

Luton 2040

A place to thrive

Luton

**Employment &
Skills Strategy**

2022-2027



Foreword

I am delighted to present to you our town-wide Luton Employment and Skills Strategy, 2022-2027.

This is a vitally important document that will be central to our shared ambition to transform lives and help deliver our vision for Luton by 2040 and anchor our work to ensure Luton is recognised as a Marmot Town. Luton is unique – a showcase for enterprise, diversity, and opportunity, and so our strategy reflects closely on this. By being clear on our challenges and priorities, we will make a real difference to those who need support and are ready to flourish, creating diverse and fair opportunities **so no one is left behind.**

Skills, productive jobs and diverse work are the essence of a thriving and successful place. Through this strategy, we will improve access to opportunities, tackle structural barriers, upskill our residents and align skills to meet the needs of our employers, now and in the future. We will support the talent pipeline with the skills and tools to make informed decisions about their future, and ensure people see Luton as a place within which enriching and rewarding careers can be developed and where entrepreneurship can thrive.

This strategy has been prepared against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic, and I am incredibly grateful to the 300+ individuals and organisations who committed their time and energy to co-produce it. The strategy's development represents the essence of a collective effort and speaks to the priorities identified by an array of local stakeholders, at a time of great change.

Through this strategy, partners are making a commitment to ensuring inclusive opportunity and equality is afforded to all, providing the basis for a healthy, active, and rewarding life.

It is also an embodiment of a long-term deal with employers, to ensure the right systems and infrastructures are in place, and that the talent needed to propel a new wave of growth, articulated within Luton's 2040 Vision, is ready and available within the town.

By adopting a strategic and action-orientated approach, we will create a dynamic and flexible workforce for the future, engage and inspire those furthest from the labour market and work towards the ultimate objective of eliminating poverty, which has deprived too many people from reaching their full potential. We are transparent about Luton's weaknesses and are well-placed to make a significant difference to many by adopting an evidence-based approach.

Luton has the assets to transform the life prospects of its residents and those excluded from the labour market, but only where we collaborate as a strong partnership, focused on realising the benefits of inclusive growth. By acknowledging our strengths and addressing our challenges, we stand the best chance of making lasting change for the people and businesses of our town.

We have much to do and this strategy sharpens the focus for us to realise our shared vision.

Councillor Aslam Khan
Luton Borough Council
Deputy Leader

Skills and Employability
Portfolio Holder



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1. Introduction



Introduction

Welcome to the Luton Employment and Skills Strategy 2022 – 2027.

This strategy has been developed by Luton’s Employment and Skills Partnership Board (ESPB), comprising senior leaders from Luton Council, Barnfield College, Central Bedfordshire College, University of Bedfordshire, Luton Sixth Form College, school representatives, Bedfordshire Chamber of Commerce, South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership (SEMLEP), Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and representatives from employers, such as London Luton Airport Operations Ltd (LLAOL) and Vauxhall Motors, and the voluntary and community sector.

Together, we have co-created a strategy founded on a rich and timely evidence base. Data has been combined with extensive stakeholder engagement to help us really understand Luton as a place and enable us to co-design our vision, objectives, and actions. We have therefore identified four key strategic priorities:

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1 Skills Driving Economic Recovery and Growth | 2 Developing a Pipeline of Talented and Resilient People |
| 3 Tackling Long-Term Inequality and Economic Inactivity | 4 Creating an Adaptable, Upskilled Workforce |

This can only be achieved through strong partnerships and it is through our collective effort that the benefits to people, businesses, and communities will be greatest.

The strategy is underpinned by the recognition of the importance of equality and inclusion and has a critical role to play in achieving the 2040 shared vision that Luton will be a healthy, fair, and sustainable town, where everyone can thrive, and no-one has to live in poverty. It will also help to underpin our goal to become a Marmot Town.

Given the current economic uncertainty, the strategy is designed to be flexible and responsive so that we can learn and adapt as we move towards economic recovery and reform. It embraces what works, building on the foundations already in place, but is resolute in focus – acknowledging urgent action is required in other areas.



Sitting alongside the strategy is a detailed Implementation Plan, including our key performance indicators (KPIs), which will be delivered through the ESPB and monitored by the Luton Inclusive Economy Board (IEB). The Luton Progression and Transition Board (PTB) will continue to oversee initiatives to improve opportunities for the development of young people in the town and, therefore, play a key role in the strategy’s delivery, too.



Our Vision

At the heart of the Employment and Skills Strategy is a bold and action-focused vision. This has been carefully developed and co-created with employers, residents, communities, and partners, setting out our collective ambition to deliver inclusive growth in Luton, through skills and employment opportunities.



Our vision will be delivered by everyone in the town, including our key delivery partners: employers, Luton Council, Barnfield College, University of Bedfordshire, our schools and sixth form colleges, Central Bedfordshire College, DWP, SEMLEP, alongside the community and voluntary sector.



By 2027, Luton will be characterised by...

A Strategy for All – No-one Left Behind

This strategy has been developed to support all who live and work in Luton, emphasising the need and opportunity to support people at different life stages and contexts. As such, no-one will be left behind.

Our Vision and strategic priorities will enable an inclusive approach that supports people to thrive, regardless of individual circumstances, backgrounds and characteristics.

- **Young People:** giving our youth and future generations the choice, aspiration, credentials and baseline skills needed to develop a successful and meaningful career, within Luton or further afield.
- **Out of Work:** ensuring those farthest from the labour market have access to skills and learning to support employability and ultimately make a positive economic contribution through secure work.
- **In Work:** giving those in work the opportunity to pursue lifelong learning aligned to their on-the-job needs, through fairer work conditions and an employer commitment to staff development.
- **Innovators and Entrepreneurs:** providing the infrastructure and support needed to activate a new wave of entrepreneurs and build on Luton's identity as a place to start and grow a business.
- **Career Changers:** supporting those seeking a career change or who are at the latter stages of working life change course and diversify, through access to clear skills and employment pathways.
- **Employers:** enabling businesses to scale, innovate and diversify, as a result of access to suitable provision and skilled people, who are eager to secure local jobs and build Luton's economic profile.



2. Strategic Context



Our Strategic Context

An Integrated Strategy

This strategy does not sit in isolation – it is part of a greater sum of parts and is integrated by design. In line with the Luton 2040 Vision, it builds on the significant momentum that was developed before the pandemic and reinforces our ambitions to deliver an Inclusive Economy in Luton. It follows on from the activities delivered through Luton’s Skills and Employability Strategy 2016-2020 and builds on the Inclusive Growth Commission’s work and the COVID-19 Economic Recovery Plan.

It has also been produced in the context of national changes and policy development, particularly those captured within the Skills for Jobs White Paper (2020), School Gatsby Benchmarks, UK apprenticeship strategies and Post-16 Plan. It also dovetails with regional strategies, including the Oxford to Cambridge (OxCam) Arc Vision and SEMLEP’s Skills Strategy and Local Industrial Strategy.

Luton’s 2040 Vision

Luton’s 2040 shared vision is that “Luton will be a healthy, fair and sustainable town, where everyone can thrive, and no-one has to live in poverty”. Within this, there are a series of strategic priorities which resonate strongly with this strategy:



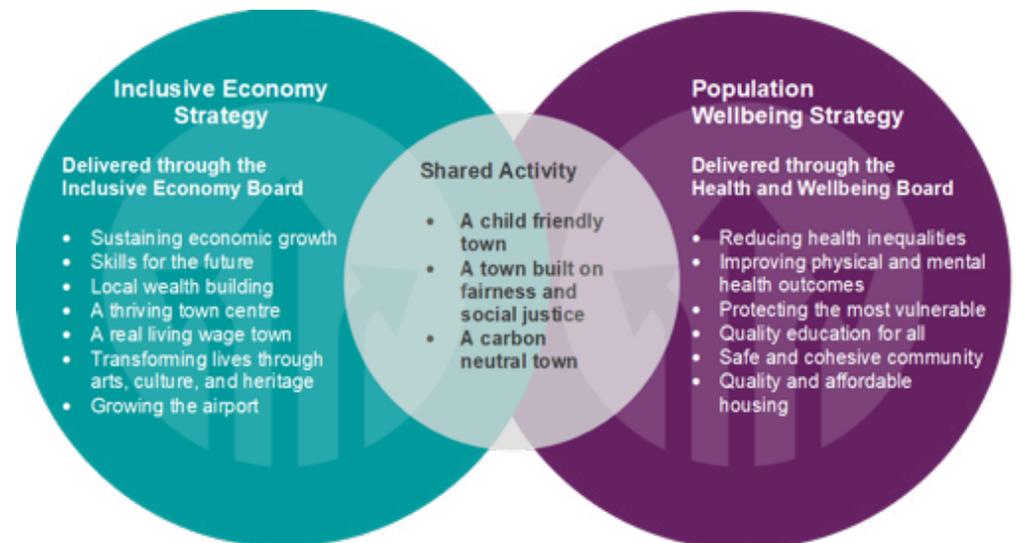
The Luton 2040 Vision is being delivered through two strategic partnership boards – the Inclusive Economy Board and the Health and Wellbeing Board. Both have developed their own strategies to drive the delivery across their own key areas of focus, which complement and augment this strategy.

Whilst this Strategy cuts across both boards and their respective strategies, it largely falls under the Inclusive Economy Board which is responsible for overseeing the delivery of the Inclusive Economy Strategy and has specific target outcomes for:

- A skilled workforce that meets the needs of local employers.
- More of our residents in high-value, well-paid jobs within Luton.

