



South East LEP

A Five Year Skills Strategy Published 2017/18

A partnership approach to skills for a flourishing, inclusive economy

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1. Foreword from our Chairman

“This is an area with national and international significance; quite simply it is instrumental to the UK’s success.”

It is an exciting time for the South East LEP, the largest in the country. This is an area of national and international significance. We are instrumental to keeping goods and services moving and our productivity impacts on the national picture. We look to the future with enthusiasm and skills is absolutely fundamental to our response.

Across our LEP area, there are so many tangible examples of growth; Public Health England’s forthcoming relocation, a new Entertainment Resort in north Kent, one of Amazon’s largest warehouses at the Port of Tilbury, Southend Airport growth, Bradwell Power Station plans, Newhaven Enterprise Zone, North Kent Enterprise Zone and Gatwick Airport growth. Our LEP area will see up to 300,000 new homes to 2030, requiring a skilled construction workforce on a significant scale. Likewise, sectors like health and care have current shortages, set to increase with an ageing and growing population. This year so far, our LEP area has advertised over 7,500 nursing vacancies, nearly 8,000 programmers and web developers and over 4,000 care workers. Our sectors are advertising a range of skills needs from entry level to post graduate.

This is in the context of some challenging statistics. Although our skills levels are improving, we have nearly 190,000 people with no qualifications. 33% of people have a degree level qualification compared to 38% nationally and nearly 42,000 people are claiming out of work benefits. We have 178,000 workless households.

*When we talk about size and scale, it is useful to remind ourselves that we have a population of 4.1 million, set to grow to nearly 5 million by 2039. That is bigger than Croatia, Panama, Georgia and Lithuania and double the size of countries like Estonia and Cyprus. Our 165,000 enterprises employ over 2 million people and in sectors such as construction, our LEP employs nearly double that of other LEPs outside London (98,000 compared with 58,000 in Leeds and 51,000 in Birmingham). For virtually all sectors, **the South East LEP has far greater numbers of employees than most other LEP areas outside London.** There are over 100,000 in manufacturing, 42,000 in finance and 222,000 in health and social work. Our creative and IT sector is flourishing and influential on an international level. This is an area of diversity, home to the longest coastline in England, large rural areas and urban concentrations and a close relationship with London. Our communities are among the most prosperous but also most deprived nationally and we have world beating international companies as well as burgeoning SMEs.*

*We are doing much already. [Our 29 skills capital projects and ESF programmes totalling £100m of investment are already delivering apprenticeships](#), employment training and growth. Local Skills Board initiatives also respond to the skills shortages and illustrate a joined up, consistent approach. Local authority Leaders are exploring their use of the apprenticeship levy to respond to growth. Looking to the future, nearly £15m Local Growth Funding allocated to skills projects, such as the Canterbury Christ Church University EDGE Hub will continue to support strong partnerships between education and employment. There is much more to do and I am pleased to introduce our shared approach to building a first class, locally driven skills system. **Christian Brodie, South East LEP Chair***

2. Background

“Improving skills is fundamental to productivity and growing an inclusive economy; it is a top priority.” *Adam Bryan, SELEP Managing Director*

The existing South East LEP (SELEP) Skills Strategy was produced in November 2014. The economic and skills landscape has changed significantly and there are a number of areas of change and reform, including apprenticeships, careers support and T-levels. Therefore a refresh is necessary. The aim of this strategy is to set out skills and employment priorities across the LEP area to inform funding, drive activity, influence government and shape future focus. The importance of skills is also reflected in the new emerging SELEP Economic Plan and Investment and Infrastructure plan. This document is owned and driven by the LEP Skills Advisory Group; a partnership of colleges, universities, local authorities, training providers and voluntary sector representatives across the LEP. Its production has also involved discussion with local Employment and Skills Boards and employers and partners across the LEP through meetings and an online consultation.

This strategy is supported by a suite of documents and evidence:

- **South East LEP Skills Evidence Base** – LEP wide information
- **District and sector profiles**
- **District tables for key data**
- **The impact of Brexit** – supporting paper
- **The Digital economy** – supporting paper
- **Construction and its importance to the SELEP area** (CITB report)
- **Celebrating Skills – overview of current capital and ESF investments** (at http://www.southeastlep.com/images/uploads/resources/SELEP_brochure_%28ESF_and_Skills_Capital%29.pdf)
- **Action Plan to deliver the strategy**

Headlines

- By virtually all measures the SELEP area is considerably bigger than other LEP areas outside London (vacancies, employees, enterprises).
- However, GVA, earnings, skills levels and benefit claimants require improvement for this to be a productive, competitive area.
- Apprenticeship numbers have fluctuated in recent years and need to increase (aligned to employer need) significantly for SELEP to contribute proportionately to the government’s three million target and to increase productivity.
- SELEP’s focus on sectors is broadly appropriate, with sectors such as construction, IT & digital, creative, engineering & manufacturing, health, care and logistics experiencing large shortages already, set to increase with significant growth. Sectors such as tourism, land based and agriculture are also clearly important. Supporting the education sector to deliver sector training is vital and there are large volumes of jobs, vacancies and enterprises in retail.
- Although there are clear issues such as high numbers of workless households, increasing numbers of homeless people and benefit claimants, this is coupled with a wide range of opportunities, presenting the right conditions to respond to the challenge.

3. A shared skills vision and priorities for SELEP

The skills strategy consultation and supporting documents outlined above have provided a clear direction of travel and need for the SELEP area, with consensus from partners. To this end, a vision, principles and priorities have been agreed to help inform work and action planning going forward. These are as follows, with following sections outlining the background to determining these areas of focus.

SELEP's vision for skills:

To help deliver a flourishing and inclusive economy across the biggest LEP in the country by equipping employers, adults and young people with the skills, conditions and aptitudes required for significant growth today and tomorrow.

SELEP's skills principles:

To achieve our vision, we will continue to use evidence, consultation and partnership to understand, respond and deliver across our geography of Kent, Medway, Essex, Southend, Thurrock and East Sussex. We will continue to develop innovative responses to the skills challenges facing the SELEP area. We would like to pilot new initiatives and expand our delivery in partnership with Government.

SELEP's priorities:

As educators, local authorities, employers, voluntary sector, employers and providers we agree our priorities are to -

- Increase apprenticeships and industry relevant qualifications for all ages, particularly in priority sectors and at higher and degree level*
- Simplify the landscape for employers, stakeholders and individuals*
- Build an inclusive economy and reduce polarisation*
- Raise awareness of jobs and growth across SELEP and the area's size, scale, national and international significance*
- Foster and support the spirit of pride, entrepreneurship innovation and enthusiasm across SELEP to bring about change*

Alignment to LEP Economic Plan

- Productivity and growth increased through equipping South East employers with people skilled for the future*

4. National context and impact upon SELEP area

“We must help people and businesses to thrive through skills. Our poor performance in basic and technical skills is key to the UK’s persistently lower levels of productivity compared with other advanced economies.” *UK government*

3a. The Apprenticeship levy and reforms are one of the most significant changes in recent years.

