

## Annex 5

# Marches LEP Skills Advisory Panel - Local Skills Report 2022



# HATCH



## The Marches Local Skills Report January 2022

A Final Report by Hatch  
January 2022

# Marches Skills Advisory Panel

## The Marches Local Skills Report

January 2022

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# Foreword from the Marches SAP Chair

I am delighted to introduce and endorse this update to the Marches Local Skills Report, having become Chair of the Marches Skills Advisory Panel (SAP) in November 2021. As the Principal and Chief Executive of Telford College, I have been closely involved with the work of the Marches SAP since its inception and, indeed, in the development of our original Local Skills Report finalised in March 2021.

Since then, we have continued to experience the ongoing challenges of the pandemic, the impact of which has been significant for our local economy and labour market. This update has been completed against this backdrop and also the ongoing uncertainty related to the government's national Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) Review. Despite this lack of clarity, our track record of effective partnership and collaboration continues and we look to the future with optimism. This update reinforces the challenges and opportunities that our area faces and also demonstrates where progress has already been made, within a matter of months, against our original action plan.

We are encouraged by what we see in the Skills and Post 16 Education Bill: ensuring that employers are at the heart of the skills ecosystem, investment in lifelong learning and the development of new approaches to technical skills all align with our local ambitions. To this end, we are looking at how we can work more strategically with employers to shape the skills landscape for the future, thus ensuring the best possible outcomes for our businesses, residents and communities. The SAP's work to champion our educational institutions and training providers is also critical. This reinforces their role as significant employers, in addition to recognising their high-quality provision which does much to underpin the Marches' fantastic quality of life.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Graham".

**Graham Guest**

**Principal and CEO of Telford College**

**Chair of the Marches Skills Advisory Panel**

## Executive Summary

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- i. This Local Skills Report for the Marches Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) seeks to clearly set out the Marches' continued skills priorities for the local economy. It builds on the 2021 Local Skills Report for the Marches LEP and is informed by the latest strategy commitments of the LEP and partners, analysis of data on local labour markets and engagement with local employers and skills providers. It also provides detail on the ongoing work of the SAP as it guides partners' commitment to address identified priorities. The structure of the report is outlined below.
- ii. [Chapter 1](#) provides an introduction to the Marches Skills Advisory Panel. The SAP is a delegated sub-group of the Marches LEP Board and works across the LEP area of Herefordshire, Shropshire and Telford and Wrekin. The SAP is responsible for providing well-evidenced, robust advice to influence investment and strategic decisions to address local skills challenges and drive change for the Marches region. Current SAP members are listed and include representatives of local businesses and organisations, education providers, and public sector skills leads.
- iii. [Chapter 2](#) summarises the Marches' priority skills strengths, opportunities and needs based on the findings detailed in Annexes A and B. Annexes A and B have been updated to reflect data and analysis available in January 2022. Given ongoing levels of uncertainty and volatility, the economic context of the plan will need to be reviewed over time to better reflect the ongoing impact of EU Exit and the recovery from the COVID-19 crisis both of which are generating increased need and new opportunities.
- iv. [Chapter 3](#) provides a long-term strategic framework for skills which was designed within the 2021 Marches LEP Local Skills Report in response to priority skills needs and opportunities identified. Cross-cutting and sector specific priorities and their rationale are explained. The cross-cutting priorities are:
  - **Delivering Responsive Demand-Led Provision:** Marches' business requirements need to be more central to skills provision.
  - **Strengthening Supply Capacity:** Marches providers need additional capacity to respond to evolving demands.
  - **Driving Digital Throughout:** The Marches needs to continue to embed digital skills in all subjects and at all levels.
  - **Inspiring Young People:** The Marches needs more young people ready and able to secure the area's growth ambitions.
  - **Harnessing Our Ageing Workforce:** The Marches needs to better harness the potential of its older workers.
  - **Reducing Barriers To Participation:** Marches businesses and providers need to address challenges created by its dispersed nature.

- v. [Chapter 4](#) outlines skills actions agreed in response to the strategic framework in Chapter 3 and how the SAP, LEP and local partners can support these actions. Under each cross-cutting priority, the actions are ordered by level of priority. The chapter also outlines how the actions align with local and national skills priorities and how they could be funded. Chapter 4 has been updated to note progress against the action plan since the 2021 Local Skills Report was published in Spring 2021.
- vi. [Chapter 5](#) reflects on the continued progress of the SAP to date in taking a leadership role in improving skills matching in the Marches by encouraging partnership working, enhancing local knowledge by commissioning and disseminating skills information, and supporting Marches employers and skills providers to respond to the skills action plan outlined in Chapter 4 and COVID-19 challenges.
- vii. [Chapter 6](#) provides new examples of how local employers and skills providers are responding to skills mismatches to improve the Marches skills base, supported by SAP activities. This builds on the selection of 11 examples provided within the 2021 Local Skills Report.
- viii. [Chapter 7](#) reflects on the key findings of Chapters 1 to 6 and calls for employers and education providers to continue to work together to progress the action plan to further improve and align skills provision across the Marches.

# 1. Skills Advisory Panels – Introduction

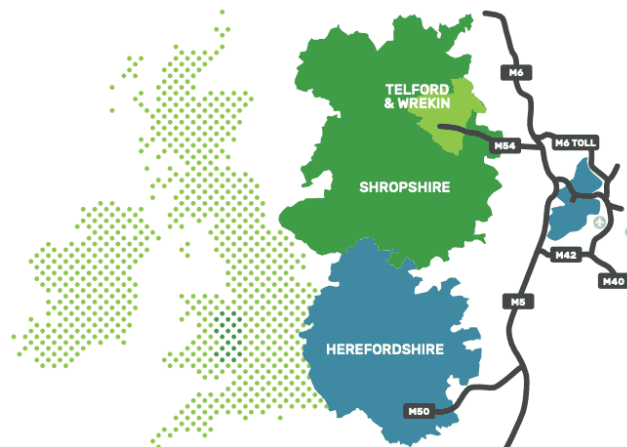
## Skills Advisory Panels: the national context

- 1.1 Since 2018, Skills Advisory Panels (SAPs) have been bringing together employers, skills providers and key local stakeholders to better understand and resolve skills mismatches at a local level. SAPs are part of Mayoral Combined Authorities and Local Enterprise Partnerships and there are 36 in total across England. The Department for Education (DfE) has supported SAPs with grant funding primarily to produce high-quality analysis of local labour markets and publish Local Skills Reports, which set out the local skills strengths and needs and how the SAP proposes its area addresses its key priorities.
- 1.2 This second iteration of SAPs' Local Skills Reports comes at a time when DfE is Trailblazing new Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs), in eight areas of the country. Developed by Employer Representative Bodies, LSIPs are part of a suite of reforms launched in DfE's "Skills for Jobs" White Paper that aim to put employers more firmly at the heart of the skills system. An evaluation of the eight Trailblazers will inform the national roll out of the programme. In the meantime, and before LSIPs are rolled out across the country, it is DfE's intention that Skills Advisory Panels and this Local Skills Report should continue to influence the behaviour of local partners and feed intelligence to central government, including to sectoral focussed skills teams and the national-level Skills and Productivity Board (SPB).

## The Marches LEP Skills Advisory Panel

- 1.3 The Marches SAP works across the LEP area which covers the local authority areas of Herefordshire, Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin, as shown by Figure 1.1.

Figure 1.1 The Marches LEP area



Source: Marches LEP

- 1.4 The SAP is a delegated sub-group of the Marches LEP Board and is responsible for providing well-evidenced, robust advice to influence investment and strategic decisions to address local skills challenges and drive change for the Marches region.



- 1.5 With effect from November 2021, Graham Guest, Principal and CEO of Telford College, became the Chair of the Marches SAP. Graham is a Director of Marches LEP and the Board Member who acts as the champion for the post 16 skills agenda. As such, he is responsible for ensuring SAP advice is reflected in strategic board discussions.
- 1.6 Table 1.1 lists the current Skills Advisory Panel members and organisations they represent.

Table 1.1 Marches Skills Advisory Panel Members	
Name	Organisation
Graham Guest	Principal and CEO Telford College Marches LEP Board member & Skills Advisory Panel Chair
Clare Keegan	Harper Adams University
Prof. Paul Johnson	University Centre Shrewsbury
Prof. Beverley Gibbs	New Model in Technology and Engineering (NMITE)
Ray Flynn	University of Wolverhampton
David Williams	Herefordshire, Ludlow and North Shropshire College
James Staniforth	Shrewsbury Colleges Group
Andrew Smith	Derwen College
Clair Schafer	Marches Skills Provider Network
Charlie Lloyd	Department for Work and Pensions
Alexia Heath	Herefordshire Council
Janine Vernon	Shropshire Council
Sue Marston	Telford and Wrekin Council
Sonia Roberts	Deputy Chair, Marches LEP Board & Landau (community and voluntary sector)
Debbie Gittoes	Herefordshire Business Board
Dave Courteen	Shropshire Business Board
Richard Nuttall	Telford Business Board
Lindsay Barton	Federation of Small Businesses
Richard Sheehan	Shropshire Chamber of Commerce
Robert Elliot	Herefordshire and Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce
Trevor Oakley	Construction Industry Training Board (CITB)
Rachel Laver	Chief Executive, Marches LEP
Kathryn Jones	Partnership Manager, Marches LEP

Source: Marches Skills Advisory Panel

- 1.7 The SAP's terms of reference and its membership are currently being reviewed by the Chair. This is to ensure that the panel is representative of its local economy and can effectively fulfil the strategic role outlined in the Skills and Post 16 Education Bill.
- 1.8 The SAP meets quarterly and, owing to COVID-19, all meetings are currently being held virtually on Microsoft Teams. The LEP Partnership Manager co-ordinates dates and the meetings are scheduled at the annual meeting in advance.
- 1.9 To find out more about the work of the Marches SAP, the Local Skills Report contents or to get involved in the local skills agenda, please contact:

**Kathryn Jones, Marches LEP Partnership Manager**

Email: Kathryn.Jones@marcheslep.org.uk

Address: Marches LEP, Cameron House, Knights Court, Archers Way, Battlefield Enterprise Park, Shrewsbury SY1 3GA

- 1.10 More information on the Marches LEP Skills Advisory Panel is available online at: <https://www.marcheslep.org.uk/what-we-do/priorities/skills-advisory-panel/>

## 2. Skills Strengths and Needs

### Key strengths:

- **Vocational and intermediate qualifications:** good supply of trade apprenticeships and intermediate NVQ qualifications, well aligned with the substantial presence of manufacturing and engineering in the Marches – sectors which make frequent use of apprentices and on-the-job learning.
- **Thriving priority sectors:** a base of specialised (food manufacturing and processing; cyber and defence) and fast growing (construction) sectors with evolving skills requirements.
- **Strong education assets:** includes well-performing schools and Further Education (FE) providers, as well as increasing Higher Education provision with institutions of strategic national and international importance developed in line with the Marches’ skills needs.

