



South Yorkshire Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) Progress Report June 2024



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Who is this publication for?

South Yorkshire LSIP background

Doncaster Chamber are the Employer Representative Body (ERB) for the South Yorkshire Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP). They are collaborating with the two other Chambers of Commerce in South Yorkshire (Sheffield, and Barnsley and Rotherham), as well as the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (SYMCA), South Yorkshire (SY) College Group, universities, independent training providers and employers¹.

The current LSIP is built on the [South Yorkshire Trailblazer](#) developed in 2021. The Trailblazer engaged with employers, trade unions, business networks and anchor institutions to collect evidence on the region's current and future skill needs. Informed by extensive primary research, it identified a strong need for digital skills, a focus that is reflected in the latest LSIP. This includes a demand for baseline digital skills such as word processing and specific digital skills such as machining technology. Improving the digital skills base in the sub-region will help to close the productivity gap, diversify the economy, seize opportunities in growing sectors and prevent further structural unemployment. The LSIP concluded with 36 recommendations to improve understanding of employer needs and better align and inform our provider offer. These reflect the fact that employers, training, and education providers have unique perspectives, but similar and complementary aims. Progress against these recommendations is discussed [later](#).

The South Yorkshire LSIP was created in 2023 and runs until 2026. The LSIP is a strategic document, focusing on post-16 education, ensuring that it meets the priorities and local employer demand. To develop the LSIP, employers were engaged in surveys and interviews to illuminate their requirements and any changes they expect to see in their business and sector. They bring with them a wealth of knowledge that is tailored to the South Yorkshire sub-region. £3.2m LSIF funds were awarded to Further Education (FE) and training providers to allow them to act on the LSIP priorities highlighted by employers and others.

Purpose of the report

The report recaps on the aims and objectives of the LSIP. It summarises the strategic and economic context and learning ecosystem in South Yorkshire. It gives a resume of LSIP priorities and actions. It articulates what has been, and is left, to achieve.

Development of the report

As noted, the three Chambers of Commerce for South Yorkshire have been leading on the development of the LSIP on behalf of the entire sub-region. The latest LSIP report can be found [here](#). The report is aimed at:

- The ERB and South Yorkshire Skills Advisory Board.
- FE Colleges, Sixth Form Colleges, Designated Institutions, Independent Training Providers (ITPs) including those in the South Yorkshire Provider Network, and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) that deliver English-funded post-16 technical education and training in carrying out the duties placed upon them in respect to LSIPs. This includes the two Sheffield universities including the Advanced Manufacturing Research Centre (AMRC).
- SYMCA and the four South Yorkshire Local Authorities.
- The three chambers of commerce, employers and other employer representative bodies.

¹ [Doncaster Chamber: Local Skills Improvement Plan](#)

- The Jobcentre Plus network and career, education, information advice and guidance (CEIAG) providers; and
- Other organisations that understand the needs of employees and learners, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds and with special educational needs and disabilities.

Employer/provider interest

Employers want to know that their current and upcoming skill needs will be met. Providers want to know they are delivering the right training that will equip learners with the correct knowledge and skills to help them to thrive in the sub-regional labour market. Under enhanced Ofsted guidelines, FE providers are required to show that they are contributing to meeting skills needs and engaging effectively with employers². LSIPs give employers the opportunity to express their skills needs and to support providers to address the needs of the wider, local economy³. We are continually engaging with employers through a number of mechanisms (see our roadmap [later](#)).

The next section summarises the South Yorkshire LSIP.

This progress report has been prepared in accordance with Local Skills Improvement Plans: Stage 2 Guidance (dated November 2023) and is intended to review progress against the local skills improvement plan published in August 2023. This report was produced in June 2024 but publication was delayed due to the pre-election period.

² [Ofsted \(2024\) Further education and skills inspection handbook](#)

³ [Department for Education \(2022\) Local Skills Improvement Plans](#)

Summary of the LSIP

Aims and objectives

The LSIP has the following aims and objectives:

- To create a modern customer journey and a skills ecosystem that is easy to navigate.
- To co-create new policy, skills and training products.
- To ensure that skills delivery is at the cutting edge of current and future businesses needs and working practices.
- To improve the visibility of growth opportunities through skills, celebrating success and making skills much more visible.
- To release workforce potential in South Yorkshire communities, promoting positive pathways and releasing hidden talent.

Challenges

The LSIP is being developed and led by an exceptional learning ecosystem in partnership with the South Yorkshire ERB. It is however working within a challenging socio-economic backdrop. For instance, the industrial legacy within South Yorkshire has resulted in a persistent productivity drag. This is reflected in its skills attainment and levels of inactivity. Its employment rate of 73.3% is 2% below England. Similarly its unemployment rate (4.7%) is higher than the English average of 3.7%. Economic inactivity (23%) is higher than England (21.4%). These factors are compounded by low pay, inactivity, and ill-health. For instance, workers earn a weekly wage of £547, £83 lower than the English average salary.

This legacy needs to be balanced against some significant new investments and initiatives in the region. These include some major employer investments at Rolls Royce and Hybrid Vehicles (for instance) and other growth areas such as health and well-being. They will attract income and investment, increasing the number of secure, high-paying jobs. The transition to net zero brings with it both challenges to overcome and opportunities to build on, not least within the steel industry. This is one of the most important and difficult heavy industries to decarbonise requiring pioneering technologies. Digital transformation within our economy will change the nature of work, the skills it requires and where it will take place⁴.

Geographic coverage⁵

South Yorkshire is in the northern third of England and borders Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire, West Yorkshire, The East Riding of Yorkshire and North Yorkshire. In 2021, the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (SYMCA) was created. With an area of 599m² SYMCA brings together four local authorities: Barnsley and Rotherham and the cities of Sheffield and Doncaster. The LSIP area is contiguous with SYMCA and has a diverse physical geography, from high Pennine western moorlands to the lowland valleys of the Rivers' Don and Dearne around Doncaster in the east. With a population of 1.37m, it has a working age population of 0.87m.

Actions

This has been a busy year for the ERB and partners. Our current priorities and actions are listed in the table [here](#). We describe our achievements to date [here](#). Despite these successes we are at the start of a long process and there is a packed timetable of activity for

⁴ See [Plan for Good Growth](#) SYMCA 2024 p10

⁵ See [City Region Employment Profile](#) South Yorkshire 2023, the Work Foundation.

the coming year (see [here](#)). Those interested in the LSIP documents detail, the plan is available [here](#) as well as a technical annex and supporting evidence base.

