

Buckinghamshire Thames Valley LEP - Skills for the workforce

This skills statement sets out the broad skills objectives that Buckinghamshire businesses need to drive growth. By working together with businesses, partners, providers and funders we hope it will become a key tool in the planning, funding and delivery of priorities. We want the statement to be proactive in identifying the key areas of need and to challenge all players involved in the skills map to work together to bring about change.

Skills Strength

- Buckinghamshire has one of the best educated workforce's in the country, with a higher proportion holding qualifications at NVQ levels 2 and 3 or higher than the country as a whole. 35.6% of working age residents hold degree level qualifications, the fourth highest of any county council area.

Skills Challenges

- A recurring theme amongst businesses is that the education system does not equip young people with the skills needed to operate effectively in the world of work.
- Careers advice and guidance is inconsistent and is generally failing to advise young people appropriately about where the potential jobs are and inspire them.
- The current SFA funded provision is dominated by level 2 and below provision although the demonstrated skills needs are at level3/technician level.
- Apprenticeship numbers are growing but this growth is not reflected in important sectors for the economy e.g. Engineering, Digital ICT/Creative and Construction/The Built Environment.
- The excellence of Buckinghamshire's schools is not realised by the local economy with the majority not returning to Buckinghamshire following graduation. This is not helped by the high cost of living locally and the proximity to London.
- Only 9.7% of young people enter employment after key stage 5 which results in a small pool of potential young employees for local businesses.
- There is underemployment within the local labour market. The number of people working part time has increased.

Action 1: Improve the market intelligence about the local labour market

Commitments 2014

- Using Labour insight software analyse the job vacancies advertised across Buckinghamshire by sector and skills needs and share with partners
- Working with Buckinghamshire Business First gather local information given by employers about their skills needs
- Use the data supplied by the SFA to gain a comprehensive picture of the local skills provision and identify gaps and development opportunities.

Action 2: Continue to develop the number and range of apprenticeship opportunities within Buckinghamshire

Commitments 2014

- To work with Bucks Business First to provide a central point of contact for business providing information about apprenticeships.
- Work with providers to develop a wider range of quality apprenticeships in priority sectors.
- To work with funders to ensure all providers have the information necessary to develop Higher Apprenticeships.
- Work with the local authority partners to harness support for apprenticeships both in terms of advocacy, funding grants and work placements.

Action 3: Develop a more effective local system of careers advice and guidance

Commitments 2014

- Develop a brokerage model to improve the linkages between local employers and schools and colleges.
- To bring together all local IAG providers – National Careers Service, Connexions, Adviza, Education Business Partnership and DWP young people advisors.
- To bid for ESF funds to support IAG locally

Action 4: Improve the work readiness of young people

Commitments 2014

- To promote the much greater involvement of local businesses in schools and colleges to inspire young people.
- To work with partners to showcase the range of businesses and employment opportunities in Bucks
- To promote the need for a greater emphasis on STEM subjects

Action 5: Promote a skills system that is more responsive to the needs of local employers

Commitments 2014

- To set up a collaborative provider planning group to identify gaps and over provision in the local skills system.
- To challenge the provider network to offer a higher percentage of their programme at level 2 and above
- Undertake regular analysis of the skills provision and use of SFA funding and challenge if this is not meeting local needs

Action 6: Provide a reference point for future skills needs

Commitments 2014

- Work with the skills sector to identify capital opportunities to help with skills development
- Through ESF identify funds for the development of sustainability skills.