

South Yorkshire Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) Progress Report June 2025

Contents

Who is this publication for?	1
South Yorkshire LSIP background	1
Purpose of the report	1
Development of the report	1
Employer/provider interest	1
Aims and objectives	3
Challenges	3
Geographic coverage	3
Actions	3
Strategic and economic context update	4interviews
Governance	4
National skills needs	4
Manufacturing Related Capabilities	4
The Green Economy	5
Construction and Housebuilding	5
Digital and technology	5
Health and social care	5
South Yorkshire Investment Zone	6
Doncaster Airport	6
What has been achieved so far?	7
Value added by LSIP	7
Emerging benefits and impacts	8
Monitoring and measuring	11
Barriers	12
Good practice	12
What still needs to be achieved?	14
Changes and new actions	14
Timeline and slippage	14
Future priorities and actions	14
Annex One: Priorities and actions (Roadmap)	16

Who is this publication for?

South Yorkshire LSIP background

Doncaster Chamber is 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, the two Sheffield universities, independent training providers and employers.

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 local area'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. 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 South Yorkshire. £3.9m 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. The next round of LSIP development is due to commence in Autumn 2025.

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 summary 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 local area. 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.
- 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 local labour market. Under enhanced Ofsted guidelines, FE providers are required to show that they are contributing to meeting skills needs and engaging

effectively with employers¹. LSIPs give employers the opportunity to express their skills needs and to support providers to address the needs of the wider, local economy². We are continually engaging with employers and providers through several 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: Report Guidance and Template (dated 2025) and is intended to review progress against the local skills improvement plan published in August 2023. This report was produced in Spring 2025.

¹ [Ofsted \(2024\) Further education and skills inspection handbook](#)

² [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. Its unemployment rate (3.0%) is lower than the English average of 4.0.%. Economic inactivity (24.5%) is higher than England (21.1%)³. These factors are compounded by low pay, inactivity, and ill-health. For instance, workers earn a weekly wage of £671, £61 lower than the English average salary⁴.

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](#). There is a packed timetable of activity until the Autumn (see [here](#)). Those interested in the LSIP documents detail, the plan is available [here](#) as well as a technical annex and supporting evidence base.

³ See [Annual Population Survey](#), ONS, 2025

⁴ See [Annual Survey of hours and earnings – workplace analysis](#), ONS, 2025

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

Strategic and economic context update

Governance

There is a strong provider base in South Yorkshire with oversight of skills provision and planning within the local area via the SYMCA led South Yorkshire Skills Advisory Board (SYSAB) 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 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. Its membership is currently being reviewed in line with new Mayoral and Government priorities.

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 local area 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. The South Yorkshire Mayor was re-elected in May 2024 until at least 2028. There have been no significant changes to the employer or provider base.

The Government consider SYMCA to be a Mayoral Strategic Authority and therefore in place (subject to meeting readiness conditions) to secure the full powers and benefits that the Government will set out in the English Devolution Bill. The full suite of opportunities will be made clear over the course of the Summer - but will build upon those agreed in the Level 4 Devolution Deal. It is expected that SYMCA will be secure an Integrated Settlement for the financial year 2026/27.

The South Yorkshire LSIP ecosystem is set out in an accompanying Technical Annex (Annex One). It shows the key partnerships and skills activities in the local area.

National Skills Needs

There is good alignment with the Skills England growth sectors especially digital technologies and the green economy and those aligned with Government missions including health and social care and housebuilding and construction. SY's manufacturing and innovation strengths create significant opportunities in defence, clean energy, advanced manufacturing and life sciences.

Manufacturing Related Capabilities

The local area has exceptional 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 local area is host to many world-leading manufacturing and engineering companies and a leader in aerospace manufacturing, medical equipment and products and diverse defence

applications. Advanced Manufacturing is a strong sector with some 59,000 jobs in this area⁶. 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 centres, as well as a cluster of Sheffield Hallam University research activities.

