



Skills and Employment Board Strategy 2017-2020

(A refresh of the 2013 – 2016 Strategy)

Final Draft V1



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FOREWARD

This Skills and Employment Board Strategy 2017-2020 sets out Swindon's ambitions for learning and skills development amongst the adult workforce.

It refreshes and builds on the Skills and Employment Board Strategy 2013-16 which has been successful in achieving:

- The successful implementation of the Raising Participation Age Strategy
- The introduction of the Swindon and Wiltshire Employability Charter and Pledge
- The launch of the Careers and Enterprise Company Enterprise Adviser Network
- The launch of the first Jobfest for young people aged 16 – 24 years, now in its 2nd year
- The implementation of the Apprenticeship Growth Strategy in partnership with employers
- The implementation of the Community Learning Trust, a partnership between Community Learning Providers
- Effective partnership working to shape the ESIF spending specifications
- The submission of a Local Growth Fund bid for Higher Education

The development of the refreshed Strategy is founded on the outcomes of a workshop in June 2016 when partners identified the priorities and actions necessary to take forward the work of the Board. The workshop was attended by a wide range of stakeholders and employers, and partnership work has been key to the success of our work to date. We look forward to further strengthening those relationships across Swindon and Wiltshire in the years ahead.

The significant changes to the learning landscape ushered in by the Apprenticeship Vision for 2020; the Post 16 Skills Plan; the new flexible Adult Education Budget; a White Paper setting out the government's plans to reform the higher education and research system; and the Post 16 Area Review, provide us with new and exciting opportunities to shape an efficient and effective skills system to meet Swindon's needs. Forecasts indicate that thousands of new jobs will be created in Swindon in the coming years with many demanding new skills and higher qualifications. Delivering strong economic growth, improved productivity and full employment in Swindon will, in part, be dependent on how we respond to this skills challenge. We want to see opportunity for all and to make sure that everyone can benefit from Swindon's success.

In recent research more than 1 in 3 local employers reported that skills gaps are a barrier to business growth, with employers citing a lack of technical, practical and job-specific skills as key to growth. In developing the Strategy our aim is to work closely with employers to ensure that they play a central role in the design and delivery of skills solutions to support economic growth. We have set out a number of ways in which to involve businesses more effectively in shaping the curriculum and providing opportunities for young people.



Mike Godfrey
Chair of the Swindon Skills and Employment Board

INTRODUCTION: RESPONDING TO NEW CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

VISION

“By 2030, Swindon will have all of the positive characteristics of a British city with one of the UK’s most successful economies; a low-carbon environment with compelling cultural, retail and leisure opportunities and excellent infrastructure. It will be a model of well managed housing growth which supports and improves new and existing communities.

Swindon will be physically transformed with existing heritage and landmarks complemented by new ones that people who live, work and visit here will recognise and admire. It will remain, at heart, a place of fairness and opportunity where people can aspire to and achieve prosperity, supported by strong civic and community leadership.”

In 2015 the Council launched its vision for Swindon and one of the Council’s Priorities to support this vision is to: **“Offer education opportunities that lead to the right skills and right jobs in the right places.”** This Pledge provides the framework for our Strategy which aims to identify and develop the ambitions and actions necessary to fulfil this Pledge in relation to Swindon’s adult workforce.

The Swindon Economic Strategy sets out five priorities as a context for action in the refresh of our Skills and Employment Strategy for 2017-2020. They are:

- Create an employment and skills system which is more responsive to the needs of business and which supports enterprise and employment growth.
- Work closely with employers to better understand their skills needs and focus available skills development investment more effectively.
- Equip young people with the skills & qualifications to successfully enter the labour market.
- Raise the higher level skills base of the workforce.
- Reduce worklessness and disadvantage.

ALIGNMENT WITH THE SWINDON AND WILTSHIRE STRATEGIC ECONOMIC PLAN

Our Strategy is also written to align with Swindon and Wiltshire LEP’s Strategic Economic Plan and Skills and Talent Strategy which both prioritise skills, acknowledging that the LEP area needs an appropriately skilled and competitive workforce to achieve its growth ambitions through business sustainability and growth.

An extract of the Strategic Economic Plan January 2016, page 13, is over page and details the SWLEP Strategic Objective 1 – Skills and Talent. Priority Actions under the priority ‘Skills System’ are all fully integrated into Swindon Skills and Employment Strategy under the Skills for Growth and the Skills for Inclusion Objectives.

Strategic Objective 1: Skills and talent - we need an appropriately skilled and competitive workforce to achieve our growth ambitions.



The SWLEP has identified four themes in its Skills Plan under which action will be progressed to achieve this objective. These are:

- **Improve the skills system.** Making the education and skills system more effective and responsive to the needs of employers and learners;
- **Skills for growth.** Helping businesses develop skilled workforces that will support long term sustained growth and improved productivity within the local economy;
- **Skills for inclusion.** Supporting the development of an inclusive economy, helping people to overcome barriers to employment, to enter and stay in the workforce; and
- **Maximise the impact of skills.** Delivering the wider priorities within the Strategic Economic Plan i.e. as an enabler to achieve other SEP priorities.

Priority actions

Skills system:

- Ensure there is a robust and responsive post 16 education and skills sector operating to meet the needs of learners and employers which is financially efficient, sustainable and operates from campuses which are fit for purpose;
- Improve progression routes to employment in the post 16 education sector, with strong employer involvement in the curriculum to ensure improved employability;
- Deliver options to enhance higher education participation across Swindon and Wiltshire meeting the demand for higher level and degree-level qualified employees locally; and
- Ensure that the learning and skills offer reflects the needs of the area, including the priority sectors, providing effective Science Technology Engineering and Maths (STEM) skills.

Skills for growth:

- Develop a skilled and competitive workforce meeting the needs of employers;
- Develop higher level skills provision through smarter engagement between the higher and further education sectors and business;
- Achieve a higher proportion of individuals employed in higher skilled and higher value-added roles (Level 4 and above) in priority sectors; and
- Embed apprenticeships as an established route to employment and maximise the opportunities to grow higher and degree apprenticeships.

Skills for inclusion:

- Improve educational attainment, exceeding the national average, at age 16 (including English and Maths) and at age 19;
- Realise the potential of residents with barriers to employment, including young people and older workers and develop innovative approaches to providing support; and
- Ensure impartial and independent professional careers advice and guidance is operating across schools and colleges.