The levy is essentially a tax on UK employers with annual pay bills over £3 million (therefore less than 2% will pay the levy). The government’s ambition is that this supports productivity, helps to deliver the 3 million-apprenticeship target to 2020 and ensures that training is employer led. Therefore funding will be with the employer, rather than the provider. Most non-levy payers will make a 10% contribution to apprenticeships, with 90% provided by the government, though there are exceptions to this based on business size and apprentice age. There has been speculation that smaller non-levy paying employers may be deterred by this new requirement and that there may be a short-term decrease in the numbers offered. The most recent apprenticeship start figures for 2017-18 show a decline for quarter one of nearly 1,600 across SELEP when compared to the same period last year; a considerable 21% fall. In some areas, the decline in starts is as high as 39%. Additionally, whilst it is positive that apprenticeships may open up for many existing employees of all ages, there is a risk that employers seeking to get value for money will re-badge existing training as apprenticeships, not necessarily therefore offering added value and potentially resulting in lower numbers of apprenticeships offered to young people.

There have been short-term issues impacting upon apprenticeships and the roll-out of these reforms, including reduced allocations to non-levy apprenticeship funded training and delays in the Register of Approved Training Providers (RoATP) to deliver apprenticeships. SELEP and partners have written to the Skills Minister and Education and Skills Funding Agency in July 2017 and January 2018 querying reduced allocations for non-levy apprenticeship funding and the £200k threshold meaning that some high scoring providers did not receive contracts. This has impacted upon employer choice, where employers have had well established relationships with providers who can no longer deliver for them. This could clearly have an impact on take up and SELEP’s ability to respond to skills shortages.

SELEP’s population is 4.1 million, roughly 7% of England. Applying this proportion to the government target of 3 million apprenticeships (from 2015-2020) would equate to **SELEP contributing 210,000 apprenticeships to this target**. For the last few years, apprenticeship starts have been approximately 32,000 annually. ****AREA FOR ACTION****

The reform of apprenticeships means that apprenticeship frameworks will be phased out and replaced with standards, also known as ‘*Trailblazers*’ and with employer input informing their design. In the short-term therefore, new standards applicable to growth sectors will not be universally available though in the longer-term these should be more relevant and employer driven. Degree apprenticeships have also been introduced, which it is hoped may address the arbitrary divide between academic and vocational routes. As they are funded by the levy and employers, this also removes financial requirements which may have previously acted as a disincentive to university. It should be noted however, that the non-levy

procurement described above means some universities are currently unable to deliver against employer demand. Additionally, some sectors such as creative, digital and construction with short-term contracts and freelancing may require additional support to take on apprentices, such as a consortium approach. **Available degree apprenticeships are limited currently but in the longer-term, this is an area for Further and Higher Education to expand. **AREA FOR ACTION****

SELEP and partners are absolutely committed to achieving significant apprenticeship growth across the LEP and ensuring the conditions are right for more technical, adult and degree apprenticeships, which will respond to priority sectors and growth. Where there are policy constraints to achieving this, SELEP and partners will continue to highlight this.

3b. Introduction of T-levels – now 2020

T-levels are new technical qualifications aimed at putting vocational qualifications on an equal footing with academic ones. They will enable 16 to 19 year olds to study in 15 sectors such as construction, hair and beauty replacing thousands currently on offer and with the ambition of making access to the job market easier and young people ‘work fit’ in a number of key industries. The first T-levels were originally due to be in place for February 2019, the government has announced that this will now commence from September 2020 with the remaining routes in place by 2022. Industry bodies such as the Confederation of British Industry have generally welcomed these delays given the extent and complex nature of these reforms, which the government has described as ‘*the biggest overhaul of post-school education in 70 years.*’ The government has pledged £500 million per year to deliver T-levels by 2022. The qualifications falling within the sectors have yet to be determined and will be informed by industry panels. There will be a requirement for three months high quality work experience, which is positive though may be challenging to offer given the high number of SMEs across SELEP. Employers will therefore need to be assisted and incentivised to prepare for this change.

The 15 sectors / routes covered are as follows and some of these cover a range of occupational areas (those with * will primarily be delivered through apprenticeships). These correlate with many of SELEP’s areas of growth and sectors potentially experiencing shortages due to Brexit:

- Agriculture, Environmental & Animal Care
- Business and Administrative
- Catering and Hospitality
- Childcare and Education
- Construction
- Creative and Design
- Digital
- Engineering and Manufacturing
- Hair and Beauty
- Health and Science
- Legal, finance and Accounting
- Protective Services *
- Sales, Marketing and Procurement *
- Social Care *
- Transport and Logistics *

As with apprenticeships, SELEP is committed to achieving greater levels of technical skills, supporting Further Education to deliver these and responding to sectors where there are shortages. To this end, alongside and in parity with A-levels this simplification may assist respond to growth and the confusion within the landscape often cited. **There are 233,000 15-19 year olds in the SELEP area, set to increase to 243,000 by 2022.** With approximately a third of young people nationally choosing vocational pathways, in the region of at least

81,000 young people may choose to undertake T-levels across SELEP. However, it will be necessary to respond to the detailed proposals, as and when they become available. A significant obstacle to achieving this is a general shortage of qualified trainers aligned to growth sectors, exacerbated by and impacting upon skills shortages in industries.

3c. £170m for Institutes of Technology (IoTs)

The government announced £170m capital for Institutes of Technology early in 2017, to improve attainment of technical and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering & Maths) based skills required by employers. Given that this is a national pot, there is some concern over how far this funding may stretch. Preliminary information circulated in February 2017 gave the context and cited that *'in the UK we currently have too few people equipped with the higher level technical skills our economy needs. This skills gap is harming the economy, hindering productivity and hampering the life chances of young people.'* As our Skills Evidence Base illustrates, this picture is clearly echoed across SELEP arguably on a far greater scale than anywhere else nationally. SELEP's Skills Strategy and Evidence Base will help to inform the areas for priority for any IoTs in the SELEP area. In more recently published guidance, the government have included in eligibility criteria that *'the IoT must cover at least one LEP area.'* SELEP has fed back concern at this to the Department for Education given the size and scale of the south east area. Full applications have to be submitted by 1st March 2018.

IoT's are to be based around boosting provision at Levels 4 and 5 in STEM subjects (mainly within FE), developing a strong pipeline of provision at Level 3 with clear pathways to the IoT's level 5/5 provision and up-skilling or re-skilling the existing workforce, to keep pace with rapid technological change. Again, the Skills Evidence Base illustrates the necessity of this across SELEP, with lower than average skills levels particularly at level 4 and above, coupled with high levels of need. Employers are expected to be central and to this end, the LEP's local Employment and Skills Boards will have a key role to play. SELEP and partners would be keen to see strong Higher / Further Education and employer partnerships, responding to the growth set out in the Skills Evidence Base. **** AREA FOR ACTION****

3d. The Industrial Strategy and skills

The government's Industrial Strategy White paper was published in November 2017 and sets out the government's plans for growth. This includes five foundations of productivity:

- *Ideas* – the world's most innovative economy
- *People* – good jobs and greater earning power for all (including the establishment of a world class technical education system / additional £406m in maths, digital and technical education / new National Retraining Scheme supporting people to re-skill)
- *Infrastructure* – a major upgrade to the UK's infrastructure
- *Business environment* – the best place to start and grow a business (including a construction 'Sector Deal' which SELEP will engage with)
- *Places* – prosperous communities across the UK (including a Teacher Development Premium for high-quality professional development for teachers in areas that have fallen behind).