The Green Economy

Our skills in this area include clean power and there are some exciting developments in nationally important sub-sectors including hydrogen, small modular nuclear reactors, aviation fuels and energy systems. For instance, the Energy Institute at the University of Sheffield is looking at the circular economy, conventional power, electrical energy storage, nuclear, wind, infrastructure and the built environment, and sustainable liquid fuels. Their wind power research centre is aligned with Siemens-Gamesa. It is the only industrially led design facility for wind generators in the UK. There is some £50m being invested in decarbonised heat in Sheffield alone. Hydrogen presents major growth opportunities, led by ITM Power, the UK's largest electrolyzer manufacturer, a developing industrial base, and active innovation efforts. A [new facility being set up](#) at the University of Sheffield Advanced Manufacturing Research Centre (AMRC) with Rolls-Royce will manufacture and test prototype modules for its small modular reactors (SMRs). Holtec, the world's largest exporter of capital nuclear components, has chosen South Yorkshire as the site for a new factory where it plans to build small modular reactors (SMRs) to serve markets in the UK, Europe, and the Middle East.

Construction and Housebuilding

With 31,000 people currently employed in construction⁷, the importance of this sector was noted in the LSIP. South Yorkshire has a good mix of construction and related professional and engineering services including Arnold Laver, ARUP, Henry Boot, Davey Markham, Keepmoat and SIG. As we move towards achieving the local area's net zero goal by 2040, skills in Modern Methods of Construction will become increasingly sought after. This will require training and upskilling⁸. Investments in this area are discussed later, and we have completed a review of employer construction skills priorities. Housing growth in Sheffield and South Yorkshire will release over £4 billion of investment for further regeneration and housing development, with the support of Homes England into South Yorkshire's Housing Catalyst site pipeline, including significant densification of Sheffield city centre.

Digital and Technology

The local area 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. We have some growing digital pioneers including technology companies such as Fluent and The Floop and digital tech heavyweights including Sumo, Twinkl, Automotive Analytics and WanDisco. We are working with employers and Sheffield Digital on an insights study of AI employer skills requirements as part of a deep dive and are due to report in the Autumn 2025.

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

⁶ [South Yorkshire Labour Market Information](#), SYMCA

⁷ [South Yorkshire Labour Market Information](#), SYMCA

⁸ [Sheffield City Region \(2021\) Local Skills Report](#)

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

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

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 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.

It is worth mentioning two major local 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 local area, given the presence of McLaren, Boeing, Rolls Royce and ITM Power. The zone offers prospective investors an excellent workforce, with outstanding universities, and FE and technical colleges¹⁴. The Zone required the continued alignment of the skills ecosystem to respond to emerging opportunities.

Doncaster Airport

Prior to its closure, Doncaster Sheffield Airport (DSA) provided approximately 2,700 jobs in the local area and contributed a net Gross Value Added (GVA) of £108m. City of Doncaster Council 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. The proposed South Yorkshire Airport City (SYAC) proposal by examining the potential for diverse high-value applications that capitalise on local strengths in advanced engineering and manufacturing. A proposed sustainable aviation hub has a £30m pledge made by Keir Starmer in a recent visit supporting the re-opening of DSA building on other announcements including Hybrid Air Vehicles creating some 1200 new jobs. There is also potential for a Centre of Excellence for Maintenance, Repair, and Overhaul (MRO) in aviation and defence and more widely an industrial power, propulsion, and production cluster beside the airport. In the next stage of feasibility work SYMCA is looking at the economic potential, market demand and detailed site options for the Gateway East site. A review of South Yorkshire's Aviation skills explores new opportunities in and around DSA (July 2025) and it identifies the types and scale of jobs anticipated. [Rotherham College](#) has recently integrated advanced flight simulators into its curriculum to enhance the learner experience and provide valuable aviation knowledge and real-life scenarios to deepen student understanding of flight principles.