### Key needs:

- **Ensuring responsive skills provision:** despite strengths, there is a need to respond to considerable change in both supply and demand of skills as a result of political, demographic, technological and economic shifts to support priority sectors
- **Enabling digital across generations:** digital skill needs span all skill levels and sectors. Continued, increasing and responsive support could unlock the potential of the Marches’ workforce.
- **Building applicable skillsets for work:** relative low provision of workplace experiences and training of workers translates to a lack of work-readiness. This issue may be worsened as some people experience periods of unemployment and economic inactivity due to the impact of and legacy of COVID-19.

## Skill Strengths and Opportunities

### Cross-Cutting Themes

- 2.1 **Demand-led provision:** Employers and skills providers in the Marches are keen to engage in more communication to improve skills matching and work readiness (Annex B – anecdotal). The SAP provides an opportunity for this, although skills providers and employers note availability of time and funding as a significant challenge. This is particularly an issue for SMEs especially since COVID-19 has increased demands on their resources.
- 2.2 **Skills supply:** Skills providers in the Marches recognise their role in anticipating skills need and respond to requirements where possible. They can be limited by funding and course design in their ability to adapt provision (Annex B - anecdotal), plus the dispersed geography restricts access and increases the need for courses to suit the catchment.

### Priority Sector Opportunities

- 2.3 Important sectors have been identified through an alignment of Government Priority Sectors and The Marches LEP Priority Sectors. These sectors demonstrate significant strengths or needs of the skills ecosystem in the Marches and have the highest potential to drive employment and productivity.

- **Agri-tech:** the agriculture sector is the Marches' most specialised sector and generates 7% of all employment (Annex A - Figure A.1). The Agri-tech sector presents an opportunity for innovation-led higher skilled job creation in response to the need to retain more skilled people locally.
- **Advanced manufacturing:** broadly, manufacturing is the Marches' second most specialised sector. It accounts for 12% of employment (Annex A - Figure A.1) and has strong prospects for further specialisation driven by skills and knowledge. While there are relatively low skills shortages currently, additional core and cross-sector tech skills would help the sector to stay competitive (Annex B – Advanced Manufacturing Deep Dive).
- **Enviro-tech:** the Marches has important enviro-tech strengths including a nationally significant anaerobic digestion cluster (Annex B - SEP). The sector is small but growing and could create 1,000 new jobs by 2030 (Annex B – Enviro Sector Needs Assessment). It will also generate demand for soft and general skills such as computer literacy and understanding company products.
- **Cyber:** The Marches has key cyber assets including HE provision, security focused Enterprise Zone Skylon Park, a cyber cluster around Malvern and Midlands Centre of Cyber Security (opened as of Dec 2021). These assets are expected to encourage the supply and demand of cyber skills.
- **Health and Social Care:** accounts for 8.3% of GVA and 14.1% of jobs and is a local specialism (Annex B – Health and Social Care Deep Dive). The dispersed geography and ageing population present pressure for change alongside the increasing demand for health and social care skills. The Marches is responding by promoting the role of technology in care, working with Skills for Care to identify and respond to future needs and growing skills provision (Annex B – Innovation Healthcare Analysis).
- **Construction:** between 2011 and 2016 this was the fastest growing Marches sector and demand for qualified construction labour is expected to continue growing (Annex B – SEP Evidence Base). The Marches has a base of relevant FE and training providers to build upon and offer more, demand-responsive degree apprenticeship programmes (Annex B - CITB Skills Gap Analysis).
- **Haulage and Logistics:** The Marches has a slight specialisation in Transportation Operations and Management employment with a location quotient of 1.2 (Annex B – Transport Tech Deep Dive).

## Skill Needs

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### Cross-Cutting Themes

- 2.4 **Demand-led provision:** 34% of employers have no skills budget or training plan, compared to 31% nationally (Annex B – Deep Dive Summary). Better understanding and communication of employers' skills requirements is needed.
- 2.5 **Skills supply:** There is an ongoing need for skills providers to assess and react to skills needs of the local business base and support businesses in responding to skills gaps.

- 2.6 **Driving digital:** 30% of Marches employers believe that computer literacy and basic IT skills need to develop in the workforce and 29% suggest that advanced IT skills need developing (Annex A – Figure A.23). Digital capability gaps pose a significant threat to socio-economic inclusion and there is an ever-present, evolving need to encourage and facilitate take-up of digital skills.
- 2.7 **Inspiring young people:** Employers and providers recognise a need for greater communication of local career opportunities to support young people to make informed decisions about their career pathways (Annex B - anecdotal). This will improve the matching of supply and demand and provide young people with a realistic understanding of the Marches employment offer.
- 2.8 **Ageing workforce:** the Marches has a greater proportion of people aged 50+ than England (Annex A – Figure A.8) and its population is ageing at a faster rate. This will create skills replacement demands as older worker move into retirement and increase the demand for labour in the health and social care sector.
- 2.9 **Barriers to participation:** Across the wide geography of the Marches there are issues such as consistent coverage of skills courses and digital connectivity. 9% of the LEP’s neighbourhoods (LSOAs) are in the 10% most deprived in England in terms of education, training and skills deprivation (Annex A - Figure A.10), suggesting skills is an acute area of need within the Marches LEP. This measure is based on a set of indicators including England language proficiency, continuing education post-16, FE and adult skills, and school absenteeism.

## Priority Sector Skills Needs

- **Agri-tech:** despite the size of the wider agriculture sector, the agri-tech sector is not yet a major contributor to Marches’ GVA or jobs. Growth has been stagnant in recent years and pre-COVID research projects jobs to shrink by 2022. The sector also generates a relatively low number of apprenticeships (Annex B – Agri-tech Deep Dive) despite the presence of a major agricultural higher education asset in the area. Intervention is needed for automation and innovation to generate higher value jobs.
- **Advanced Manufacturing:** prior to COVID, the recent growth in advanced manufacturing employment was forecast to halt in the coming years (Annex B - SEP Evidence Base & Manufacturing Deep Dive). Developments in the low-carbon agenda and digitisation present real need for new skills and a focus on upskilling the existing workforce to adapt to new technologies.
- **Business and Professional Services (BPS):** professional and business services account for approximately 12% of employment in the Marches, compared to 19% at England (Annex B – Business and Professional Services Deep Dive). There is a high proportion of vacancies in accounting, sales, administration and management. Aspirations to grow the sector will require more highly qualified people with skills that match the future needs of the LEP’s business base.
- **Food Manufacturing and Processing:** an important and growing sector in the Marches, with an employment specialisation 2.5 times the national average. The sector is currently at risk of hard-to-fill vacancy issues, particularly in poorly perceived roles and as an effect of changes to migration policy (Annex B - Food and Drink Deep Dive). There is a need to improve communication of roles and progression routes available.
- **Cyber:** recruitment is a particular challenge for SMEs which struggle to source cyber skillsets and compete with higher paying roles elsewhere (Annex B – Cyber Security SIA).

- **Health and Social Care:** the ability for training provision to keep up with demand for digital roles and vocations allied to medicine, nursing, dentistry, care and optical services (Annex B – Health Deep Dive) needs attention. EMSI data shows nurses and care home workers are consistently the most numerous job vacancies in the Marches LEP area.
- **Construction:** there are issues around training provision such as viable options for upskilling and recruitment of trainers (Annex B – CITB analysis).
- **Visitor economy:** despite a significant drop in employment since 2017 (Annex B – Visitor Economy Deep Dive), the sector has a crucial role in creating demand for local businesses, attracting skilled workers and supporting wider jobs. Better accreditation and understanding of skills and careers in the sector are needed.
- **Education:** as the Marches seeks to promote itself as a place to live, work and invest, more research may be needed into the skill requirements of the educational sector.
- **Haulage and Logistics:** There has been a reduced supply of HGV drivers in the UK following EU Exit and the pandemic. Over the long term this may be addressed by improvements in transport technology. It is expected that haulage companies will be among the first to adopt fully autonomous vehicles (Annex B – Transport Tech Deep Dive). Logistics companies in the Marches also face undersupply of skills and experience.

## COVID-19 impact reflections

2.10 The COVID-19 crisis has disrupted the Marches economy and created a new landscape of opportunity and need that partners are continuing to grapple with and understand. This remains an evolving situation and the longer-term impacts will depend on the area’s ability to leverage new opportunities and respond to emerging new needs. COVID-19 related needs and opportunities include:

- Students at all levels will have extra support needs (academic, emotional and social) after extended periods of remote learning, home schooling and disruptions to extra-curricular opportunities.
- Heightened demand for blended adult learning which Marches’ post-16 skills providers will need to respond to remain competitive. Evidence is already emerging of falling unemployment but rising vacancies (including apprenticeship vacancies) exacerbated by a mismatch of skills against employers’ needs. It is important to build deeper understanding of this, including
  - increasing awareness of young people’s motivations for employment, training and study
  - the impact on 50+ workers whose economic activity has reduced, potentially reducing opportunities for knowledge transfer and informal workplace mentoring
  - the best ways to support people to re-enter the workforce, including job seekers, those with health conditions or disabilities and residents from areas that experience higher levels of deprivation.
- The impact of EU Exit has also led to changes in the labour market and affected the balance between supply and demand.

- The changing employment landscape also drives opportunities for working with employers to consider and embrace new approaches to recruitment and job design.
- Working from home and hybrid working have become more common as a result of the pandemic, allowing people to live further from their workplace. This creates more opportunity for the Marches to attract higher numbers of skilled or higher paid workers to live in the area.
- There are opportunities to promote routes to self-employment to residents to encourage economic activity. The Marches Growth Hub has a key role to play here. This support should also be aligned with public and private sector investment in co-working hubs which may present new opportunities for our town centres and high streets.
- The pandemic has highlighted the importance of the health and social care sector which may create new training demands and investment needs for the Marches the strong base of public and private sector Health & Social Care operators in the area.
- Throughout the pandemic, people have increasingly relied on digital technology. There is an opportunity for the Marches to harness and strengthen the core digital skills developed throughout this time and embed specialist digital skills in core sectors. The need for continued investment in both skill development activities and digital infrastructure to limit and prevent digital exclusion is vitally important.