Enabler of other priorities:

- Ensure military service leavers and existing employees have clear pathways to new skills and flexible learning.

MANAGEMENT AND DELIVERY OF THE SWINDON STRATEGY

The Strategy will be managed by the Employment and Skills Board. The Board is an employer-led group which includes: local business representatives, members of the Local Enterprise Partnership, employer organisations, Voluntary Sector and Public Sector commissioners. The chair of the LEP Skills and Talent Sub-group is a member of this Board and clear linkages with the LEP are therefore in place.

The Board Sub Groups are responsible for the delivery of activities to achieve the priorities. Each Sub Group will develop an Action Plan with outcomes to be reported to the Board on a regular basis. The Sub Groups have been streamlined since the original strategy to provide a more efficient structure as follows:

Skills for Growth

Responsibility: Skills for Growth has responsibility for skills for the future and present workforce, including growth of apprenticeships and the development of employability skills for young people in schools and colleges through Careers and Enterprise initiatives.

This Group is aligned to:

Swindon Economic Strategy 2013-2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A place of opportunity for young people ▪ A higher skilled, higher earning population ▪ Right skills for right jobs
SBC Priority 2: Offer education opportunities that lead to the right skills and right jobs in the right places.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Pledge 18: Increase the number of businesses employing young people as an apprentice from 15% to 20%.
Swindon and Wiltshire LEP Strategic Economic Plan, January 2016: Strategic Objective One	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Skills and Talent – we need an appropriately skilled and competitive workforce to achieve our growth ambitions (The Skills System and Skills for Growth)

Higher Education

Responsibility: Higher Education has responsibility for developing the Higher Education offer to meet business higher skills needs.

This Group is aligned to

Swindon Economic Strategy 2013-2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Innovative HE provision
SBC Priority 2: Offer education opportunities that lead to the right skills and right jobs in the right places.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Pledge 19: Secure a range of options to access higher education in Swindon
Swindon and Wiltshire LEP Strategic Economic Plan, January 2016: Strategic Objective One	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Skills and Talent – we need an appropriately skilled and competitive workforce to achieve our growth ambitions (The Skills System)

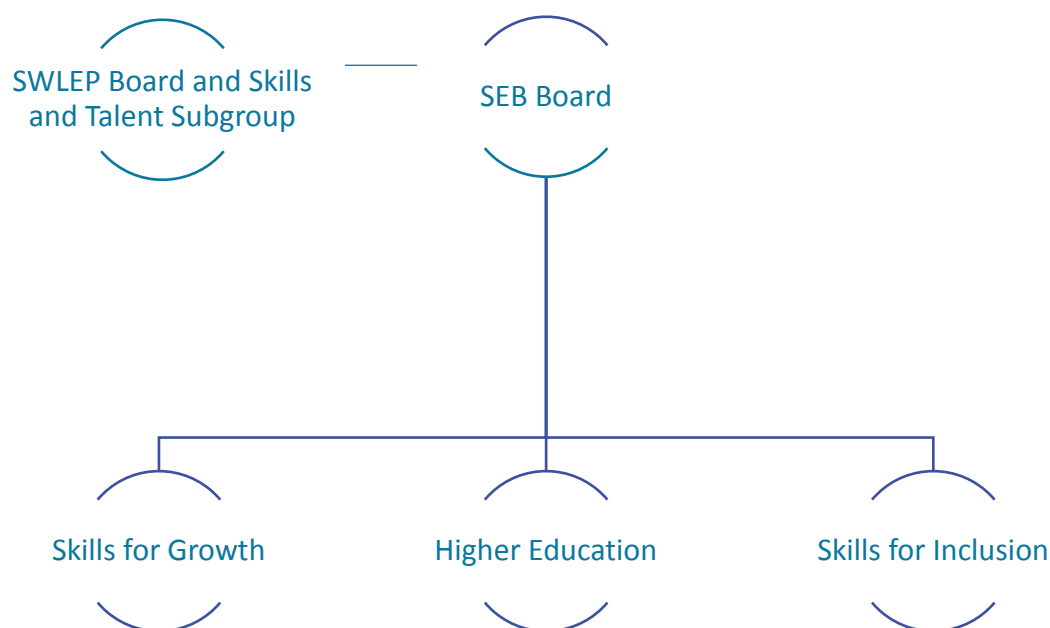
Skills for Inclusion

Responsibility: Skills for Inclusion has responsibility for reducing, worklessness and future exclusion by improving the participation of young people and adults in learning, and securing progression to sustainable employment.

This Group is aligned to

Swindon Economic Strategy 2013-2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A place of opportunity for young people ▪ Right skills for right jobs
SBC Priority 4: Help people to help themselves whilst always protecting the most vulnerable children and adults.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contribute to the SBC Transition Programme that aims to improve outcomes for young people and adults with an Education, Health and Care Plan.
Swindon and Wiltshire LEP Strategic Economic Plan, January 2016: Strategic Objective One	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills and Talent – we need an appropriately skilled and competitive workforce to achieve our growth ambitions (The Skills System and Skills for Inclusion)

THE SKILLS AND EMPLOYMENT BOARD STRUCTURE



The successful implementation of the Strategy will require the active collaboration of all partners. Reflecting this, the principles of collaboration, partnerships and employer engagement have been at the heart of the Plan development process.

The Skills and Employment Board will have overall responsibility to set a strategy and monitor delivery. Individual sub-groups are expected to develop their own action plans with outcomes and performance measures which will be reported to the board on a regular basis.