Strategic and economic context update

Governance

There is a strong provider base in South Yorkshire with oversight of skills provision and planning within the sub-region via the SYMCA led South Yorkshire Regional Skills Advisory Board (SYRSAB) and the ERB, SY Colleges Partnership and South Yorkshire Provider Network. The three South Yorkshire Chambers of Commerce are working collaboratively as the designated Employer Representative Body (ERB) for South Yorkshire (SY).

The rebooted SYSAB partnership was formed following a recommendation in the SY Trailblazer to merge the SY Skills Advisory Network (known elsewhere as a Skills Advisory Partnership) and Skills Accelerator Board. This latter board was formed to oversee the LSIP Trailblazer and Strategic Development Fund pilot. It offers oversight on skills provision and planning more generally, bringing together stakeholders and anchor institutions. It plays a pivotal role on skills devolution, strategy development and implementations and flagship investments in skills provision, providers and infrastructure.

Under this board, with a combined annual turnover of over £0.2 billion, is the South Yorkshire Colleges Partnership. This is a dynamic partnership between Barnsley College, DN Colleges Group, Doncaster Deaf Trust, Northern College, RNN Group, The Sheffield College, University of Sheffield AMRC Training Centre and The Chesterfield College. The South Yorkshire Provider Network is one of the leading networks of Further Education (FE) colleges, skills and employability providers in the country. These partnerships bring together strategic stakeholders, anchor institutions and providers.

The 2024 [South Yorkshire Skills Strategy](#) sets the strategic backdrop for the LSIP setting out three clear missions: to move those far from the labour market into work; to raise attainment of core knowledge and skills; and to increase the supply of a high-skilled workforce. The LSIP is embedded within the strategy and well placed to support the sub-region to meet these goals. The strategy in turn sits within the 2024 [Plan for Good Growth](#) which articulates how South Yorkshire can attract investment and increase the number of high-paid jobs. The three dimensions of the plan are prosperity, connection and community. The plan highlights South Yorkshire's sectoral strengths such as the green economy, the health sector, advanced manufacturing and creative industries. Given the re-election of the South Yorkshire Mayor until at least 2028, it is likely that this Plan will continue to guide strategic priorities for the medium term.

The South Yorkshire LSIP ecosystem is set out in [Annex One](#). It shows the key partnerships and local skills activities in the sub-region.

National skills needs

Looking at the economy overall, South Yorkshire sees more people than the national average employed in lower skilled, lower paid positions such as sales and customer service (9.1%), machine operation (8.7%) and elementary occupations (13.1%). That said, healthcare and information and communication technology were the most advertised areas in 2022. Skilled trade occupations and machine operatives were predicted to see the largest decrease, and professional occupations and associate professional occupations the largest increase. Proportionately, in South Yorkshire, the majority of those in employment are working in professional occupations (17.6%), however this is nearly 3% below the national average.

The following sections give a brief snapshot of the position in South Yorkshire in relation to nationally important sectors.

Construction

With 27,000 people currently employed in the sector, the importance of the construction industry was noted in the LSIP. Its predicted growth is comparatively slow, 10.2% by 2035 in England and only 1.2% in South Yorkshire. That said, there is a good mix of construction and related professional and engineering services located in the sub region including Arnold Laver, ARUP, Henry Boot, Davey Markham, Keepmoat and SIG. As we move towards achieving the sub-region's net zero goal by 2040, skills in Modern Methods of Construction will become highly sought after. This will require training and upskilling⁶. Investments in this area are discussed later and we are in dialogue with the local CITB team on skills matters.

Manufacturing

The sub-region has expertise in high precision engineering, metals and alloy production, and high-quality design and manufacturing of products for a wide range of global industries, from medical instruments to transport and nuclear components. We have a heritage of over 200 years in pioneering steel making and engineering excellence which has resulted in a culture of innovation. Today the sub-region is host to many world-leading manufacturing and engineering companies. Manufacturing is the most common apprenticeship destination for males in South Yorkshire. Advanced Manufacturing is a sector with potential, with the opportunity for 59,000 jobs in this area⁷. South Yorkshire is also home to the UK's largest, research-led advanced manufacturing cluster. The Advanced Manufacturing Innovation District hosts companies such as Boeing, McLaren and three University of Sheffield research centres⁸, as well as a cluster of Sheffield Hallam University research activities.

Digital and technology

Reflecting on the LSIP focus on digital skills, the sub-region has a strong presence in software applications. This includes strengths in industrial applications and niche clusters of digital businesses including e-learning and digital transport technologies' firms. The digital sector in South Yorkshire is predicted to grow by 9.2% by 2035. 82% of online job adverts now require digital skills as an essential requirement. South Yorkshire firms are most likely to specifically request office software skills, GDPR skills and digital marketing skills⁹. Apart from Sheffield, all areas of South Yorkshire see a risk of job losses due to automation at levels higher than the national average. That said, we have some growing digital pioneers including technology companies such as Fluent and The Floow and digital tech heavyweights including Sumo, Twinkl, Automative Analytics and WanDisco.

Health and social care

Improving population health and reducing healthy life inequalities before they reach the acute stage is a key manifesto pledge for the Mayor of South Yorkshire. With 93,000 employees, the health and social care sector is the largest employer in South Yorkshire and projected to grow by a further 15.1% by 2035¹⁰. Care assistants and nurses saw the most online job adverts and significant staffing shortages, indicating a need for more people to engage in these occupations¹¹. South Yorkshire has nearly 19,000 students on health-related courses with a further 4,180 adult learners in health sectors and 2,350 health sector

⁶ [Sheffield City Region \(2021\) Local Skills Report](#)

⁷ [Doncaster Chamber \(2023\) South Yorkshire Local Skills Improvement Plan](#)

⁸ [SYMCA: Advanced Manufacturing Innovation District \(AMID\)](#)

⁹ [Kada Research \(2023\) South Yorkshire Skills and Employment Evidence Base](#)

¹⁰ [Department for Education: Local Skills Dashboard](#)

¹¹ [Kada Research \(2023\) South Yorkshire Skills and Employment Evidence Base](#)

apprentices¹². We have a cluster of health related assets in South Yorkshire at the cutting edge of diagnostic development and academic and health science innovation.

Haulage and logistics

With an economic output nearing £1 billion, South Yorkshire employs 35,000 people logistics. The sector is continuing to expand at a fast pace. This is consequence of exponential growth in on-line shopping and e-commerce which is driving an increasing need for well-connected storage and distribution facilities. Technology and efficiency enhancements include automation, robotics and Artificial Intelligence. Household names with warehousing and distribution bases in Doncaster include Amazon, Ikea, Next, Asda, The Range, B&Q, Lidl, Woodfield Group and BMW. Workforce skills for new and existing staff cover operations, customer service and supply chain management.