## Net Zero Labour Market Transition impact reflections

- 2.11 Under Net Zero policy, the UK Government is committed to reducing net UK emissions of greenhouse gases by 100% relative to 1990 levels by 2050. The transition to Net Zero will have considerable impact on the UK labour market and require a local response to opportunities and challenges presented.
- 2.12 Table B.1 in Annex B summarises challenges and opportunities for the transition of the UK and Marches labour markets in as a result of the Net Zero policy, with a focus on opportunity sectors of Automotive (Electric Vehicles), Offshore Wind and Electricity Networks, Forestry and CCUS/Hydrogen. Key opportunities and challenges for the Marches include:
- The UK government Build Back Better Plan highlights significant funding for green infrastructure projects and seeks to grow net zero industries and encourage new ones to grow, including in carbon capture, usage and storage and hydrogen
  - A Green Jobs Taskforce has been commissioned to grow green skills by, for example, working with businesses, reforming the skills system to be more responsive to employers, and expanding post-16 training programmes in green industry related skills
  - There is evidence that the transition will disproportionately impact low to medium skilled employees, younger adults and women. This is likely to have implications given the Marches skills profile (Annex A – Figure A.21)
  - The Marches LEP Economic Recovery Plan outlines plans to support the net zero transition at a local level by working with the SAP to raise the profile of growth sectors including the environmental technologies sector.

## 3. Skills Strategy

- 3.1 The following skills strategy has been developed based on the findings of the 2021 Marches SAP Local Skills Report. The strategy builds on the skills needs and opportunities identified in Chapter 2 and the wider research underlying this outlined in Annex A and B.
- 3.2 The Marches' skills strategy is set out by crosscutting and sector specific priority. The cross-cutting priorities are as follows:

Priority	Sub-priorities	Rationale
<b>1: Delivering Responsive Demand-Led Provision:</b> Marches' business requirements need to be more central to skills provision.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A: Marches providers need more structured engagement with smaller SMEs and priority growth sectors to understand their skills needs.</li> <li>B: More Marches businesses need to develop training plans and increase their in-work training investment.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Marches employers do not invest as highly in training as other UK employers and SMEs (which make up a large proportion of employers) are harder to engage especially given current COVID-19 challenges.</li> </ul>
<b>2: Strengthening Supply Capacity:</b> Marches' providers need additional capacity to respond to evolving demands.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A: Marches providers need to collaboratively plan future provision around evidence of employer demand and forecast needs among priority growth sectors and smaller businesses.</li> <li>B: Marches providers need new investment in physical and digital infrastructure to respond to evolving needs of the economy.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Skills providers and partner agencies need to forecast skills demand for the economy.</li> <li>Skills providers need capacity and up to date facilities to meet evolving skills needs.</li> </ul>
<b>3: Driving Digital Throughout:</b> The Marches needs to continue to embed digital skills in all subjects and at all levels.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A: Marches' core digital skills offer needs to be continually refreshed at all levels of learning.</li> <li>B: Providers need to continually adapt intermediate and specialist digital content in programmes to meet the rapidly evolving demands and opportunities created by digital technology.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The need for core digital skills is a recurring key priority for all sectors of The Marches economy.</li> <li>Core &amp; specialist digital skills provision needs to continually adapt to stay relevant.</li> </ul>
<b>4: Inspiring Young People:</b> The Marches needs more young people ready and able to secure the area's growth ambitions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A: The Marches needs to strengthen careers advice to ensure more school age learners are better prepared for work and more informed about their options locally and to enter higher skilled jobs. Demand side interventions to encourage creation of higher skilled jobs could also support this.</li> <li>B: More Marches employers need to offer more meaningful work experience and apprenticeships, including for the existing and potential SEND workforce.</li> <li>C: The Marches needs to aim for better integration between</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is a perception amongst employers and skills providers that young people are as fully aware of the broad range of employment options in the Marches' key sectors than they could be.</li> <li>Employers continually want young people to arrive better prepared for work.</li> </ul>



Priority	Sub-priorities	Rationale
	initiatives supporting young people through school, college and early work years to create clearer pathways.	
<b>5: Harnessing Our Ageing Workforce:</b> The Marches needs to better harness the potential of its older workers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A: Marches employers and providers need to provide a better offer to re-skill older learners at later stages of their working life.</li> <li>B: The Marches needs to find better ways to transfer the skills of older workers to younger generations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Marches has a rapidly ageing population and needs to ensure smooth replacement of vital skills and knowhow.</li> <li>Harnessing the skills of older workers to upskills new workers could help with this.</li> </ul>
<b>6: Reducing Barriers To Participation:</b> Marches businesses and providers need to address challenges created by its dispersed nature.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A: Marches providers and employers need to make more learning opportunities, more widely available for the whole potential workforce including those with SEND through flexible, virtual, blended learning programmes.</li> <li>B: Stronger co-ordination among providers is needed to ensure a good choice of accessible course provision in all parts of the Marches.</li> <li>C: Marches needs to ensure connectivity and equipment are available to remote learners to undertake blended learning.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>COVID-19 is expected to increase demand for reskilling and virtual or blended learning programmes for adults.</li> <li>The wide geography of the Marches means that it can be difficult to provide a full range of courses across the area suitable for the needs of all residents.</li> </ul>

### 3.3 The Marches priority sectors have specific additional skills priorities that needs to be addressed:

Sector Priority	Rationale
<b>7: The Marches' Agri-tech</b> businesses need support to better understand future skills requirements and the value of formal learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Marches agri-sector has growth potential if it can position itself to capture evolving opportunities and access the skills to drive change, but the sector generates very low apprenticeship numbers and shows signs of favouring up-skilling existing staff to meet its evolving needs.</li> </ul>
<b>8: Marches could build its tech-focused agri-learning capacity and aim to be a net exporter of qualified Agri-tech employees to the UK.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Harper Adams University is an internationally recognised HE anchor asset and Holme Lacey Campus in Herefordshire is the UK's premier organic farming college facility.</li> <li>Although the current number of agri-apprenticeships isn't large, there is some clustering of delivery capacity around the Marches to build on.</li> <li>The Marches engineering and digital capacity could be better supported and harnessed to strengthen agri-learning.</li> </ul>
<b>9: Marches has a growing base of specialist engineering provision which it needs to use to better understand and meet the skills needs of many Advanced Manufacturing sectors across the Marches.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Although the Marches is training more engineers than the economy is expected to absorb, NMITE provides Marches with the capacity to better engage with, and support, manufacturing business to help the Marches ensure supply and demand for training are aligned with the sector's growth needs.</li> <li>Training and career opportunities in advanced manufacturing need to be more attractive to learners and more relevant modules need to be offered that more closely match the needs of employers.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Each sub-sector and business can have quite specific training needs which may require specialist provision and The Marches Advanced Manufacturing sector has been broadly defined across the spectrum of higher and lower skills and includes businesses that are only partly adopting advanced processes including the area's significant base in defence manufacturing.</li> </ul>
<p><b>10:</b> The Marches needs to use business support channels to help businesses adapt to growing competitive pressures in the <b>Advanced Manufacturing</b> sectors.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recent growth in advanced manufacturing employment is expected to come to a halt, and there needs to be a real focus on securing competitiveness by upskilling the existing workforce to respond to technological change and drivers emerging from smart tech, Industry 4.0 and the low carbon agenda.</li> <li>• Many manufactures recognise they need to deliver an up-lift in their higher and technical skills, as well as strengthening the focus on creativity for innovation and communication skills if they are to compete but need help to articulate their training needs so providers can respond.</li> </ul>
<p><b>11:</b> The Marches' <b>Advanced Manufacturers</b> may need extra help to address the high cost of training across the range of roles and across such a large area.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There appears to be a reasonably high level of job vacancies and staff turnover in the Marches Advanced Manufacturing sector, and at higher skills levels.</li> <li>• Current levels of staff training in the Marches' Advanced Manufacturing sector are low and this may be driven by cost and the time required to train staff.</li> <li>• Capital equipment costs can be a barrier to skills provision in Advanced Manufacturing and specialist learning is difficult to deliver across a dispersed area like the Marches.</li> <li>• Marches appears to do well on higher level manufacturing apprenticeships, but the range of apprenticeships offered locally appears to be narrow.</li> </ul>
<p><b>12:</b> The Marches should explore re-orienting training provision and creative new apprenticeships to better meet local needs in the <b>Business &amp; Professional Services</b> (BPS) sector (inc <b>Digital &amp; Creative</b>).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BPS is a large and rapidly evolving sector which will increasingly rely on skilled knowhow to compete and succeed.</li> <li>• Although Marches doesn't have any major BPS sector strengths, it generates jobs across a range of key sub-sectors and staff turnover (partly driven by low retention rates among higher qualified young people) will lead to large numbers of openings which will require suitably trained people in order to maintain business operations.</li> <li>• Training provision for BPS in the Marches is misaligned with expected openings and could be re-balanced by a shift for example from Media and Communication training to Marketing and Sales courses.</li> <li>• The Marches' BPS sector appears to have a high proportion of vacancies and could make better use of apprenticeships at all levels. This is currently limited by a lack of flexibility in apprenticeship standards to respond to employer need.</li> </ul>
<p><b>13:</b> Marches needs to work with its nascent <b>Enviro-tech</b> sector to develop clearer evidence of the sectors skills requirements for providers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Marches has ambitions to grow its enviro-tech sector as the global interest in low carbon and sustainability evolves, but the sector is currently small locally and success will require a shift to higher value and innovation sub-sectors, as well as wider access to softer general skills.</li> <li>• The sector is hard to define but it appears that a lot of people are in lower skill roles however, there appears to be huge scope to increase the number of enviro-tech apprenticeships and amount of FE and HE provision locally. This needs further investigation to be confirmed.</li> </ul>
<p><b>14:</b> Effort is needed to make the Marches <b>Food</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Food Manufacturing &amp; Processing (FMP) is an important and growing sector for the Marches and there are already local and national</li> </ul>

