

Kent County Council
Education and Young People's Services

Adult Learning, Skills and Employment Strategy
2015 -2018

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Introduction

In 2013 KCC launched its 14 – 24 Learning, Employment and Skills Strategy that laid out our ambitions for the young people of Kent. This *Adult Learning, Skills and Employment Strategy* builds on this work and focuses on the education, training and employment of adults in the County. The importance of this strategy has become more apparent in recent months with the release of a number of national reports on adult skills and employment which highlight the future direction for adult learners, economic growth and employment.

The adult skills agenda has always been a priority. In 2014 there was greater attention given to adult skills, by a variety of stakeholders including government, educators and employers. There is considerable concern from all quarters that our adult population is insufficiently skilled to deliver the long awaited economic growth that is expected as we recover from recession and meet the needs of the economy in a more competitive global market. There is recognition that as well as improving the education and skill levels of young people, there is also a need to do the same for adults in order to fill the skills gaps identified. There is concern that a failure to increase the skill levels of our adult population will lead to higher levels of unemployment and under-employment, both of which are expensive, wasteful and socially divisive.

It is, therefore timely that an ambitious and aspirational Adult Learning, Employment and Skills Strategy is delivered across Kent for 2015-18

'.....there is no more important issue facing our economy than getting the education and skills system right – it is crucial to cementing recent improvements in growth sustainably over the longer term. It's essential we build the right skills base if we are to support a rebalancing towards those high-value, high-skill activities that will underpin our role in the global marketplace'.

Confederation for British Industry 2014¹

In addition to the compelling case for skills for economic growth, adult learning and skills can make an important contribution to equality, social inclusion, community cohesion, health and wellbeing and thereby the strategy contributes to other ambitions of Kent County Council and its partners.

Adult Skills Datapack

This Strategy should be read in conjunction with the Kent Adult Skills Datapack that is published alongside the strategy. The Datapack follows a similar format to the existing District 14-24 Datapacks produced by the KCC Skills and Employability Service. The Adult Skills Datapack contains information about the current skill levels of the adult population in Kent, explains the current provision of skills training in the County and outlines the skill requirements of the local economy.

¹ Gateway to Growth: CBI/Pearson Education and Skills Survey 2014

Purpose of the Strategy

The purpose of this Strategy is to set out our ambitions for the skills and qualifications of the adult population of Kent that all local providers of education and skills can aspire to and achieve by working in partnership. The Strategy is supported by all the relevant stakeholders, as an over-arching strategy for Kent to improve provision and outcomes.

Kent County Council contributes to the Strategy through some of its services as well as providing a strategic overview and facilitating collaborative activity between education providers, training providers and employers.

Ambition and Vision

The overarching ambition for Kent providers is to maximise adult participation in training and learning in order to achieve economic growth, full employment, social inclusion, community cohesion, health and wellbeing.

The vision is for Kent to be a place where lifelong learning enables all of its citizens to enjoy life, take part in society and have the skills for sustainable and productive skilled employment.

Strategic Framework

The Strategy is built around the following objectives to:

- increase adult employment in Kent
- improve the education and the skill levels of the adult population of Kent
- provide pathways, such as apprenticeships and re-training opportunities, to enable people to take up employment in priority sectors
- increase participation in learning and employment amongst priority groups, in isolated communities, and deprived neighbourhoods; and including vulnerable adults such as those with disabilities.

These objectives respond to the national and local challenges, and the framework closely mirrors the four key themes in the 14-24 Learning, Employment and Skills Strategy which are:

- Participation and Youth Employment,
- Achievement and Attainment,
- Vocational Education and Apprenticeships and
- Support for Vulnerable Learners.²

² 14 -24 Education, Learning & Skills Strategy 2013-2016

Adult Learning and Skills - The Challenges We Face

Ten years ago Lord Leitch commenced his investigation into the skill levels of the adult population of the UK. The final report, published in 2006³, alerted government, politicians, educators and employers to the need to rapidly improve adult skill levels in order to retain our competitiveness in the global economy.

The review made the following proposals: investing in skills training to reduce the proportion of adults without the equivalent of level 2 qualifications (31% in 2005, 7million adults); shifting the balance of intermediate skills to Level 3, with an increase in apprenticeships to over 500,000; broadening the ways to achieve Level 4 other than via a university degree; and engaging employers more fully in skills training.