Engineering

With an aging workforce both within industry and education, engineering is a national challenge and local stakeholders are concerned about this workforce and attracting new recruits. Engineering vacancies are also higher in South Yorkshire (6.7%) than in England (6.1%) and reflective of the strength of this sector historically. More action is required to develop and support green apprenticeships with clear technical pathways to help South Yorkshire decarbonise, this gap in provision is also a national challenge. The new [SY Institute of Technology](#) will boost engineering skills. Specialising in Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQs), professional training and higher apprenticeships, the investment in facilities and cutting-edge equipment is focused on widening opportunities in engineering and other technical sectors.

Science and maths

The number of science, research, engineering and technology professionals in South Yorkshire is expected to rise by 17.4% by 2035 (the second fastest percentage increase after the health and social care associate professionals' occupational group). This demonstrates technology's expected importance in driving employment growth. This rate of growth is only slightly slower than anticipated nationally (+17.7% in England over the same period). South Yorkshire starts from a slightly lower base with 7.1% of those in employment currently employed as science, research, engineering, and technology professionals, compared to 8.1% in England.

Maths achievement is important for educational progression but also throughout life. Level 2 English and maths attainment at ages 16 and 19 is below average in South Yorkshire. Doncaster has the highest percentage of 19-year-olds with a L2 in English and maths (72.2%), followed by Barnsley (71.2%), Sheffield (69.7%) and Rotherham (67.8%), but they are all below England (74.8%). The increasing numbers of 19-year-olds in South Yorkshire with L2 English and maths is encouraging. However, this only accounts for around one third of 19-year-olds who did not achieve L2 English and maths at 16. For a more detailed analysis of maths performance in South Yorkshire see our [Skills Evidence Base](#).

Employer base

There are 41,570 businesses in South Yorkshire (March 2023), which has seen significant growth over the past 5 years; in March 2019 there were 38,615 businesses. Over this five-year period (March 2018- March 2023), the number of businesses in South Yorkshire has grown each year, with the least significant growth more recently (+230 in the most recent year). 87.8% of businesses in South Yorkshire are micros with 0 to 9 employees, compared

¹² [Kada Research \(2023\) South Yorkshire Skills and Employment Evidence Base](#)

to 89.2% in England. South Yorkshire has a higher share of small businesses (10 to 49 employees) than the national average.

It is worth mentioning two major sub-regional developments:

South Yorkshire Investment Zone

South Yorkshire is home to the UK's [first Investment Zone](#) announced in July 2023. It aims to be the best place to start, scale-up or relocate a business. It has world-class companies and universities with strengths in high-precision engineering and design, materials, manufacturing, healthcare, digital and creative technologies, future mobility, and clean energy. It has the potential to provide 8,000 new jobs leveraging £1.2bn of private funding by 2030¹³. There is an opportunity to build on the sectoral strengths of the sub-region, given the presence of McLaren, Boeing, Rolls Royce and ITM Power. The zone is able to provide prospective investors an excellent workforce, with outstanding universities, FE Colleges, and technical colleges¹⁴.

Doncaster Airport

Prior to its closure, Doncaster Sheffield Airport provided approximately 2,700 jobs in the region and contributed a net Gross Value Added (GVA) of £108m. Doncaster City Council have recently signed a 125 year lease for the airport, having prepared an Outline Business Case for its on-going development. With the reopening ahead, previous modelling estimates that over 35,000 jobs could be provided through development of the airport and the surrounding Gateway East site. This could generate GVA of some £1.6bn¹⁵. Through exploring and developing creative solutions to the climate challenge, the airport offers an opportunity to develop an ecosystem around Jet Zero, advanced flight technologies (e.g. BVLOS drones), material light-weighting, clean aviation fuel and logistics and smart transportation solutions¹⁶.

¹³ [HM Treasury \(2023\) South Yorkshire named as first UK Investment Zone](#)

¹⁴ [SYMCA: The UK's First Investment Zone](#)

¹⁵ [Doncaster Council \(2023\) South Yorkshire Airport City: Programme update and financial approvals](#)

¹⁶ [SYMCA \(2024\) Mayor sets out vision](#)

Priorities and actions (Roadmap)

Priority	Action / Activity / Milestone	Partners involved	Timescales	Method of implementation & outcomes expected	Monitoring arrangements -	Progress Status
Task and finish group 1-4: Digital Literacy, Capacity Building, Trainer Training, Middle Managers	Respond to LSIP recommendations through 4 agreed groups ensuring proposed solutions aligned with employer need/existing provision. Chamber CEOs to progress actions.	Doncaster Chamber (Oversight) SY Chamber CEOs (Group chairs) Other partners eg providers, SYMCA, employers and SYSAB representatives (in attendance)	Overall timescales: May 2024-Sept 2024 First session convened for each group (May 2024), session two planned for July 2024	Working groups convened Preferred solution developed for each group	Set up initial task and finish group and 2-3 follow-up groups every 4-6 weeks. Facilitate/frame the meetings & log actions	On track to deliver
LSIF Project 1: Digital Skills	400 target TNAs October 2023 - March 2024 Micro badging potential Investment in immersive classrooms	Barnsley College (Lead) SY Providers Network (Co-ordinating)	447 TNAs started October 2023 - complete March 2024 Micro Badging and immersive classrooms complete Dec 2024	Training Needs Assessments led by SY Provider Network Training solutions delivered Summary presented to providers/curriculum leads (March 2024)	Barnsley College oversight (monthly South Yorkshire LSIF Partnership Board meetings)	TNAs delivered, other elements on track
LSIF Project 2: South Yorkshire Skills	Employer advice hub for employers SY Skills Expo held at the MAGNA Conference Centre	Barnsley College (Lead)	Expo held Rotherham 22.03.24 Future of Website being considered by SY Colleges Principles (end of July 2024)	Website up and running Provider led website Partner led conference	Barnsley College oversight (monthly South Yorkshire LSIF Partnership Board meetings)	Delivered
LSIF Project 3: More and Better Apprenticeships	Apprenticeship hub co-ordinator funded and IAG advisor End Point Assessments (EPA) Research	The Sheffield College (Lead partner)	Completed March 2024	Research study undertaken Six new apprenticeship standards including green construction and composites. EPA enhancements considered and training provided	Oversight by Barnsley College and The Sheffield College (reported into monthly SY LSIF Partnership Board meetings)	Delivered but note Hub was extended to October 2025
LSIF Project 4: Modern Methods of Construction Centre	MMC new facility	Barnsley College (leading new facility)	Facility anticipated operational Autumn 2024	Construction of new facility.	Barnsley College oversight (monthly SY	On track to deliver (note late start due to