However, given the significant connection between health and work, it also closely ties into the Population Wellbeing Strategy owned by the Health and Wellbeing Board.

The focus of each Board’s strategy is summarised below, emphasising the natural links and connections with the Employment and Skills Strategy.



Levelling Up Luton

Our Contribution to Levelling Up

Our strategy has a pivotal role to play in Levelling Up – within Luton and as part of a broader agenda to tackle inequalities and ensure the benefits of growth are felt across the UK. This will have significant implications for Luton, through the direction and focus of policymaking and investment and will enable us to address the variance in outcomes that are seen across local communities, but also to better capitalise on the opportunities for growth.

The central theme of the UK Government’s Levelling Up White Paper is to ensure equal opportunities to succeed in all parts of the country, by tackling inequalities and reinforcing the message that by staying local, you can go far. It seeks to bring about transformative change by 2030, anchored around the delivery of 12 Missions. **Importantly, this provides a vital ‘hook’ for our strategy, given how integral skills and employability will be to Levelling Up.**

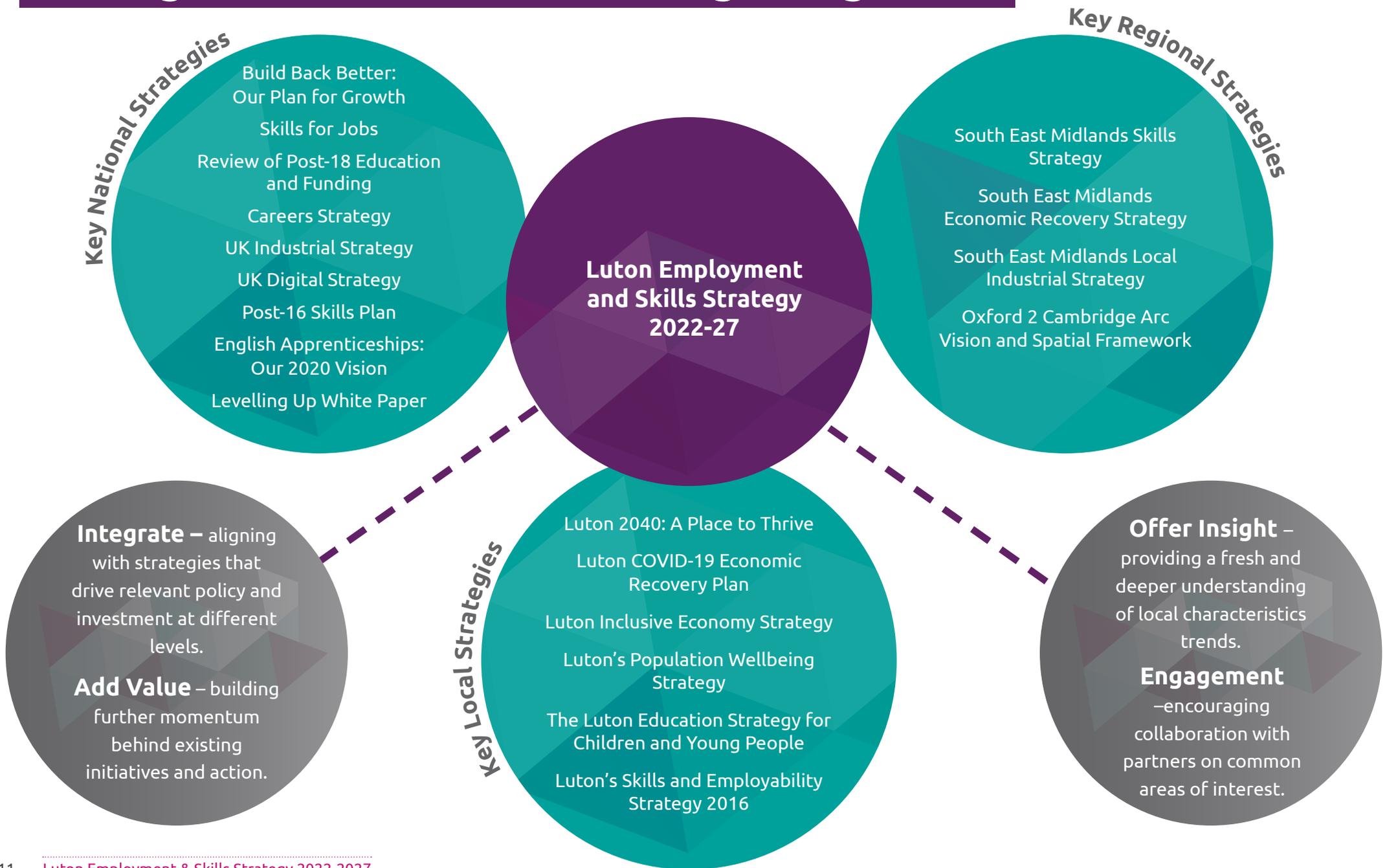
Within these Missions, our strategy will help to deliver against key actions, but it also takes cues from the areas that are likely to be the focus for Government attention. Some of those that resonate with the strategy and will shape five-year delivery are:

- **Living Standards** – driving up levels of pay, employment and productivity and closing the inequalities in performance across regions and localities.
- **Education** – improving primary school attainment in reading, writing and maths, with more than 90% achieving the required standard.
- **Skills** – increasing the number of people completing high quality skills training, leading to 200,000 engaging with upskilling and learning on an annual basis.



Note: Luton has been identified as one of 55 Education Investment Areas as a result Government’s of Levelling Up commitments.

Making the Connections – Strategic Alignment



Co-produced and Co-owned

Whilst an abundance of research has shaped the evidence base, the document is also a reflection of co-creation, with stakeholder perspectives and local knowledge offering great value to the ultimate shape and content of the strategy.

We have directly engaged with more than 300 individuals, organisations and communities as part of this process. **This is just the start of the conversation that will continue for the lifetime of the strategy**, which will take place through a commitment to monitoring progress and adjusting our focus, where necessary.

Underpinning Evidence

The detailed evidence and stakeholder engagement that underpins the strategy accompanies this report in the form of 3 technical appendices. These are:

- 1. Evidence Baseline Report** – data and information relevant to employability and skills, including skills supply and demand.
- 2. Policy and Literature Review Report** – relevant strategies, policies, and publications, identifying strategic drivers and summarising the funding and support ecosystem.
- 3. Stakeholder Engagement Summary Report** – the key narratives and recurring themes that were drawn from stakeholder engagement and co-creation.

Collectively these provide a comprehensive evidence base on which the strategy has been crafted. Each are also a powerful showcase for co-creation and reinforce our commitment to evidence-led and transparent policymaking.

Desk Based Research and Literary Review

Evidence
Baselining

Strategy and
Policy Review

Wider Literature
Review

Stakeholder Consultation and Strategy Co-creation

Employer
Focus Groups

1:1
Interviews

Community
Focus Groups

Online
Surveys

Stakeholder
Conference

Members
Workshop

Young People
Focus Groups

Jobseekers
Interviews

Partnership
Boards

School
Leaders

Adult
Learners

Special Interest
Groups

Online Survey Testing and Endorsement of Draft Strategy

Final Strategy

3. Luton Today



Assessing the Evidence: Luton Today

Luton is a vibrant, modern and diverse town with many unique features and much to celebrate. It has a population of over 213,000 people and is recognised as being one of the youngest and most diverse towns in the country. Alongside the challenges facing the town, Luton also has a number of important strengths and assets. The town has an excellent strategic location; it is home to the fifth-largest airport in the UK, less than 30 minutes from London and in the centre of the Oxford to Cambridge Arc (OxCam Arc). A strong local economy worth £7.5bn (2020) is underpinned by a cohesive town with a powerful sense of community spirit and support from local businesses. There are many good and outstanding schools and a strong higher and further education offered through the University of Bedfordshire, Barnfield College, Luton Sixth Form College and Central Bedfordshire College, Cranfield University, and the Open University across the border.

In recent years, Luton had enjoyed economic success with high rates of economic growth and earnings close to the national average. Yet, whilst progress has been made, there are still sections of communities who have not benefitted from this success and wider labour market changes have led to many having to rely on low quality or insecure work. Luton faces high levels of deprivation, especially in southern parts of the town, with over 46% of children growing up in poverty, whilst inequalities between genders and ethnic backgrounds are laid bare too, as a result of lower wages, skills attainment, and rates of economic participation.

Key Challenge: Responding to the Pandemic

COVID-19 has significantly impacted the livelihoods of people and communities across the town. Indeed, Luton has been particularly hard hit

– seen within job losses, furlough levels and business performance, which has accentuated poverty, and disproportionately impacted some, including young people.

As evidence of this, data recently highlighted Luton as having the 7th highest number of furloughed workers, with 32,000 jobs at risk and the 8th highest claimant counts for cities and large towns in the UK. Furthermore, with disruptions to education along with high numbers of young people finding themselves unemployed, there is a risk of these challenges deepening and perpetuating. Without action, the progress we have made in recent years on the levelling up agenda is under threat. Therefore, tackling inequality is at the heart of the challenge we face within many of our communities.