There have been some significant new investments and initiatives in the local area. These include some major employer investments including [one of the largest machining halls in the UK](#) at Forgemasters. This has resulted in an apprenticeship recruitment drive. Other growth areas include health and well-being. Sheffield Children's NHS Found Trust is building National Centre for Child Health Technology (NCCHT) at the Sheffield Olympic Legacy Park. The NCCHT will be a world-class

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

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

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](#)

facility dedicated to creating a healthier future for children and young people through innovation, technology and outstanding care.

These investments will attract income and investment, safeguarding and increasing the number of secure, highly paid jobs and stimulating supply chain development innovation. 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 place¹⁷.

What has been achieved so far?

Value added by LSIP

The South Yorkshire LSIP provides an ambitious shared blueprint for aligning skills provision with employer needs. It was developed in close collaboration with ERB partners. The LSIP was the starting point to transform the relationship between providers and employers. The ERB's 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 three 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 an overarching Good Growth Plan.

In each of the South Yorkshire Chambers, local FE colleges are Patrons, and many independent training providers are also Chamber members. This enables them to engage directly with SMEs and anchor businesses through the Chambers' day-to-day activities including networking and participation in wider policy work which adds real value to the LSIP. This close relationship helps ensure that providers have real-time insight into the skills needs of local employers. It also supports more responsive curriculum development, strengthens employer-provider partnerships, and fosters collaboration on regional priorities such as green skills, digital transformation, and workforce inclusion.

"Doncaster College is proud to continue its patronage of the Doncaster Chamber. These networks and connections are immensely valuable to us as we strive to engage local employers in our curriculum design and delivery. Our close engagement with a key representative body is an essential asset in ensuring our college offer continues to keep pace with local and regional skills needs into the future." (John Rees, Chief Executive Officer, DN Colleges Group)

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 which have been driving the outcomes and changes required:

- Improvements to navigation including the SY Skills Website and Knowledge and Skills Zones and Knowledge and Skills Exchanges. These help to enhance visibility and understanding.
- A new Apprenticeship Hub was launched and announced by South Yorkshire's Mayor, Oliver Coppard. The hub aims to increase the number and quality of apprenticeship starts in the region and has been overseen in part by Karen Mosley, Social Impact and Inclusion Director at HLM Architects. Karen, who served as President of The Sheffield Chamber of Commerce from 2022 to 2024 with a focus on skills and social mobility, continues to co-chair the South Yorkshire Skills Advisory Board and chairs the South Yorkshire Institute of Technology. Her leadership in this project has ensured strong collaboration between employers, training providers, and local authorities, driving more inclusive access to high-quality apprenticeships

¹⁷ See [Plan for Good Growth](#) SYMCA 2024 p10

across South Yorkshire. The South Yorkshire Apprenticeship Hub and Careers Hub are now operational, alongside the launch of the Institute of Technology. (see the [good practice](#) section for a summary).

- A [South Yorkshire Skills Strategy](#) has been launched with three transformative missions that dovetail LSIP aspirations neatly.
- Providers galvanising to participate in, discuss and action our Knowledge and Skills portfolio.
- High profile visits including the PM and new CEO of Skills England.
- Knowledge and Skills Insight Reports covering key sectors including construction, manufacturing, lifestyle, leisure and culture, and financial and professional services have been circulated across the LSIP network, with aviation planned for a future phase. These reports help inform strategic decision making and align provision with employer demand..

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)