				On-site this summer (2024)	LSIF Partnership Board meetings)	planning permission requirements)
Employer Panel Foresight	1-2-1 interviews with 10 business per month started May 2025 Milestone 1 st quarterly insight report Target 150 interviews	3 SY Chambers providing company contacts ERB to land quarterly reports with providers	May 2024-Oct 2025	1-2-1 in-depth interviews with HR leads in key sectors (6 sectors targeted) LMI quarterly report produced	Led by Doncaster Chamber who commissioned Kada Research to produce 6 quarterly reports	On track to deliver
Knowledge and Skills Zones	Target 12	Doncaster Chamber (Oversight) SY Chambers (Delivery)	March 2024-June 2025	Doncaster Event held: March 24 Sheffield: May 24 and Jun/ July 24	12 at monthly/bi-monthly intervals led by Doncaster Chamber in partnership with Sheffield, and Barnsley and Rotherham Chambers	On track to deliver
Knowledge and Skills Teach ins	Target 8 teach-ins	Doncaster Chamber (Oversight) SY Chambers (Delivery)	April 24- June 25	Session 1: SY Apprenticeship Hub + Skills Street – April '24. Session 2: Skills Bank + ADVANCE Sheffield June '24	8 bi-monthly teach-ins Led by Doncaster Chamber in partnership with Sheffield, and Barnsley and Rotherham Chambers	On track to deliver
Knowledge and Skills Casts (Podcasts)	Target 9	Doncaster Chamber (Oversight) SY Chambers (Delivery)	May 2024-Jan 2025	Episode 1 complete: Manufacturing and Automation – May 24, Uploaded onto website	9 podcasts (1 per month) led by Doncaster Chamber in partnership with Sheffield, and Barnsley and Rotherham Chambers	On track to deliver
NEETs	Research Report Produced	Doncaster Chamber (Oversight) SYMCA (Commissioners) SYSAB (Sign-off)	Study start date Jan 2024 Report published May 2024	Research undertaken. Employer survey Workshops Co-design sessions	Led by Doncaster Chamber in partnership with Sheffield, and Barnsley and Rotherham Chambers	Completed
Sub-Regional LSIF/LSIP Impact Framework	Framework produced	Led by Barnsley College on behalf of the sub-regional LSIF partnership	Report Published March 2024	Development of logic model. Partner workshop.	Will be updated in 2025	2024 report complete.

What has been achieved so far?

Value added by LSIP

The South Yorkshire LSIP gives us an ambitious long term shared plan for aligning skills provision with employer needs. It was developed in close collaboration with our partners. We see the LSIP as the starting point to transform the relationship between providers and employers. Our portfolio of activities brings a curated and mediated dialogue that translates employer needs into demands that can be clearly understood by training and education providers. In the last two years there has been an unprecedented level of collaboration informed by robust evidence and overseen by a refined governance structure (discussed [earlier](#)). This is backed up with a coherent South Yorkshire Skills Strategy and a new overarching Good Growth Plan.

It should also be noted that whilst businesses covet agile skills delivery, they want it to take place within the parameters of a relatively stable system. All the LSIP recommendations are designed to be sustained long-term; this includes the piloting of any new skills delivery which will be tested over periods of time sufficient to build markets and change behaviours.

There has been significant progress already made against many of the recommendations in our LSIP. These include the following.

- Improvements to navigation including the SY Skills Website and Knowledge and Skills Zones and teach-ins. These help to enhance visibility and understanding.
- The South Yorkshire Apprenticeship Hub and Careers Hub are up and running and the Institute of Technology has been launched (see the [good practice](#) section for a brief summary).
- A new [South Yorkshire Skills Strategy](#) has been launched with three transformative missions that dovetail LSIP aspirations quite neatly.
- A number of recent announcements for major new facilities including a flagship [digital tech hub](#) in Doncaster and a [new facility being set up](#) at the University of Sheffield Advanced Manufacturing Research Centre (AMRC) with Rolls-Royce to manufacture and test prototype modules for its small modular reactors (SMRs).

Emerging benefits and impacts

“We have worked tremendously well and collaboratively together which would have been unimaginable five years ago. This is a step change and the LSIF/LSIP has really brought us [providers and stakeholders] together.” (LSIP Board Member)

As noted above, since publishing the SY Trailblazer, much progress has been made. This includes improvements to skills brokerage and signposting, the creation of an Apprenticeship Hub, retention of over £1m in apprenticeship levy funds and an increased emphasis on celebrating success and sharing best practice. As well as tangible impacts and outcomes, the programme has resulted in some considerable strategic added value, the more subtle, but significant effects of our collaborations in South Yorkshire. These include:

- The ERB’s ability to articulate and communicate employer needs and address issues of concern. For example, the LSIP task and finish groups were conceived purely to tackle LSIP recommendations including some real blockages growth such as trainer, capacity and digital literacy constraints.
- The LSIF programme board which continues to meet has identified, allocated and delivered activities across the provider network that reflect the shared strategic objectives identified within the LSIP. The LSIF has provided financial incentives to

stimulate partner and stakeholder resources including equipment, people, and funding. For instance, investment in learning infrastructure will stimulate future investment, learning and collaborations.

- The ERB has enhanced organisational capacity, knowledge and expertise and improved information exchange and knowledge transfer. The chamber chief executives have good working relationships with local leaders, SYMCA, and provider principals and CEOs.
- The partnership structures have created the mechanisms and incentives to initiate stakeholder engagement in the design and delivery of sub-regional priorities and programmes.
- The excellent stakeholder engagement developed during the Trailblazer has been maintained and strengthened. The LSIP Project Steering Group will work closely with the SYSAB and LSIF Partnership Board. There is good cross fertilization of senior personnel across these boards to ensure ongoing alignment and economies of scale.
- The ERB and South Yorkshire Chambers are engaged in governance and oversight of the region's Further Education providers, Higher Education Institutions, and related projects such as the South Yorkshire Apprenticeship Hub.
- The LSIP lead is preparing and responding to the enhanced Ofsted inspection role.