Securing a strong economic recovery is absolutely essential if we are to continue growing our economy in a way that can benefit everyone in Luton. This is a central pillar of the Luton 2040 Vision to ensure that everyone in Luton can thrive and no-one has to live in poverty. It also lies at the heart of our Marmot Town objectives, which places great importance on the need to narrow health inequalities to support fuller lives and allow people to engage actively and successfully in learning and work. Indeed, the pandemic will continue to shape daily life, for some time to come – the town and its residents must be prepared for this eventuality.

Key Challenge: Luton's Inequalities

Central to the focus of the strategy and fundamental to what makes Luton distinct from other areas is a picture of inequality. Compared to benchmark areas and looking at communities within Luton, evidence shows there is significant variance in individual outcomes, as a result of stark and perpetuating inequalities:

- **Wages** – significant imbalances persist between the wages attained of our residents and those of in-commuters, and there is also a pronounced gender pay gap. The town has a higher proportion of jobs that pay below the UK's living wage.

- **Economic inactivity** – levels are significantly higher than comparators and the national average, particularly for those from ethnic and migrant backgrounds, women, younger people and those physically or mentally impaired.
- **Employment** – Luton’s overall rates of employment trail the national average, young people are less likely to be in work and the gap between male and female rates of employment is greater in the town.
- **Deprivation** – Whilst the picture has improved in recent years, Luton is currently ranked the 70th most deprived out of 317 local authorities with lower wages, qualifications and higher levels of worklessness, all key drivers of poverty and inequality.
- **Hotspots of deprivation** – this picture of inequality correlates closely with areas of deprivation, with communities to the south of the town being particularly impacted by poverty, low skills and worklessness.
- **Health** – Luton’s residents report lower overall health and well-being levels than comparator areas, including poorer mental health and shorter life expectancies.
- **Skills** – Luton’s residents are less skilled and less likely to achieve high attainment scores at GCSE and A level, whilst those from disadvantaged backgrounds are least likely to progress.

Looking deeper at the nuances of local inequality and differing experiences, stakeholder engagement has highlighted:

- **The influence of ethnicity on progression**, racial bias, and how cultural influences impact participation – particularly evident within those from a Muslim background.
- **The need to consider how women can be supported** into more stable and higher paying employment.

- **The need for ‘good employers’** who offer more flexible terms and conditions, to enable work-life balance and make the value of economic participation more overt.
- **The critical role of improving health and wellbeing** in order to help people participate in the labour market.
- **The complex reasons for underemployment and low levels of economic participation** within certain groups.

Key Challenge: Barriers to Work and Skills

Within Luton, there are people who want and need to work but face certain conditions that may make steady employment and skills engagement difficult to acquire. People facing one or more of these barriers often experience bias and discrimination, too, creating embedded issues that perpetuate and limit the opportunity of those eager to work and play an active role in Luton’s prosperity. Individuals with such barriers may include:

- People within areas of high social deprivation and poverty
- Households on a single income with dependent children (challenges around affordable childcare / flexible working)
- Young people who are care leavers or are being supported (estimated that 140+ of these currently remain out of work)
- People who are (or at risk of) being NEETs
- People with disabilities, mental and physical health conditions or learning difficulties
- People from black and minority ethnic backgrounds
- People for whom English is a second language
- Returners to work with caring responsibilities

- Some people aged 50 or over with low levels of transferable and digital skills
- Individuals who are homeless, don't retain a permanent address or are in temporary accommodation
- Ex-offenders.

Some of the most pronounced barriers driving a lack of participation in skills and work, and therefore individual outcomes and prosperity are:

Access to Transport and the Internet

There remains a need for people to be able to access learning and work, in an affordable and fair manner. This applies to physical access and efficient transport services, as well as access to the internet, as a gateway to a host of services and a conduit for job delivery.

Systemic Inefficiencies

There is an opportunity for public services and support systems to be better integrated, to ensure those furthest from work can readily access the support they need. This approach is also key to fully incentivising the value of work and training, versus claiming benefits.

Health and Wellbeing

Those in poor health and with longstanding medical challenges which are less likely to engage in learning and work. There is a need to ensure support is in place to enable such groups to participate and preventative measures are taken to improve health and wellbeing.

Terms and Conditions of Work

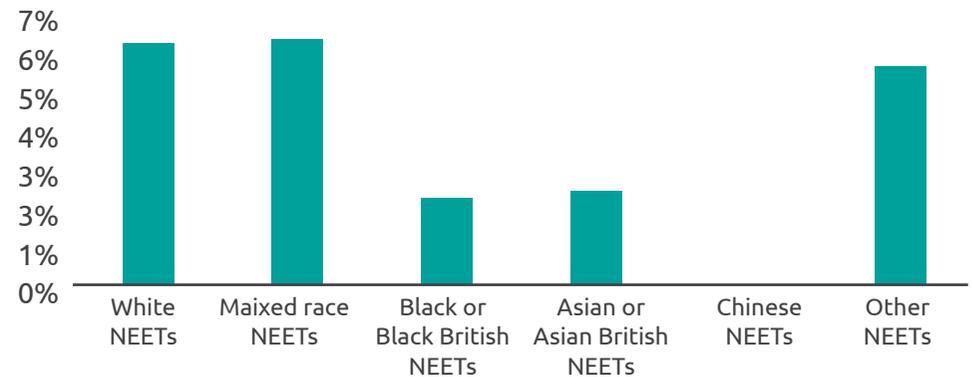
People increasingly need employers to offer more flexible terms and conditions, to enable work-life balance and make the value of economic participation more overt. This is particularly important for women, young families and those who are caring for dependants.

Key Challenge: NEETs and SEND

Whilst Luton has seen a reduction in the proportion of residents identified as NEET or unknown in the past 5 years, (from 8 in 2016 to 4% in 2020), this remains a concern and is at risk as a result of COVID-19.

Despite the town's performance bucking the trend of comparators (such as Milton Keynes and Slough) and being below the English average, absolute NEET levels remain higher than other comparators (including Bedford and Northampton) and continue to highlight the opportunity cost of individuals not fulfilling their potential. Inequalities are again exposed here, too – those of white and mixed race ethnicity are over two times as likely to be categorised as NEET than those of Asian or Black descent, and young males are more predisposed to be non-participants, versus female counterparts.

NEETs by Ethnicity as a % of Total Populations – Luton



These challenges extend beyond NEETs, including those with special educational needs (SEND), who also face challenges, further constraining prospects and their ability to live a full life. Therefore, those residents identified as SEND and with learning difficulties and disabilities (LDD) are a key concern. They are being marginalised in terms of opportunities to participate in learning and work. More needs to be done to increase the mobility of this group, providing bespoke support and developing pathways that will improve prospects and unlock significant productive potential.

Data Snapshot: The Luton Story

Economic Health check: Headlines



Luton has a young and more diverse population, **but this is expected to shrink by 6% in 2043**



The town is home to a growing employment base (92,000 jobs) but **COVID-19 has hit the town hard**



Luton's job density level of 0.78 is **significantly lower than comparator areas**



Economic inactivity stands at approx. 25%, **much higher than near neighbours**



There is a highly apparent gender pay gap (28%) and **evident ethnic inequality**



Over 20% of jobs in Luton generate income **less than the Living Wage – higher than the national average**



Yet, jobs in Luton are **more productive than many comparator areas (£61k per FTE)**



Luton is more deprived, with key drivers being **employment, skills, and income deprivation**



Social mobility data suggests **the impoverished can and do succeed in Luton, versus the sub-region**

Skills Supply: Headlines



Higher Education participation in Luton (38%) is close to the national average with **positive interaction levels**



When compared to selected benchmark areas, **fewer students in Luton complete main 16-18 study programmes**



Luton relies on skilled labour from beyond its boundary, **as a draw for in-commuters**



Increasing levels of alignment between Further and Higher Education skills provision and locally important sectors



Higher proportion of 16-18 school/college leavers go into **HE education or training (72%)**



Further and Higher Education providers are making a positive impact in terms of **widening participation**



Provider outreach, support and influence extends **beyond skills provision**



Fewer Luton students access top 1/3rd performing universities (12%) versus England



Apprenticeships are not gaining necessary traction (0.26% per head) versus academic study

Data Snapshot: The Luton Story

Skills Demand: Headlines



Demand is shaped by key sectors that are job creators, specialised and are growing



Evidence of more specialised and technical skills **being important to local employers**



Luton is expected to be shaped by automation – up to 70% of jobs at medium risk



The town's strategic direction and sector focus will be a **major driver of skills demand**



Foundational and core skills are in high demand and seen as **fundamental to employability**



COVID-19 impacts will see **green skills and individual resilience** come to the fore



Whilst growth is important, **replacement demand will propel the quantum of need**



Town centre regeneration, airport expansion and construction are all **key drivers of demand**



The trend of increasing demand for higher level occupations and skills is **expected to continue**

Skills Shortages/Gaps: Headlines



There is a higher prevalence of skills gaps driven by **high skilled and service intensive roles**



Digital skills are a key area for improvement and driven by basic competency need



Skill shortage vacancies are more common in Luton versus comparator areas



7% of staff are deemed to be not fully proficient in their role, which is challenging local employers



Skills gaps are holding back local business **growth and productivity in particular**



Strong evidence of employer demand for **management and leadership skills**



Data suggests there are **fewer underutilised people in the Luton labour market**



Quality rather than quantity of applicants is the main driver of skills gaps in Luton