Many of the ambitions set out in the strategy align to those in the national careers strategy and acknowledge the vital role skills plays in employment growth stating that *'we recognise that people and the skills they have are a key driver of productivity.'*

The Industrial Strategy acknowledges again the importance of investment in technical education, which it notes *'for too long has not had the prestige it has enjoyed in other countries. The system can be complex and confusing, not always meeting the needs of individuals or those of employers.'* This complexity is also reflected by responses to SELEP's skills strategy consultation. As the Industrial Strategy outlines, this has led to a shortage of technical-level skills and STEM take up (which is also evident across SELEP). Greater proportions of young people are still choosing academic rather than vocational study.

The Industrial Strategy sets out that all in society should be able to access skills and work and to train throughout their working lives and employers, individuals and the government will need to work together to help people develop the right skills to work with and alongside new technologies. The importance of digital skills is also highlighted and the strategy sets out plans for a new entitlement for adults who lack core digital skills to access free basic training.

Sector Deals are also described and are outlined as partnerships between the government and industry on sector specific issues. One of the first national deals will be around construction and SELEP has already expressed interest to the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy in being involved, given the size of this sector. The Construction and Industry Training Board (CITB) will play a leading role in this and as outlined, SELEP has worked with the CITB to create a detailed demand led report for skills and engaged employers and providers in this. Other developing sector deals include Artificial Intelligence, Nuclear, automotive, creative and life sciences. The creative sector deal overview notes the ambition to build creative clusters across the UK and given the presence of clusters across SELEP, it would be positive to engage with this.

The strategy sets out plans to introduce Skills Advisory Panels to bring together businesses and education and to produce rigorous analysis of the current and future supply and demand for skills. In the SELEP area, the three federated skills boards are well placed to perform this role, with a LEP wide panel to be formed from the Chairs of these boards and education representatives to ensure a LEP wide strategic lead. Skills Advisory Panels are currently at pilot stage and will be developed over the next eight months before rolling out nationally.

Clearly as the skills ambitions within the industrial strategy set out above it will be important for SELEP and partners to engage with these.

3e. SELEP's Local Economic Plan / Industrial Strategy

Alongside the skills strategy, SELEP is also updating its economic plan to align with the industrial strategy. This will also align to the skills strategy and is at draft stage. The plan has set out five ambitions, which includes skills:

- A business infrastructure fit to drive UK PLC
- A digital DNA energising our communities
- An amplified collective voice to positively disrupt and lead change
- A flexible South East embracing inclusive growth and resilience by working smartly with our neighbours
- Productivity and growth increased through equipping South East employers with people skilled for the future

The economic plan will take into account areas such as coastal and rural economies, digital infrastructure, entrepreneurship and supporting creatives and freelancers. Much of SELEP's interaction with small to medium sized businesses is through the Growth Hubs (co-ordinating business support) and SELEP will be working with Growth Hubs to provide information about the skills landscape and on joining up areas of work such as a potential skills portal.

3f. The national Careers Strategy

The importance of careers has emerged as a key requirement in the skills strategy consultation and the fact that ideally this would commence at primary level. There are many programmes and initiatives cluttering the landscape and a range of partners have expressed the need for simplification and local determination.

In December 2017, the Department for Education published a new national careers strategy setting out roles for employers and education providers. This was followed in January 2018 with Careers Statutory Guidance for schools. This includes a key and broader role for the national Careers Enterprise Company (CEC) work which is being delivered across SELEP and described more fully below. The focus on strengthening engagement with employers and ensuring access to apprenticeship and other opportunities is positive and aligns with the ambitions set out through this strategy. There is a clear role for LEPs and partners in delivering the strategy and working with the CEC in the coming months.

Key elements of the careers strategy include:

- Secondary schools to offer every young person at least seven encounters with employers during their education, supported by the CEC network
- All schools to give providers of technical education (including apprenticeships) opportunity to talk to pupils about their offer and continued work with higher education
- A strategy to communicate key aspects of the new T-levels to parents, teachers, students and careers professionals as they become available
- £2million to test careers activities including those with primary schools, including work with Opportunity Areas on new approaches to employer engagement
- Improving the take up of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) qualifications and embedding STEM in careers programmes and the production of a STEM toolkit for colleges and schools
- A requirement for schools to meet the eight Gatsby Benchmarks which form a framework for good career guidance including encounters with employers and linking curriculum learning to careers
- A role for Ofsted to comment on careers guidance provided in inspections
- £5 million to testing 'Careers Hubs' in 20 areas, linking together schools, colleges, universities and other local partners.
- Support higher education students from disadvantaged backgrounds to make best use of their university careers services and offering support such as mentoring and outreach.
- A new service and inspiring website for adults by October 2018 to offer high quality, bespoke support for those that need it most, including people with low qualification levels and those with special educational needs and disabilities
- Contributions to careers information from LEPs, including Local Industrial Strategies and Skills Advisory Panels and up to date information on skills and jobs in local areas

- £40million for Career Learning Pilots to test how to effectively engage adults in opportunities and benefits of learning. The first pilot (the Flexible Learning Fund) was launched in October 2017 to support adults with low or intermediate skills.

3g. The Careers Enterprise Company (CEC) – connecting schools and employers

The Careers Enterprise Company (CEC) is a national network set up by government to *‘connect schools and colleges, employers and career programme providers to provide high-impact career opportunities for young people.’* As of August 2017, there were 1,700 schools nationally signed up to the network. The CEC part funds Enterprise Co-ordinator posts (EC’s) by 50% and ECs work with up to 20 schools in their area to match them with an Enterprise Adviser (senior business volunteer) to work in partnership with schools and colleges to develop a careers plan and connection. The Careers Strategy includes the commitment for Enterprise Adviser to be available to every school and college by 2020 and to launch a £5 million new investment fund to support disadvantaged pupils with support to prepare for work, including mentoring and guidance.

Across the SELEP area, match funding is currently provided predominantly by local authorities, with a presence across Essex, Southend, Thurrock, East Sussex, coastal schools in Kent and with a West Kent network recently launched. This represents nearly 200 secondary schools to ultimately be worked with and represents a huge opportunity to articulate LEP and local skills board priorities. In 2017, Hastings was also announced as an ‘Opportunity Area.’ The government established Opportunity Areas to focus local and national resources on a common goal – of increasing social mobility. Hastings has a dedicated Enterprise Co-ordinator and Partnership Board focused on four priority areas.

The LEP has also played a role in linking partners such as the National Careers Service, Job Centre Plus and others up given all now have remits to work with schools. The training provider networks and local authorities across the LEP also do a lot of work with schools, including apprenticeship promotion and information. As part of the ambition to increase apprenticeships, independent and impartial services locally for employers are important, particularly given the high volume of SMEs across SELEP’s area.