Nine years later and these messages have been repeated and updated in a number of reports that have been published in 2014, by, amongst others, the Confederation of British Industry⁴, the Federation of Small Businesses⁵, the UK Commission for Employment and Skills⁶, and the National Institute for Adult Continuing Education⁷. For the purposes of this Strategy, the most significant of this year's reports was produced by the Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion for the Local Government Association (LGA).⁸ This report repeats Lord Leitch's concerns, and illustrates clearly the potential loss of economic growth that will result from a failure to improve the skills of the adult population.

The LGA report 'Realising Talent' predicts that, by 2022, 9.2 million people with skill levels at level 2 and below will be chasing 3.5m low skilled jobs, a gap of 5.5 million people who will have a high risk of unemployment or under employment. This represents a huge level of spare capacity and human capital in the economy. This also needs to be considered alongside the low levels of productivity in the UK, compared to international competitors, which are also partly due to skills gaps and lack of training in work.

At the other end of the skill spectrum, it is predicted that there will be 14.8 million high skilled job roles, but only 11.9 million people sufficiently qualified to fill them - a gap of 2.9m people.

The report concludes that we need to increase the skill level of the working population from the current national average of level 2.3 (just above 5 GCSEs) to level 3 (A level and Technical Vocational and Higher Apprenticeship equivalent).

The CBI adds to this ambition, declaring that we need 'alternative escalators to high skills', combining work and high level skills training.⁹

³ 'Prosperity for all in the global economy – world class skills' Leitch Review of Skills, Final Report (December 2006)

⁴ 'Gateway to Growth', the CBI Education & Skills Survey (2014)

⁵ Small Business Index, Q2 2014. Federation of Small Businesses

⁶ 'Precarious Futures? Youth unemployment in an international Context'. UKCES. June 2014

⁷ NIACE Adult Participation in Learning Survey (2014)

⁸ 'Realising Talent: employment and Skills for the future', a report for the Local Government Association. Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion.(July 2014)

⁹ 'Gateway to Growth', the CBI Education & Skills Survey (2014)

A Skills Portrait of Kent

At all levels of skill the people of Kent do better compared to their contemporaries in many parts of the UK, having skill levels slightly above the national average. However, they do less well in comparison to Kent's neighbouring local authorities in the South East region. (See table 1)

Table 1. Adult Skill Levels ¹⁰

	Adults with no quals %	Adults at level 2 (Equivalent to 5 x GCSE A*-C) %	Adults at level 3 (Equivalent to 2 A Levels) %	Adults at Level and above. %
Kent	7.3	74.6	55.4	33.6
South East	6.5	76.5	59.3	38.3
GB	9.3	72.5	55.8	35.2

This picture is mirrored in the unemployment figures for 2014, with Kent unemployment being below the national average but above the South East average. The number of unemployment claimants aged 16-64 is 16,162 in Kent equivalent to 1.8% of the population, compared to 1.3% in the South East, and 2.2% nationally. ¹¹

This Strategy sets out an ambition for Kent to match and exceed its South East region neighbours at all skill levels so that Kent has one of the most educated and skilled workforces in the Country.

Employment and skills is a key driver of local economic growth: a *motivated, flexible and skilled workforce attracts employers and boosts productivity (LGA).*

A significant aspect of Kent's economy is the significant number of Small and Medium sized businesses. In Kent, 84% (61,000) businesses have fewer than ten employees and there are only 790 firms with more than 100 employees. ¹²The federation of Small Businesses recently highlighted that skill shortages act as a significant barrier to growth for small businesses. ¹³ It is important that providers pay due regard to the needs of small businesses and apply the necessary additional efforts to communicate with the small business sector. This will require introducing mechanisms, such as the development of 'Guilds' (already created for the catering industry in Kent) which bring together small and medium sized employers in a given sector.

Adult Skills for Economic Growth

Research indicates that there is a strong relationship between skills and productivity. Any shortfall in the qualifications needed for the future will, potentially, lead to a shortfall in productivity and economic growth. The LGA report calculates that, by 2022, between 16%

¹⁰ ONS Annual Survey (2013)

¹¹ Kent Unemployment Bulletin. Kent County Council. October 2014

¹² The State of the Kent Economy. Research & Evaluation, Business Intelligence. Kent County Council. June 2014

¹³ Federation for Small Business

and 25% of growth could be lost, amounting to £375 billion, if we do not address the skills gaps described.

Importantly for this strategy, both the Leitch Review (2006) and the LGA report (2014) point out that it will not be sufficient to rely on schools and colleges, through continuing to improve the skill levels of young people entering the labour market, to achieve the necessary improvement in skills. We must do something about the adult population as a whole.

