SLP, LAs	FE, HE, ACE, ITPs, industry bodies. LAs, South London Colleges and Universities Partnership, ERBs (e.g. CITB's On-Site Experience Hubs and GoConstruct Careers) Chambers, BIDs, Employers	20.Apr 26-Mar 27	Greater opportunities for residents	Consultation of existing best practice in relation to s106 and social value practice

No.	Action or change	Specific activity	Lead org(s)	Supporting partners	Timescales	Expected outcomes	Monitoring & measurement
13	Support business with access to training and support access through frameworks, levy or grant flexibility, expand networking and communication opportunities and access to funding sources and affordable workspaces.	21. Provide signposting to support, advice and guidance for employers and self-employed workers within priority sectors (care, creative) - one-stop freelancer, SME training signpost & outreach (linking to regional employer and sector support pathways)	SLP	Local Authorities ERBs (e.g. CITB – New Entrant Support Team NEST & Apprenticeship/Training Grants) FE, HE, ACE, ITPs Subregional Multi-Sector Hub, South London Colleges and Universities Partnership, Chambers, BIDs, Employers	21. Apr 26-Mar 29	Increased employer awareness and access to support resources.	Delivery of subregional hub and evidence of signposting to SME, self-employment support and resources (e.g. website views, partnership communications)
Priority: Future-Ready: Workforce security and opportunity							
14	Promote priority sector careers as sustainable, fulfilling with progression routes to higher salaries (both within and across sectors) including skilling of new entrants and upskilling existing workforce.	22. Support FE–HE– to create visual progression routes, modular pathways, and joint curricula planning and sector-specific ladders. and provide employers, educators and learners with clear, visual tools to support talent development (including sector-specific progression models and cross sector progression: for example, care-to-nursing pathways, or hospitality-to-management ladders).	South London Education Group	SLP, FE, HE, ACE, ITPs Careers Hub, Employers, ERBs, Multi sector talent hubs, South London Colleges and Universities Partnership, Employers	22. Apr 26-Mar 29	Greater awareness of pathways within and across sectors.	Development of visual resources and case studies (see also action 9).
15	Increase employer AI and digital confidence through targeted support and foster collaboration between FE, HE, and industry to accelerate innovation partner employers with universities for tailored higher technical skills courses.	23. Increase AI & digital confidence for employers by collating access to information and training best practice toolkits to South London employers, toolkits, and campaigns to position AI as an enabler and AI related roles across sectors.	SLP	FE, HE, ACE, ITPs Digital Leads, Sector boards; SMEs, South London Colleges and Universities Partnership, Employers	23. Apr 26-Mar 29	Greater awareness of digital support provision	Access to resources, toolkits, websites providing support on AI, delivery of events, activities, campaigns.

No.	Action or change	Specific activity	Lead org(s)	Supporting partners	Timescales	Expected outcomes	Monitoring & measurement
16	Explore how educators can embed Digital/ Cyber/AI in all vocational courses	24. Digital literacy, AI and Cyber to be promoted as a core competency, including the embedding of AI, cyber-awareness, and productivity tool modules or frameworks as standard across skills provision across priority sector curricula (e.g. include CRM and POS systems in hospitality courses or data tools in care training)	South London Education Group	SLP, South London Colleges and Universities Partnership, Employers, FE, HE, ACE, ITPs.	24. Apr 26- Mar 29	Increased availability of AI, digital modules within vocational curricula	No of modules incorporated into FE delivery



Background and Method

Evidence Base. Quantitative: The development of the LSIP uses a broad range of evidence and research. This includes the London LSIP Evidence base. [Supplementary South London Data](#), Business London Survival survey (2026) and South London Employer survey (2025). ([South London Skills Improvement Plan - South London Partnership](#)) Additional quantitative data included, [Construction Workforce Outlook | CITB, Skills for Care \(2024-2025\) London Workforce Data/SEL London Workforce Data](#), Creative Cluster research undertaken by IDM in 2022/23, and 'South London Creative and Digital Innovation Cluster. Findings Report' 01.03.2024. [We Made That](#).

Qualitative: Qualitative information on local skills issues was gathered from representatives of employers and employer representative bodies, training providers, local authority officers, and voluntary and community organisations. Insight was collected through surveys, stakeholder events, research papers, webinars and one-to-one engagement, alongside wider engagement through South London Partnership events and partner-led activity. A summary of qualitative sources can be found here ([South London Skills Improvement Plan - South London Partnership](#)).