European Social Fund (ESF) projects, part of the European Structural and Investment Funding (ESIF), scoped and informed by the Swindon and Wiltshire LEP are all commissioned by three main ESF co-financing organisations:

- Department for Work and Pensions
- Skills Funding Agency
- Big Lottery

These projects will be coordinated and integrated into the work of the Skills and Employment Board. Our role will to review performance reports, understand issues and challenges and where possible facilitate and enable. The skills related programmes are as follows:

ESIF and Higher Futures – Skills and employment projects continuum – October 2016

Building Bridges	Employability support	Skills coaching for younger people	Older workers	Raising aspirations STEM careers	Workforce skills brokerage	Higher Futures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Big Lottery funding of Community First-led partnership • £4m project (£2m ESF) • Commenced summer 2016 – for 24 months • 1800 + participants • People most disadvantaged in workplace, who have most difficulty sustaining employment • Tailored and integrated interventions, into-employment support, sponsored employment, volunteering, access to skills courses, work experience and CEIAG 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DWP tender • Commences late 2016 • £3m ESF • 36 months • 1842 participants • Tackle worklessness - moving the max. no. of unemployed & inactive people into sustained employment • Linked to Work Programme but community-based 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SFA contract to Learn Direct began May 2016 • £1m ESF • 18 months duration • 500 learner starts • Providing skills to tackle the effects of disengagement and under-achievement • To address local skills shortages. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SFA contract award offer imminent • £0.95m ESF • 18 months duration • Enable older workers to identify and unlock potential and increase vocational skills • Reduce unemployment amongst older people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SFA contract award offer imminent • £1.24m ESF • To increase participation rates in Higher Education and in Apprenticeships. • CEIAG for NEET / at risk of NEET • Focus on studying and entry into STEM careers • Inspire and inform young people to progress in their education and employment goals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SFA contract award offer imminent • £4m ESF • 18 months duration • Businesses to obtain demand-led skills packages from the open market of training providers using the skills broker service. • Key sector SMEs workforces • Giving lower waged workers opportunity to upskill • L&M skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not ESIF Funded - £1.4m "City Deal" • Delivers L4 and HND / Degree • Brokers skills delivery with university and college providers • Focus on military leavers • Flexible, modular approach • Accreditation of prior learning (APL) • Partnership delivery – local authorities, Army, HE and business
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-accredited • Employability support • Multi-agency • Basic Skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic skills • Up to QCFL2 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic skills / • Up to QCFL2 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic skills • Up to QCFL2 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • QCFL 2+ • Apprenticeships • Traineeships • CEIAG, experience & placements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intermediate and higher skills • QCF Levels 2 and 3+ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level 4+ • HND/ Degree, ACL

SKILLS FOR GROWTH

Skills for Growth include Swindon's ambitions to:

- Grow our **apprenticeship start volumes and the number of employers** who are using apprentices as a route to improving the higher level skills of their workforce; and
- Exploit **Careers and Enterprise** initiatives used by all Swindon's secondary schools to inform their ambitious and measurable careers education plan that raise young people's aspirations, provides opportunities to engage with employers and the world of work and have measurable outputs.

Our 'Skills for Growth' goals and outputs are designed to address **SWLEP** skills challenges. The following is an extract from the SWLEP Strategic Economic Plan January 2016, Objective One, Skills for Growth:

Skills for growth:

- Develop a skilled and competitive workforce meeting the needs of employers;
- Develop higher level skills provision through smarter engagement between the higher and further education sectors and business;
- Achieve a higher proportion of individuals employed in higher skilled and higher value-added roles (Level 4 and above) in priority sectors; and
- Embed apprenticeships as an established route to employment and maximise the opportunities to grow higher and degree apprenticeships.

In particular our work will impact positively on SWLEP priorities:

Education attainment 16-19 (increase to 85.4% 19 year olds with a Level 2, from 83.3%); and the percentage of our residents aged 16 to 64 years who are able to respond to employer demand for Level 4 qualifications (increase to at least national 37.1% from 28.8%).

In addition we will contribute to the Skills for Inclusion challenge of careers advice in schools, and the Skills System by improving employer engagement in schools.

APPRENTICESHIPS

THE CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR APPRENTICESHIP GROWTH

Apprenticeships are changing, and in its Apprenticeship Vision for 2020¹ and the national Post 16 Skills Plan², the government sets out its ambitious plans for three million more apprenticeships by 2020 and the creation of a simplified Post 16 education and technical training offer. But the challenge is not just to secure an increase in the volume of apprenticeships but to improve their *quality* as well so that they are seen as a prestigious path to successful careers, in all sectors of the economy and at all levels.

To bring about change the government has introduced a number of reforms. In April 2017 funding will be changed and the introduction of the apprenticeship levy will require some of the largest employers to invest in apprentices; this is likely to significantly increase the demand from employers wanting to engage with the apprenticeship programme.

At the same time, reforms mean that apprenticeships are becoming truly employer-led, with the new apprenticeship standards being designed by employers to meet the needs of employers in that sector. Once an apprentice completes an apprenticeship based on a new standard, the objective is that they will be a fully competent and productive employee in that job role.

To deliver the higher skills that the economy needs, from September 2016, Higher and Degree apprenticeships will be advertised on UCAS along with university applications to widen access to the professions. These apprenticeships are designed by employers, universities and professional bodies and already exist for such diverse occupations as Solicitor, Software Developer, Accountant, Dental Technician and Space Engineer.

Against this backdrop, there are huge opportunities to grow provision in Swindon and meet the skills needs of our economy. Our aim is to be equally ambitious with a total of **10,250** starts by 2020 to contribute to the national target of 3million.

This will require an increase in starts year on year, but at present both young people and employers lack an awareness of the potential of apprenticeships to offer a valuable work-based professional and technical alternative to academic routes and higher education. Swindon has double the national average of large employers (with 200+ employees) and with the introduction of the levy it is crucial that providers are ready to respond to this new demand and are able and prepared to develop and deliver the ‘off-the-job’ training needed for the new employer-designed standards.

Alternative solutions are available for some employers who express an interest in filling vacancies with apprentices but are unsure how it will work for them. For these businesses one option is to use our local Apprenticeship Training Agencies, Longwater and Swindon Apprenticeship Solutions as a first step.

¹ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/482754/BIS-15-604-english-apprenticeships-our-2020-vision.pdf

² https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/536043/Post-16_Skills_Plan.pdf

Skills and qualification needs are rising, and there are significant opportunities to meet these needs through the increased provision of Higher, Advanced and Degree Apprenticeships in our growth sectors. Working with employers we aim to deliver new apprenticeship routes to develop the higher level skills to secure Swindon's continued growth and to complement our ambitions to secure more higher education provision in the town. We are fortunate to have Higher Futures, a SWLEP City Deal project that is working locally with businesses to broker and facilitate opportunities to develop and deliver Higher and Degree apprenticeships. This aspect of Apprenticeship growth will also be addressed by our Higher Education Strategy.

We see the need to grow both the *demand* for apprenticeships and the *supply* of potential candidates; therefore our priorities are to work with the three target groups: people, businesses and providers to simultaneously work to stimulate the supply of and demand for apprenticeships.

WHERE ARE WE NOW WITH APPRENTICESHIP GROWTH?