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 is able to clearly articulate and communicate employer needs and address issues of concern. For example, the LSIP Knowledge and Skills portfolio includes a programme of activity to research, reflect on, and share employer insights with college and curriculum leads.
- The LSIF Programme Board, which continues to meet regularly, has identified, allocated, and delivered activities across the provider network that align with the shared strategic objectives set out in the LSIP. The LSIF has provided financial incentives to stimulate partner and stakeholder contributions, including investment in equipment, staffing, and funding. For instance, investment in learning infrastructure is expected to drive future investment, innovation, and collaboration.
- Chamber Chief Executives have strong working relationships with local leaders, SYMCA, and the principals and CEOs of local providers.
- The partnership structures in place have created effective mechanisms and incentives to encourage stakeholder engagement in the design and delivery of local priorities and programmes.
- The high levels of stakeholder engagement developed during the LSIP programme have been maintained and strengthened. There is strong cross-fertilisation of senior personnel across these boards, helping to ensure ongoing alignment and achieve economies of scale.
- The ERB and South Yorkshire Chambers continue to actively engaged in the governance and oversight of local Further Education providers, Higher Education Institutions, and related initiatives such as the South Yorkshire Apprenticeship Hub. This direct involvement is helping to shape provision, including T Levels, apprenticeships, and Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQs).
- The LSIP lead is actively preparing for 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 Knowledge and Skills brand to elevate understanding and visibility of employers' skills across a range of platforms.

The below table shows a portfolio of activity led by three South Yorkshire Chambers:

Knowledge & skills casts (podcasts):	Knowledge and Skills Knowledge and Skills Exchanges	Knowledge and Skills zones	Knowledge & skills insights quarterly reports
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Episode 1: Manuf. Automation May 24 - Episode 2: Advances in Transport & Logistics Aug 24 - Episode 3: Digital & Creative Nov 24 - Episode 4: Business & Prof. Services Dec 24 - Episode 5: Leisure, Tourism & Hospitality Jan 25 - Episode 6: Equality Diversity and Inclusion Feb 25 - Episode 7: Education Mar 25 - Episode 8: LSIP in Summary March 25 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Session 1: SY Apprenticeship Hub + Skills Street (Apr 24) - Session 2: Skills Bank + Advance Sheffield (Jun 24) - Session 3: SY IOT + Sheffield Hallam University (Sep 24) - Session 4: The Careers and Enterprise Company + Sheffield University Business Management School (Oct. 24) - Session 5: Bootcamps and Sector Routeways (Dec 24) - Session 6: Made Smarter + Doncaster Council Asylum Seekers/EDI/Minorities Provision (Feb 25) - Session 7: Sheffield College +AMRC (Mar 25) - Session 8: SY Innovation Programme + Sheffield Business School Centre (Apr 25) - Session 9: South Yorkshire Skills Seminar Jun 25 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Doncaster: March 24 - Sheffield: May 24 - Sheffield: June/July 24 - Barnsley & Rotherham: September 24 - Doncaster: Oct. 24 - Barnsley & Rotherham: Oct 24 - Doncaster: Jan 25 - Barnsley & Rotherham: Feb 25 - Barnsley & Rotherham: Mar 25 - Sheffield: Mar 25 - Doncaster: Mar 25 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Manufacturing and automation: Sept 24 - Smart, sustainable & construction: Dec 24 - Lifestyle, Leisure and Culture: May 25 - Aviation: May 25 - Finance and prof. services: Launched Jun 25

- **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 and raise the profile of skills and qualifications. 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 another 9 events were delivered across the local area.
- **Knowledge and Skills Exchanges:** The intention was to equip business engagement staff with more knowledge about what is happening in the skills ecosystem. It positions them to better promote skills initiatives and institutions to the companies they are engaging with. There have been eight sessions undertaken with a final session planned for June 2025. A list of teach-in subjects appears [here](#).
- **Knowledge and Skills casts:** Designed to showcase best practices from leading companies in HR, training, qualifications, and workforce development, these podcasts aim to share valuable insights with other businesses. Nine episodes featuring high-profile leaders from the local area have been produced and published on . The series is hosted by Nikki Jones, Director of the AMRC Training Centre and former Director at the University of Sheffield, whose combined experience bridges the gap between academia and industry, adding credibility and fostering strong connections to regional skills initiatives.
- **Knowledge and Skills Insights:** Ensuring that the LSIP/Chambers are producing new insights to support providers and partners. High quality qualitative interviews have been completed with 125 anchor employers and high growth SMEs face to face and many more through round tables. There are five of these insight reports in phase one and two in phase

two. Each report is 'landed' with LSIF partners (the AMRC landed the manufacturing report and Barnsley College landed the construction report). These have been well received and provided some very useful insights on the changing position in skills in South Yorkshire including HTQs and T-levels. Roundtables have also fed into the reports engaging a further 30+ employers/CEOs.