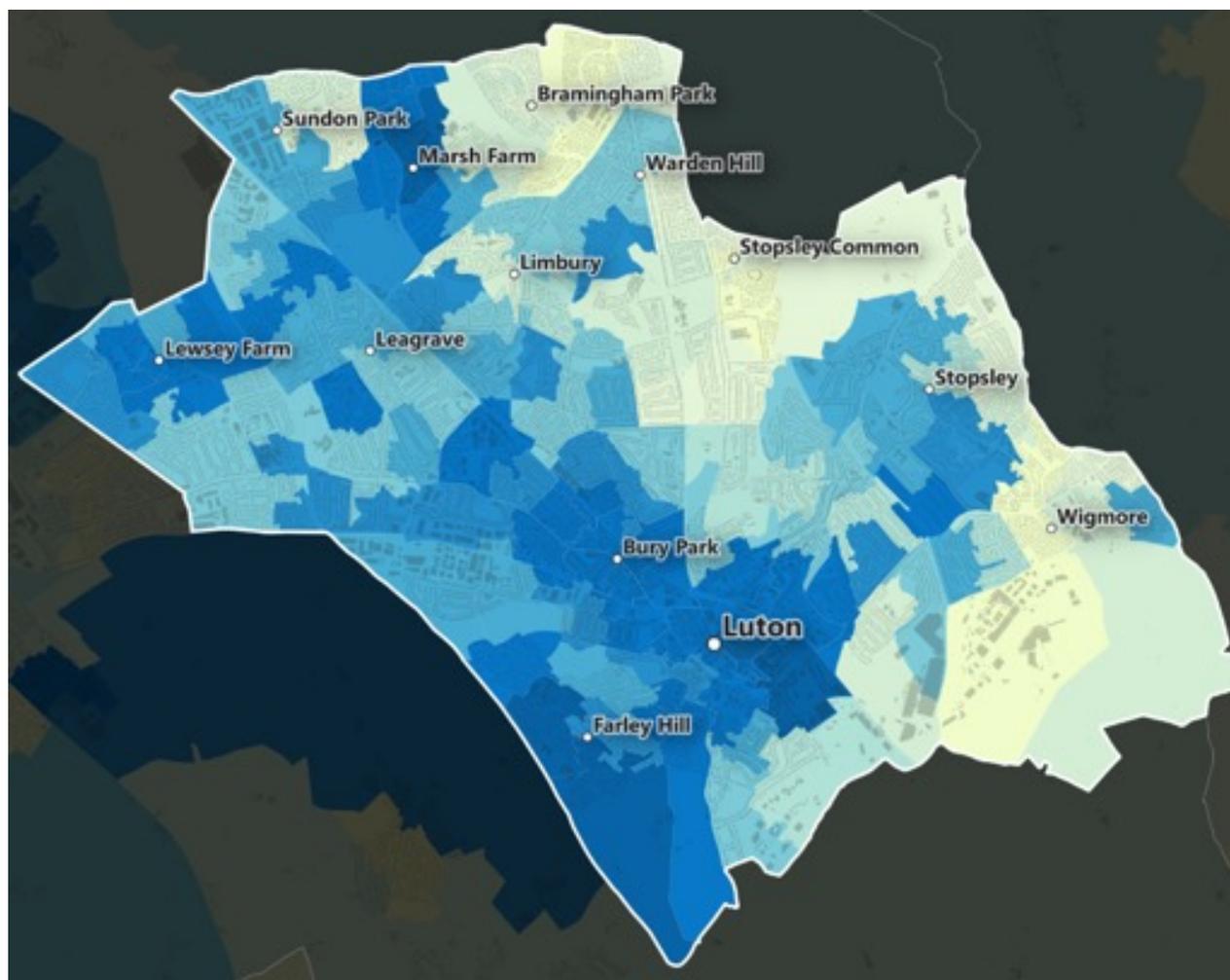
Mismatches relate to qualifications of applicants but also **attitude, motivation, and personality**

Note: Digital skills are broad in nature and straddles basic online searching and emailing to specialist programming and development. They have become essential within today's workplace with the economy shifting towards more digital industries and the adoption of technology, leading to an increased demand for digital skills.

A Localised Picture of Deprivation and Inequality

- Luton's most deprived communities in 2019 were generally clustered to the south and west of the town.
- The most deprived areas include Bury Park, Farley Hill, Marsh Farm, Lewsey Farm, Leagrave and central Luton – these communities are within the top 10-20% most deprived areas nationally.
- Other communities where deprivation is a key concern include Stopsley, Sundon Park. Wigmore and Limbury.
- Within these areas, key drivers of overall deprivation include education, skills and training, employment, income levels and standards of health.
- The communities provide a geographic focus for strategic action, by tackling key drivers of poverty and introducing people into work and learning.

Note: darker shades of blue indicate highest deprivation levels, darker yellow, lowest deprivation levels



Map Source: MHCLG, 2019. Contains National Statistics data. Crown copyright and database right 2019

Sectors Driving Demand – Now and Looking Ahead

Today, there are a number of sectors that are significant employers, create high quality jobs and have driven much of the town's labour demand. These are important in the context of ensuring people are engaged with work and that skills provision is aligned, extending too, to sectors that will propel future growth.

Luton's Most Significant Sectors by Employment (2020)



Sectors Driving Luton Growth and COVID-19 Recovery

Construction

- Construction activity accounts for more than 5% of all jobs across the town
- An important sector in the context of regeneration and investment
- Has made effective use of apprenticeships and vocational pathways
- Increasingly shaped by automation and modern methods of construction
- Broader base of skills will be needed, including those with a green focus

Health and Social Care

- More than 13% of all jobs are provided within this expansive sector
- Growth and skills demand sensitive to changing demographics and Brexit
- Sector struggles with poor perception and low paying nature of roles
- COVID-19 pandemic expected to create new employment opportunities
- Wide range of roles and careers which need to be better communicated

Aerospace and Aviation

- Supplies more than 6% of all jobs in Luton, across a variety of roles
- London Luton Airport acts as an important anchor employer
- Airport jobs offer strong wages and boosts town productivity
- Airport development and expansion a key driver of future demand
- Skills needs include STEM, technical skills and raising diversity

Creative Arts and Media

- Highly specialised sector sustaining more than 2% of all Luton jobs
- Roots in local hat making but increasingly touched by technology
- Town a hub for computer systems, games, music, and film making
- An important driver of enterprise innovation, culture, and inclusion
- The sector is increasingly dependent on advanced digital skills

Advanced Manufacturing, Automotive & Engineering

- Circa 8% of all jobs are derived from manufacturing activities
- Vauxhall, Leonardo and SKF are global players within the sector
- The OxCam Arc is a key driver of sector innovation and advantage
- Primed to grasp vehicle electrification and battery tech opportunity
- Shortage of higher-level skills and digital aptitude key constraints

Information, Communication, and Technology

- Luton is a hub for tech firms, accounting for almost 2% of all jobs
- Expected to be the fastest growing local sector through to 2030
- Sub-region is a global science, tech, and innovation powerhouse
- ICT increasingly a cross-cutting influence on all Luton businesses
- Management of data, analytics and data security are all key skills

Green Economy

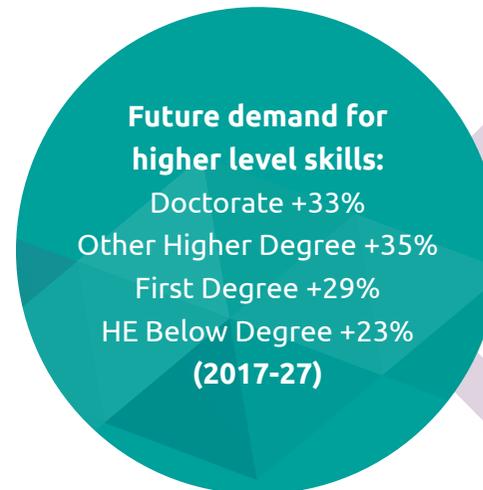
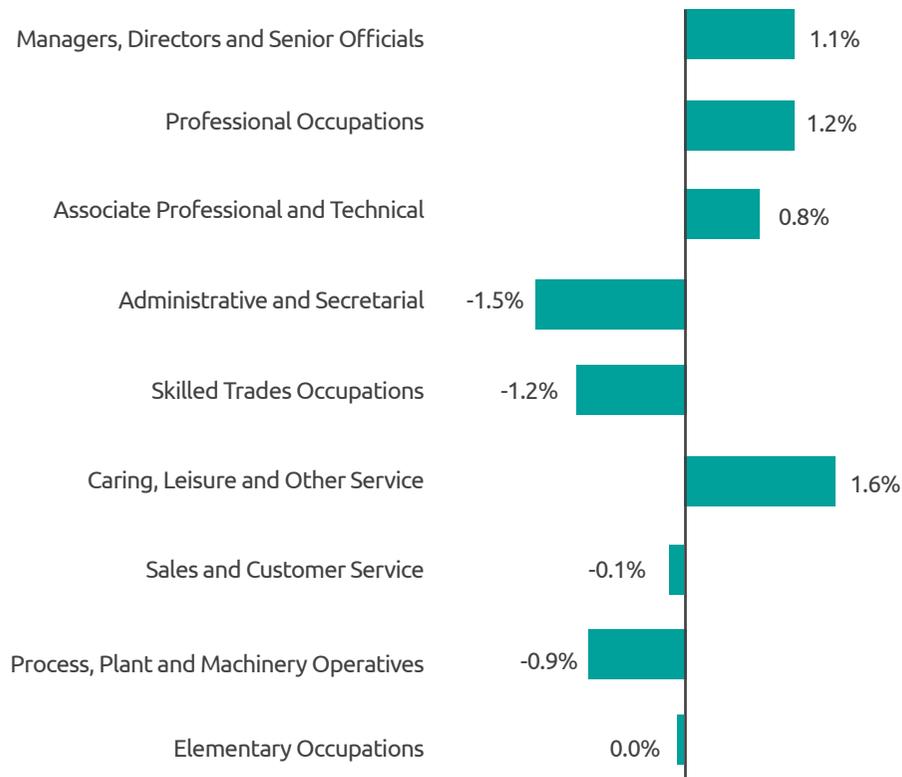
- All of Luton's sectors are expected to require a rapid green transition
- Imperative driven by Luton's 2020 Climate Emergency declaration
- UK's 2050 Net Zero targets propelling firm focus and investment
- London Luton Airport has bold plans to be the greenest in the UK
- Wide range of engineering, digital and trade-based skills in demand

Luton's Evolving Local Jobs Market

The local labour market is dynamic and subject to constant change.