<p><b>Sector</b> a more attractive place to work offering great opportunities for learning and progression.</p>	<p>industry skills shortages which could be deepened by Brexit and rapidly evolving changes driven technology.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Marches FMP sector generates more job openings than it does course completers in relevant subjects.</li> <li>• Food and drink apprenticeship numbers are decreasing in the Marches and there is particular scope for training to improve proficiency with a focus on customer service and communication skills, as well as digital science and related engineering skills.</li> </ul>
<p><b>15:</b> Further work is needed to better identify the specialist training needs of niche, quality <b>Food sector</b> producers and to identify how best they can be met across the rural Marches.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some food manufacturing industries are highly specialised in the Marches, e.g. manufacture of cider and other fruit wines, processing and preserving of poultry meat, operation of dairies and cheese making.</li> </ul>
<p><b>16:</b> The Marches needs to develop a clearer understanding of the complementary role its <b>Cyber sector</b> training providers can play in developing local skills for the sector.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The cyber sector is not yet large in employment terms but has strong prospects and is a strategic priority for growth.</li> <li>• Skills and talent are a huge priority issue for SME cyber security firms and there are established national providers plus local broad provision that have a role to play.</li> <li>• FE and private providers need to complement existing provision to help respond to need and drive growth.</li> </ul>
<p><b>17:</b> Marches providers need additional delivery capacity to meet the <b>Health &amp; Social Care</b> sector's evolving training needs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The ageing population of the Marches is creating growing demand for qualified care staff. Local employment is expected to grow and generate yet more demand for extra training.</li> <li>• The care sector and education providers in the Marches are already working together on tackling skills shortages (eg with the University of Wolverhampton's Centre of Excellence in Health, Allied Health and Social Care) and identified need for extra capacity and a greater focus on digital curriculum.</li> </ul>
<p><b>18:</b> Marches providers need additional delivery capacity to meet the <b>Construction sectors</b> evolving training needs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Marches has a growing construction sector and demand for qualified construction labour is expected to increase. Training has been in decline, but could be boosted by older workers in the sector.</li> <li>• The Marches' construction sector already has skills gaps in skilled trades and professional and managerial roles and emerging technologies involving modern methods of construction will further increase demand for particular skills.</li> <li>• The Marches has a base of HE provision relevant to the construction sector (including the new Marches Construction Ready Training Centre) which could be built upon to offer more specialist provision in growth areas and degree apprenticeship programmes to help meet higher level skills gaps with the right employer involvement.</li> </ul>
<p><b>COVID-19 Recovery Priorities</b></p>	
<p><b>19:</b> The Marches <b>Visitor Economy</b> will need help to re-establish itself in new post-COVID markets, once partners are clear on the way ahead.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The visitor economy has a crucial role in creating employment opportunities and showcasing the Marches to the wider UK but will emerge from COVID under financial duress. In the long run, highlighting the visitor and quality of life offer could support creation of higher skilled jobs and retention of talent.</li> <li>• The visitor economy sector will need to continue to train its staff and adjust to new requirements around hygiene and distancing, while facing immediate survival pressures.</li> </ul>

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**20: The Educational sector** should be encouraged to attract higher skilled workers and employers.

- The strong education sector helps to attract workers into the area in addition to other quality of life factors. This is supported by local home building plans.
  - The sector is at risk of facing skills shortages given the impact of COVID-19 on educators.
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## 4. Skills Action Plan

- 4.1 The following set of actions were developed to respond to the skills strategy of the 2021 Marches SAP Local Skills Report outlined in Chapter 3. Within each cross-cutting priority section, the actions are ordered by level of priority based on the second and third columns of the table. For actions that are already underway the status column is highlighted in green, where the actions are in the pipeline the status column is highlighted amber. We have also included aspirational actions, which are not yet in the pipeline, but which are important and being developed by delivery organisations to address local and national skills priorities.
- 4.2 Since developing these actions significant progress has been made in implementing them. In this chapter, the table has been updated to note any progress made to date under each action. This update has been compiled following consultation with and feedback from key partners.

Action	Status - Underway, Pipeline, Aspirational	Timeframe	Wider Local Skills Priority Alignment	National Skills Priority Alignment	Group Targeted	Delivery Organisation	Responsibility of the SAP, LEP	Funding & Resources
<b>1: Delivering Responsive Demand-Led Provision</b>								
<b>Raise awareness of employment support initiatives</b> with employers and learners.	Underway	Short term	Will further existing initiatives e.g. The Work and Training Tool, Sector Based Work Academy programmes, ESF projects and the Kickstart Scheme	Skills for Jobs White Paper	Broad	LEP/All SAP members	Delivery	ESFA CITB
<b>Progress</b>								
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regular updates on initiatives such as Kickstart, Restart and other European Social Fund employment support programmes provided by their representatives at SAP meetings for dissemination by panel members across their respective networks and information gleaned from participation in the programmes' Local Engagement Meetings shared with partners.</li> <li>Details of current initiatives promoted through the Marches Growth Hub website and Employer Skills Support webpages recently updated and refreshed.</li> <li>Discussed at local Business Board meetings.</li> </ul>								

Action	Status - Underway, Pipeline, Aspirational	Timeframe	Wider Local Skills Priority Alignment	National Skills Priority Alignment	Group Targeted	Delivery Organisation	Responsibility of the SAP, LEP	Funding & Resources
<p><b>Establish business-led networks of SMEs and skills providers</b> in key sectors to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ensure links with learning providers for planning training provision</li> <li>promote education, training and business links</li> <li>highlight business support services</li> <li>explore opportunities to jointly fund learning between the public sector and employers</li> <li>and where appropriate establish sector skill strategies including around digital and remote learning.</li> </ul>	Underway	Short – medium term	SEP 2019; Agri-Tech Deep Dive; CITB Skills Gap; Food and Drink Deep Dive; Innovative Healthcare Analysis; Visitor Economy Strategy Priority 1	Skills for Jobs White Paper	All sectors (Highlighted for construction, advanced manufacturing; agri-tech and health and social care, tourism)	Existing business-led networks SAP with input from businesses and business representative organisations e.g. Chambers of Commerce /FSB	The SAP provides an opportunity for communication between business networks and skills providers, but it is important to ensure this is far reaching.	SAP funding from DfE
<p><b>Progress</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A review of SAP membership is currently underway to ensure appropriate representation from the across the spectrum of business-led networks, particularly those in key sectors, SMEs and skills providers.</li> <li>It will be important to understand government expectations around future Local Skills Improvement Plans and the future role of SAPs.</li> </ul>								
Deliver business support programme to assist SMEs and strategic employers <b>to establish workforce development plans</b> and upskilling programmes.	Underway	Long term subject to funding	SEP; Agri tech Deep Dive Priority 2	Skills for Jobs White Paper	All businesses	LEP/Marches Growth Hub via ESF Skills Support for the Workforce and other ESF projects	Delivery oversight	Marches Growth Hub Funding, ERDF, ESF and proposed UKSPF
<p><b>Progress</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Marches Growth Hub continues to offer a single point of access to information and guidance on business support, including that to support the development of workforces and skills, irrespective of sector or size. Its delivery model ensures that it is strategically integrated with the wider skills agenda led by the Marches LEP and its SAP and delivered with local partners.</li> </ul>								

Action	Status - Underway, Pipeline, Aspirational	Timeframe	Wider Local Skills Priority Alignment	National Skills Priority Alignment	Group Targeted	Delivery Organisation	Responsibility of the SAP, LEP	Funding & Resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work has been undertaken with the WM Growth Hub Cluster to develop the Smarter West Midlands project, part of a national programme to develop the digital skills of industry leaders, bringing businesses and research development together to develop new technology, and helping makers embrace new digital tools. Also supporting local take-up of places on Help to Grow programme. NMITE are rolling out a Herefordshire Skills for the Future programme.</li> <li>Successful delivery of Peer Networks programme to encourage peer learning amongst business leaders.</li> <li>Building Skills &amp; Growth Capacity being delivered by UCS across Shropshire and Telford &amp; Wrekin.</li> <li>3 new enterprise and employment projects to be delivered in Herefordshire as part of the Community Renewal Fund.</li> </ul>								
Develop an <b>impact measurement programme</b> to assess outputs, outcomes, and desired impacts from Marches Skills investment.	Pipeline	Short-medium term	Cross-priority		Broad	LEP	Delivery	SAP funding from DfE
<p><b>Progress</b> Not yet progressed</p>								
Encourage FE leaders to <b>establish a professional development network and programme</b> for FE tutors to enhance professional development, quality of teaching and best practice for remote/digital learning.	Underway	Medium term	Priority 2 & 20		All sectors in line with business need	FE	Influence	Dependent on funding being secured
<p><b>Progress</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collaboration has begun between local HE and FE institutions in the delivery of CPD to tutors to develop and enhance the quality of teaching and share best practice. Telford College scheduled combined CPD event in January 2022 with a focus on Health provision. Meetings taking place to share good practice in AR/VR and develop further programmes.</li> <li>FE providers (FE colleges and specialist providers) in Shropshire, Telford &amp; Wrekin and Hereford have established a peer network of Designated Safeguarding Leads to share best practice in relation to safeguarding. The group also includes as college in the Black Country and in Staffordshire. The group met twice between September and December 2021. This group grew out of a College Collaborative Fund project between Shrewsbury Colleges Group and Newcastle and Stafford College Group.</li> <li>Shrewsbury Colleges Group and Cirencester College are delivering a programme of enhanced induction and mentoring for new teachers and newly qualified teachers through an ETF funded project; the project commenced in September 2021 and concludes in March 2022.</li> </ul>								
Explore a <b>smart procurement toolkit</b> for large employers/investors and public bodies to promote local supply	Aspirational	Medium term	CITB Skills Gap Analysis Priority 1	Skills for Jobs White Paper	All sectors, (esp. Construction Industry, Food & Drink)	LA partners	Influence	Dependent on Funding being secured

Action	Status - Underway, Pipeline, Aspirational	Timeframe	Wider Local Skills Priority Alignment	National Skills Priority Alignment	Group Targeted	Delivery Organisation	Responsibility of the SAP, LEP	Funding & Resources
chains and mandate apprenticeships and training.								
<b>Progress</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not yet progressed, some development work has been undertaken by Telford &amp; Wrekin Council</li> </ul>								
<b>2: Strengthening Supply Capacity</b>								
Establish a <b>Cyber Security Education</b> training centre.	Underway	Short term	Cyber Security SIA Priority 16	AI Sector Deal	Cyber security sector	Midlands Centre for Cyber Security	LEP oversight and influence	Herefordshire Council, University of Wolverhampton, ERDF
<b>Progress</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The new Hereford Centre for Cyber Security, officially opened in December 2021, will offer high quality research facilities through the University's Cyber Security Research Institute as well as providing office space for the cyber businesses and advanced training facilities designed specifically to tackle threats in cyberspace, when fully operational by 2025. To date, 22 cyber-related courses have been delivered.</li> <li>The Station Quarter project in Telford Town Centre will have a Cyber Security Pathway delivered by University of Wolverhampton and Telford College.</li> </ul>								
Establish a SAP focus group to <b>monitor intelligence</b> on labour supply and demand to enable targeted investment in provision and promotion of learning opportunities.	Pipeline	Medium term	Cyber Security SIA; Agri tech Deep Dive; Health and Social Care Deep Dive; Enviro-Tech Deep Dive Priority 2	Skills for Jobs White Paper	Priority sectors (esp. agri-tech, enviro-tech, health & social care)	LEP Employers FE/HE providers	The SAP provides targeted intelligence research and is reviewing remaining areas of need.	SAP funding from DfE
<b>Progress</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not yet progressed – SAP provided with data and intelligence briefing on labour market issues at each meeting.</li> </ul>								
Undertake collaborative <b>fore-sighting research to better identify the future skills requirements</b> in key sectors driven by digital technology and innovation.	Pipeline	Medium term	Agri tech Deep Dive; Health and Social Care Deep Dive;	Industrial Strategy	Priority sectors (esp. agri-tech, enviro-tech, health & social care)	LEP Employers FE/HE providers	Delivery	SAP funding from DfE