- Statistics from the National Apprenticeship Service show that there were 1560 starts in 2013-14, 1790 in 2014-15 and 1,920 in 2015/16. This represents 1 apprentice per 58 employees in the workforce in Swindon.
- Trend data shows that Swindon has performed better than nationally in relation to growth in the number of apprenticeship starts since 2005/06, with a reversal of the decline seen in recent years. Since 2013/14 starts have increased by 14% in 2014-15 and by 7% in 2015-16. In 2015-16 Swindon performed better than nationally with a 7% rise compared to 1%; we had the third largest increase in the Southwest and had the largest increase from 2015 to 2016 out of all local authorities nationally.
- Fewer young people in Swindon (4%) start an apprenticeship as a Key Stage 4 destination than in the South West (6%) and in England (5%).
- Higher apprenticeships starts have been lower than the national average since 2012/13. In 2014/15 Swindon had 3% higher apprentice starts compared to 4% in England.
- The percentage of SEN Young People who started an apprenticeship as a Key Stage 4 destination in 2013/14 is low (3%) when compared to the South West (7%) and England (5%)
- Apprenticeships are concentrated in Business, Administration and Law, Retail and Commercial Enterprise and Health, Public Services and Care. Most apprenticeships (59%) are Intermediate level apprenticeships, with 38% at Advanced level and 3% at Higher Level.
- Traineeship numbers in Swindon in 2015/16 remain low with 56 enrolments (double the number from the previous year).
- Swindon and Wiltshire Councils are agreeing a shared Apprenticeship Growth Strategy to minimise costs and maximise impact and opportunities.

OUR PRIORITIES FOR APPRENTICESHIP GROWTH

With Wiltshire Council the following priorities have been agreed. Areas for collaboration are identified and we will work together to maximize impact of all activities.

i) Increase the number of young people taking up apprenticeships and traineeships with 10,250 apprenticeship starts between 2015 and 2020.

We will:

- Improve awareness of apprenticeships as a route to higher level in schools and colleges. Target young people, parents and staff. Coordinate this with the Careers and Enterprise project and the national Apprenticeship campaigns to gain maximum benefit and impact.
- Coordinate for the benefit of schools and colleges local, regional and national initiatives, such as the ESF funded, Apprenticeship Ambassador Network, and the Careers Education Company funded work.

ii) Pledge 18, of SBC vision Priorities and Pledges, to increase the number of businesses employing young people in the borough as an apprentice to 20% (280 more employers)

The City and Guilds LEP report July 2016 identified the top 5 concerns/ questions employer's asked about apprenticeships; funding updates (including the levy), how to get started, recruitment, how to find training providers/ co-deliver and the work readiness of young people. We can help them to take on apprentices by doing the following:

We will:

- Use innovative approaches and work with partners, stakeholders and key intermediaries to promote to employers the benefits of using apprenticeships as an integrated part of their plans for a sustainable and higher skilled workforce.
- Exploit the use of social media and the national Skills Funding Agency Apprenticeship Campaign Get in Go Far.

iii) To support employers and providers work effectively together to develop and grow by 20% higher and degree apprenticeships to meet local skills needs in our priority sectors.

We will:

- Develop and implement a LEP wide Higher and Degree Apprenticeship growth plan that targets our key sectors (Higher Futures).
- Maximise the impact of Higher Futures to benefit employers. Higher Futures is an ambitious project which will work with local employers to develop a highly skilled workforce for Wiltshire and Swindon, maximising the economic potential of the area and addressing the growing skills gap through the provision of part-time, flexible, university level skills provision to military leavers and local employees.
- Where appropriate, we will support independent and new types of providers to play their part in developing new programmes, particularly in our nearest universities.

CAREERS AND ENTERPRISE

THE CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR CAREERS AND ENTERPRISE

The Careers and Enterprise Company (CEC) was set up because the nature of employment is changing. Jobs continue to be created but young people are struggling to get them, in part because those young people are not getting the inspiration and information they need. Research by the Gatsby Foundation has set out what is required to inspire and prepare young people for the world of work.

The evidence suggests that there is too little good information for young people and too little understanding of what works in careers and enterprise education. Employers and schools work in different worlds and it takes time for collaboration between the two to develop new worthwhile and sustainable programmes. Consequently, examples of excellent practice are patchy and remain local, spreading to other areas only slowly if at all, and the transition from education to employment is not always smooth.

In addition it is recognized that the current post 16 landscape is complex and too difficult to navigate. The national Skills Plan³, BIS July 16, proposes simplified education and technical training offer that will commence implementation in 2018.

The Careers and Enterprise Company and other government initiatives aims to address this challenge by:

- Recruiting senior and strategic business people from the public, private or third sector to become Enterprise Advisers, and using the local Enterprise Advisers and the national Network, to develop strategic and measurable careers, enterprise and employer engagement plans for schools and colleges.
- Encouraging employers to scale up their existing school engagement activities.
- Working with employers and providers to implement the new Technical Routes described in the national Skills Plan (BIS, July 2016), and in particular in the STEM sectors.
- Increasing opportunities for students to have exposure to the world of work. The more contact points there are between business and young people, the better their future employability options.

Raising Participation Age projects in Swindon have left the area well-placed to exploit the opportunities provided by the launch of the Careers and Enterprise Company. The free review of Careers Education offered to all schools and colleges by Swindon Borough Council, and commissioned through Adviza on behalf of the National Careers Service, helped both the cement good working relationships with schools and colleges and ensured those providers were well-aware of their strengths and priorities for development in terms of careers education and employer engagement.

³ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/536043/Post-16_Skills_Plan.pdf

WHERE ARE WE NOW WITH CAREERS AND ENTERPRISE?

- All Swindon Secondary Schools and Colleges were invited to benefit from being engaged in the network. Seventeen schools and colleges are currently matched with their Enterprise Adviser and working to develop Employer Engagement Strategies (November 2016). The Swindon and Wiltshire Enterprise Adviser Network is the most developed in the Southwest.
- Project funding has been agreed until at least end of August 2017, co-funded by Swindon Borough Council and the Careers & Enterprise Company.
- Education Business Partnership, funded through the Careers & Enterprise Company, has begun its project to help grow apprenticeships in the Swindon area, and support schools and employers in developing work experience opportunities. The forthcoming Careers & Enterprise Company mentoring scheme will similarly complement the work of the Adviser Network.
- New Careers and Enterprise projects coming on board during 2017 that will require coordination to build a cohesive and accessible offer to schools.
- The national Skills Plan (BIS, July 2016) has laid out its ambitions to create improved and simplified technical routes towards higher level skills. By 2018 this will commence implementation.