Using the latest data, it's clear that the local economy will continue to shift, creating new demand for occupations and skills as a result of sector and industrial shifts, which in turn will require a sustained pipeline of skilled local talent. Within this, Luton's economy will retain its diversity, creating a range of opportunities.

Projected Occupational Change (2017-2027) – Luton



Other Factors Shaping Demand

- Technological disruption
- Net Zero
- New firm formations
- Inward investment and expansion
- Migration and demographics

Changing Skills Perspectives

- Gradual shift away from traditional qualification/attainment focus
- Employers keen to assess overall applicant potential to recruit
- Business eagerness to deploy new recruitment methods and targeting



Key Opportunity: Luton's Evolution and Growth

Set within the 2040 Vision is a renewed ambition for greener and fairer growth, making the link between local people and opportunity stronger, whilst benefitting from new norms emerging from the pandemic. As such, Luton is in the midst of one of its most significant periods of regeneration, with major investments being made that will revitalise the town and redefine its image.

The expansion of the airport will create huge opportunities for Luton's economy, creating new jobs and economic activity. The town centre masterplan provides the framework for the future with investments already underway and planned at the station, Hat District and Power Court Stadium. These will include design and construction activity and also the operation of new businesses, and workspaces creating a diversity of employment and pathways.

There is a huge opportunity to align growth and regeneration with local people, delivering significant benefits in the form of new jobs, training initiatives and infrastructure enhancements. The town must also make effective use of new learning facilities that have been developed, including the University of Bedfordshire Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Building and investments at Barnfield College and Luton Sixth Form.

The pandemic has also had a seismic effect on what were the norms of working and learning for many across Luton. Examples of this are visible across various facets of the economy, propelled by the effects of technology and an acceptance that a successful life and career can be pursued in a different way. Here, attitudes have shifted towards motivating factors such as greater work-life balance, workplace flexibility and better harnessing digital platforms to support learning and development. Looking ahead, this will have important implications for how jobs are conceived, fairer work conditions and the core skills needed within the labour market.

Key Opportunity: Enterprise

Employment and training opportunity arises not just from working for established businesses, but also from starting new firms and as a result of thriving entrepreneurship. Start-ups are an important component of dynamic and productive economies and provide valuable outlets for innovative and creative capacity, providing opportunities for people from a wide range of backgrounds to contribute and prosper. Luton has and continues to excel in developing and growing early-stage enterprises, which create a richness of activity in the town and drive the base of small businesses that are important to the fabric of the local economy.

It is vitally important that enterprise forms a central component of Luton's economic story moving forward, as a catalyst for growth and inclusive opportunity. Young people, those seeking a career change and the economically inactive, should be aware of this and have the chance to unlock their entrepreneurial potential, with the skills provision and infrastructure in place to bring more into work.

Key Opportunity: Digital Skills

Digital skills are increasingly the foundation of contemporary work, with rapid technological advances and infrastructure connectivity upgrades enabling businesses across all sectors to digitalise. Here the need for an equally swift skills response is prescient, in the context of Luton's economic evolution, the transition to Net Zero and the pursuit of inclusive growth, as a result of the creation of new, technical and higher skilled roles.

While further progress is to be made in expanding the infrastructure and provision to support digital skills development, an intensified focus on this will open up valuable prospects for Luton's residents. A ubiquitous base of digital competence will play a key role in job readiness, improve employment prospects, unlock productive work and create more accessible learning opportunities.

Digging Deeper – Views from the Ground

The development of this strategy has engaged stakeholders from across Luton and further afield, to create a deeper understanding of place and conditions. Stakeholder perspectives offer resonance with data and also highlight a series of recurrent themes.

| Employer Views | Provider Views | Young Person Views | Community Views | Wider Views |
|--|--|---|--|--|
| Acute skills shortages need to be addressed to fill job vacancies | Accessible and clear skills and employment pathways are critical | Perceptions of Luton as a place to develop a career are poor | Luton is not well articulated as a place or as a dynamic economy | The visibility of job and learning opportunities needs to be greater |
| Provision must respond to the future workplace and skills needs | Seamless education and work transition (cradle to grave) is key | Balanced and more regular careers advice is a necessity | Town regeneration opportunities should unlock local benefits | The town needs to work harder to retain skilled and ambitious talent |
| Stronger synergies between employers and providers are necessary | Parents and families must be better informed to shape career choices | Sense that employment is more important than continued learning | Digital skills need to be improved to open up access to employment | Grassroots solutions are needed to respond to local nuances |
| A pipeline of rounded talent is more valued than just qualifications | Businesses must be able to deconstruct skills need in detail | Lack of awareness of the local business base and diversity of offer | All ages must be given the information and encouragement to work | Systems thinking is needed to ensure work is enriching and pays |
| Career fluidity means people must prepare to upskill and be flexible | Improving readiness and awareness at a young age is key | Business leaders should be more visible and act as mentors | Would like to access jobs that are fairer and better paid | Employers need to be prepared to invest in workforce development |
| Vocational routes need to be more accessible and affordable to firms | Digital skills need to keep pace with technological change | Eagerness for more work placements and career experience | More should be done to celebrate success and raise aspirations | All residents must have a baseline of digital competency to thrive |
| There is a genuine desire to invest in and recruit local talent | STEM subjects should be core to provision and drive employability | Need to do more to promote enterprise as a rewarding career option | Ethnic backgrounds and circumstances must be considered | Wellbeing must be viewed in the context of economic participation |

4. Strategic Priorities and Actions



Our Strategic Priorities

Drawing on the evidence base developed, the strategy has a focus on **four key priorities**, which frame the basis for local action.

1. Skills driving economic recovery and growth

2. Developing a pipeline of talented and resilient people

3. Tackling long-term inequality and economic inactivity

4. Creating an adaptable, upskilled workforce

Priority Emphasis

Investment in the right local skills will support a strong and rapid pandemic bounce-back and long-term growth, assisted by ecosystems to support job creation in emerging and growing sectors.

The strategy must ensure the next generation of Luton's workers are prepared for the world of work, understand the breadth of local opportunity, and are flexible and ready for their chosen career.

Increasing economic activity and participation in education and skills, to tackle poverty, deprivation and level-up across Luton, targeting those distant and disengaged from learning and work.

Enabling people to understand the importance of lifelong learning and its necessity as part of career progression, whilst making sure businesses value and invest in their staff to support progression and growth.

Our Priorities

Our strategic priorities have emerged through research and stakeholder engagement. They align with those within the Luton 2040 Vision and our Inclusive Economy and Population Wellbeing Strategies. Critically, these will be owned and delivered by the key delivery partners across Luton and those which have an active interest in the town – securing a commitment to change.

The strategic priorities take account of the challenges we are facing now in the context of the pandemic, and the new jobs emerging as digital technology advances and the need for a green recovery comes into focus. The pace of change is rapid, but the opportunity to transform Luton’s fortunes is significant too.

The action areas supporting each of our strategic priorities are set out below and will be supplemented by an accompanying Implementation Plan. The latter provides more detail within each action and sets out a more granular approach to governance, accountability and monitoring.

The action areas are intended to be deliverable within the strategy’s 5-year duration and realistic in their intent. They will be reviewed annually and may be revised, subject to contextual change, policy, and Luton’s ongoing economic performance. This is in keeping with the strategy being a living and breathing entity – adaptable to change and always focused on our priorities.

Importantly too, the assigned actions build on existing activity and the delivery of initiatives across Luton. The objective is not to duplicate effort or create overlapping initiatives, rather to build on our strengths and respond to gaps where they exist.

Our priorities call on collective will and the value of leading by example, with anchor key employers and the Council anchoring this intent – setting the tone for partners to follow.

The strategy is also shaped by a series of key drivers, which provide the context for a localised response and rationale for action. They are also fundamental to the balance of need and opportunity.



Strategic Priority 1: Skills Driving Economic Recovery and Growth

Rationale for Intervention:

- The pandemic has had a seismic effect on Luton in terms of unemployment and changing the way people learn.
- Furlough rates show that the town has been particularly exposed and local sectors may struggle to bounce back.
- The pandemic risks exacerbating long-standing issues associated with poverty, deprivation and economic inactivity.
- Green growth and the low carbon agenda are creating new opportunities and inspiring a fresh wave of job creation.
- Existing and proposed investments in skills infrastructure will support accelerated recovery and longer-term resilience.
- Levelling up investments in the town will act as a springboard for long-term recovery.
- The 2040 Vision provides a consistent goal from which Luton's sectors, clusters, and assets will develop.
- Key projects, such as London Luton Airport expansion, will provide the basis for landmark initiatives and action.
- The health crisis has placed a renewed awareness of the importance of skills development and training investment.
- Resident-based higher level qualifications lag comparator areas and pose a risk to future business growth.