Action	Status - Underway, Pipeline, Aspirational	Timeframe	Wider Local Skills Priority Alignment	National Skills Priority Alignment	Group Targeted	Delivery Organisation	Responsibility of the SAP, LEP	Funding & Resources
			Enviro-Tech Deep Dive Priority 1					
<b>Progress</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not yet progressed</li> </ul>								
Work with the UOW Centre of Excellence in Health, Allied Health and Social Care to <b>establish a spoke model centre of excellence for health and social care at FE level</b> to inspire young people and encourage reskilling in older age groups	Underway	Medium term	Priority 4, 5 & 17	Skills for Jobs White Paper	Health and Social Care Young people entering market Older people reskilling	College or training provider	Influence	Dependent on funding being secured
<b>Progress</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A successful Strategic Development Fund bid from consortium comprising Telford College, Shrewsbury Colleges Group, Herefordshire, Ludlow &amp; North Shropshire College and SBC Training is now driving strategic curriculum collaboration with a particular focus on Health &amp; Social Care.</li> <li>The University of Wolverhampton also hosts professional networks at its Telford Campus, including demonstrations of on-site equipment and simulation facilities, and are arranging for Telford &amp; Wrekin Council's Learn Telford provider to visit the facility. The university is working with the School of Society &amp; Community and others to provide an open event for employees of the local authority to explore career options in health and social care and also regularly meet with the Telford nursing team to discuss recruitment activity based at the site.</li> </ul>								
<b>Undertake joint skills assessment across sectors with shared priorities</b> to address shared skills needs across priority sectors	Aspirational	Medium term	Priority 1		Priority Sectors (esp. Adv Mfg., Enviro-Tech, Defence, Digital)	LEP	Delivery	SAP funding from DfE
<b>Progress</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not yet progressed</li> </ul>								
Undertake research in priority sectors to better <b>map progression and movement of students and workers engaged in re/ up skilling.</b>	Aspirational	Medium term	CITB Skills Gap Analysis, 2019 Health and Social Care	Industrial Strategy	Priority Sectors (esp. Construction, Health & Social Care)	LEP/CITB	Delivery	SAP funding from DfE

Action	Status - Underway, Pipeline, Aspirational	Timeframe	Wider Local Skills Priority Alignment	National Skills Priority Alignment	Group Targeted	Delivery Organisation	Responsibility of the SAP, LEP	Funding & Resources
			Deep Dive, 2020 Priority 4 & 5					
<b>Progress</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sector Deep Dives into the following sectors undertaken in September 2021: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hospitality, Catering &amp; Visitor Economy</li> <li>• Retail</li> <li>• Transport Technologies</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Findings have been factored into this Local Skills Report update. Further work required, dependent on funding.</li> </ul>								
Establish a <b>Telford Maths and Digital Education and Enterprise Hub</b> (proposition in pipeline).	Underway	Short term	Priority 3	Industrial Strategy	SMEs Employers Young people	Telford College led with partners	Influence	Dependent on funding being secured
<b>Progress</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Telford College's new digital skills and enterprise hub is to be delivered in partnership with the University of Wolverhampton, the local authority, and businesses through Telford Towns Fund. Funding has been secured and building work will commence September 2022.</li> </ul>								
Establish greater <b>construction sector training</b> capacity.	Underway	Medium term	Priority 2	Industrial Strategy	Construction sector Workers upskilling	Providers	Influence	Dependent on funding being secured
<b>Progress</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A dedicated Construction Centre was opened by SBC Training in July 2021 to support apprenticeship provision across Shropshire. Shrewsbury Colleges Group has expanded its teaching groups for Brickwork and Carpentry &amp; Joinery apprenticeships and Telford College is also extending its construction centre to provide additional courses for bricklaying, electrical installation, plumbing and general maintenance.</li> </ul>								
Establish a <b>tourism and culture training hub</b> that better co-ordinates and promotes learning in the sector.	Aspirational	Long term	Visitor Economy Strategy, 2020 Priority 19	Tourism Sector Deal	Visitor economy	LEP/Marches Growth Hub Local Authorities, providers	Influence	Dependent on funding being secured
<b>Progress</b>								

Action	Status - Underway, Pipeline, Aspirational	Timeframe	Wider Local Skills Priority Alignment	National Skills Priority Alignment	Group Targeted	Delivery Organisation	Responsibility of the SAP, LEP	Funding & Resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Marches LEP Visitor Economy Strategy recognises that skills and entrepreneurship are essential to enable local businesses and organisations to achieve their potential and create thriving communities and destinations and proposes ‘creating a one-stop shop for tourism skills and training support that packages existing provision and plugs any tourism-specific gaps using the Marches Growth Hubs as a focus for delivery and presenting in a visitor SME-friendly way’.</li> </ul>								
<b>3: Driving Digital Throughout</b>								
Develop progression programme for the <b>NHS Health and Care Digital Capabilities framework.</b>	Pipeline	Medium term	Innovative Healthcare Analysis, 2019 Priority 17	NHS Health and Care Capabilities Framework	Health and social care	Providers	Influence	Dependent on funding being secured
<b>Progress</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not yet progressed</li> </ul>								
Develop a <b>Digital Care Curriculum.</b>	Aspirational	Medium-long term	SEP 2019 Digital Strategy Priority 3	Integration and Innovation proposals for a Health and Care Bill	16-18 year olds, health and social care	FE providers	Influence	Dependent on funding being secured
<b>Progress</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>With the success of the Strategic Development Fund (SDF) bid this has been identified as a key element. Target date for delivery March 2022.</li> </ul>								
<b>Establish a Bootcamp for Coding</b> based on the West Midlands pilot.	Aspirational	Medium term	Priority 3	Industrial Strategy	Students, people looking to upskill, unemployed people	LEP education providers	Influence	Dependent on funding being secured
<b>Progress</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coders’ Excellence for Scholarship Skills Bootcamp being offered from January 2022 by Northcoders as part of the Government’s Lifetime Skills Guarantee and Plan for Jobs.</li> </ul>								
<b>Develop a Fab Lab</b> to encourage students to participate in STEM and digital.	Aspirational	Medium term	Priority 3	Industrial Strategy	Students	Education providers	Influence	Dependent on funding being secured
<b>Progress</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Harper Adams University is currently exploring the possibilities of Living Labs to support the Agritech sector and its School of Sustainable Food &amp; Farming.</li> </ul>								

Action	Status - Underway, Pipeline, Aspirational	Timeframe	Wider Local Skills Priority Alignment	National Skills Priority Alignment	Group Targeted	Delivery Organisation	Responsibility of the SAP, LEP	Funding & Resources
<b>4: Inspiring Young People</b>								
Establish clearer career progression into defence/cyber industry.	Existing	Medium term	Cyber Security SIA Priority 16	Skills for Jobs White Paper	Young learners in schools, college, HE and people already working in digital sector	Midlands Centre for Cyber Security	Influence	Dependent on funding being secured
<p><b>Progress</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Midlands Centre for Cyber Security provides a single hub for cyber security needs for small or large business. The trail-blazing project is a joint venture between the University of Wolverhampton and Herefordshire Council, part-funded by the Marches LEP) and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF); the centre supports businesses, develops their skill sets and leads in cyber security testing, research and development.</li> </ul>								
Strengthen careers promotion in priority sectors with skills shortages.	Existing	Medium term	CITB Skills Gap Analysis, 2019 Agri tech, Food and Drink & Health and Social Care Deep Dives, 2020 Priority 4	Skills for Jobs White Paper	Priority sectors (esp. agri-tech, construction, health & social care, food & drink) School age pupils	LEP	This will be supported by the new Careers and Enterprise Company (CEC) led Careers Hub.	CEC
<p><b>Progress</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Marches Careers Hub promotes this through its schools and colleges by appropriate business engagement activity. This is also supported by Telford &amp; Wrekin's Life Ready Work Ready Programme and NMITE's Future Skills for Herefordshire project.</li> </ul>								
Establish a <b>Future Leaders Scheme</b> offering engagement with businesses, mentoring, work experience, problem solving projects.	Aspirational	Short-medium term	SEP 2019 Priority 4	Skills for Jobs White Paper	Pre GSCE 13-14 year olds.	LAs and Young Enterprise and Careers and Enterprise Company	The MLEP Careers Hub is about to launch and could deliver this.	CEC
<b>Progress</b>								

Action	Status - Underway, Pipeline, Aspirational	Timeframe	Wider Local Skills Priority Alignment	National Skills Priority Alignment	Group Targeted	Delivery Organisation	Responsibility of the SAP, LEP	Funding & Resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Marches Careers Hub Cornerstone Employer Group could potentially take this forward.</li> </ul>								
Establish <b>SAP working group on work readiness</b> , to raise awareness amongst employers, skills providers, learners and public and private partner organisations of the issues and opportunities.	Aspirational	Short term	Priority 4	Build Back Better Strategy	Young people entering the market	SAP	Delivery	Dependent on funding being secured
<b>Progress</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Marches Careers Hub Cornerstone Employer Group contributes to this.</li> </ul>								
Create a <b>Young Entrepreneurs</b> support programme to inspire young learners to start up in business.	Aspirational	Medium term	Priority 4	Industrial Strategy	Young people entering the market People who are unemployed or re-entering the market	FE/HE Private sector providers	Influence	Dependent on funding being secured
<b>Progress</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Young Enterprise programmes in the West Midlands provide business education in schools, colleges and universities in the region and deliver activities across the Marches.</li> </ul>								
<b>5: Harnessing Our Ageing Workforce</b>								
Explore supporting <b>micro-credentialling</b> as a way to value core skills to increase accreditation of older workers and workers in sector with less formal qualification e.g. the visitor economy.	Aspirational Note: NMITE Skills Foundry aims to develop essential skills in a modular way.	Medium term	Priority 5, 6, 14, 18 & 19	Skills for Jobs White Paper	People who are unemployed or re-entering the market People whose skills are not formally recognised	SAP	Influence	Dependent on funding being secured
<b>Progress</b>								