OUR PRIORITIES FOR CAREERS AND ENTERPRISE

i) To recruit and train a sustainable Enterprise Adviser network of 20 Enterprise Advisers.

We will:

- Engage with employers, employer groups and business engagement organisations to secure a sustainable Enterprise Adviser Network of 20 employers, and to raise awareness of opportunities for employers to work with schools and colleges.
- Provide leadership and training to support the effective delivery of the project through the Enterprise Advisers.
- Celebrate the good practice through Enterprise Adviser forums and ensure Enterprise Advisers are linked into the right staff and Governors in schools and colleges, and into local and national networks.

ii) To engage and support 20 schools and colleges to become active members of the Enterprise Adviser Network.

We will:

- Engage with senior leaders and delivery staff in 20 schools and colleges by building on existing relationships with schools, Governors, Head teachers, and the Careers Network.
- Work with the Swindon Careers Network to manage concerns, share best practice and develop the project.
- Promote and celebrate the project to Heads, staff and Governors in all schools and colleges.

- iii) **All 20 schools and colleges in the Enterprise Adviser Network will develop and implement an Employer Engagement Plan to deliver better employability skills, careers awareness and improve aspirations through contacts with employers and the world of work.**

We will:

- Support the needs assessment and development of Engagement Plans which will be realistic and have associated measureable impact.
- Facilitate monthly meetings between Enterprise Advisers and their matched school or college.
- Work in partnership with businesses, schools, colleges, relevant local and national projects and providers to create and promote career pathways in the priority sectors such as science, engineering, maths and technology and the high volume service industries such as construction, hospitality, retail and care.
 - Coordinate, maintain and develop resources and stakeholder opportunities to support schools, colleges and EAs: ‘what works’; Careers and Enterprise Company tools and resources; local opportunities / events / services; and resources and opportunities for specific young people, eg. SEND
- Work in partnership with Wiltshire Council to share best practice and progress.

Skills for Growth Performance Measures

Contributing to SBC Pledge 18 and 19, SWLEP SEP Objective One,

Objective	Outputs
Achieve SBC Pledge 18 by 2019/20	280 more employers with an apprentice start by 2019/20
Grow the number of apprentice starts	Achieve 10,250 apprenticeship starts between 2015 – 2020 (lifetime of current government)
To support employers and providers to work effectively together to develop and grow by 20% higher and degree apprenticeships to meet local skills needs in our priority sectors.	Higher and degree apprenticeship starts grow by 20% annually – 124 starts by 2019/20 (50 starts in 2014-15), contributing to an increase of Swindon’s residents with a L4 qualification (SWLEP SEP). (Reference Higher Futures)
A sustainable Enterprise Adviser network is recruited and supported to deliver the aims of the CEC project.	A network of 20 Enterprise Advisers is maintained and matched with schools and colleges.
All 20 schools and colleges in the Enterprise Adviser Network will develop and implement an measurable Employer Engagement Plan / Careers	All 20 schools have an Employer Engagement Plan that underpins their Careers Education Plan, with measurable outcomes against

Education Plan	educational achievements (qualifications at L2) by age 19 years and addresses CEC identified Cold Spots. Contributes to the SWLEP SEP Skills for Growth and Skills for Inclusion.
Fully integrate local and national initiatives to join up the dots and avoid duplication	Fully integrate ESF and other Skills for Growth projects and provision, eg. Higher Futures, ESF Raising Aspirations, ESF Skills Coaching, Skills for the Workforce

HIGHER EDUCATION

Swindon's Higher Education strategy has ambitions to:

Secure a range of options to access Higher Education in Swindon that is responsive to employer need, contributes to narrowing the participation gap, makes sustained improvements in participation rates for young people and offers an opportunity for upskilling whilst in employment.

Our 'Higher Education' goals and outputs are designed to address **SWLEP** skills challenges. The following is an extract from the SWLEP Strategic Economic Plan January 2016, Objective One, Skills System:

- Deliver options to enhance higher education participation across Swindon and Wiltshire meeting the demand for higher level and degree-level qualified employees locally; and
- Ensure that the learning and skills offer reflects the needs of the area, including the priority sectors, providing effective Science Technology Engineering and Maths (STEM) skills.

THE CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

In recent years, Higher Education has moved up the political agenda with recent government strategies making clear the linkages between higher education and improved productivity. The HM Treasury Productivity Plan 2015⁴ highlights the role of HE as local anchor institutions, in terms of raising aspirations and broadening the talent pool through both young and older learning, increasing the capacity to support local productivity and to make areas more competitive, improving and sharing prosperity.

Stemming from the Productivity Plan, the Minister for Universities and Science has set an ambition to **"Double the proportion of people in HE from disadvantaged backgrounds by 2020"**. HEFCE analysis suggests that this will mean an increase in participation of 2-3% per annum compared with the current trend of 1%.

In 2014 BIS published its strategy on access to HE⁵ and its unifying ideal is that everyone with the potential to benefit from higher education should have equal opportunity to do so. In order to make progress, the strategy aims to:

- Make significant and sustained improvements in the participation rates for the most disadvantaged groups and in the diversity of the student population.
- Narrow the gap in the participation rates in and across higher education between advantaged and disadvantaged groups.

⁴

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/443898/Productivity_Plan_web.pdf

⁵ The national strategy for access and student success in higher education, 2014

The cap on student numbers has been lifted and this will enable higher education to expand further.

This supportive strategic context will enable Swindon and the LEP to further develop its activity to secure Higher Education opportunities for local residents.

For many years, the Council has pursued a strong and consistent strategic drive towards Higher Education in Swindon, prioritising higher education development through all its relevant policies and strategies. Foremost amongst these is the Vision for Swindon 2015 which has a pledge to, “secure a range of options to access Higher Education in Swindon.”

Wider support for this drive towards Higher Education (HE) also comes from the Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership. Its Strategic Economic Plan has a strong thread running through it on the need for action to address the absence of a university presence in Swindon and Wiltshire.

With Swindon identified as a HEFCE⁶ ‘cold spot’, where fewer young people enter HE than would be expected given their prior attainment, Swindon Borough Council and its partners want to play their part in narrowing the participation gap and to make sustained improvements in participation rates for young people.