Making a Difference Today:

There are a number of initiatives that are currently delivering positive outcomes for people and businesses in Luton. These will be expanded and built upon as part of our approach:

London Luton Airport Expansion - Employment & Skills Plans

London Luton Airport is embarking on a long-term expansion programme which will increase capacity and create new job opportunities. Within this, an Employment and Skills Strategy is being developed, drawing on the latest data and illustrating the airport's commitment to aligning job opportunities with local people.

Luton Social Work Academy

Luton's social work academy aims to support the recruitment, development, and retention of newly qualified social workers through a partnership with the University of Bedfordshire. Its primary aims are of stabilising and securing permanency in the Children's Social Care workforce and sustaining excellent practice through continuing professional development.

Passport to Employment

Luton Council's Passport to Employment programme aims to connect unemployed people with local job opportunities. The programme includes employability skills, CV writing, transferable skills, mock interviews and other core skills such as ESOL, English and maths. The programme includes guaranteed interviews with employers such as Vauxhall Motors and has proven to be particularly invaluable over the course of the pandemic, matching candidates with job openings.

Priority Actions

Priority Actions

- 1.1.** Develop a seamless employment and skills ecosystem with employers at the centre to bridge the gap and ensure provision is based on the current and future needs of Luton's businesses and growth sectors, particularly SMEs who are the lifeblood of the local economy
- 1.2.** Design clear learning and career pathways, making the connections at key stages and linking the curriculum to local jobs and work opportunity
- 1.3.** Develop a joined-up and real-time approach to understanding and responding to emerging Green and Digital Sector skills requirements
- 1.4.** Target skills development and employment initiatives on sectors and employers experiencing recruitment difficulties and shortages
- 1.5.** Maximise local levers such as procurement and the opportunities of key regeneration and development in Luton, to create local job prospects and better connect to the local provider offer
- 1.6.** Increase the engagement and involvement of businesses in our employment, skills and learning activity, especially SMEs
- 1.7.** Embed enterprise education within local provision leading to more established entrepreneurship and start-up pathways and helping to inspire the next generation of new business owners

Example activities to be delivered through the Implementation Plan



Strategic Priority 2: Developing a Pipeline of Talented and Resilient People

Rationale for Intervention:

- Despite being ambitious, many local people lack awareness of the local economy, growth sectors, and skills pathways.
- Gatsby benchmarks suggest Luton is performing well, but some schools and colleges have room for improvement.
- Apprenticeships are not gaining traction locally and don't offer the variety to support individual and business needs.
- Employers and providers are eager to engage on existing and future skills needs and harness the power of data.
- Strong evidence of skills shortages and gaps that need to be addressed as part of future workforce development.
- The growth and development of the town have created new opportunities to inspire and retain the best talent in Luton.
- Work readiness and digital skills are becoming increasingly relevant to all jobs, but STEM remains essential too.
- Luton's population is expected to shrink and age, reducing the working age populace and tightening the labour market.
- Evidence suggests that schools and skills provider performance could be improved to better life prospects.
- It is vital to inform parents and those who will influence young persons' career decisions from an early age.

Making a Difference Today:

There are a number of initiatives that are currently delivering positive outcomes for people and businesses in Luton. These will be expanded and built upon as part of our approach:

Careers Hub Luton

Careers Hub Luton helps schools and colleges meet the Gatsby benchmarks, improving career aspiration outcomes for young people. The overall ambition is to bring together local schools and colleges and work closely with universities, training providers, employers, and career professionals to create a network and allow young people to make informed choices, drawing on resources such as Enterprise Advisers.

University of Bedfordshire STEM Building

Opened in 2019, the STEM Building is devoted to related teaching and research, creating a new hub for innovation, and providing the focus for stronger engagement with Luton-based employers. Within 6,000m² of teaching and laboratory space, the building has allowed the university to offer new courses and promote the value of science and engineering, through the Science and Engineering Outreach Centre.

Barnfield College Campus Development

The College is one of the anchors of Luton's further education provision and continues to invest in infrastructure and teaching facilities. The £25m redevelopment of the New Bedford Road campus will transform the College's offer and presence in the town. The investment includes a new Coding Centre, Digital Lab, Employer Zone, contemporary teaching space and the latest technology.

Priority Actions

Priority Actions

2.1. Support and encourage schools and colleges to develop provision which enables development of core employability skills that are in demand and will form the basis of future jobs, including STEM

2.2. Develop a more comprehensive vocational offer for young people through a wider variety of learning options

2.3 Create more regular employer touchpoints with local role models connecting to students, parents, and influencers to enable informed decisions on learning and work choices

2.4 Increase levels of awareness and aspiration and promote Luton in a positive way to encourage young people to stay in Luton

Example activities to be delivered through the Implementation Plan



Strategic Priority 3: Tackling Long-Term Inequality and Inactivity

Rationale for Intervention:

- Luton has pronounced issues associated with economic inactivity and unemployment rates amongst residents.
- Stark inequalities are evident within Luton, linked to wages, skills levels and measures of poverty, limiting prospects.
- Poor physical and mental health are key contributors to economic inactivity and can be embedded within education.
- Women, certain ethnicities and young people are more likely to be disadvantaged by low pay and insecure work.
- Deprivation remains a major driver of individual outcomes and is holding some back from economic participation.
- The town's cultural diversity creates complexities in terms of the motivation to work and the value placed on this.
- Whilst our 16-18 pre-NEETs and NEET figures are quite low; data indicates that we need to look at the diversity of options, different skills pathways, and alternative provision, which is also required for SEND young people.
- Children in care or leaving supported services are at significant risk of disadvantage and lesser progression.
- With an ageing workforce, there will be competing demand for STEM, business operations, healthcare, and education skills. The baby-boomer population accounts for a significant share of these jobs and are set to retire.
- The town is home to a larger than average proportion of jobs that pay below the national living wage.

Making a Difference Today:

There are a number of initiatives that are currently delivering positive outcomes for people and businesses in Luton. These will be expanded and built upon as part of our approach:

Community Led Programmes

Luton benefits from a number of programmes which target local organisations and community groups to improve cohesion, mobility and create locally led solutions. Funding sources include Community Learning, Community Led Local Development and Building Better Opportunities Funds. Each of these are designed to support and encourage voluntary, third sector and other not for profit organisations in supporting disadvantaged adults and addressing inequalities, with the aim of promoting social renewal.

Department for Work and Pensions Access to Work

The Access to Work programme helps people to get or stay in work if they have a physical or mental health condition or disability. Support offered is need dependent and includes a variety of direct services such as grants to help pay for practical support with work, advice about managing mental health, communication support at an interview, funding vehicle adaptations and alternative means of transport.

Luton Virtual School

Luton's virtual school promotes and coordinates educational support for looked after children and care leavers. The service tracks the progress of each young person and provides additional support to help them to fulfil their potential. The school represents the Council's commitment to corporate parenting, in recognition of the need for and importance of acting as equivalent guardian of young peoples' futures, instilling awareness, confidence and ambition across all in care.

Priority Actions

Priority Actions

3.1. Provide joined up employment support for target groups that removes barriers to skills and work for disadvantaged groups, particularly women, returners to work, ethnic minority groups, disadvantaged community groups, some over 50s, people with physical and learning difficulties or disabilities, homeless or ex-offenders

3.2. Help individuals to be job-ready by providing high quality employment and skills support

3.3. Work with local businesses to embed best practice in real living wages, local recruitment, retention, and skills progression, addressing racism and other forms of discrimination

Example activities to be delivered through the Implementation Plan



Strategic Priority 4: Creating an Adaptable and Upskilled Workforce

Rationale for Intervention:

- The economy continues to evolve and the base of sector employment will change, shifting skills demand too.
- The town is particularly exposed to the effects of automation, requiring rapid workforce reskilling.
- Luton has been reliant on foreign labour and the effects of Brexit will increase the need to grow talent from within.
- Employers report that they expect to see a shift towards occupations that require more balanced individual skillsets.
- Work readiness skills are valued in employees, but technical and digital skills will also play a key role across key sectors.
- The effects of digitalisation and technological disruption are not expected to abate, accentuating the need for upskilling.
- Employers need to be encouraged to invest proactively in staff development and provide necessary in-job training.
- Luton benefits from an increasingly diverse and flexible range of providers, courses and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) options.
- Web-based learning offers opportunities to considerably expand the scope and reach of skills development.
- Luton businesses report acute challenges linked to staff not being fully proficient in their roles, limiting productivity.
- People lack awareness of the probability of a more free flowing career and the training implications of this.

Making a Difference Today:

There are a number of initiatives that are currently delivering positive outcomes for people and businesses in Luton. These will be expanded and built upon as part of our approach:

University of Bedfordshire CPD Courses

The university has developed an expansive programme of CPD courses which have been designed to support professional upskilling, continued learning and business competitiveness. With the 10th largest offer in the UK, courses focus on the needs of the modern workplace and local sectors, covering topics such as leadership, management, lean, digital skills, cyber security, healthcare, and social work.