3h. Brexit and impact on sectors, funding and workforce

A separate report to support this strategy will consider the potential impact of Brexit more fully and the evidence base considers the impact on some sectors, with for example, higher proportions of migrant labour. With much still to be negotiated at the time of writing, it is difficult to make any predictions with certainty. The government nationally is already exploring a ‘UK shared Prosperity’ fund to replace EU funding.

SELEP and partners have influenced European Social Funding held by the DWP and matched by the DWP, ESFA and Big Lottery. This is delivering against areas such as apprenticeships, in work training for growth sectors and supporting unemployed and disadvantaged cohorts towards employment. Partners would welcome greater control, influence, and flexibility over this funding so any national pot will need to respond to local need and give local partners a leading role. For cohorts including homeless, carers, care leavers, offenders, those with mental health barriers and special educational needs and disabilities, EU funding

support has been important. Additionally, the LEP and partners are able to provide a clear steer as to sector focus. Therefore, some ring fencing would arguably be a positive thing.

A Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) report 'What Small Firms want from Brexit' was published in April 2017. This outlined that one in five companies have EU staff and one third do business with or within the EU. Key concerns were described as being accessing the skills required (59%), growing their business (54%) and enforcing new immigration rules (56%). The sorts of responses being considered to likely shortages included moving abroad (13%) or closing (8%), continuing to recruit from the EU at extra cost (40%). Some were considering investing in their current workforce (9%) or offering new opportunities like apprenticeships (16%).

In terms of SELEP priority sectors, the biggest being construction; the Royal Institute for Chartered Surveyors (RICS) has produced figures outlining that 'post Brexit should the UK lose access to the single market, nearly 200,000 EU workers could be lost, placing infrastructure and construction projects under threat.' The Nuffield Trust representing health and care also concluded that 'there is doubt about the future of our EU workforce who currently perform a vital role across health and social care'.

With skills shortages potentially set to increase, investing in areas such as skills support and apprenticeships are therefore likely to be even more important.

3i. Digital revolution changing the way we work (supporting report)

A separate report to support this strategy will consider the potential impact of the digital revolution more fully. This now cuts across all sectors, from robotics being used in warehousing to the application of digital care. In some sectors (i.e. manufacturing and engineering) robotics have seen employers reduce their workforce. Methods of working have changed, with remote and flexible working being applied by many employers, reducing travel times and negating the need to meet in person.

These advances represent huge potential for skills development. Many schools, further and higher educational establishments now use virtual reality, drones and robotics. Virtual reality and simulators mean that people can be trained for an industry without having to actually be there. A potential area for SELEP and partners to explore would be reaching young people, adults, those in rural areas, home educated and cohorts such as prisoners though such flexible and interactive learning and promoting sectors in new and exciting ways such as virtual reality. The digital creative and gaming sector across SELEP is highly successful and growing so will have an important part to play in maximising these opportunities.

It is predicted that this will continue to transform workplaces and with some forecasts suggesting that more than 10 million jobs could be at risk of being replaced by automation over the next ten years. This is already happening in areas such as self-service check-outs and robotics in health and care. Many of these (but not all) will be lower skilled jobs and coupled with Learning and Work Institute predictions of more than six million too many low skilled people and two million too many with intermediate skills, it again highlights the need to improve the skills levels across the LEP. It is therefore vital to help people in work to upskill as well as new entrants.

3j. UK skills levels in an international context and on productivity

According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)'s international table published in 2015, two in ten 15-year olds in the UK lack basic maths, science and reading skills compared to one in 10 in Vietnam. The UK is ranked 20th of 76 countries and falls behind Japan, Poland, Finland and Canada. The OECD notes that if education failings are not tackled 'economic output is lost and is a powerful predictor of the wealth that countries will produce in the long run.

A BEIS report notes that 'a nation's prosperity depends largely on its ability to raise the level of its productivity. The education level of its workforce, and how effectively the skills are used in the production processes, are considered important factors in this process.'

Comparisons with other countries illustrate relatively poor productivity in the UK compared with countries such as Italy, Canada, France and Germany. The same report finds evidence of a positive link between high skills and productivity. This is evident in SELEP's lower than average GVA, earnings and skills levels and further illustrates the benefits of upskilling. It should be noted however, that employment levels are generally good currently.

It is clear that the UK's performance in productivity and skills is not keeping pace internationally and the skills evidence base illustrates that SELEP is failing to keep up with national skills levels and those of other LEPs. This is due to a combination of factors, including availability of employment, access to training in rural areas and deprivation in coastal areas and there are disparities, with some parts of SELEP well above and others well below the national average. This is therefore an important area to address, if the SELEP area is to reach its full potential and given its size, impact upon national performance.

3k. Further Education Area Reviews

In September 2015, the government commenced reviews of further education across England (33 in total), which concluded in 2017. The focus was on FE and sixth-form colleges, with participation by other institutions such as school sixth forms and training providers being voluntary. This did lead to questions about the scope of the review, in that not all post 16 provision was therefore included. Reviews were led by steering groups, chaired by the FE commissioner and including LEP and local authority representation as well as college Principals and Chairs of Governors. They explored areas such as mergers, financial resilience and responding to labour market needs.

The reviews were conducted in waves, with East Sussex being part of the Sussex Area Review in the first wave. Kent and Medway and Essex, Southend and Thurrock were in wave five, whereby the process was more streamlined and prescribed. The LEP worked with local authorities, Kent and Medway Skills Commission, the Essex Employment and Skills Board and Opportunity South Essex to present an employer led, evidence based overview of jobs and skills growth for FE providers, in line with the LEP's capital investments in FE from 2014. The full reports are now available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/post-16-education-and-training-area-reviews> and key recommendations include:

- Continued collaborative working to provide routes to higher technical and professional learning
- Developing progression routes beyond level 3 to increase skills levels of local residents
- Increasing delivery of apprenticeships in key sectors, particularly at higher levels

- Supporting better careers education, information, advice and guidance through collaborative working with colleges, the LEP and local authorities
- Colleges developing their estates to ensure facilities are suitable to support the delivery of provision in priority skills areas
- The development of greater specialisation in key areas where colleges have expertise in order to provide level 4+ provision in priority areas
- Effective transition arrangements between schools and colleges
- Mergers / potential mergers in SELEP's area include Canterbury and East Kent College, Palmers and SEEVIC and Sussex Coast and Sussex Downs College.
- Continued support to ensure direct links with industry, FE and HE and to inform provision