As well as the need to improve participation amongst young people there is a clear need to up-skill the current workforce and to raise the aspirations and achievement of the future workforce so that local people can benefit from the jobs being created. In order to meet these needs and deliver economic growth, we need to work with employers to drive forward a more responsive skills system including the provision of higher education.

There is significant latent potential to achieve higher level skills within our workforce and among those completing further education. The alignment of local strategy with central government ambitions, combined with the lifting of the cap on student numbers therefore offers real possibilities to realise Swindon’s ambitions.

WHERE ARE WE NOW WITH HIGHER EDUCATION?

- Swindon has had decades of very low participation in Higher Education (HE) with the 10th lowest participation rate in the country amongst young people.
- More than half of all wards in Swindon have some of the lowest participation rates in the country and this situation has persisted for years. Latest data shows that the wards with the lowest percentage of young HE participants were the same wards as a decade earlier. The proportions of young people going into Higher Education from Parks and Penhill wards (7.6% respectively) had the 5th and 6th lowest rate of participation in England. Only 9% of pupils on Free School Meals attend university; this is the second lowest rate in the country and well below the average of 23%.
- Yet projections suggest that to 2022, 64% of all jobs (including replacement demand) will require a Level 4 qualification or above, including related skills at a higher level.

⁶ HEFCE: The Higher Education Funding Council for England

- Higher Futures is a new skills development programme aimed at ensuring the workforce in Swindon and Wiltshire is able to gain higher level skills and qualifications (NVQ level 4, HND, Degree and above). It offers employers specialist impartial support and advice to identify their skills needs and gaps, and develop tailored training solution with Universities and Colleges.
- By 2025, Swindon is projected to have a population of over a quarter of a million and without any change, none of these residents have local or ready access to higher education which meets the needs of local employers.

PRIORITIES FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

The current priorities are to

- Increase the range of options for accessing HE in Swindon
- Improve HE participation in Swindon to national average or better
- Increase the percentage of young people (<25) moving from level 3 into HE.

Higher Education Performance Measures	
Objective	Outputs
Create greater learner demand by raising aspiration & achievement amongst Swindon residents (young & old)	<p>Increase the number of Swindon residents with a level 4 and above (university level) qualification from 24% to be in line with national average (31%).</p> <p>Increase the number of 18/19 year olds progressing to University from 27% to be in line with national average (37%).</p>
Increase the access to HE in Swindon	<p>Increase the HE offer in Swindon to exceed the current position of: Approx. 900 HE learners in Swindon (Swindon College 390; New College 515). + Oxford Brookes deliver BSc/MSc in Adult Nursing and FD in Operating Department Practice. October 2016 numbers are approx. 520 students.</p>
Engage with Swindon Employers to develop an attractive & sustainable curriculum that maximises the uptake of the improved HE offer in Swindon.	<p>Extend the current offer of subjects:</p> <p>Engineering/Construction, Education, Business /Management, Art/Design, Health and Social Care</p>
To support employers and providers work effectively together to develop and grow by 20% higher and degree apprenticeships to meet local skills needs in our priority sectors.	<p>Higher and degree apprenticeship starts grow by 20% annually – 124 starts by 2019/20 (50 starts in 2014-15). (Note: this objective and output is linked to the Higher Futures Plan)</p>

SKILLS FOR INCLUSION

Skills for Inclusion will work to improve the participation of:

- All young people who are NEET* or at risk of becoming NEET, aged 16-18 (academic years 12 and 13), and up to 25 years for Looked After Children/Care Leavers and those with an Education Health and Care Plan; and
- Adults who are looking to re-engage after a break in employment for whatever reason.

This group aims to enable access to effective progression routes that lead to employment and therefore reduce the chances of future exclusion for these groups.

*NEET: Not in education, employment or training.

Our 'Higher Education' goals and outputs are designed to address **SWLEP** skills challenges. The following is an extract from the SWLEP Strategic Economic Plan January 2016, Objective One, Skills for Inclusion:

Skills for inclusion:

- Improve educational attainment, exceeding the national average, at age 16 (including English and Maths) and at age 19;
- Realise the potential of residents with barriers to employment, including young people and older workers and develop innovative approaches to providing support; and
- Ensure impartial and independent professional careers advice and guidance is operating across schools and colleges.

Note: the third bullet above is addressed within the Skills for Growth objectives and outputs. It is relevant to the Swindon Skills for Inclusion because good careers advice and guidance underpins our ambitious adult education progression and destination targets.

YOUNG PEOPLE

THE CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

The Post 16 Skills Plan⁷ published in July 2016 provides for the transformation of post 16 learning and the government's ambition is that every young person, after an excellent grounding in the core academic subjects and a broad and balanced curriculum to age 16, is presented with two choices: the academic or the technical option. The academic option is already well regarded, but the

⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/post-16-skills-plan-and-independent-report-on-technical-education>

technical option must also be world-class. There should be appropriate bridging courses to make movement between the two options easily accessible.

To achieve this, the Skills Plan ushers in a radical overhaul of the post-16 vocational qualification system to replace 20,000 courses with “15 high-quality routes”. The first ‘pathfinder’ routes will be taught from September 2019 and will be two-year college based programmes suitable from the age of 16, as well as those aged 19+, with close alignment to the new apprenticeship standards.

All 15 routes will be rolled-out for teaching by September 2022 and four of the 15 routes will be “primarily delivered through apprenticeships.” A new, employer-led Institute for Apprenticeships will regulate quality across apprenticeships and its remit will be expanded to cover all technical education.

Quality work placements within each programme will be critical, and every 16–18 year-old student following a two-year, college-based technical education programme will be entitled to one.

In addition, the reform of school and college accountability measures will provide new data on how young people progress at school or college, and is intended to encourage providers to focus on achieving the best outcomes for all their students, irrespective of their starting points and will help all providers place an equal focus on destinations.

With Swindon having one of the highest proportions of young people in the country choosing technical options at 16, the reforms being introduced provide a real opportunity to support Swindon’s young people and adults in new ways to enable them to secure sustained skilled employment and meet the needs of our growing and rapidly changing economy.

WHERE ARE WE NOW WITH YOUNG PEOPLE?