Action	Status - Underway, Pipeline, Aspirational	Timeframe	Wider Local Skills Priority Alignment	National Skills Priority Alignment	Group Targeted	Delivery Organisation	Responsibility of the SAP, LEP	Funding & Resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>£2.8m has been secured as part of the Hereford Towns Fund to support Hereford Skills Foundry's Future of Work Hub. This aims to increase share of young people and adults who have relevant skills for employment and entrepreneurship and number of start-ups and/or scale ups utilising business incubation, acceleration and co-working space.</li> </ul>								
<b>6: Tackling Barriers to Participation</b>								
Continue to <b>work with DWP and ESFA on initiatives</b> to help people into training and employment.	Existing	Short term	Priority 4 and 6	Skills for Jobs White Paper	Young people facing barriers to learning and employment	Contract holders	Provide evidence base to support need and scrutiny and monitoring of projects, along with LA partners	ESFA and DWP
<b>Progress</b>								
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The LEP is engaged with DWP Kickstart and Restart programme representatives and delivery partners and the 3 Local Authority Economic Recovery Groups</li> </ul>								
Encourage FE Institutions and training providers to <b>set up a central mechanism for transferring unspent apprenticeship levies</b>	Aspirational	Medium term	Priority 4 and 6	Skills for Jobs White Paper	Young people SMEs	FE institutions and training providers	Influence	Dependent on funding being secured
<b>Progress</b>								
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promotion of the national approach to Apprenticeship Levy transfer has commenced as part of employer engagement and awareness raising activity</li> </ul>								
<b>Appoint female ambassadors</b> to promote uptake in traditionally male sectors.	Aspirational Although there is work being done in this area by providers and employers.	Medium term	Priority 4 and 6		Women entering/re-entering the market (agri-tech, construction, digital etc.)	LEP/all SAP partners	Influence	Dependent on funding being secured
<b>Progress</b>								
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The West Midlands Apprenticeship Ambassador Network (WMAAN) has appointed female ambassadors and champions to promote traditionally male sectors among females.</li> </ul>								

Action	Status - Underway, Pipeline, Aspirational	Timeframe	Wider Local Skills Priority Alignment	National Skills Priority Alignment	Group Targeted	Delivery Organisation	Responsibility of the SAP, LEP	Funding & Resources
Develop a <b>UNESCO Learning City Approach</b> to formalise an inclusive skills ecosystem.	Aspirational	Long term	Priority 1, 2 & 6		Broad	Local authorities, education providers, key employers.	Influence	Dependent on funding being secured
<b>Progress</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not yet progressed</li> </ul>								

## 5. Assessment of Progress

### Taking a Local Leadership Role on Skills

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- 5.1 The SAP acts as a partnership of member organisations who nominate their panel representatives to feed into the skills planning and report back to their host organisation. As well as disseminating relevant policy reports and resources, the SAP commissions data analysis to provide up to date information on skills needs and opportunities to help identify local skills priorities. Consultation underpinning the March 2021 report highlighted good levels of understanding among SAP members of the role of the SAP and its responsibilities for reporting to DfE and the SAP Programme Team. Discussions are currently taking place on how best to position the SAP for the future to meet the needs of the DfE and of local stakeholders.
- 5.2 The SAP appointed a new Chair, Graham Guest, Principal & CEO of Telford College and LEP Board Member, in November 2021 who, with the support of the LEP, is overseeing a review of membership. This is to ensure that there is appropriate representation on the panel and a sufficient balance of employer and business representation, particularly in light of the forthcoming Skills & Post-16 Education Bill and government expectations around Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIP). Feedback on the findings from pilot LSIP areas would be welcomed to guide this process.
- 5.3 Through members, the SAP engages with local authorities, LEP funded skills capital project managers, European Social Fund (ESF) contract holders, the voluntary and community sector, and the Careers and Enterprise Company. Wider local authority teams and elected members are briefed on the work of the SAP through updates at the LEP's Operations Group meetings, scrutiny committees and the CEO report presented at LEP Board meetings. Data and research developed by the SAP is shared with partners and made openly available on the LEP website to promote knowledge and understanding of the skills landscape across the Marches and to support capacity building within partner organisations.

### Working Together with Local Partners

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- 5.4 All local FE, HE and independent training providers are actively engaged with the SAP. They are all invited as members and asked to share skills information with their wider networks. The SAP HE Skills Group meets several times a year as a subgroup of the SAP with an independent Chair, Dr Catherine Baxter, who is the HE sector representative on the Marches LEP Board. The FE Colleges meet under a separate group, Shropshire, Wrekin Association of Colleges (SWAOC) which the LEP and local authority skills leads are invited to attend. The Marches Skills Provider Network (MSPN) shares data and analysis with its members and the LEP team meets regularly with the network to consider joint working opportunities and align work programmes.
- 5.5 The local business environment is supportive of the SAP and includes strong, closely networked SMEs and active local Business Boards. Employers are currently represented on the SAP by three business board representatives, the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB), two Chambers of Commerce and the Construction Industry Training Board.



- 5.6 Where there is a specific sector focus, the SAP Chair and LEP Partnership Manager attend meetings to share data and analysis to sense check findings. The local business board representatives also bring a strong employer voice to SAP discussions and working closely with the Marches Growth Hub teams enables skills issues to be considered as key elements of business planning, scale up and investment decisions.
- 5.7 Direct business engagement with employers can be challenging, due both to the high proportion of local employers who are SMEs and the large geography that the Marches LEP covers. Working with and through local networks, sector and/or geographic, enables the SAP to have a wider reach. The impact of COVID-19 has made engagement with employers more challenging in large part because SMEs are focused on recovery. They have limited capacity to respond to longer term skills issues and opportunities, other than immediate staffing challenges. Those that continue to engage have tended to welcome the shift to virtual meetings as it reduces travel time. A positive aspect of this has also been the more agile and flexible approach to engagement with other partners and stakeholders that on-line interaction can offer.
- 5.8 Connections have been made with DWP partners delivering initiatives including Restart and Kickstart Schemes and organisations such as the West Midlands Apprenticeship Ambassador Network. The work of the Marches Careers Hub, under the auspices of the Careers & Enterprise Company, sees careers education support being afforded to local schools, colleges and specialist institutions through a collaborative delivery model with the Marches' three local authorities.
- 5.9 To aid understanding, the LEP team also sends regular updates out to SAP members to ensure that they are fully briefed on the latest policy developments and funding announcements.
- 5.10 SAP members share insights with their contact and members and build connections of the SAP across the wider West Midlands area. Connections into Powys and Ceredigion are forged and maintained through regular communication between the LEP and the Growing Mid-Wales Partnership.

## Developing a Knowledge Base

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- 5.11 The SAP has commissioned various data analyses and reports including baseline data analysis, sector deep dive reports and COVID-19 impact analysis. These reports alongside other LEP analysis have formed a baseline for the Local Skills Report Strategy and Action Plan, and are summarised in Annex B.
- 5.12 SAP funding has been used to build capacity and insight within the LEP, local authorities, FE colleges and MSPN teams through investment in a data analytics tool. Initial feedback on this has been positive, with specific examples of where it has been used to directly inform curriculum development. Repeat investment is being considered to build on and expand its use.
- 5.13 The SAP is considering the need for further research in the following areas, subject to funding availability:
- Employer views on needs for CPD and their shifting post-COVID requirements
  - Collaborative fore-sighting research to better identify future skills requirements in key sectors post-COVID and on skills needs to make the most of opportunities within the low carbon economy
  - Potential for and best approach to a smaller scale approach to learning (e.g. modular learning or micro-credentialling).

- 5.14 The LEP team also benefits from being part of the Midlands Engine intelligence community. This provides the opportunity to feed into and to benefit from Midlands-wide data and intelligence commissioning.

## Impact on Local Skills Provision

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- 5.15 The SAP primarily influences skills providers via dissemination of information and analysis, including by undertaking bespoke research focused on local challenges such as the eight skills sector deep dive reports. This has been seen to support Marches skills providers and employers jointly to target and justify their funding requirements, and this has resulted in numerous successful bids for funding as outlined in Paragraph 5.26.
- 5.16 The SAP provides a means for skills providers to communicate with and hear from each other, local employers and public and third sector representatives.
- 5.17 The DfE has not conducted any formal reviews since the March 2021 report. However, invitations to attend SAP meetings have continued to be extended to the DfE team. The LEP team has continued to feedback news on DfE policy development to SAP members and encourage their contribution to consultation exercises.
- 5.18 Skills providers report to the SAP that funding mechanisms can be a barrier to better aligning provision with longer-term local economic needs. Current arrangements require the curriculum to be demand-led which in turn relies heavily on larger employers that have capacity to articulate their demands. This can obscure the needs of smaller businesses and not always reflect the longer term and less easy to enumerate future needs of the economy. Other application led funding streams are limited and are often capital focused. Plus, there is a disparity between funding opportunities for general FE institutions and Sixth Form colleges with proposed Skills Bill funding streams applying only to general FE institutions. In addition, the current absence of devolved skills budgets, in contrast to neighbouring MCA areas, increases a disparity of provision.
- 5.19 The SAP aims to support providers to understand the funding landscape. Recent funding announcements have tended to focus on short term COVID-19 response and have not addressed uncertainty around the availability of longer terms funding, for example the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, Levelling Up Fund, and any FE funding. The lack of sight and clarity around longer-term funding is a barrier and, coupled with the ongoing LEP Review, restricts opportunities to build capacity.
- 5.20 There is an emerging need for adult reskilling, support for businesses in encouraging new approaches to recruitment and further work with schools and colleges around the careers education agenda.

## COVID-19 Recovery and Renewal Plans

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- 5.21 The SAP commissioned a COVID-19 impact analysis report which highlighted that some existing skills issues had worsened since March 2020. As set out in Chapter 3, this report seeks to respond to those immediate and longer-term recovery issues. The SAP also reviewed skills providers engagement with employers over elements of the July 2020 Plan for Jobs and this was fed into DfE policy development via the policy team.

- 5.22 The SAP continued to meet throughout the pandemic to support communication on evolving skills needs and has continued to disseminate up to date research and policy information to panel members. Although all actions have supported the Marches' COVID-19 recovery by reducing the likelihood of unemployment, actions which align with the COVID-19 specific priorities (Priority 19 and 20) should in particular support the recovery.
- 5.23 The Marches LEP worked with partners to develop an [Economic Recovery Plan](#) (Annex B) which includes the priority skills and labour market support highlighted within the March 2021 Local Skills Report.