3I. Work and Health programme

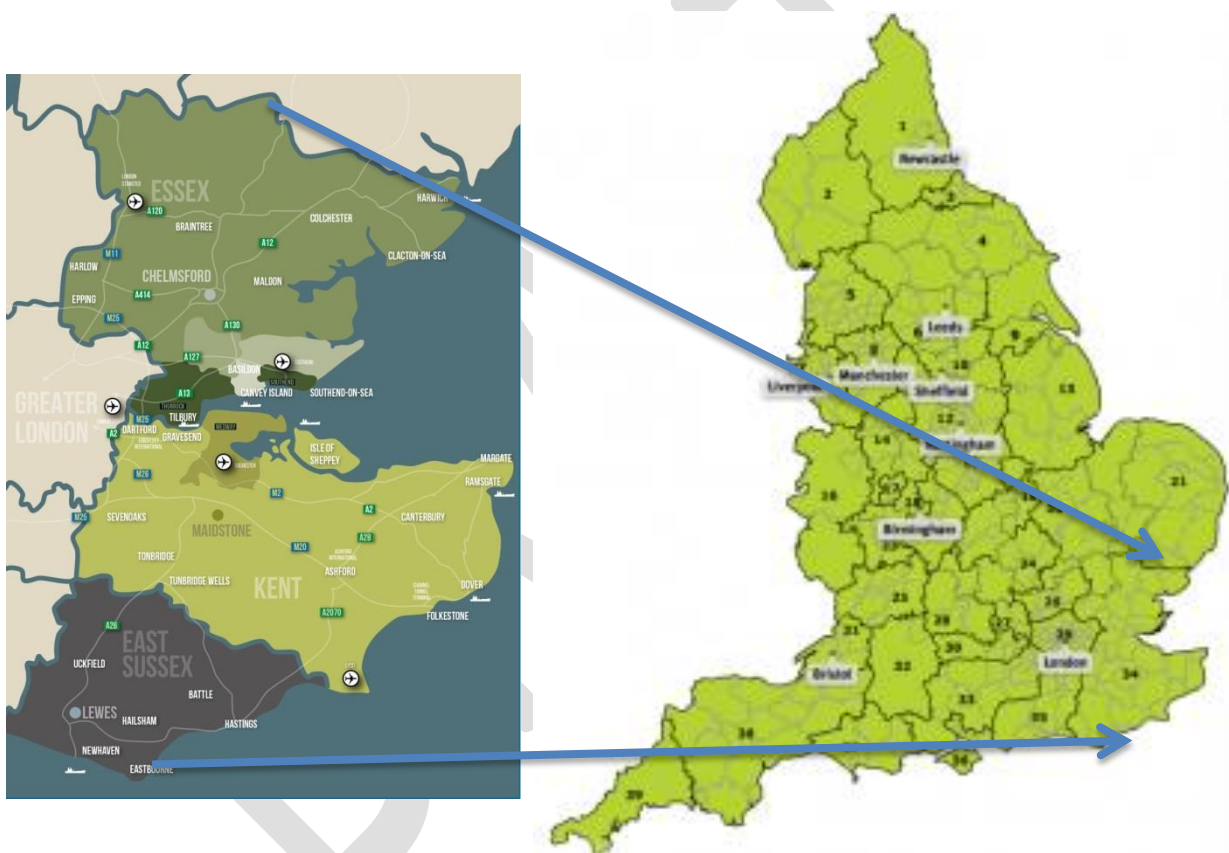
The Work and Health programme is a new government welfare-to-work programme, launched in January 2018. This replaces the previous 'Work Programme' and 'Work Choice' though not all beneficiaries of those will necessarily be referred to the new programme. It provides specialised employment support for people with disabilities and long-term unemployed people. In the SELEP area this is delivered by Shaw Trust and local partners. Shaw Trust have fed back a high number of referrals in the first months and are working with SELEP and federated areas to ensure join up with local programmes and activity. Geographically, the programme is based on Job Centre Plus operational boundaries and the SELEP falls within the 'Home counties' area, which also includes parts of East Anglia. Further information about the programme and local partners is available at <https://www.shaw-trust.org.uk/Services/Work-and-Health-Programme>. DWP are also soon to launch an 'Access to Work Mental Health Support Service' which it will be important to link in with.

5. The South East LEP context

“The largest LEP outside London and covering a very diverse area, it is impossible to categorise SELEP”

One of 38 LEPs nationally, SELEP has a federated model of operation, principally supported by local business and skills boards. For skills, this includes the Skills Advisory Group and local Employment and Skills Boards. LEPs were set up by government to deliver activities to drive growth

Geographically, the South East LEP includes Kent, Essex, East Sussex, Medway, Southend and Thurrock. **By far the largest LEP area nationally, it has a population of 4.1 million** and covers 35 local authority areas, including 29 districts. The map below illustrates that it includes one of the largest coastlines in the country and borders on Greater London, Cambridge, Hertfordshire, West Sussex and Suffolk.



SELEP covers a very diverse area, made up of rural, coastal, urban, wealthy and deprived populations. From areas such as Jaywick in Essex (the most deprived ward in the country) to Tunbridge Wells in Kent, with low-level unemployment and high qualification levels, it is impossible to categorise the SELEP area and different areas often require different approaches. This diversity makes the SELEP area applicable to a wide range of government policy.

The SELEP is home to some world-beating companies and is an area to be proud of including household names such as Ford, Saga, Stansted Airport, P&O Ferries, Konica Minolta, Eurotunnel, Royal Opera House, Turner Contemporary, Maidstone Studios, DP World and Amazon as well as a wide range of start-ups in sectors such as digital, creative

and construction. The area is soon to be home also to Public Health England, a new Bradwell Power station, Entertainment resort and expanded ports and airports.

The SELEP area is nationally and internationally important –SELEP’s sea, rail, airports and roads provide a gateway to the world and the rest of the UK. This area is vital and instrumental in keeping people, goods and services moving and enabling international trade.

Overall, SELEP has lower than average skills levels and though improving, these are failing to keep up with the national average at every level, except level one. Generally, SELEP falls within the bottom half of LEPs for skills levels. As a diverse and large area, SELEP has areas well above and well below the national average.

Nearly 190,000 (7.5%) adults have no qualifications; the highest number of any LEP nationally after London and Leeds. 90,000 people in employment do not have a qualification and 237,000 have a level one only. **FE participation has fallen in recent years.**

This area will see significant housing and infrastructure growth, with up to 300,000 new homes projected to 2030. This has clear consequences for the construction sector but also for sectors serving a growing population, such as health, tourism and care. This is coupled with nationally important infrastructure schemes such as the Lower Thames Crossing.

There will also be significant population growth, increasing to nearly 5 million by 2039. This will include a sizeable ageing population, impacting upon sectors such as health and care.

SELEP has large volumes of both high value and entry-level jobs, building on a strong IT, creative, construction, manufacturing, care, tourism, agriculture and health base and with nearly 400,000 vacancies advertised from August 2016-July 2017. New entrants often require support to get into these sectors.

SELEP has the second highest of all LEP areas of workless households; there are 178,000 workless households and 83,000 children living in workless households. **Over 40,000 people were claiming out of work benefits as of June 2017** – among the highest numbers nationally.

Apprenticeship start numbers have fluctuated in recent years (around 32,000 annually), with a population of nearly half a million 15-24 year olds. Quarter one figures for 2017/18 show a 21% fall from the same period last year. SELEP applying a proportionate target to the government’s ambition for 3 million apprenticeships (from 2015-2020) would equate to SELEP contributing 210,000.