- From 2013 to 2016 the September Guarantee rate for year 11 students in Swindon grew to be among the highest in the country. Numbers remaining in learning in March of the following year were strong and better than the national average over the same period but fell below national for the first time in 2016. Numbers remaining in learning into year 13 broadly matched the national picture from 2013 to 2015 but fell well below national in 2016. In March 2016 Swindon was ranked in the bottom quartile of authorities on this measure, largely as a consequence of larger numbers of students moving into employment without training in year 13, rather than continuing in learning.
- Falling trends in the proportion of 16 and 17 year olds who are recorded as NEET in Swindon match those found nationally. Slightly fewer 16 year olds are NEET compared to nationally, in Swindon, but slightly more 17 year olds.
- Until 2016, the proportion of both 16 and 17 year olds in Swindon, in unknown destinations, was consistently below the national average. In 2016 figures for both years were above the national average, with Business Support Team colleagues increasingly stretched to deliver a wide range of services within localities and not consistently prioritizing their “tracking” role.
- The majority of young people who are tracked but are not found to be in learning or NEET are in employment without training. In March 2016, in Swindon, the rates were 1.6% at 16,

compared to a national figure of 0.9%, and 5.8% at 17, with a national figure of 3.2%. This equates to approximately 40 16 year olds and more than 150 17 year olds in Swindon.

- Education Employment and Training (EET) rates for key vulnerable groups of 16 to 18 year olds are below those of their peers and of similar cohorts nationally. For Looked After Children/Care leavers and Young Mothers/Pregnant Teenagers (typical cohorts 110 in both cases) the gap from the national group is small and not likely to be statistically significant. For LDD learners (cohort typically close to 400) the official EET rate is 76% compared to the equivalent national figure of 81%.
- While the proportions of vulnerable groups in positive destinations are only a little below national averages, the attainment of some of these young people is a cause for concern.
- Attainment gaps at KS4 and KS5 for vulnerable groups are wider than the national average. At 19 the gap in attainment by Free School Meal status is the widest for three years and only very small proportions of these groups enter Higher Education.
- With neither of Swindon's FE Colleges having a positive 'value added' score for Level 3 vocational/technical courses, the on-going post-16 area review is a crucial opportunity to ensure that opportunities for vulnerable groups are prioritised.
- Recent research (Dec. 2015) in Swindon showed that employers across all sectors of the economy have entry level occupations. However, significant minorities struggle to recruit to those positions because of difficulties in finding personnel with the right attitude, motivation and work ethic. Skills most in demand for these recruits are less about specific qualifications but focus on attitudes and behaviours, team-working, customer care and oral communication skills.

PRIORITIES FOR DISADVANTAGED YOUNG PEOPLE

- i) Ensure all young people NEET or at risk of NEET have opportunities to progress to a positive and appropriate destination after the age of 16 and achieve at least level 2 by 19 years.**

We will:

- Put in place robust tracking arrangements to identify young people who are not engaged in education or training or who have left provision, reducing the numbers of 16 and 17 year olds in unknown destinations.
- Work with SBC teams in Children, Families and Community Health, and Adult Social Care to promote options and choices to secure effective referral and participation in relevant and fit for purpose education and training.
- Work in partnership with the voluntary sector, ESIF funded projects and other relevant provision that can support disadvantaged young people to re-engage and stay engaged.

- ii) Reduce the performance and employment gap between disadvantaged young people and their peers**

We will:

- Work with providers and employers to provide sector routes that lead to employment or further learning.
- Work with Providers and other stakeholders such as DWP to support the development of Traineeships, Supported Internships and Supported Employment opportunities.
- Work with the SBC Transitions Team to review, plan activities / actions that when implemented will contribute towards the improvement of participation and employment rates of these groups.

i) Develop a high quality and diverse curriculum offer which provides high quality destinations to meet the needs of vulnerable young people.

We will:

- Facilitate a joined up approach of education (A levels), training (technical) and employment services that can provide a joined up end to end service that meets the needs of young people who needs cannot be met by the core system alone.
- Work with providers to pilot innovative ways of delivering learning that meets the needs of all young people.
- Support partners to implement the Governments Post 16 Skills Plan (July 2016)

COMMUNITY AND ADULT LEARNING

THE CHALLENGES AND THE OPPORTUNITIES FOR ADULT LEARNING

Learning is an important vehicle for social mobility, and is beneficial both for individuals and for society as a whole. It is particularly important in the current context of rapid technological change, longer working lives and an ageing population. Numerous studies have demonstrated that learning as an adult (including non-accredited learning) brings many benefits including better health and wellbeing, greater social engagement, increased employability and greater capacity for parents to help their children to learn.

The Marmot Strategic Review of Health Inequalities in England concluded that reducing health inequalities requires action on six policy objectives, one of which makes explicit the links between employment and well-being:

- Give every child the best start in life
- Enable all children young people and adults to maximise their capabilities and have control over their lives
- Create fair employment and good work for all
- Ensure a healthy standard of living for all
- Create and develop healthy and sustainable places and communities
- Strengthen the role and impact of ill-health prevention

Employment projections show that skills needs are rising and those without the skills for employment will find it increasingly difficult to find work so there is a need to build on the work

already being undertaken, to continue with activities proposed in this plan and to help more people that are out of work to access employment opportunities.

A fundamental change to adult learning is the transfer of control of the Adult Education Budget (AEB) from 2017 to local government areas through devolution agreements. Transferring the AEB will enable local areas and colleges and other training organisations to reshape their local adult education provision. The principal purpose of the AEB is to engage adults and provide the skills and learning they need to equip them for work, an apprenticeship or further learning. It also enables more tailored programmes of learning to be made available, which do not need to include a qualification, to help those furthest from learning or the workplace. Consequently, colleges and other training organisations will have more flexibility to respond to the needs of their local area. This will enable the funding of programmes that really make a difference by including locally designed learning activity alongside qualifications, or instead of them.

In clarifying their skills priorities, local areas can influence the pattern and nature of provision for those learners that need support to engage and progress in learning to reach a full Level 2 or 3 and this will provide Swindon with the opportunity to tailor its adult and community learning to meet local needs.

The introduction of new adult (19+) learner outcome measures for further education from 2017, will put greater emphasis on destinations (into employment, apprenticeship or further learning) and progression within learning and earnings which will further support the authority in this work.

WHERE ARE WE NOW WITH ADULT LEARNING?