- **The Quarterly Economic Survey** offers a unique quarterly insight into employer sentiment each quarter. Over 1300 businesses have engaged in the last five reports. They include a regular assessment of skills and recruitment as well as business confidence. Each quarter has a key topic of interest. The last five have looked at AI, Towns and City centres, Access to Finance, Business Crime and Planning.

These measures raise awareness of skills interventions and training including technical qualifications with businesses and business engagement teams and offer insights for employers and providers on current best practice in skills development. In parallel, £3.9m was 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 and residents. There is evidence the activities have improved co-ordination through collaborative activity across the partnerships and the governance and working parties will continue past the end of the project funding envelope. The ERB has helped inform provision and understanding of the provider offer. In terms of outcomes, the collaboration has exceeded the initial expectations, and it is expected that once the final data is collected all outcomes will have been met. This has been achieved by not only investing in capital but also providing funding to train the FE workforce to capitalise on the investments for example in building digital curriculum for employers or training account managers to engage with businesses. The project has also run two local conferences with a third to follow in June 2025 in conjunction with SYMCA to further build employer relationships.

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 local micro-badging system. 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 including a Digital Learning Hub at Northern College to ensure excluded groups have access to high quality digital resources and support¹⁸. They have also piloted robotics and VR courses. Learners on T-level health courses at Doncaster College study in classrooms designed to replicate real clinical environments, featuring a hospital ward, waiting area, and laboratory. Barnsley College note that "new state-of-the-art immersive spaces can instantly transport students to extraordinary environments – from the heart of a bustling football stadium or a dynamic construction site to the depths of outer space or even inside the human body". RNN's aviation simulator mentioned earlier can mimic various flight conditions and scenarios meaning students can repeatedly practise manoeuvres and emergency procedures, build confidence and competences. This practical application cements their understanding of aeronautical principles and prepares them more thoroughly for future careers in aviation.

Doncaster Colleges Group (DNCG) immersive room is fully operational and being utilised for staff CPD, Digital Curriculum Presentations and cross campus teaching with their other main campus North Lindsey College. The AMRC developed new knowledge for internal teaching staff in Automation and Controls. This new specialism will be transformative for employers both in upskilling their existing workforce and multi-skilling new employees.

Work was also completed to assess the benefits, value, and potential of micro badging to support entry to employment and in-work skills acquisition. It was decided not to proceed with this project at this time. However, each partner has a micro-badging system in place and curriculum leads will look to revisit later in the year using a multi-supplier proposal rather than with one badge provider.

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 centralised marketing.

¹⁸ Lord Blunkett opened the Northern College (NC) digital hub, as part of a library modernisation programme in November 2024.

This built on earlier SDF investment in the [South Yorkshire Skills](#) website which is the 'interchange' for employers looking for skills solutions including T-levels and HTQs as part of their businesses approach to growth and development. Project 2 also brought together a local team of business development specialists to engage 447 new businesses in training needs assessments (TNAs). The TNA identified general and digital skills needs, which were then addressed through local training solutions developed by the partnership. Sales teams from various providers collaborated to design and participate in a training package focused on building 'solution-based selling' skills. This training was well received and the group noted that it had been 'really beneficial' in providing new skills to engage with employers across multiple platforms. This funding also provided two local skills conferences attended by over 200 regional employers.

Project 3: More and better apprenticeships. This project aimed to increase awareness of apprenticeships by improving access, progression, and outcomes through End Point Assessment (EPA). 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 in green construction, composites and nuclear sectors.

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. Several collective solutions were identified including sharing where EPAs take place. Whilst there was not as much demand for EPA training as anticipated, there were useful workshops on EPAs and partners were able to integrate good practice.