SELEP enjoys a close relationship with London, which has both positive and negative impact on the area in sometimes drawing skills out of the South East, offering higher salaries and affecting house prices (i.e. the average house price in Sevenoaks is £409,256), which has implications for lower paid jobs, in sectors such as care. However, some London companies are seeing opportunities for relocations to SELEP, in sectors like finance and creative.

Across SELEP, there is a growing need to support disadvantaged groups such as benefit claimants, ex-offenders and increasing numbers of homeless people. Some areas within SELEP are now nationally considered ‘hotspots’ for homelessness Medway, Basildon, Dartford, Chelmsford and Colchester. Across SELEP, latest local authority statistics show that in 2016/17 there were nearly 2,150 homeless or threatened with homeless households. Hastings has been identified by the government as an ‘opportunity area’ whereby additional focus and resource is provided to improve social mobility.

6. Sector and business context (all facing shortages already, set to increase)

The skills evidence base illustrates the significant size of SELEP compared with other LEPs and for its sectors also. For example, 101,000 (6.4%) people are employed in construction compared with 62,000 (4.6%) in Leeds and 48,000 (3.8%) in Greater Manchester. It is a similar picture for sectors such as health and care. The SELEP area also has the fourth highest number of manufacturing sector employees (108,000 or 8.5%) of any LEP area nationally. 90.1% of SELEP’s enterprises are micro – the highest proportion of any LEP outside London and the highest number at nearly 153,000 showing significant growth from 123,000 in 2010. Across all sectors therefore there is a growing need for more start-up / entrepreneurial, leadership and management skills as well as digital. Across all sectors, the speed and level of change mean that the nature of work is changing and therefore training needs to adapt accordingly. More people are working flexibly and so may require different sorts of support, such as short-term office hubs and space.

A table from the skills evidence base is included below, to illustrate the sector requirements and developments in the area which will impact upon skills and jobs needs in the future. Generally, there is a need to support people across all sectors with higher, technical and professional skills to increase productivity and competitiveness and enable people to progress from low and entry level jobs. Sectors that have been marked as priorities have been identified as having LEP wide significance due to large current and future jobs growth, high value jobs or strategic importance. **Supporting sector reports will be produced, the following are headlines only.**

Sector	SELEP Picture Now	Growth / Future
Construction (PRIORITY)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 27,325 enterprises 101,000 employee jobs Ageing workforce Disproportionately male workforce Nearly 6,000 vacancies (including Electricians, plumbers, carpenters, Quantity Surveyors, Bricklayers, Production Managers) Average national salaries include: Production Manager (£46k), Supervisor (£33k), Carpenter (£32k), Quantity Surveyor (£47k) Competition from London offering higher salaries to people trained here 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 300,000 new homes across SELEP, so sector set to see considerable growth Large infrastructure projects (i.e. Lower Thames Crossing) Growing need for ‘green’ & low carbon skills and opportunity to establish as area of expertise Public perception hindering growth. Large requirements in ‘off site’ jobs Carpenters, Joiners, Architects, Project Managers, Plumbers & heating & ventilation engineers and Chartered surveyors identified by UKCES as jobs of the future Brexit impact as large migrant workforce Trend towards pre-fabricated housing

		speeding up construction
Health and Care (PRIORITY)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 7,240 enterprises 220,000 employee jobs Disproportionately female workforce (particularly in care) Over 45,000 vacancies (including Nurses, care workers, medical practitioners, social workers and care managers) Average national salaries include: Nurse (£35k), Care workers (£20k), Residential home managers (£41k), Social Workers (£41k) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Population growth to 4.6 million by 2030 Increasing ageing population – both will impact on health and care needs Public perception of sector (particularly care) hindering recruitment – good opportunity to progress to management Care Workers, Nurses, dentists and nursing assistants identified by UKCES as jobs of the future Potential impact of Brexit as large migrant workforce Opportunities to use digital technologies in care
IT, Digital & creative (PRIORITY)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 19,170 enterprises 85,000 employee jobs IT has a disproportionately male workforce Over 30,000 vacancies (including Web developers, software developers, IT support, graphic designers) Average salaries include: IT project manager (£57k), IT technician (£34k), programmer (£43k) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Current ‘digital revolution’ means skills for this sector applies across all other sectors with digital skills needs growing Many hard to fill vacancies in IT Programmers & Software developers, IT specialist managers, IT analysts, IT project managers, web designers and developers identified by UKCES as jobs of the future High numbers of micro businesses and freelancers which may require a different approach / support to enter sector Sizeable Games, Entertainment and cultural part of sector likely to see growth Aligning to government plans for Local Digital Partnerships Ensuring local communities are aware of the new digital entitlement
Finance (PRIORITY)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3,020 enterprises 43,000 employee jobs Strong relationship to London – many SELEP residents commuting to finance jobs Over 8,000 vacancies (including Insurance underwriters, finance analysts, sales related roles and financial managers) Average salaries include: Finance and investment analysts (£45k), Pensions and insurance clerks insurance underwriters (£42k), insurance underwriters (£41k) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trend for some finance companies in London relocating to parts of SELEP due to available workforce / lower rents Growing need for IT (software) skills due to online nature of industry – difficult to recruit to Finance and investment analysts and advisers, chartered and certified accountants, sales accounts and business development managers identified by UKCES as jobs of the future Potential impact of Brexit on international companies presence in UK, with London as Europe’s main financial services hub
Manufacturing and engineering (PRIORITY)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 108,000 employee jobs Nearly 12,000 vacancies including mechanical engineer, production manager, engineering manager, test engineer Disproportionate male workforce Ageing workforce Internationally famous companies located here (i.e. Ford, Raytheon, e2v) Average national salaries include: design and development engineers (£43k), engineering professionals (£33k), 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public perception of sector hindering recruitment Ageing workforce likely to impact on skills needed – high need for technical skills Mechanical Engineers, Metal fitters, production and maintenance fitters identified by UKCES as jobs of the future Impact of digital and robotics on future skills requirements Decline in employment forecasts but current shortages and factors such as competition from other sectors / ageing