- The proportion of adults (18-65 year olds) with learning disabilities in paid employment, at 4.2% in 2014/15, is well below the national rate of 7.0%.
- The national Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2015 show that Swindon is a place of contrasts. Overall it is amongst some of the least deprived parts of England, however pockets of deprivation exist, and 8 of Swindon Local Super Output Areas (LSOAs) are in the most deprived 10% nationally, whilst others are in the most privileged 10%.
- 1% of the Swindon workforce are registered as Job Seekers (1,400 people) compared with 1.5% in England. 24% of claimants are aged between 18 – 24 years and 24% are 50+ years.
- Worklessness, i.e. those on a range of out of work benefits, is below average, but some wards have very high rates of worklessness. These include Penhill where 24% are on out of work benefits; Parks (19%); Walcot (15%) and Gorse Hill and Pinehurst (14%).
- Swindon has a lower proportion of adults who have low skills levels. There are only 68.9% of adults who have achieved a Level 2 or above qualification compared to 77.6% in the southwest and 73.6% in Great Britain.
- The 2011 Census found long term health problems or disability limited the day to day activities of 15.4% (32,302) of people in Swindon.

- In Swindon, there are an estimated 25,000 individuals with depression or common mental health problems.

PRIORITIES FOR ADULT LEARNING

i) Swindon Community Learning Partnership collaborates to produce a joined up accessible curriculum that meets the needs of our priority learners, resulting in adults achieving L2 and above to at least national average.

We will:

- Work in partnership, through the Skills and Employment Board structure, to continue to develop the established Swindon Community Learning Partnership (Trust), working with partners and stakeholders to identify new opportunities to engage and progress our priority learners.
- Create where possible a joined up curriculum that minimizes duplication, maximizes the use of public funding, capitalizes on each partners resources and expertise, and makes available a commercial offer for those that can afford to pay.
- Work in partnership to ensure all learners who have not yet achieved L2 or above are able to access ESOL, English, Maths and IT.

ii) Improve Adult Education Budget learners' destination outcomes to at least 60% progressing into learning, work or volunteering.

We will:

- Identify and target priority learners, including those 'known' to SBC, who would benefit from the community learning offer to widen participation amongst key groups.
- Support and train tutors and trainers with information and resources to improve the provision of information, advice and guidance of partner, stakeholder and ESIF funded project provision.
- Work with others to share volunteering information between ACL providers and agencies that coordinate and develop volunteering.
- Work with partners to increase take-up of opportunities in Higher Education, Traineeships and apprenticeship as routes to higher level skills.

iii) Work with providers and employers to develop employer led sector-based routes into learning and work with clear progression pathways relevant to the needs of business and the lives of our learners.

We will:

- Bring together employers and providers to create employer led sector groups that identify skills needs and contribute to shaping the curriculum.
- Build on existing resources and expertise of providers to create the sector pathways.
- Work with partners to grow access to Traineeships, Supported Internships and apprenticeships.

Skills for Inclusion Performance Measures	
Objective	Outputs
Ensure all young people NEET or at risk of NEET have opportunities to progress to a positive and appropriate destination after the age of 16.	Reduce NEETs and unknowns for each year group to below the national average, to achieve 3% for 16 year olds and 5% for 17 year olds by 2018. 95.4% in learning/ apprenticeship by 2018.
Increase the proportion of young people from vulnerable groups in learning, in particular Looked After Children/Care Leavers and holders of EHCPs	Improve EET destinations for 16 to 18 year old Looked After Children/Care Leavers from 63% to 70%. Increase the figure for LDD learners from 78% to 83%. (July 2018)
Improve Adult Education Budget learners' destination outcomes to at least 60% progressing into learning, work or volunteering.	Work with Skills and ESF project providers to develop an accessible and joined up AEB curriculum enabling 60% of AEB learners who are engaged to progress into a positive destination (44% in SBC in 2015-16), and % of working age population with L2 or above at least as good as national.
Work with providers and employers to develop employer led sector-based routes into learning and work with clear progression pathways relevant to the needs of business and the lives of our learners.	Develop post 16 engaging and relevant sector based routes with providers to increase the percentage of young people that achieve L2 or above by 19 years to at least national 85.5%, from 83.3%

5. PERFORMANCE MEASURES SUMMARY

Skills for Growth Performance Measures	
Objective	Outputs
Apprenticeship Growth SBC Pledge 18 and 19 SWLEP SEP Objective One (L2 by 19 years target and proportion of residents with a L4)	280 more employers with an apprentice start by 2019/20
	Achieve 10,250 apprenticeship starts between 2015–20
	Higher and degree apprenticeship starts grow by 20% annually – 124 starts by 2019/20 (50 starts in 2014-15) *Led by Higher Futures
	All secondary schools / colleges have Employer Engagement Plans that underpin their outcome focused Careers Education Plan (address CEC Cold Spots).
	Fully integrate ESF and other funded work, Eg Higher Futures, ESF Raising Aspirations, ESF Skills Coaching and other
Higher Education Performance Measures	
Objective	Outputs
Higher Education SBC Pledge 18 and 19 SWLEP SEP Objective One (Proportion of residents with a L4 target)	Increase the number of Swindon residents with a level 4 and above (university level) qualification from 24% to be in line with national average (31%). Increase the number of 18/19 year olds progressing to University from 27% to be in line with national average (37%).
	Increase the HE offer in Swindon to exceed the current position of; 900 HE learners in Swindon (Swindon College 390; New College 515). Oxford Brookes deliver BSc/MSc in Adult Nursing and FD in Operating Department Practice. October 2016 numbers are approx. 520 students.
	Extend the current offer of subjects by working with employers and providers: Engineering/Construction, Education, Business/Management, Art/Design, Health and Social Care
Skills for Inclusion Performance Measures	
Objective	Outputs
Inclusive solutions to realising the potential of young people and adults. SWLEP SEP Skills System, Skills for Growth and Skills for Inclusion	Reduce NEETs and unknowns for each year group to below the national average, to achieve 3% for 16 year olds and 5% for 17 year olds by 2018. 95.4% in learning/ apprenticeship by 2018.
	Improve EET destinations for 16 to 18 year old Looked After Children/Care Leavers from 63% to 70%. Increase the figure for LDD learners from 78% to 83%.
	Develop post 16 engaging and relevant sector based routes with providers to increase the percentage of young people that achieve L2 or above by 19 years to at least national 85.5%, from 83.3%
	Work with Skills and ESF project providers to develop an accessible and joined up AEB curriculum enabling 60% of AEB learners who are engaged to progress into a positive destination (44% in SBC in 2015-16).