This is bolstered by the influence of Karen Mosley, Social Impact and Inclusion Director at HLM Architects, whose leadership and ongoing regional roles have helped strengthen collaboration and widen access to high-quality apprenticeships.

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 several challenges. These include new legislation, recruitment of skilled staff, retention, and an ageing workforce. This project involved the development of a modular construction training centre and is particularly timely given the Government's priority on housebuilding and economic growth. Learners are shown how to build, assemble and install modular homes. Developed in partnership with Laing O'Rourke and T3 Training and Development it includes facilities for the loading and unloading of construction materials. There is a limited amount of provision of this kind nationally. The new training facility will develop digital and technical skills among their 4,500 directly employed workforce, increasing its ability to deploy a manufacturing-led approach to construction and deliver certainty for their clients.

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 local area 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 an accompanying Technical Annex (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 has evolved from research and analysis to delivery and insight. They have been playing a convener role with senior stakeholders, providers and employers, brokering meaningful discussions. The ERB have been able to identify and prioritise skills needs, but encouraging actionable solutions was initially challenging when we are one step removed from being able to deliver effective and sustained change. The ERB's most successful approach to this has been to work in an open and collaborative way with providers to reflect on our findings and identify solutions. This has been more effective than the task and finish groups convened last year. The ERB deliberately pivoted towards reflecting and informing good practice and curriculum development with roundtable events and open actions-oriented discussions. These have typically been written up as a Provider Response to the Knowledge and Skills insights report (available on our website).

One challenge has been securing sufficient interviews for roundtables and we have had to meet regularly to generate new referrals. This challenge was addressed through additional meetings and a collective response, recognising the need for more interviews. The ERB found that while it was easy to generate referrals, converting these into successful interviews was much more difficult. Going forward, the ERB will require partners to deliver successfully completed referrals.

It will take some time for LSIF digital adoption benefits and apprenticeship outcomes to be realised. The activities listed earlier have moved at some considerable pace over the last six months with partners fully mobilised and engaged. Deliverables were agreed with Barnsley and Rotherham and Sheffield Chambers of Commerce and SLAs are in place and Kada Research was commissioned as research partner.

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

Positive changes have been witnessed in the behaviours of LSIP partners, funders and other stakeholders in South Yorkshire. For example, partners have:

- Identified, allocated and delivered LSIP activities that reflect the shared strategic LSIP objectives. We have articulated and communicated employer needs and address issues of concern through the Knowledge and Skills insights.
- 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 local area priorities, qualifications and programmes for instance through the Knowledge and Skills employer insights.

As noted, 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 including HTQs and T-levels are clearly understood, publicised and used.

Examples of provider employer collaboration are illustrated in the following table.

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 SY Institute of Technology (SYIoT). SYIoT provides high-quality training and qualifications in engineering and manufacturing, digital, construction, healthcare sciences, science, and media. See description here . Siemens delivered a practical workshop at the AMRC using new technology. SYIoT provides a pathway to HTQs in Health and Engineering (see here), addressing critical skills gaps in the region by delivering higher-level technical education. The LSIP has promoted this provision through advisors at its third Knowledge and Skills Exchanges.
--------------------------------	--