	mechanical engineers (£38K)	workforce means there is continued need for skilled staff <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2018 is the year of engineering
Transport & Logistics (PRIORITY)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6,270 enterprises 93,000 employee jobs Disproportionate male workforce Of national and international significance – SELEP has nine ports, high speed rail links and regional airport capacity Over 8,000 vacancies including HGV Driver, Forklift Truck driver, warehouse manager, transport manager and depot manager Average national salaries include: managers in transport distribution (£37k), Warehouse Managers (£36k), LGV Drivers (£26k) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impact of digital and robotics on future skills requirements (i.e. automated warehousing) Aircraft pilots, LGV drivers, train drivers identified by UKCES as jobs of the future Airport expansion at Gatwick (outside LEP but providing large volume of jobs), Stansted, Southend airports
Agriculture and land based (Kent & East Sussex PRIORITY)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6,000 enterprises 1,000 vacancies including landscaper, veterinary nurse and farm estate worker Average national salaries include farmer (£44k), veterinary nurses (£24,495) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Important to food security and potential move to more UK production if imports become costly Innovations in areas such as wine production could lead to further growth Farmers UKCES jobs of the future Growing need for farm based R&D and response to climate change
Retail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 11,495 enterprises 276,000 employee jobs (NB includes wholesale and repair also) 11,000 vacancies including store manager, sales executive and retail sales person Average national salaries include sales assistants (£21k), cashiers (£18k), retail managers (£28k) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impact of online retail Heavy reliance and inter-relation with transport and logistics sector UKCES identifies IT skills associated with sector, such as business analysts as jobs of the future
Education (PRIORITY)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2,935 enterprises 156,000 employee jobs 33,000 vacancies including secondary education teaching professionals, teaching assistants, primary and nursery education teaching professions Reported difficulties recruiting and people leaving sector Average national salaries include secondary education teachers (£31k), FE teaching professionals (£35k) & teaching assistants (£17k) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Largely public sector so reliant on public funding UKCES identifies Secondary School Teachers and educational support assistants as jobs of the future General challenge in schools, colleges and universities to recruit to sector specialism especially where there are shortages in the sector itself. Essential to explore industry placements and support to address this.
Professional , scientific & technical (cross cutting) PRIORITY)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 27,950 enterprises 110,000 employee jobs Reflecting the high level of technical and higher level jobs across SELEP Reflects jobs in some of sectors as above such as IT, construction and also legal Over 9,000 vacancies including Solicitors, legal professionals and legal secretaries Average national salaries include Solicitors (£45k), Vets (£40k) and legal professionals (£45k) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technical roles are increasing as reflected in the sectors described above and are reflected in UKCES jobs of the future as well as legal and medical roles Factors such as climate change and exploring new approaches to areas such as crop growth could be an area for expertise and expansion

Energy & Utilities (PRIORITY)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 18,000 employee jobs • 1,600 vacancies including water and sewerage operatives, engineering technicians and business sales executives • Average national salaries include £29,000 for water and sewerage operatives and £30,000 for engineering technicians 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The sector reports requirements in engineering and experiences similar shortages to the engineering sector • UKCES identifies needs for technical skills and notes that in future there will be increasing skills requirements for the expansion of intelligent energy systems that track usage as well as installation of energy technologies such as solar & wind.
Accommodation, Food & Hospitality (PRIORITY Kent, Medway, East Sussex)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 112,000 employee jobs • 8,615 enterprises • Nearly 6,000 vacancies including restaurant manager, bar staff, hotel manager • Average salaries include £28,000 for a Restaurant Manager, £20,000 for a Chef & £30,000 for a Hotel Manager 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current and future trends include the development of companies such as Airbnb changing the nature of the sector • Growth across the SELEP area has seen an increase in new restaurants, hotels and bars in many areas • Likely to be impacted by Brexit and potential reduced workforce. Sector has campaign to recruit more UK workers • Potential impact of climate change • Language skills important and require nurturing • A high employment turnover rate

Future place based developments influencing these sectors

Clearly there is a lot about the future which will impact SELEP's sectors which cannot be predicted. However, there are a range of certainties in terms of forthcoming investments which will have skills and jobs implications across the area. Some key examples are as follows with more schemes and resultant jobs and skills needs described in the accompanying Construction and Industry Board (CITB) demand led report:

Development / investment	Further information
Public Health England relocation to Harlow (Essex) from 2019	Jobs to include Scientists, engineers, researchers, Scientific support workers, finance, HR, IT analyst and marketing roles. These will include graduate and post graduate roles, PHD studentships, entry level roles and apprenticeships. Recruitment is expected to take place from academia, industry and the NHS.
Bradwell Power Station (Essex) new build (pre-planning stage only)	Jobs would be in engineering, construction, planning
Amazon Fulfilment Centre location (Tilbury, Thurrock) – recently opened and still recruiting (2017)	1500 jobs including Control Systems Engineer, Senior Control System Engineer, maintenance technician and health and safety manager
Lower Thames Crossing (Essex, Southend, Thurrock and Kent) (timings to be confirmed)	Expected to generate up to 25,000 new jobs in construction and engineering
Cross Rail Essex routes – to 2020	Generating a share of 50,000 jobs which were projected for London and the south east
Harlow Enterprise Zone (Essex)	2,500 jobs, growing to 5,000 over 25 years
Southend Airport Growth	Up to 7,000 new jobs to 2020
Stansted Airport (Essex) growth	Up to 10,000 new jobs to 2030
Port of Tilbury (Thurrock) growth	Up to 5,500 jobs at London distribution Park and Tilbury sites
London Gateway (Thurrock)	One of Europe's biggest logistics parks and growing
Wind farms (Greater Gabbard, Gunfleet Sands, London Array, East Sussex coast)	Maintenance (Engineering) skills likely to continue to be needed
Better Queensway Development (Southend)	£320 million regeneration in Southend over next 15-20 years

Up to 300,000 new homes to 2030 across SELEP area	Large numbers of jobs in construction and engineering. Sites including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ebsfleet Garden City (Kent) • Otterpool Park Garden Town (Kent) houses and commercial land • New garden town on Essex-Hertfordshire border • Dunton Hills in Essex (to include new schools and shopping facilities) • Wealden Housing developments to 2028
Discovery Park (Sandwich, Kent)	Up to 3,000 new jobs
Elwick Place Development Ashford (Kent)	Development requiring construction and engineering jobs. Leisure and hospitality jobs to be created
Sittingbourne Town Centre regeneration (Kent)	Development requiring construction and engineering jobs. Hotels, cinemas and shops to create retail and hospitality jobs
London Entertainment resort (previously Paramount) – plans only	Large scale entertainment resort would require construction and engineering skills and once up and running, large numbers of hospitality jobs
Growth of Gatwick Airport	Continuing jobs for people living in East Sussex and Kent
Swallows Business Park (Hailsham, East Sussex)	Over 500 new jobs
North Bexhill Access Road	Development opening up land for the development of 38,000 sqm of new employment space and the creation of over 2200 jobs
Lewes North Street Quarter	£180m development on brownfield site to include public spaces, off street parking, employment space and a healthcare hub
Devonshire Park (Eastbourne)	£44m project to deliver new welcome building, theatre and gardens
Queensway Gateway Road	New road to reduce congestions on the Ridge and open up land along a corridor between Hastings and Bexhill for business investment and housing development
Hastings Harbour Quarter project plan	£500m project to regenerate Hastings seafront creating jobs, homes and a working marina for up to 600 vessels. Construction and jobs based at the marina as well as 1,300 homes.
Newhaven Enterprise Zone	Made up of eight sites covering 79 hectares and focusing on advanced manufacturing, engineering and ‘clean, green and marine’ sectors linked to Rampion Offshore Wind Farm (Operations and Maintenance Base currently under construction).
Eastbourne Arndale Centre Retail / Leisure development	£80m re-development in Eastbourne creating 22 new retail units, approximately 300 extra car-parking spaces, 7 restaurants and a cinema.
Potential High Speed One from Ashford to Hastings	High speed rail link between London St Pancras, Hastings, Bexhill and Rye via Ashford International – proposed by government
South Essex Vision 2050	Ambitions for growth including housing, business and leisure development to ensure the right conditions for growth

7. Shared ambition across the LEP

All SELEP's partners and federated boards have fed into this strategy and it therefore represents a shared ambition for inclusive growth. Aligning with the LEP's Strategic Economic Plan also ensures consistency.