## Skills Action Plan

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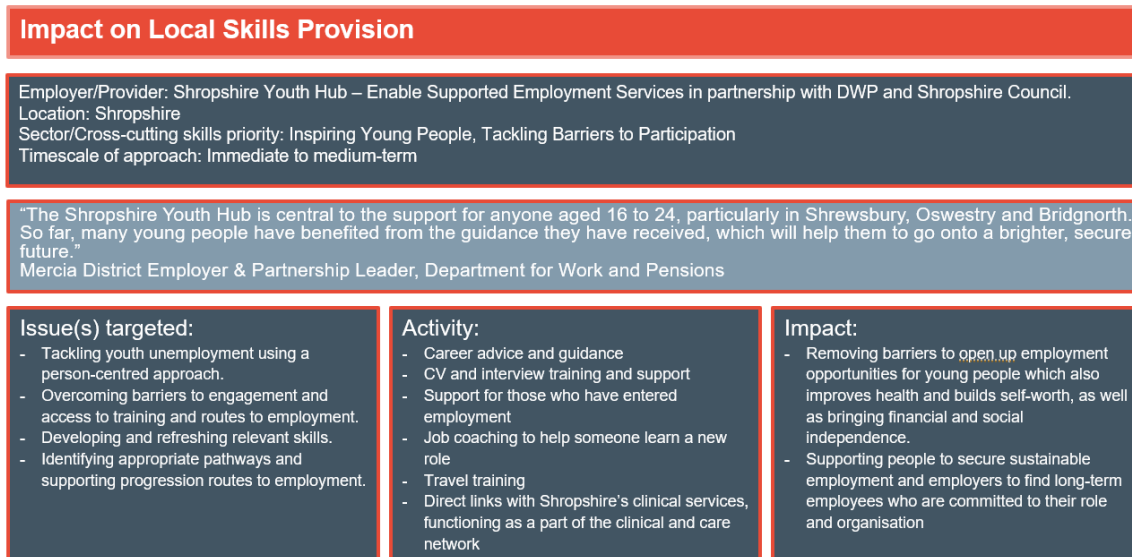
- 5.24 The current Skills Action Plan within the [Local Skills Report](#) was finalised in March 2021 and ongoing actions from this, together with current progress against each, the [Strategic Economic Plan](#) and Draft [Local Industrial Strategy](#) are included in Chapter 4. In some areas, the lack of relevant or appropriate funding has hindered progress. However, the spirit of collaboration forged amongst SAP members has driven forward some actions to meet the shared aspirations noted within the March 2021 report.
- 5.25 The SAP has performed a strong leadership role on skills in the Marches, engaged with local partners, and advised and supported providers to develop programmes which are evidence-based and that meet the needs of local employers. For example, the SAP supported co-ordination of Local Growth Fund and other LEP investments to develop new apprenticeship opportunities.
- 5.26 The Marches LEP has made significant progress in supporting employers and skills providers to understand the need for and attract investment to deliver:
- Eleven Priority Sector Skills Deep Dive reviews to provide insights on skills supply and demand mismatches in the Marches, in line with Action 3 of the Skills Action Plan
  - £200k of Local Growth Funding (LGF) for Shrewsbury Colleges Group to expand and enhance training capacity in automotive engineering and advanced manufacturing engineering subjects as set out in Figure 6.6 of the [2021 Marches Local Skills Report](#). This aligns with Action 5 of the Skills Action Plan
  - £315k of Growth Deal funding to improve Derwen College's IT infrastructure to develop digital resources to assist young people into work, in line with Action 6 of the Skills Action Plan. An example of activities supported is provided in Figure 6.5 of the [2021 Marches Local Skills Report](#)
  - The Marches Centre of Excellence in Health, Allied Health and Social Care (described later) is a £5m project, including £3.5m of LGF to create technologically advanced learning facilities at the University of Wolverhampton's Priorslee Campus, Telford, in line with Action 4 of the Skills Action Plan
  - LEP project development funding was also awarded to support Shropshire Chamber to develop a virtual careers advice service using 3D and video technology, in line with Action 6 of the Skills Action Plan
  - The development of Skylon Park Enterprise Zone by part-funding the recently opened Midlands Centre for Cyber Security through Local Growth Funding, in line with Action 1 and 4 of the Skills Action Plan

- LGF funding for NMITE, a new independent, not-for-profit, teaching institution which seeks to address the shortage of skilled graduate engineers in the Marches, and across British businesses, in line with Action 4 of the Skills Action Plan. A recent investment of £5.7m focuses on the development of the Centre for Advanced Timber Technology, the Centre for Automated Manufacture, and the Centre for Future Skills
- 5.27 The Marches LEP has also launched the Marches Careers Hub, funded by the Careers and Enterprise Company to raise awareness of local employment and training opportunities based on data and intelligence gathered by the SAP. This will further support Actions 4 and 6 of the March 2021 Action Plan. Hub members include local schools and colleges working together with a Steering Group of cornerstone employers, local partners, and SAP members. It is one of only 11 hubs in the UK to include all schools in its LEP region.
- 5.28 More information on the influence of the SAP is available on the [Marches LEP website](#).

## 6. Positive impact stories

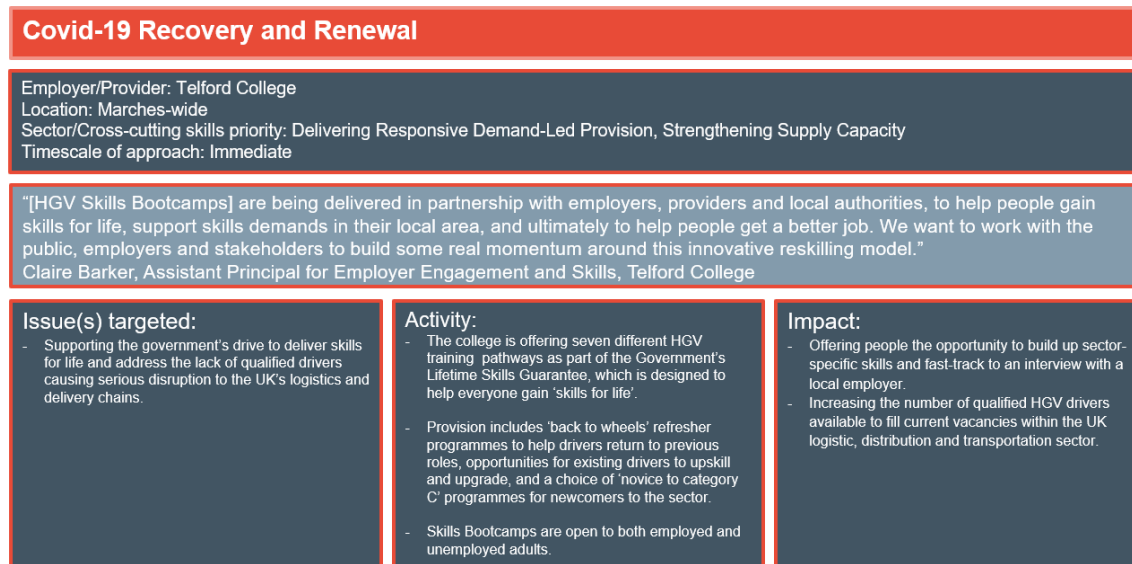
6.1 SAP members have prepared the following case studies to give good practice examples for how local employers and skills providers can influence better matching of skills demand and supply in the Marches. 11 further case studies are available within Annex C.

Figure A.1 Shropshire Youth Hub



Source: Shropshire Youth Hub, 2022

Figure A.2 HGV Skills Training



Source: Telford College, 2022

Figure A.3 Marches Strategic Development Fund Pilot

**Impact on Local Skills Provision**

Employer/Provider: : Telford College, Shrewsbury Colleges Group, Herefordshire, Ludlow & North Shropshire College and SBC Training as part of a combined Strategic Development Fund Pilot  
 Location: Marches-wide  
 Cross-cutting skills priorities: Delivering Responsive Demand-Led Provision, Strengthening Supply Capacity, Driving Digital Throughout  
 Timescale of approach: Medium to long term

“Recruitment, retention and demands for greater digitalisation are the key issues. We want to take advantage of technology-led learning, including virtual and augmented reality, to fast-track more staff into the [Health & Social Care] sector and upskill others.” Janet Stephens, Deputy Principal, Telford College

<p><b>Issue(s) targeted:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Build workforce capacity and capability, improve recruitment and retention and develop future supply pipelines across the local Health &amp; Social Work sector</li> <li>- Deliver supported progression opportunities for adults &amp; young people already in education into local NHS trusts and social care through a Social and Health Care Academy</li> </ul>	<p><b>Activity:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- With clinical leads, new training packages have been designed and developed to bridge knowledge and skills gaps for unemployed adults to help them enter health or social care employment</li> <li>- Design immersive software to train new NHS recruits on the expectations and reality of working in a pressurised hospital environment</li> </ul>	<p><b>Impact:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ensuring that technical education and training is better aligned to local Health &amp; Care sector needs within the Marches area</li> <li>- Putting employers at the heart of local skills systems, supporting close collaboration between providers and facilitating direct and dynamic working arrangements between employers and providers</li> </ul>
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Source: Telford College, Shrewsbury Colleges Group, Herefordshire, Ludlow & North Shropshire College and SBC Training, 2022

Figure A.4 IN2 Youth Support Programme

**Inspiring Young People**

Project lead: Landau (funded under Marches ESF allocation and by the Education and Skills Funding Agency)  
 Location: Marches-wide  
 Cross-cutting skills priorities: Tackling barriers to participation, inspiring young people and supporting responsive demand led provision  
 Timescale of approach: Immediate

“I really enjoyed both Python and Java courses. They were challenging but rewarding. It’s interesting to hear how what you are learning can be applied to a real-life scenario.” Amy, learner with School of Coding under the IN2 Youth Support Programme

<p><b>Issue(s) targeted:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To achieve the sustainable integration of young people into the labour market</li> <li>- To help young people to participate in work or learning by equipping them with the necessary personal and transferable skills</li> <li>- To support young people not in education, employment or training or those at risk of disengagement</li> </ul>	<p><b>Activity:</b></p> <p>Delivery of personalised communication, confidence building and workplace skills programmes through partners, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Brightstar Boxing</li> <li>- School of Coding</li> <li>- Renu Training Academy</li> <li>- Landau</li> <li>- Shropshire Youth Support Trust</li> <li>- Southall School</li> <li>- Horizon Training</li> <li>- HVOSS</li> </ul>	<p><b>Impact:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The IN2 Youth Support programme has supported 1,512 young people to date</li> <li>- Positive progression into education and employment</li> <li>- Promotion of apprenticeship and traineeship opportunities across the Marches</li> <li>- Provision of specialist and tailored support for neurodiverse learners</li> </ul>
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Source: Landau, 2022

Figure A.5 Extended Veterinary Education and Research Facilities

**Impact on Local Skills Provision**

Provider: Harper Adams University  
 Location: Based in Telford & Wrekin local authority with national and international impact  
 Cross-cutting skills priority: Strengthening Supply Capacity  
 Timescale of approach: Long term

Harper Adams University Vice Chancellor, Professor Ken Sloan, said: "We are delighted to have been awarded funding to extend our veterinary education and research facilities. The recent launch of the Veterinary Education Centre and our Harper Keele Vet School offers access to a leading-edge learning environment."