Higher Technical Qualifications	The development of Higher Technical Qualifications in South Yorkshire is underpinned by a formal Partnership Agreement between the SY College Principles 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 local area's curriculum offer and ensuring it supports the IoT. Two rounds of HTQ delivery funding have been secured under the terms of the Agreement. Collaborative work includes promotion (Skills Expo which the ERB attended), curriculum development through innovation and new technology, and networked technologies to tackle skills shortages and share specialisms across the provider network. A bi-annual LMI group is proposed to inform curriculum recommendations, and a pilot is proposed for essential digital skills in NHS and wider health systems workforce in partnership with the ICB.
Adult Skills Fund (ASF)	Partners receive devolved ASF 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 local area in response to emerging skills priorities, such as the need for low carbon skills and welding. Full and part-time courses include; construction, green skills, manufacturing, healthcare, retail, logistics and transport and many other options.
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. Its T Level students have won a range of awards including the 2024 Engenuity Skills Awards T Level Student of the Year award. Other providers including The Sheffield College have been offering them since September 2023.
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. See latest news here .
Immersive Classrooms	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 learning places learners in simulated environments making use of advanced technology and innovative teaching methods. This allows for a fuller learning experience and provides a safe environment and cost-effective way to develop new skills efficiently. Immersive and VR space content design knowledge and delivery experience was also supported.
Landing Knowledge and Skills Insights	South Yorkshire Providers have taken the lead in 'landing' Knowledge and Skills insight reports with curriculum providers. For example, the director of the AMRC training centre convened a South Yorkshire Manufacturing Providers' Task Force made up of local colleges, the Master Cutler, the AMRC Training Centre and Sheffield Hallam University. The group met once in March (virtually) and once in May 2025 at the AMRC training Centre to discuss the above report findings and inform future provision including HTQs and T-levels. An addendum paper summarises the key issues identified and their response to employers. The key issues discussed were high performance leadership, flexible training, promoting and understanding the provider offer and well-being in the workplace.

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 an acceleration of activity over the past year, supported by a comprehensive programme of initiatives. The indicative timeline for deliverables in the coming months includes

- An Aviation report webinar (July 2025)
- The roll out and landing of three insight reports with providers (Lifestyle, Leisure and Culture; Aviation; and Finance and Professional Services (July to September 2025) and follow-up Provider Response.
- The updating of the SY Skills Board (Autumn 2025)
- Knowledge and Skills Exchange (September 2025)
- Knowledge and Skills insight reports on Artificial Intelligence (August 2025) and Veterans (September 2025)

Future Priorities and Actions

The former LSIF board have agreed that partners will continue to meet to ensure momentum and collaborative working are sustained. This will now be known as the South Yorkshire Skills & Employer Collaboration Board.

The board has used LSIF investment including:

- Continued investment in strategic programmes and flagship investments through SYSAB including the Apprenticeship Hub, Careers Hub and Institute of Technology.
- A South Yorkshire Skills Expo 2025 with SYMCA at the ASSEAL New York Stadium in Rotherham. It will include networking and masterclasses aimed at businesses covering AI, workforce planning, the promotion of training opportunities and the future of advanced manufacturing.
- The bedding in of virtual learning environments and modular construction training centre at Barnsley College with several learner cohorts completed.
- Enhanced alignment through better collective understanding of the SY skills offer.
- Refinement of provision to meet employer need in response to LSIF intelligence including the skills insight reports (construction and advanced manufacturing to date).
- Continued promotion of the Knowledge and Skills portfolio.

The ERB will ensure the following:

- Continued attendance at partners meetings and events and dialogue with partners including DfE, SYMCA, employer bodies and rebranded South Yorkshire Skills & Employer Collaboration Board (formerly the LSIF board).
- Completion and dissemination of the above Knowledge and Skills portfolio including of employer insight reports. This typically involves 2-3 meetings with employers and providers and a published provider response which sits alongside the reports (see [here](#)).
- Work with SYMCA and partners on further ERB alignment with the [South Yorkshire Skills Strategy](#) Missions¹⁹. We will agree within the next four months how we will mobilise employer

¹⁹ 1 Moving those far from the labour market into work or ready for work. 2. Raising attainment of core knowledge and skills 3. Increasing the supply of a high-skilled workforce

skills requirements around the SY [Plan for Good Growth](#) including employer insights to inform the work of the growth areas: the SY Investment Zone, SY Airport City, our four town and city centres and the Sheffield Innovation Spine.

In the Autumn we will also explore with SYMCA and providers where the LSIP's/ERB's involvement in HTQ/T Levels would be most useful and respond accordingly. For example, increased local promotion via the ERB partners could help to meet (a) national ambitions for the scale-up of T-level industry placement provision and (b) local growth priorities cited earlier for instance around engineering.