Further Education Distance and Online Learning

Barnfield and Central Bedfordshire Colleges offer flexible study options, enabling students to learn remotely and in a way that can accommodate full time work, through distance and online learning. Some online courses are available at no cost, with modules accredited towards higher level certificates. Study options range from short courses to degrees, geared around adaptability and relevance.

Case Study: Leonardo Growth Opportunity

As one of the town's most prominent employers, Leonardo has developed a programme to support staff development, growth, and progression. Through investment in bespoke skills development programmes, the company is building internal capability by nurturing existing talent, supporting individual ambition, and enhancing professional expertise, embedding this within the fabric of the firm's culture. Training and development focus on key competencies, accelerating internal mobility, career pathway identification and the transfer of practical knowledge and skills. The company continues to evolve its growth opportunity offer, as part of a commitment to grow the business founded in a loyal, responsive, and innovative workforce.

Priority Actions

Priority Actions

4.1. Encourage greater uptake of CPD and flexible learning by employers, particularly SMEs, and ensure apprenticeships are seen to be part of the upskilling solution

4.2. Help individuals to upskill and reskill building a workforce with transferrable skills

4.3. Stimulate employers to collaborate on shared areas of skills and learning interest, including potential pooling of resources and staff capacity, to help overcome training cost barriers

Example activities to be delivered through the Implementation Plan



Promote awareness of the Lifetime Skills Guarantee



Hold 'Reskill to Rebuild' events in Luton active businesses



Strengthen the blended and flexible learning offer



Boost and promote learner aid and financial support



Support new sector partnerships to aid engagement

5. Making it Happen



Making it Happen

A Collective Commitment

The strategy's commitment to action can only be achieved as a result of sustained accountability, transparency and good governance. As such, there will be a collective responsibility to own and deliver the strategy, with four underlying principles guiding this approach:

Partnership Led

Working together to pool capacity, resources, and expertise



Evidence Driven

Data analysis to drive insights and decision making



Forward Facing

Focusing on future opportunity and changing local conditions



Accountable for Change

Continuous review of performance and achievement



The strategy is owned by the ESPB and monitored by the IEB. The PTB will continue to oversee initiatives to improve opportunities for the development of young people in the town.

The ESPB recognises that we need to play a range of different roles to achieve the positive changes in this strategy. These are:

- **Advocates** – for the involvement and leadership of people with lived experience, so that solutions and services are co-designed wherever possible, and lobbying to get the best deal for the borough

- **Navigators and coordinators** – developing a more integrated system for employment and skills, with clearer pathways across a range of provision to support people into good jobs based on well managed and maintained relationships with key employers and sectors
- **Funders and commissioners** – building and sharing an evidence-based approach to funding decisions on programmes and services
- **Anchor institutions** – ensuring jobs and opportunities are created directly within these employers, and through supply chains
- **Providers** – Luton has a large and responsive institutional and provider network, delivering education and a wide range of vocational training and employment support services
- **Employers and businesses** – providing good jobs and opportunities for local people, benefiting from a committed and skilled local workforce

The ESPB will leverage established and new relationships with key stakeholders to provide the right expertise, insight, energy and direction.

Good Governance

Effective governance will be the cornerstone of delivery and it will also be important to maintaining a commitment to accountability. The ESPB will regularly interface with the IEB and PTB throughout the strategy's life, making the best use of the relationships and the expertise within. Good governance will also allow the ESPB to straddle responsibilities and functions at both a strategic and operational level, where necessary. Overarching governance arrangements are set out below, with the ESPB bound by its own Terms of Reference.

Governance Overview

Luton 2040 Vision

Inclusive Economy Board

Employment and Skills Strategy Delivery

ESPB Membership:

- Luton Council Education and Economic Growth & Skills
- Barnfield College
- DWP
- Central Bedfordshire College / Chair of the PTB
- Luton Sixth Form College
- University of Bedfordshire
- SEMLEP
- Chair of the CLLD & VCS representative
- Employer representation: Chamber of Commerce, Airport, Vauxhall

Employment and Skills Partnership Board (ESPB)

Overall responsibility for shaping and delivering the Employment and Skills Strategy.

Role and function are set out within the Board's Terms of Reference.

Progression and Transition Board (PTB)

To ensure all 16–18-year-olds, and all 16–25-year-olds with EHCPs*, have access to RPA-compliant destinations.

It also ensures IAG is in place as well as links with pre-16 and the curriculum to enable progression and transition.

PTB Membership:

- Luton Council Education and Economic Growth & Skills
- University of Bedfordshire
- Providers of Education for 14–19-year-olds (Barnfield College, Central Bedfordshire College, Luton ACL, Luton Sixth Form College, Cardinal Newman Sixth Form, Shared Learning Trust Sixth Form, Secondary Heads)
- Independent Learning Providers
- Apprenticeships Representation
- SEMLEP

Note: EHCP = Education Health and Care Plan
IAG = Information Advice and Guidance

Tracking Change and Monitoring Impact

Aligned with governance processes and an overarching pledge of transparency, the strategy will be subject to ongoing monitoring to track delivery progress. This will help to understand the extent to which the Strategy and identified actions are affecting change and what difference interventions are making. It will also support long-term impact assessments and enable the ESPB to report in a consistent manner.

The actions provide a 'hook' to achieve this and incorporate indicators which can be quantified and tracked over time. The accompanying Implementation Plan includes further detail with regards to each action

and associated KPIs, as well as data sources which will underpin monitoring processes. Monitoring will occur at a minimum of an annual basis, with quarterly reporting to the ESPB and it is expected that evaluations will be commissioned periodically, aligned to delivery progress, to provide more detailed insights into achievements and impacts.

Monitoring – Areas for Focus

The following KPIs represent the key areas of focus for monitoring and reporting activity and highlight where the strategy is intended to 'move the needle'. They will therefore be important measures of success and help determine the legacy of the strategy over its 5-year duration. The ESPB and partners will maintain a resolute commitment to tracking progress, sharing data and using this to inform future decision-making.

| Strategic Priorities | Outcome KPIs | Measure of Success | Data Source |
|--|--|--------------------|---|
| 1. Skills driving economic recovery and growth | Numbers of hard-to-fill vacancies | Decrease ▼ | ONS Employer Skills Survey |
| | Proportion of residents in higher level occupations | Increase ▲ | ONS Annual Population Survey |
| | Total number of jobs and job density | Increase ▲ | ONS BRES / Jobs Density |
| | Per Worker Average Productivity (GVA) | Increase ▲ | ONS Subregional Productivity |
| 2. Developing a pipeline of talented and resilient people | Proportion of residents with 5+ GCSEs | Increase ▲ | ONS Key State Performance Data |
| | Apprenticeship and traineeship completions | Increase ▲ | ONS Apprenticeship and Internship Data |
| | Levels of HE and HE participation | Increase ▲ | ONS FE Statistics / Office for Students |
| | Levels of FE and HE progression | Increase ▲ | ONS FE Statistics / Office for Students |
| 3. Tackling long-term inequality and economic inactivity | Proportion of benefit claimants | Decrease ▼ | ONS Claimant Counts |
| | Proportion unemployed and economically inactive | Decrease ▼ | ONS Annual Population Survey |
| | Proportion of jobs paying Real Living Wage / wage equality | Increase ▲ | ONS Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings |
| | Proportion of total population registered as NEET | Decrease ▼ | ONS NEET Data |
| 4. Creating an adaptable, upskilled workforce | Level of reported business skills gaps and shortages | Decrease ▼ | ONS Employer Skills Survey |
| | Adult and lifelong learning participation levels | Increase ▲ | ONS Community Learning data |
| | Proportion of businesses investing in CPD and training | Increase ▲ | ONS Employer Skills Survey |
| | Proportion of residents with no qualification or NVQ1 | Decrease ▼ | ONS Annual Population Survey |

Appendix A



Our Inspiration

Our Strategy and priority actions have drawn inspiration from further afield, to reflect on exemplar initiatives and what has worked, to maximise prospects for success in Luton. The following are examples that showcase a template from which to deliver our actions, locally.



Action: 1.3. Develop a joined-up and real-time approach to emerging Green and Digital Sector skills requirements

This action will help support females from an ethnic background to play a more active role in the local economy, providing encouragement and resources to help them invest in learning and to secure a job.

With the pace of change across the economy showing little evidence of slowing, and with digital technologies impacting all industries and sectors, there is an even more pressing need to understand the dynamics of the labour market. Data and statistics form a vital component of this requirement, with an increasingly rich array of information available to deconstruct labour supply and demand, including the changing nature of roles and role for upskilling. Whilst this data is gathered in Luton and across the wider sub-region, there is an opportunity to go further, both in approach, and the coordinated sharing of intelligence. Of particular relevance are digital skills and how these can be better understood in real time.



Wider Inspiration: South East LEP, Digital Skills Partnership

This project has been identified as a source of inspiration for Luton as it has formed the basis for understanding and better tackling digital skills, leveraging insights using innovative approaches. It also offers a model that could be replicated by local partners.

The government is working with LEPs and Combined Authorities (CAs) to help deliver Local Digital Skills Partnerships (Local DSPs) to tackle local digital skills challenges and build thriving and inclusive local economies. Six trailblazers were established across England, developing innovative models to improve digital skills, boost local economies and share best practice with other peers. Within the South East, there are five priorities which include providing support to SMEs, educators and students, residents and ensuring alignment between education and industry. Data plays a central role in decision-making and delivery, with new sources of information used to build a more definitive digital skills picture. representatives.