**Issue(s) targeted:**

- New higher level skills provision delivered locally
- Drives support for the local, national and international agri food sector through investment in Marches based asset
- Barriers to participation tackled through development of alternative entry routes
- National shortage of veterinary surgeons, exacerbated by EU exit's impact on staff numbers working in the UK and additional export requirements

**Activity:**

- Development and delivery of new collaborative programme underpinned by investment in Marches-based institution and use of existing farm, laboratory and teaching facilities
- Additional capital funding of almost £500k secured thanks to a successful Strategic Priorities Grant from the Office for Students to support teaching and learning in veterinary medicine, veterinary nursing, veterinary physiotherapy and allied professions at Harper Adams University

**Impact:**

- Higher than predicted recruitment to Veterinary Medicine and Surgery (BVetMS) programme
- New capital funding to enhance graduate employability and address skills needs, especially technical provision at Level 4 and 5
- Local response to national shortage and opportunity to raise profile of veterinary roles, with a unique focus on the agri-food sector
- Collaboration with other veterinary schools across the UK

Source: Harper Adams University, 2022

Figure A.6 NMITE Employability Initiatives

**Impact on Local Skill Provision**

Provider: NMITE (part funded under Marches ESF allocation and match funded by NMITE)  
 Location: Herefordshire  
 Cross-cutting skills priorities: Tackling barriers to participation, inspiring young people and supporting responsive demand led provision  
 Timescale of approach: Immediate

"This has the potential to be transformative for the Herefordshire business community, characterised by its high proportion of SME employers. The future Herefordshire-wide graduate training programme, amongst other initiatives, will help make Herefordshire businesses more appealing on a national scale." Toby Kinnaird, Head of Partnerships at NMITE.

**Issue(s) targeted:**

- Tackling barriers to participation and inspiring young people - Herefordshire is a cold spot on the social mobility index, with wages and qualification levels below the national average
- Supporting responsive demand led provision - smaller businesses feel hampered by the lack of appropriate skills and vacancies are hard to fill.

**Activity:**

- Develop and promote an Entrepreneurship and Enterprise Skills Youth Network
- Develop a Future Skills Group
- Provide Business Skills Gap Coaching
- Facilitate an Employer Engagement Forum
- Offer careers advice for school pupils and add value to the Enterprise Advisor Network element of the Marches Careers Hub
- Develop a Herefordshire Placement Programme

**Impact:**

- Launched in Summer 2021, the project is designed to add value to existing Marches Careers Hub, Marches Growth Hub and other local provision to:
- Help SMEs and microbusinesses understand gaps and opportunities in their labour market skills and offer flexible support .
  - Engage SMEs and microbusinesses with educators (schools, colleges, FE and HEIs)
  - Develop enterprise skills amongst young people

Source: NMITE, 2022

Figure A.7 Marches Careers Hub

### Taking a Local Leadership Role

Provider: Marches Local Enterprise Partnership (funded by Careers & Enterprise Company)

Location: Marches-wide

Cross-cutting skills priority: Inspiring Young People

Timescale of approach: Current funding to 31 August 2022

"The Marches Careers Hub enables consistent, accelerated and progressive careers support to young people across the Marches. It connects businesses with schools and colleges to improve outcomes for young people, education and employers."  
Angela Tellyn, West Midlands Regional Lead, Careers & Enterprise Company

#### Issue(s) targeted:

- Drives improvement in careers education by:
- Supporting employers to build long term, sustainable and mutually beneficial partnerships with schools and colleges
  - Providing opportunities for schools and colleges to collaborate and innovate in the development of careers programmes which help students to find their next best step and meet local needs
  - Delivering professional development opportunities and peer-to-peer support for Careers Leaders

#### Activity:

- Development of network of Cornerstone Employers
- Creation of communities of practice programme for Careers Leaders to share good practice and disseminate effective approaches to strategic careers programme
- Development and delivery of virtual careers fair to support young people in understanding local opportunities and routes into different careers

#### Impact:

- Increased collaboration between schools and colleges to improve the consistency of careers provision and deepen impact, measured through Gatsby Benchmarks
- Cornerstone Employers promoting benefits of employer/education linkages through peer recommendation
- 600 young people and 18 exhibitors attended the virtual careers fair held in July 2021. Resources remained live until end of January 2022 to encourage additional employer encounters for further impact.

Source: Marches Local Enterprise Partnership, 2022



## 7. Looking forward

- 7.1 The Marches is now facing new and pressing skills challenges resulting from the COVID-19 crisis and also the impact of EU Exit. This Local Skills Report sets out a way forward for the Marches SAP to operate within the wider Marches LEP and national skills policy framework where it can support local employers and skills providers to continue to improve skills matching and boost productivity for the Marches economy. The Marches already has much to offer with high-quality skills provision, an attractive quality of life offer and significant sector-specific strengths and opportunities. We are currently facing a period of substantial change in terms of how and where people work, underpinned by fast paced technological change. It is critical that the Marches is ready and able to make the most of new opportunities for employment and growth, while continuing to address existing challenges embedded in its traditional sectors, low levels of productivity, areas of disadvantage, rural make-up and ageing population.
- 7.2 The success of the Marches in increasing its skills base to maintain good employment levels and boost productivity, depends in part on the ability for the SAP and its partners to continue to work together (as described in Chapter 6) to maintain a good balance between supply and demand, both now and into the future.
- 7.3 This report provides a blueprint for how the SAP can drive this. Chapter 2 summarises the key areas of focus which are highlighted in data and by the SAP as areas of particular need or opportunity for skills matching in the Marches. Chapter 3 builds on this by outlining the strategic aims which will address the issues raised in Chapter 2. Chapter 4 provides more detail on how the SAP is currently addressing or can in future address these aims. The chapter also prioritises actions and describes the delivery organisation, the responsibility of the SAP or LEP and the funding source needed to take the actions forwards.
- 7.4 The remaining two chapters of the report reflect on how the SAP is currently operating and the progress it is making against the current action plan and provides examples of best practice in addressing skills issues in the Marches.
- 7.5 To make the most of this Local Skills Report, the LEP, SAP and local partners are asked to continue to deliver the action plan in Chapter 4 in particular and work with others to progress the actions which are set out as relevant to their organisation.
- 7.6 The current lack of clarity within the policy landscape is constraining effective future planning. Confirmation from the Department for Education on the future strategic roles of SAPs, and their resourcing, is vital to enable the Marches SAP to maintain its local leadership role. In addition, timely confirmation of future skills funding is critical to prevent gaps in provision emerging, e.g. where programmes funded under the ESF are drawing to a close. In spite of these challenges, the LEP and SAP remain committed to delivering, supporting and influencing these actions as set out in the action plan table.

## Appendix A - Consultee List

A.1 This report draws on findings from discussions with the following people undertaken to inform the 2021 Marches SAP Local Skills Report and as part of the 2022 update of Skills Action Plan.

Table A.1 Consultee List (Name, Organisation)
Aggie Caesar-Homden, Marches LEP
Alexia Heath, Herefordshire County Council
Andrew Smith, Derwen College
Angela Tellyn, The Careers & Enterprise Company
Prof. Beverley Gibbs, NMITE
Brian Frost, Shropshire Construction Training Group
Dr Catherine Baxter, Harper Adams University
Charlie Lloyd, Department for Work and Pensions
Christina Blakley, University of Wolverhampton
Clair Schafer, SBC Training & MSPN
Clare Keegan, Harper Adams University
Dave Courteen, Mosaic Group & Shropshire Business Board
Prof. David Langley, NMITE
David Williams, Hereford, Ludlow and North Shropshire Colleges
Deborah Gittoes, ACL Online & Herefordshire Business Board
Gary Blackburn, Marches LEP
Gill Hamer, Marches LEP
Graham Guest, Telford College
James Staniforth, Shrewsbury Colleges Group
Janine Vernon, Shropshire Council
Julie Webster, Department for Work and Pensions
Kathryn Jones, Marches LEP
Lindsay Barton, Golden Kite Solutions & Federation of Small Businesses
Mark Thompson, AceOn & Telford Business Board
Mike Goodall, Federation of Small Businesses
Prof. Nazira Karodia, University of Wolverhampton
Parmjit Chima, Harper Adams University
Paul Hinkins, Business Watch & Telford Business Board
Prof. Paul Johnson, University of Chester
Phil Taylor, Landau
Rachel Laver, Marches LEP
Ray Flynn, University of Wolverhampton
Richard Sheenan, Shropshire Chamber of Commerce
Robert Elliot, Herefordshire & Worcester Chamber of Commerce
Scott Grindley, Black Country Consortium
Sonia Roberts, Landau
Sue Marston, Telford Council
Tim Yair, Midlands Energy Hub
Toby Kinnaird, NMITE
Trevor Oakley, Construction Industry Training Board
Will Westley, Telford Business Board

## Appendix B - Linked Resources

- [Careers & Enterprise Company, Trends in Careers Education, 2021](#)
- [CITB, Construction Skills Gap Analysis for the Marches LEP, 2019](#)
- [Department for Education, Skills for Jobs: Lifelong Learning for Opportunity and Growth, 2021](#)
- [Department for Health and Social Care, Integration and innovation: working together to improve health and social care for all, 2021](#)
- [HM Government, AI Sector Deal, 2019](#)
- [HM Government, Tourism Sector Deal, 2019](#)
- [HM Government, Industrial Strategy: Building a Britain fit for the future, 2017](#)
- [HM Treasury, Build Back Better: Our Plan for Growth, 2021](#)
- [Local Skills Report Annexes – Core Indicators and Additional Data, 2021](#)
- [NHS, A Health and Care Digital Capabilities Framework, 2018](#)
- [Midlands Energy Hub, Low Carbon Environmental Goods and Services Market Snapshot](#)
- [The Marches LEP, Skills Action Plan 2017-2020](#)
- [The Marches LEP, The Marches Local Industrial Strategy, 2019](#)
- [The Marches LEP, The Marches Strategic Economic Plan, 2019](#)
- [The Marches LEP, Visitor Economy Strategy, 2020](#)
- The Marches LEP, Sector Deep Dives, 2020:
  - [Executive Summary](#)
  - [Advanced Manufacturing](#)
  - [Agri-tech](#)
  - [Business and Professional Services](#)
  - [Cyber Security and Resilience](#)
  - [Environmental Technologies](#)
  - [Food and Drink](#)
  - [Health and Social Care](#)
- The Marches LEP, Sector Deep Dives, 2021
  - [Transport Technologies](#)
  - [Hospitality, Catering and the Visitor Economy](#)
  - [Retail](#)
- [The Marches Local Skills Report, 2021](#)
- [The Marches Local Skills Report Annexes A & B, 2021](#)
- Further Marches LEP insights are available [here](#).

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