The ERB partners have initiated a series of activities to deliver LSIP priorities. They have been designed under a common brand to elevate understanding and visibility of employers' skills across a range of platforms. They include four **task and finish groups** established to address LSIP recommendations. They cover digital literacy, trainer training, middle management, and capacity building. These time limited groups involve providers and partners and are designed to develop high impact responses. The first of each group has met, and a range of solutions will be developed over the summer period. The next set of task and finish groups will follow (see next section).

There is also a portfolio of activity led by three South Yorkshire Chambers. These comprise of:

- **Knowledge and Skills Zones:** The idea is to bring training providers to twelve events where employers are already attending in large numbers to help create a skills marketplace. The events involve tailored marketing collateral as well as mini masterclasses and good practice. The first event was the Skills Expo in Rotherham (March 2024) and there are another 11 events planned across the sub-region.
- **Knowledge and Skills Teach-Ins:** The intention is to equip business engagement staff with more knowledge about what is happening in the skills ecosystem. It will position them to better promote skills initiatives and institutions to the companies they are engaging with. There are eight bi-monthly sessions planned to June 2025. The first session held in April 2024 profiled the Apprenticeship Hub and Skills Street. Skills Street is an immersive and innovative careers training experience developed to inspire and inform children, young people, and adults. The next session planned for June 2024 will feature two local high-profile programmes: Skills Bank offering staff training support and ADVANCE Sheffield, an upskilling and reskilling programme.
- **Knowledge and Skills Podcasts:** To capture best practice from companies that are exemplars in HR, training, and workforce development and to promote it to other businesses. There are nine podcasts planned between now and January 2025. The first on manufacturing automation has recently been published on Spotify.
- **Knowledge and Skills Insights (Employer Panel):** Ensuring that the LSIP/Chambers are producing new insights to support providers and partners. High quality qualitative interviews have started with 150 or so anchor employers and high growth SMEs. A different sectoral focus will be selected each month, the first being Manufacturing Automation. A quarterly insight report will be produced and 'landed' with LSIF partners (the AMRC have offered to assist here). The first ten of these

interviews have been undertaken and early signs are we will produce some very useful insights on the changing position in manufacturing skills in South Yorkshire.

These measures will raise awareness of skills interventions with businesses and business engagement teams and offer insights for employers and providers on current best practice in skills development.

In parallel, the LSIF £3.9m has been allocated to four project areas to support LSIP recommendations. Many of the LSIF funded activities link well to LSIP priorities and have directly engaged or supported local employers. There is evidence the activities have improved co-ordination through collaborative activity. In terms of outcomes there has been investment in staff development at providers. Businesses have also understood and invested in workforce development, for instance, as a consequence of the digital training needs assessment and road mapping. South Yorkshire Skills (LSIF Project 2) has performed well against its contracted outputs related to employer engagement and support which have been exceeded. A description of each LSIF project follows.

Project 1: Digital skills was conceived in response to the South Yorkshire LSIP's emphasis on digital upskilling. It aimed to widen access to digital skills and raise standards through investment of digital facilities, joint curriculum planning and a sub-regional micro-badging system. Work is underway to assess the benefits, value, and potential of micro badging. Investment has been made in inter-connected immersive classrooms offering state of the art digital training to enhance digital skills and tailor support to new sector-specific training in line with the LSIP requirements. Immersive and VR space content design knowledge and delivery experience was also supported. Orders for new equipment have been placed, with installation planned for Summer 2024 when it is generally quieter on campus. Under this strand, an independent report was commissioned from Kada Research to assess the potential of mobile learning in the workplace. This project is informing curriculum planners and new collaborations and investment.

Project 2: South Yorkshire Skills aims to make the skills ecosystem simpler and more accessible to employers through improved use of technology, employer engagement and a centralised marketing. This built on earlier SDF investment in the [South Yorkshire Skills](#) website. Project 2 also brought together a regional team of business development specialists to engage 447 new businesses in training needs assessments (TNAs). The TNA explored general skills and digital skills needs and were followed up with local training solutions. The sales teams from different providers worked together and the training was 'really beneficial'. The TNAs will feed into the providers digital group to inform a joint curriculum response.

As noted earlier LSIF funds under this project also supported the South Yorkshire Skills Expo for a second year at the Manga conference centre in Rotherham, held on 22nd of March 2024. The theme of the day was collaboration and how partners can work together to unleash business productivity. It was perceived to be a success by attendees and there are plans to make this a showpiece skills event for the sub-region and build on the success of 2024. It provided an opportunity to promote flagship projects and programmes and celebrate achievements with providers, employers, and learners.

Project 3: More and better apprenticeships. This project aimed to increase awareness of apprenticeships by improving access, progression, and outcomes. This 'engagement' strand of activity builds on the South Yorkshire Apprenticeship Hub which was a recommendation from the Skills Accelerator Trailblazer LSIP and was launched using SYMCA funding. An additional Apprenticeship Hub co-ordinator was appointed to engage and support activities with employers and young people and to help to embed the hub. An Information Advice and Guidance (IAG) advisor based at Northern College worked with community groups to raise awareness of apprenticeships amongst underrepresented adult groups. The Advanced Manufacturing Research Centre and The Sheffield College were also supported to introduce new apprenticeship standards based on labour market needs as well as increasing capacity

on other in demand standards, leading to six new apprenticeship standards in areas linked to labour market demand including green construction and composites.

There was also a programme of activity to explore options to improve End Point Assessments (EPA), recognised as a key bottleneck locally, affecting achievement and progression. LSIF was used to build the short-term capacity of independent assessors and longer term preparing for an EPAO application. A consultancy project looked at how to break down barriers to accessing and completing apprenticeships. Providers at the LSIF board felt their concerns were considered, stating that “everyone was honest and constructive, and the feedback was exceptional”. They are planning how to address this issue as a partnership and raise their concerns with DfE. Assessment delays affect achievement rates and progression. This investment has created a slicker approach and reduced delays. Several collective solutions have been identified including sharing where EPAs take place. Whilst there was not as much demand for EPA training as anticipated, there was a useful workshop on EPAs and partners were able to integrate good practice.

Project 4: New Modern Methods of Construction (MMC). The importance of this foundation industry was recognised in the trailblazer report and LSIP 2023 report which also noted that it faced a number of challenges. These include new legislation, recruitment of skilled staff, retention, and an ageing workforce. This project, which has now received planning permission, will develop a modular construction training centre. It will be built in conjunction with employers and will be available to be used on a collaborative basis for teaching by South Yorkshire providers. The project will put in place a fully operational construction training site where learners will be shown how to build, assemble and install modular homes. It is being built in conjunction with a large national construction company, Laing O’Rourke, and will include the loading and unloading of construction materials. There is an extremely limited amount of provision of this kind nationally. The facility will be operational Summer 2024, with an initial trial cohort of 30 learners.