Alignment with LSIP Guidance: The South London LSIP annex was developed in line with national guidance, using a broad evidence base and extensive employer engagement that reached well beyond the Employer Representative Body. More than 600 stakeholders, including over 160 employers, were consulted through surveys, interviews, roundtables, and events, ensuring diverse insight across all priority sectors. All provider types contributed to the process, including FE colleges, HE institutions, adult and community learning providers, and independent training organisations, along with local authorities, sector bodies, and voluntary and community organisations. This collaborative, system wide approach ensures the LSIP reflects both employer needs and the full spectrum of local skills system perspectives.

Environmental and net zero goals: The South London LSIP annex embeds the skills required to support Net Zero and climate adaptation by aligning with national and regional strategies, including the Clean Energy Jobs Plan, which sets out the workforce needed for clean power by 2030 and Net Zero by 2050. Evidence gathered for the LSIP identifies growing demand for green and low-carbon skills, particularly within construction and the built environment, such as retrofit, low-carbon heat installation, energy-efficiency roles, and wider decarbonisation competencies. Employers also emphasised the need for flexible, modular training to support rapid upskilling for emerging green technologies. These priorities are reflected across the LSIP's cross-cutting themes, especially the Future-Ready agenda, which commits to embedding sustainability and green skills into

vocational pathways and building clear progression routes into roles essential for delivering climate-resilient growth.

Equality of Opportunity: Equality considerations are embedded throughout the LSIP, responding to employer and stakeholder feedback on barriers faced by disabled residents, neurodivergent applicants, economically inactive people and groups under represented in priority sectors. The annex promotes inclusive employment pathways, supported internships, flexible modular training, and outreach that broadens and diversifies talent pools. It also recognises physical and digital barriers to participation, such as low digital confidence or accessibility need, and commits to providing accessible, flexible learning and more inclusive recruitment and progression routes across South London.

Governance Structure: The governance of the London LSIP is led by [BusinessLDN](#), the designated Employer Representative Body responsible for developing the pan London plan and coordinating delivery across the four London sub regions, including South London. The South London Annex operates through the [South London Partnership \(SLP\)](#), a collaboration of five boroughs, which leads local engagement with employers, providers and stakeholders. Delivery and oversight are further strengthened by the [South London Skills and Employment Alliance](#), which brings together employers, FE and HE providers, local authorities, and VCSE partners to shape priorities, share intelligence and support coordinated implementation across the sub region. This Alliance forms a core part of the area's governance arrangements and ensures that the LSIP is informed by a diverse range of partners, including those with statutory duties, non statutory providers and wider community organisations.

South London Engagement (2025-2026)	Direct ⁵	Partner type				
		Employers	FE/HE/ITP ⁶	Public sector: Local Authorities, Health	ERB	VCSE/ESO
Event/Activity						
Kingston and Merton Business Expo	17	17				
BusinessLDN – Green Skills for a Thriving Capital (2025) Roundtable event.	31	6	25			
BusinessLDN – Hospitality and Retail Skills Roundtable (2025) Roundtable	36	6	29		1	
BusinessLDN – Solving Employers' Skills Challenges Webinar (2025) Webinar	98	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Destination South London Summit – Visitor Economy (2025)	130	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
LSIP Evaluation (2025) EM Consultancy) Direct engagement:	35	10	20			
South London Skills and Employment Working Group (2025): Borough and partnership engagement session.	10			10		
Care Providers – Skills for Care Engagement (2025). Webinars and consultation activity with adult social care providers.	25	24			1	
SLP (2025) South London Skills Summit	100	20	Y	Y	6	Y
South London Skills and Employment Alliance	15					
Partner Insight (1-1s/forms)						
Hospitality Employer partners						
Employer outreach						
Cold calls to employers						
Hays Recruitment – One-to-One Consultation (2025)	1	1				
Chamber outreach	3				3	
South West London Social Care Academy Hub. Regional workforce insight and provider engagement	1			1		
CITB	1				1	
South Thames Colleges Group/Education Group, South London	10		10			
South London Careers Hub – Cornerstone Employer Engagement (2025)	1			1		
BIG South London (HEIs)	5		5			
SWL Primary Care representatives	10			10		
Kingston Council,	1			4		
Merton Council	1			2		
Richmond Council/Richmond Partnership	1			1		
Sutton Council	1			1		
Croydon Council	1			1		
SLP Employer Survey (long)	60	60				
SLP Employer Survey (pulse)	20	20				
TOTAL	614	164	89	31	12	0

⁵ Direct = individual or organisation attended, provided insight, completed survey

⁶ Organisations with a statutory duty under the Skills and Post 16 Education Act 2022.