Working with federated skills boards, the SELEP's Skills Advisory Group brings together colleges, universities, local authorities, training provider, employer and voluntary sector representatives. As a working group of the largest LEP nationally, it is the biggest of its kind nationally and represents an expert group which could prove as a useful sounding board to government for new initiatives and consultation on what is and isn't working on the ground. This group, the LEP Board and extensive LEP network of hundreds of partners have fed into and informed this strategy, which is the result of detailed research and consultation. There is therefore consensus across the LEP of issues to address, with headlines as follows:

- SELEP's education and productivity in a national and international context highlights the need to align education to growth and where the jobs in future will actually be. We will share our clear and consistent message to all stakeholders' schools, colleges, providers, universities in order to rise to the challenge of current shortages and future growth and ensure our communities can benefit from this.
- There is a consensus that apprenticeships and technical qualifications need to increase as an excellent way to respond to skills and sector shortages. As is outlined above, numbers (including higher and degree level) need to increase significantly and align to growth.
- The scale of the skills challenge requires us to significantly increase all age participation and create the right conditions for upskilling and retraining. Models such as 'returnships' could be adopted to support people into growth sectors and respond to training needs.
- Across almost all responses to the SELEP skills consultation, the complex nature of the skills system was identified as a barrier. This is reflected in the UK government's industrial strategy. It is vital that this complexity is addressed and duplication, waste and overlap are removed.
- It is important to ensure also proportionate allocations of funding to SELEP. More local control of funding to ensure it is efficiently and appropriately utilised, would be beneficial.
- This is an ambitious area, with among the largest growth nationally projected. There is every opportunity for the SELEP area to lead the way and to champion new and innovative areas such as digital skills across sectors and virtual reality learning in new settings. It is important that SELEP and partners champion the area and its potential.

8. What we are already doing

- Investing in facilities for growth through Skills Capital now and in the future, as is outlined in our 'Celebrating Skills' brochure¹. This includes facilities to respond to technical and STEM shortages across a range of sectors including agriculture, manufacturing, IT and digital and construction. We will continue to make the case for

¹http://www.southeastlep.com/images/uploads/resources/SELEP_brochure_%28ESF_and_Skills_Capital%29.pdf

industry led, inspirational facilities as a key part of our response to skills shortages and provide support to areas such as Institutes of Technology.

- Influencing provision and support through the European Social Fund and government funding (such as the Work and Health Programme)
- Supporting a Careers Enterprise Adviser programme now linking nearly 200 schools with employers across the LEP area and growing
- Exploring opportunities to reach primary schools, such as the 'Inspiring Governance' programme
- Raising the profile and importance of apprenticeships through, for example, videos² and infographics and planned work with the National Careers Service
- Fostering stronger links with LEP Growth Hubs to ensure local employers can access support and any skills feedback is shared
- Trailing innovative new approaches such as Tutor CPD through local Skills Boards and exploring a DWP and National Careers Service pilot to support older workers
- Piloting an online portal to simplify things - 'Opportunity South East', with the opportunity to roll out across the LEP (<https://my.opportunitiessoutheast.co.uk/>)
- Local federated skills boards also deliver a range of locally specific initiatives such as Open Doors and 'STEAMfest' in East Sussex, a care sector recruitment drive in Essex and a 'Made in Kent' campaign in Kent and Medway.

9. Emerging actions – a commitment to deliver

There is a strong shared commitment to deliver against the findings and conclusions in this strategy. With much excellent work happening at federated area level, partners have agreed that it is appropriate to agree on five priority areas for meaningful impact across the SELEP area. In order for these to be successful, all partners also need to articulate the vision, priorities and actions to their networks which will help to ensure a consistent message. A separate action plan has been developed to support this strategy, also reflecting plans in federated areas. This will be regularly updated to show progress and to evolve in line with government policy changes, external factors (such as Brexit) and funding opportunities.

Headline actions include:

- Establish a cross LEP employer led Skills Advisory Panel to interlink with federated boards and oversee the strategy and action
- Increase apprenticeships and industry relevant qualifications aligned to employer need
- Simplify the landscape for employers and individuals through tools such as 'Opportunity South East' and the Growth Hubs
- Raise awareness of key sectors to adults and young people through tools such as virtual reality, online and face to face activity
- Prepare employers for policy changes such as T-Levels and support employers with the apprenticeship levy
- Address the shortage of tutors and teachers in sector relevant subjects and support continued professional development (CPD)
- Secure public commitments from large employers (and representative bodies of smaller employers) to apprenticeships and industry relevant training

² <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UcKA5bGNj1ss8Xm4OjM1Va6g>

- Utilise current and remaining European Social funding for areas of need including in work progression, leadership and management and digital and to support cohorts such as ex- offenders, homeless people and unemployed
- Take up opportunities to work with government and align to the Industrial Strategy and Careers Strategy, through areas such as sector Deals, Digital Partnerships and supporting disabled people into work
- Continue to explore and secure capital funding to ensure the right facilities and infrastructure to deliver
- Work with local authorities to champion and support areas such as skills in procurement and utilisation of the apprenticeship levy
- Ensure that cross cutting areas such as free-lancing, digital, leadership are addressed and that the right conditions are in place to support these
- Work with the Careers Enterprise Company, local authorities and partners to deliver against the government's careers strategy and engage more employers in working with schools and colleges
- Work with all LEP working groups (creative, rural, coastal, universities, growth hubs) to deliver the strategy and action plan and to update this where appropriate

10. Conclusions and next steps

Fundamentally the evidence and feedback throughout this strategy and supporting documents illustrates that the key requirement across all activity is for greater alignment between education and employers. With growth forecast on an unprecedented scale accompanied by factors such as the digital revolution and Brexit, employers will require support and clarity to respond. This will mean addressing the spectrum of skills needs from entry level through to higher. For the SELEP economy to become more productive and for skills levels to improve, many in SELEP's communities will require additional, in-depth support and facilities. Positively, there is already large scale commitment to respond to challenges from employers, local authorities, education providers and the voluntary sector. As the largest LEP in the country, this represents a public / private partnership on a significant scale. This is coupled with a strong current focus on skills through government policy and initiatives which the LEP and partners are keen to engage in. The time is therefore ripe to deliver against this strategy.

Moreover, there is a clear desire across SELEP to go further and to deliver more through establishing areas of expertise and innovation in areas such as free-lancing and virtual reality and to create the very best conditions for local employers and individuals. The LEP therefore looks forward to delivering against this strategy and would like to thank all partners involved in current and future work.

Going forward the action plan supporting this strategy will become a working document, to be overseen by the LEP's Skills Panel and Advisory group. Regular reviews will be provided to show progress. These documents and the full evidence base will be made available on the SELEP website and added to on an ongoing basis to ensure relevance to need and government policy.