The ERB and chambers are initiating two further insights reports:

- Looking at AI skills opportunities and challenges in South Yorkshire. The survey has been co-designed with digital leaders and business support bodies including Sheffield Digital and interviews have started.
- The experience of veterans in the workplace. The CEO of Skills England and Defence Minister have been informed of this work. The survey has been co-designed with veterans and is available on request. We intend to inform local and national policy with this work.

At the time of writing there is no current LSIF funding available, and other sources of funding will need to be used to support future activity.

Annex One: 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 progressed actions.	Doncaster Chamber (Oversight) SY Chamber CEOs (Group chairs) Other partners e.g. providers, SYMCA, employers and SYSAB representatives (in attendance)	Final tactical ideas / outline business cases submitted to SYMCA	Working groups convened Preferred solutions developed for each and then refined and submitted to SYMCA	Key actions progressed by SYMCA e.g. enhanced promoting of learning and skills provider offers through SYMCA skills website	Delivered
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)	Micro Badging and immersive classrooms complete March 2024. Over the next 6 months the collaborative work can start to roll out.	Collective procurement of immersive and implementation plan led by the curriculum group.	Barnsley College oversight (monthly South Yorkshire LSIF Partnership Board meetings)	Micro Badging pilot has completed. Will be kept under review for FY 25/26. All immersive spaces installed and now operational.
LSIF Project 2: South Yorkshire Skills	Employer advice hub for employers SY Skills Expo held at the MAGNA Conference Centre	Barnsley College (Lead)	447 TNAs started October 2023 - complete March 2024 Expos held Rotherham in March 2023 and March 2024 Future of Website being considered.	Website up and running Provider led website Partner led conference	Barnsley College oversight (monthly South Yorkshire LSIF Partnership Board meetings)	447 TNA's delivered and actioned as a group. Steering Group and Curriculum group informed on outcomes for further curriculum development leading to new AI provision.

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. 6 new apprenticeship standards (green construction & composites. EPA enhancements considered & 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. On-site this summer (2024)	Barnsley College oversight (monthly SY LSIF Partnership Board meetings)	Site delivered and is now operational.
Knowledge and Skills insights phase one	125 interviews complete across five sectors	3 SY Chambers and partners provided company contacts ERB to land reports with providers	Organised May 2024-March 2025 (Final report to be launched June 2025)	1-2-1 in-depth interviews with HR leads in key sectors (5 sectors targeted)	Led by Doncaster Chamber who commissioned Kada Research to produce 5 employer insights	On track to deliver
Knowledge and Skills Zones	Target 10	Doncaster Chamber (Oversight) SY Chambers (Delivery)	March 2024-March 2025	Events held across Barnsley and Rotherham, Doncaster and Sheffield. Listed here .	Led by Doncaster Chamber in partnership with Sheffield, and Barnsley and Rotherham Chambers	Delivered
Knowledge and Skills Exchanges	Target 9 teach-ins	Doncaster Chamber (Oversight) SY Chambers (Delivery)	Organised April 24-March 25	See list here .	8 Led by Doncaster Chamber in partnership with Sheffield, and Barnsley and Rotherham Chambers	On track to deliver (final one planned for June)
Knowledge and Skills Casts (Podcasts)	Target 9	Doncaster Chamber (Oversight) SY Chambers (Delivery)	May 2024-March 2025	All episodes complete and available here	9 podcasts led by Doncaster Chamber in partnership with Sheffield, and Barnsley and Rotherham Chambers	Delivered see timeline
Chamber QES Surveys	Quarterly	Doncaster Chamber (Oversight) SY Chambers (Delivery)	Quarterly Q1-Q4 2025 and Q1 2025	Over 1300 responses covering AI, Towns and City centres, Access to	Doncaster Chamber in partnership with Sheffield, and Barnsley and	

				Finance, Business Crime and Planning.	Rotherham Chambers	Delivered. All surveys here .
--	--	--	--	--	-----------------------	--



Accelerating digital transformation