Monitoring and measuring

Measuring progress against the LSIP agenda is a complex and multi-layered task with multiple stakeholders and many potential audiences over varying timescales. South Yorkshire has developed a regional impact framework that adds value to the DfE national Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). The impact framework operates at both (a) activity level and (b) strategic programme or plan level.

A South Yorkshire monitoring and evaluation impact framework has been drafted with the following elements:

- Updating the programme logic model including reflections on year two output performance. This appears in [Annex Two](#).
- Part 1: Revisiting the general direction of travel and labour market and skills performance against the DfE dashboard and other measures.
- Part 2: Ensuring there is good understanding of employer needs in South Yorkshire.
- Part 3: Tracking outcome and impact measures for both LSIF and LSIP.
- Part 4: Continuing to assess the strength of co-ordination, and leadership between stakeholders ensuring provider sentiment is captured.

Barriers

The ERB is evolving as it shifts from research and analysis to delivery and insight. We have been playing a convener role with senior stakeholders, providers and employers, brokering meaningful discussions. We have been able to identify and prioritise skills needs, but encouraging actionable solutions is challenging when we are one step removed from being able to deliver effective and sustained change. Driving cultural and behavioural change takes time. It has taken longer than anticipated to get to this point. The ERB was initially constrained by operational capacity and the time taken to set up an impactful portfolio of

activities properly. For example considerable work was needed to ensure the task and finish groups had the right people engaged and were appropriately focused. We also wanted to give the opportunity for providers to comment on, refine and sign off our employer insights questionnaire. This was done at senior level in the provider network. In relation to capacity, appropriate measures have been taken to put in place a project plan and internal and external dedicated resource.

It will take some time for LSIF digital adoption benefits and apprenticeship outcomes to be realised. The LSIF savings, predicted through collaboration, are not as large as anticipated (under the South Yorkshire Skills project) and similarly these will take some time to come to fruition.

The activities listed earlier are now moving at pace with partners fully mobilised. Deliverables have been agreed with Barnsley and Rotherham and Sheffield Chambers of Commerce and SLAs are in place.

Good practice

“Collaborative working is a core feature of the way South Yorkshire Further Education Colleges operate across South Yorkshire.” South Yorkshire Collaborative Annual Accountability Statement

Although it is early on in the process, positive changes have been witnessed in the behaviours of LSIP partners, funders and other stakeholders in South Yorkshire. For example, partners have:

- Been able to articulate and communicate employer needs and address issues of concern through task and finish groups and commissioning bespoke research. This includes independent studies in the areas of NEETs, employer based virtual learning environments and technology development and end point assessments.
- Identified, allocated and delivered LSIP activities that reflect the shared strategic LSIP objectives.
- Used financial incentives to stimulate partner and stakeholder resources.
- Enhanced organisational capacity, knowledge and expertise and improved information exchange and knowledge transfer through the knowledge and skills portfolio.
- Created the mechanisms to initiate employer engagement in the design and delivery of sub-regional priorities and programmes for instance through the knowledge and skills employer foresight work.

As noted above, the LSIP team has sought to promote understanding of skills programmes and flagship projects through its knowledge and skills portfolio. This is ensuring that existing flagship collaboration measures like the Apprenticeship Hub, The Careers Hub and the Institute of Technology and other skills measures are clearly understood, publicised and used.

Specific examples of provider employer collaboration are illustrated in the box overleaf.

The SY Institute of Technology	Led by Doncaster College, SYCP has continued to work collaboratively with Sheffield Hallam University and leading employers on development of the South Yorkshire Institute of Technology (IoT). This includes reviewing the region's skills needs and the curriculum offer required. See description here .
Higher Technical Qualifications	The development of Higher Technical Qualifications in South Yorkshire is underpinned by a formal Partnership Agreement between the SYCP and Sheffield Hallam University. The Agreement recognises the skills and expertise of respective members of the partnership and that alignment of activity is critically important in shaping the region's curriculum offer and ensuring it supports the IoT. Two rounds of HTQ delivery funding have been secured under the terms of the Agreement.
Devolved Adult Education Budget (AEB)	Partners receive devolved AEB grant funding through the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (SYMCA). Partners have worked collaboratively and with SYMCA to help shape the way in which more innovative funding methodologies can support the curriculum offer across the region in response to emerging skills priorities, such as the need for low carbon skills and welding.
T levels .	As a Wave 1 adopter of T levels, Barnsley College used early adopter funding and support from the Education and Training Foundation to create a programme of support for other colleges across South Yorkshire as their programmes came on stream.
Apprenticeship Hub	LSIP Partners have supported SYMCA in launching South Yorkshire's first Apprenticeship Hub . Led by The Sheffield College, Colleges have secured funding and approval for the Hub that will address as a priority the significant drop in take up of apprenticeships by younger people, as well as taking steps to address barriers to successful completion.

What still needs to be achieved?

Changes and new actions

For the ERB the preparation for the delivery phase encompassing multiple workstreams is now complete and a full portfolio of activities will be delivered in the coming months. As per the [roadmap](#) this will ensure employer needs are clearly understood by all stakeholders and providers. The findings and activities are informing South Yorkshire's curriculum planning and learning provision.

Timeline and slippage

There has been some slippage through capacity constraints but there is now a full and exciting programme of activity in place for 2024/25. The indicative timeline for deliverables for this coming year appears in the box below.

Knowledge & skills casts (podcasts):	Knowledge and skills teach-Ins	Knowledge and skills zones	Knowledge & skills insights quarterly reports
Episode 1: Manuf. Automation Complete Episode 2: June 24 Episode 3: July 24 Episode 4: August 24 Episode 5: Sept. 24 Episode 6: Oct. 24 Episode 7: Nov 24 Episode 8: Dec 24 Episode 9: Jan 25	Session 1: SY Apprenticeship Hub + Skills Street (Complete) Session 2: Skills Bank + Advance Sheffield June 24 Session 3: August 24 Session 4: Oct. 24 Session 5: Dec. 24 Session 6: Feb 25 Session 7: April 25 Session 8: June 25	Doncaster: March 24 Sheffield: May 24 Sheffield: June/July 24 Barnsley & Rotherham: September 24 Doncaster: Oct. 24 Barnsley & Rotherham: Oct 24 (Approx) Sheffield: Nov 24 Doncaster: Nov. 24 Barnsley & Rotherham: Feb 25 Approx Sheffield: March 25 Doncaster : March 25 Barnsley & Rotherham: June 25 (Approx)	Manufacturing automation: Aug 24 Smart, sustainable & construction: Nov 24 Transport & engineering: Jan 25 Creative & digital futures: April 25 Technology in business, finance and prof. services (tba) Technology & people development in customer facing (hospitality, tourism and Sport) (tba)

Future priorities and actions

The ERB will ensure the following:

- Continued attendance at partners meetings and events and dialogue with partners including DfE, SYMCA, employer bodies and SY Providers Network.
- Completion of the above knowledge and skills portfolio.
- Completion of Sessions 2-4 of the first four task and finish groups. There are already some promising solutions emerging, including the promotion of middle leaders' good practice and support and practical measures addressing trainer shortages.