Our Inspiration



Action: 1.4. Target skills development and employment initiatives on sectors and employers experiencing recruitment difficulties and shortages

This action will build on success achieved to date, creating new opportunities for local people to benefit from growing sectors and regeneration, creating a pool of skilled talent support demand from employers.

Luton has benefitted from a Construction Skills Hub, developed to support key projects, such as the DART. The project spanned nearly two years and was the result of a partnership between VolkerFitzpatrick-Kier, Luton Council and Luton Rising, to help people obtain the skills needed to enter the construction industry. Training more than 700 people, the Hub provided a rich source of talent to meet local demand. As Luton embarks on a further phase of redevelopment and green growth, there is an opportunity to leverage this model and develop a successor initiative, creating a valuable employment pathway. In turn, key projects, such as airport expansion, stadium development and new housing will be delivered, to the benefit of local people and the town.

MAYOR OF LONDON

Greater London, Mayor's Construction Academy Hubs

This initiative has been identified as a source of inspiration for Luton given its track record of success, delivery at scale and the commitment it has secured across a wide range of partners. It has also gained a high profile and driven apprenticeship take-up

The Mayor's Construction Academy (MCA) brings together seven Hubs across London, aligning the many opportunities in London to undertake skills training with employers and those interested in pursuing a related career. The MCA Hubs seek to bring this together, making the offer more compelling, bringing local people into contact with local job opportunities. Hub coordinators are the connecting point between all the organisations helping develop the workforce, acting as an interface between the College of North East London, London Boroughs of Barking and Dagenham, Camden and Newham, London South Bank University, South London and Partners and West London College.

Our Inspiration



Action: 2.2. Develop a more comprehensive vocational offer for young people through a wider variety of learning options.

This action will deliver activities that enable more effective use of funds that will support apprenticeship uptake and encourage development of new vocational pathways, benefitting individuals and employers.

There is a prime opportunity in Luton, to develop an apprenticeship model that better supports the needs of employers and individuals, creating more choice and raising participation. At the core of this is thinking smarter and being innovative – harnessing the resources available through the Apprenticeship Levy in a different way, making funding more widely available, especially to smaller businesses which have struggled to find the resources needed to take on an apprentice. This action will build on critical thinking and work undertaken to date, to create an Apprenticeship Levy Hub, which will collect and recycle unused funds, with these being made available to non-levy paying businesses and SMEs, with additional flexibility in terms of supporting elements of apprenticeship costs.



West Midlands, Apprenticeship Transfer Fund

This scheme has been identified as a source of inspiration for Luton given its relevance to local challenges associated with Levy take-up, distribution and underspend. It could be built upon to shape a local solution, which goes further and expands the apprenticeship offer.

The Apprenticeship Levy Transfer Fund, coordinated and delivered by West Midlands Combined Authority, enabled levy paying businesses to transfer up to 25% of their funds to non-levy payers and smaller businesses. The scheme means that unspent levy monies are retained, for use in sectors within the county where apprenticeship programmes provide an effective skills development and recruitment tool. In doing so, larger employers are assisting SMEs and businesses within their supply chains, helping them to meet the training costs of providing an apprenticeship. Other examples of levy pooling include Islington Borough Council, New Anglia LEP and Hertfordshire County Council's schemes.

Our Inspiration



Action: 3.1. Provide joined up employment support for target groups that removes barriers to skills and work for disadvantaged groups

This action will help support females from an ethnic background to play a more active role in the local economy, providing encouragement and resources to help them invest in learning and to secure a job.

Luton's diversity is one of its greatest assets but is also integral to the town's complexity and is also a driver of some of the employability challenges observed locally. In this context and with an urgent need to address Luton's economic inactivity and worklessness issues, particularly among women from an ethnic minority background, there is an opportunity to establish fresh initiatives that will inspire a wave of labour market entrants. The underlying need is nuanced and will likely require a multifaceted response, which address key barriers such as a lack of English language competency, self-confidence and childcare obligations. It is also apparent that such initiatives will need significant trust to be established within communities, if support is to succeed.



Tower Hamlets, Women's Inclusive Team

This project has been identified as a source of inspiration for Luton as it has supported and helped mobilise ethnic groups that have been unable to make an economic contribution. It provides a template for local ethnic community engagement.

Since 2004, Women's Inclusive Team has been supporting black and ethnic minority communities in Tower Hamlets through youth programmes, women's empowerment projects, mental health support and food banks. Building from its roots in children's play sessions and the development of safe environments for BAME females, the organisation evolved to support adult women, through empowerment projects. Now delivered via a women's only centre in Bethnal Green, services include advice and guidance, focusing on mental health, parenting, community integration and English language learning. With 28 staff members, the organisation is guided by a Board which includes 20 women representatives.

Our Inspiration



Action: 3.2. Help individuals to be job-ready by providing high quality employment and skills support

This action will help to ensure young people in care are able to progress within education, learning and work, with equivalent opportunities to develop meaningful careers, as a result of joined-up institutional support.

Whilst Luton has much to offer young people as a result of its infrastructure, job diversity, location and growth potential, it is also home to those who have had an uncertain and unstable start to life. This is particularly true of those young people in care, who rely on local authorities and statutory services to ensure they have access to shelter, education, guidance and parental support. In these instances, the need and value of this comes not only through the delivery of support, but the very nature of care provided, reflecting the attitudes, concerns and aspirations of a responsible parent. As such, the opportunity to go further is apparent, improving long-term prospects, through considered corporate parenting and securing benefits for young people that transcend the support they receive.



Slough Borough Council, Corporate Parenting Strategy 2019-20

This corporate Strategy has been identified as a source of inspiration for Luton as it has established a powerful framework from which the Council is delivering support from a *'as if this were my child'* perspective and sets a precedent for a sustained organisational commitment.

Slough Borough Council published this Strategy (subsequently reviewed in 2020) to deliver corporate parenting to all children within the authority's care, and those supported by the Slough Children's Services Trust. The Strategy was developed on the basis of a responsibility to ensure that children and care leavers get the best experiences in life. It is grounded in excellent corporate parenting, which promotes good health and educational attainment, a wide range of opportunities to develop talent and also the skills in order to have an enjoyable childhood and successful adult life. It intersects various areas across the Council and seeks to create direct benefits, such as work and apprenticeships.

Our Inspiration



Action: 4.1. Encourage greater uptake of CPD and flexible learning by employers, particularly SMEs, and ensure apprenticeships are seen to be part of the upskilling solution

This action will engage employers to ensure they are making the most of vocational pathways, are investing in workforce development and creating progression routes for employees, into higher value roles.

Apprenticeships and vocational pathways offer businesses the opportunity to not only establish a pipeline of talent, but to also upskill the existing workforce and meet immediate skills demand. In some cases, businesses lack awareness of the potential for apprenticeships to address their workforce development needs and are not making effective use of the presence of local provision and funds associated with the Apprenticeship Levy. Within this background, there is significant scope to harness the capacity of local businesses who have benefitted from vocational pathways, and leverage positive experiences and outcomes to increase engagement, particularly from SMEs.



East of England, Apprenticeship Ambassador Network

This Initiative has been identified as a source of inspiration for Luton as it has successfully developed a base of business champions who advocate the benefits of apprenticeships. There is the potential to better leverage this network to raise awareness and take-up, locally.

The Apprenticeship Ambassador Network has nine regional networks across England – this includes one with an East of England focus. The network consists of a group of business leaders whose main aim is to spearhead the drive to engage new employers to recruit apprentices across England. Ambassadors undertake their role on a voluntary basis, by supporting and influencing a wide range of key stakeholders including schools, colleges, employers and their supply chains, trade associations and employment bodies. Ambassadors are recruited on the basis of a high commitment to apprenticeships in their own workforce, a high profile in their area and as represent a diverse range of employment sectors and industries.

Supporting Information

This Appendix provides supplementary information which supports the content of the strategy. Additional information is available in the accompanying Technical Appendices:

- **Evidence Baseline Document**
- **Policy and Literature Review**
- **Stakeholder Consultation Summary**

These documents are available via the Luton Council website:
www.luton.gov.uk/employmentandskills

Evidence Sources

The strategy has been informed by a wide array of evidence, amassed from statistical and qualitative sources. This includes the following, with further detail provided within accompanying Technical Appendices:

- **The Office for National Statistics** (including NOMIS and specific data sources published within)
- **Government Departments** (including the Department for Education, Business Innovation and Industrial Strategy, Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities, Health etc)
- **Luton Council** (including specific departments within and Careers Hub Luton)
- **SEMLEP** (and associated labour market and skills reports)
- **Learning institutions** (such as Barnfield and Central Beds Colleges and the University of Bedfordshire)

- **London Luton Airport** (including emerging employment and skills plans)
- **Surveys** (such as those disseminated by partner organisations)
- **Other Feedback** (via workshops and questionnaires)

Data Contextualisation

To aid data analysis and understand Luton's relative performance, the town has been compared to other geographies. These have been chosen on the basis of statistical boundaries, location, and socioeconomic characteristics. Comparator areas used are:

- England
- OxCam Arc
- SEMLEP
- Bedford
- Milton Keynes
- Northampton
- Slough

Further information

For more information on the strategy, work being undertaken to deliver the Implementation Plan and opportunities to get involved, please contact the Luton Economic Growth and Skills team. EconomicGrowth@luton.gov.uk



To find out more please email
EconomicGrowth@luton.gov.uk