The ERB and chambers will also initiate a further round of high level task and finish groups to continue implementing recommendations. Future priorities will be agreed again by SYSAB (as the first four groups were). Current areas still to be addressed and being considered include:

- Working with hard to engage groups including better pathways for veterans and reservists, ex-offenders and older workers. Gender and digital skills is also an area we intend to explore.

- Work readiness activities including bootcamps and ‘investors in young people’ and addressing barriers to work including childcare.
- All age careers including primary careers.
- Peer support and industry placements.

Once agreed we will appoint a chair and appropriate participants from the provider, partner and employer communities.

The LSIF board has produced a sustainability report and action plan setting out priorities for the next year and the sub-groups that will continue. It was agreed that partners would continue to meet to ensure momentum and collaborative working are sustained. “From a collaborative perspective we are in a good position to come together to network and discuss priorities. This is about the future. We have to look past this project” (LSIF Programme Board Member).

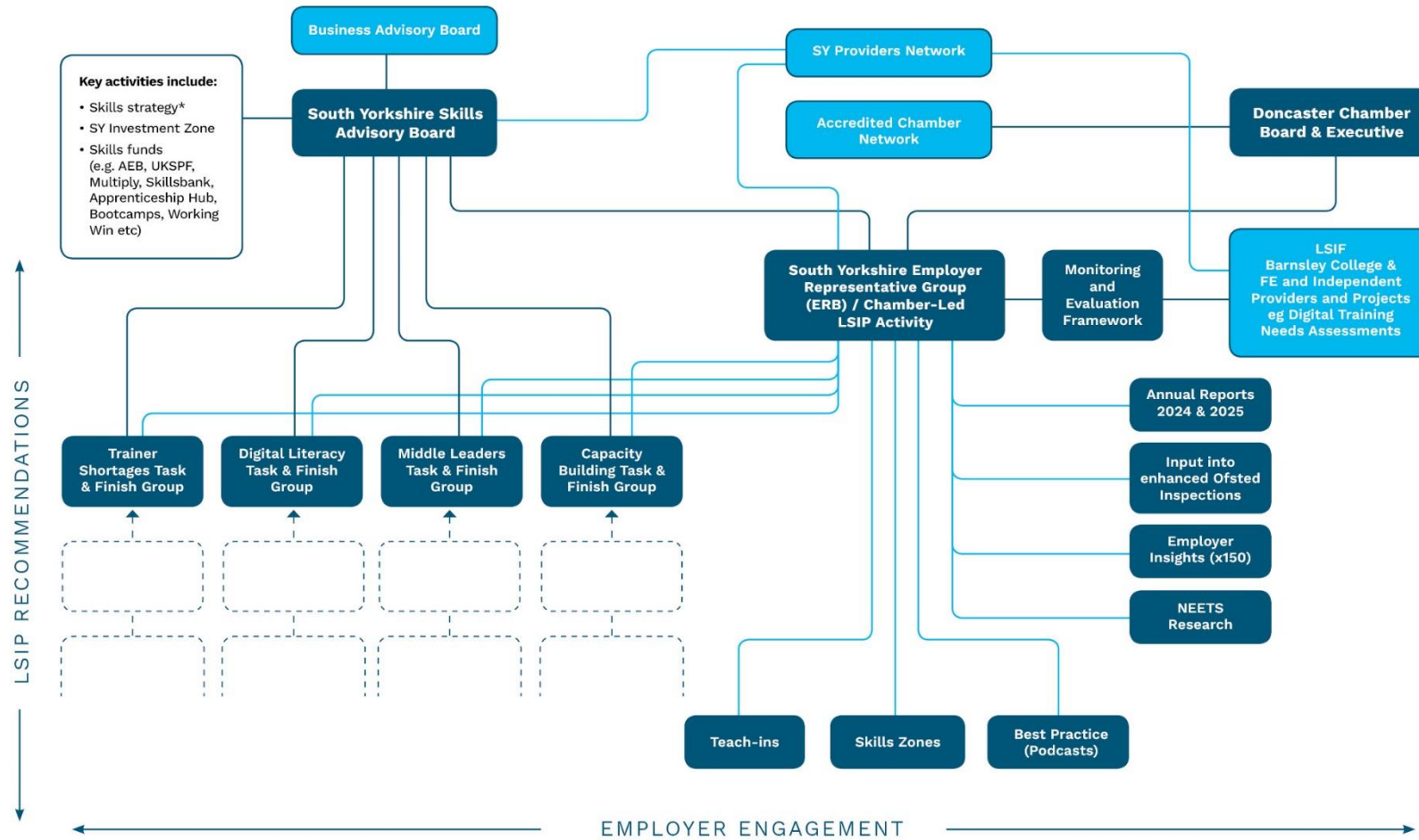
During year two the LSIF programme board has a number of ambitions, based on partner insights and the South Yorkshire Collaborative Annual Accountability Statement. These include the following strategic priorities:

- Continued investment in strategic programmes and flagship investments through SYSAB including the Apprenticeship Hub, Careers Hub and Institute of Technology. Further clarification on the position for skills investment through the UKSPF would help progress some LSIP priorities.
- A raised profile with central government including ideally a familiarisation visit and presence at the South Yorkshire Skills Expo 2025.
- Continued investment in new equipment and premises including the virtual learning environments and development of a modular construction training centre at Barnsley College with the first learner cohort complete.
- Building on LSIF progress to make most effective use of innovation and new technology to transform the curriculum and consider how networked technology could help SYCP with shared teaching and curriculum development in the light of staffing challenges.
- Enhanced alignment through better collective understanding of the SY skills offer.
- Refinement of provision to meet employer need in response to LSIP intelligence including the knowledge and skills insight quarterly reports. Within a year the following thematic sectoral reports will have been presented to providers: manufacturing automation; smart, sustainable and advanced construction; and advances in transport and engineering¹⁷.
- The SYCP Principals’ Group will agree by the end of July 2025:
 - The sustainability arrangements for future maintenance and development of the South Yorkshire Skills website and collaborative Employer Hub activity.
 - A collaborative LMI group to meet twice a year to consider data regarding new and trending skills and make curriculum recommendations to SC College Principals.

¹⁷ Covering aviation, electric vehicles, rail and smart cities/digital solutions

Annexe One: South Yorkshire Ecosystem

South Yorkshire LSIP Organogram/Ecosystem



*| **Mission 1:** Move those far from the labour market into work or ready for work; **Mission 2:** Raise attainment of core knowledge and skills; **Mission 3:** Increase the supply of a high-skilled workforce.

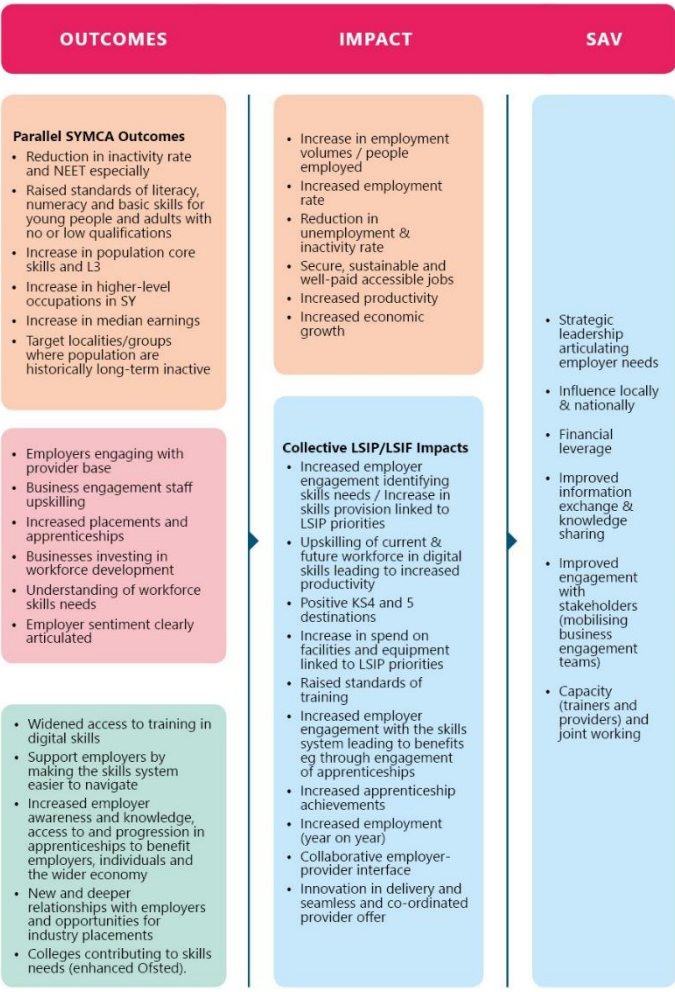
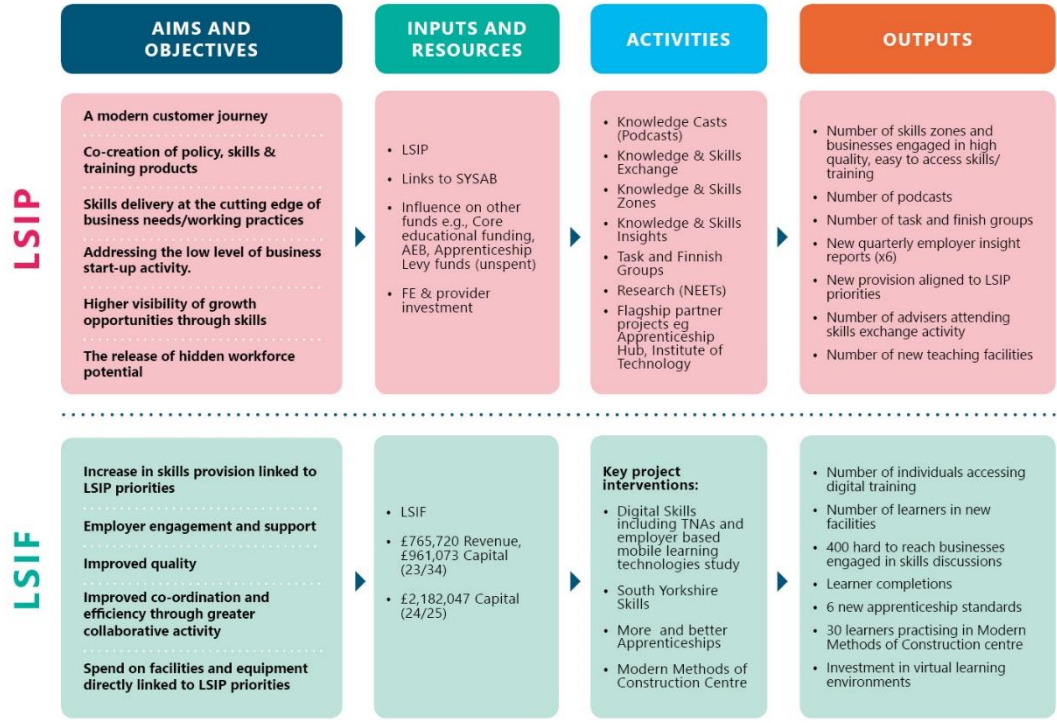
Annex Two: LSIP/LSIF Logic Model

Rationale/Context:
 The skills element of productivity and addressing historic imbalances through inclusive growth.

- **Labour Market:** SY's output per hour, per job filled is 77% of English average.
- **Business:** 40% of SY businesses would like to play a greater role in supporting careers provision in schools/colleges. 53% of SY employers say digital skills reliance 'will significantly increase' in the next 5 years.
- **Skills:** 37% of the SY population have NVQ4+ qualifications (compared to 43% nationally).
- **Jobs:** Share of skills-shortage job vacancies that are high skilled is 39% in SY (34% nationally).
- **SYMCA Missions:** reducing inactivity, raising attainment, and increasing the supply of a high-skilled workforce.

South Yorkshire Skills Visions:

- SYMCA: To ensure people have the education and training to live healthy and productive lives and to be resilient to future change.
- LSIP: For SY to be the place where England's skills system is reshaped to become more agile and meet modern business expectations.
- LSIF: The LSIF will enable education providers in SY to respond collectively to the priorities in the LSIP.





Accelerating digital transformation