Achieving a step change in qualification levels is not possible by relying on ever better qualified young people – adults already in the workforce will need to continue to attain higher qualifications [LGA]

This need is exacerbated as the average age of the workforce is increasing as the numbers of adults aged 50-64 remain in work. There has been an increase of over 2 million people in this age group since 2000 to 7.7 million people. The average age of the workforce has recently increased to over 40.

Kent will be more reliant on our adult workforce to deliver the economic growth we need. It will primarily be adults' skills and capabilities that will either deliver or constrain growth. [LGA]

A recent CBI report underlines the need for a more age inclusive skill system stating 'We need to ensure people of all ages can learn and aren't discouraged from improving their skills by the system'¹⁴

Adult Skills Provision - Responsive to Employers

As well as increasing the volume of skills training available to the adult workforce, it is important to teach the right skills in the right sectors, so the impact on productivity and employment is maximised.

Lord Leitch recommended that there should be a 'focus on economically valuable skills and demand led skills, responding to employer needs'. This view was echoed more recently by the Commission for Adult Vocational Teaching and Learning¹⁵ which determined that adult vocational training should have 'a clear line of sight to work' requiring 'a two-way street' with employers.

The requirement to link skills training with economic needs is perhaps best illustrated in the STEM sector, which is a subject of concern for the CBI: ¹⁶

Science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) skills underpin innovation and the UK's ability to compete successfully in high-value, high-growth sectors. Demand for these skills is rising strongly as economic recovery takes hold.

¹⁴ 'A Better off Britain: Improving lives by making growth work for everyone'. CBI. November 2014

¹⁵ 'It's About Work : Excellent adult vocational teaching and learning'. Commission on Adult Vocational Teaching and Learning (2013)

¹⁶ 'Gateway to Growth', the CBI Education & Skills Survey (2014)

This is already causing a rise in the proportion of businesses reporting current difficulties in recruiting technicians and experienced staff with STEM skills. And the shortage problems are expected to intensify in the coming years. There is an urgent need to improve the supply of STEM-skilled people if economic growth is not to be held back. [CBI, Gateway to Growth 2014]

The need for education and employers to work closer together is a common theme that runs through all of the reports listed - and also from Ofsted in its annual review of the FE sector.

*Training providers need to ensure that vocational provision is better matched to the needs of local businesses and communities*¹⁷

The LGA report calls for 'more local responsiveness ... a more agile and responsive skills and employment system'. This Strategy aims to respond to this need by identifying those sectors in Kent where skills training will facilitate economic growth and increased employment. This requires using labour market information to determine where local jobs will become available and to engage employers in the design of training. It also provides the opportunity to develop centres of excellence for particular sectors on a regional basis (such as NWK College's provision for the Maritime sector), potentially exploiting LEP funding.

The CBI has recently underlined this concern regarding the lack of relevant skills training, pointing out that 'we train five hairdressers for every vacancy in a salon, yet only two people for every five jobs in the automotive industry'. In the same report they conclude that:

*We must build a vocational education system that better adjusts to the changing needs of our economy and rewards provision that helps people find a job instead of simply rewarding institutions based on the number of people taking a course*¹⁸

In short, employer engagement, by necessity, is an integral part of our Strategy for Adult Learning, Skills and Employment.

Impact of Unemployment

Unemployment is costly to individuals and to wider society in a variety of ways. In 2014, 4,475 young Kent adults aged 18 to 24 were claiming Job Seekers Allowance. Although this represents a considerable fall from over 8,000 young adults five years ago, the cost to DWP in benefits alone still exceeds £12m per annum.

Added to this is the cost of lost tax revenue that would have resulted had these young adults been gainfully employed. The average annual taxation of an employee returning to work is £9800. If 18-24 year olds could pay only half that amount the 'fiscal disbenefit', the lost tax revenue, of 4,475 young adults equates to over £22million. Young adults aged 18-24 account for 25% of claimants and, of course, similar costs can be attributed to older unemployed adults, which means these sums can be quadrupled.

¹⁷ Further Education and Skills. Sector Report. 2012/13. OFSTED

¹⁸ A Better off Britain: Improving lives by making growth work for everyone'. CBI. November 2014

From an industry point of view, unemployment should be seen as unused capacity, a waste of human capital that could otherwise contribute to productivity – if the right training and skills opportunities were made available.

As well as the impact of unemployment on productivity and growth there are also the social costs that place additional pressures on local government and other local services, such as health services.

Unemployment in Kent

In Kent unemployment is below the national average but above the South East average. The number of unemployment claimants aged 16-64 is 16,162 in Kent equivalent to 1.8% of the population, compared to 1.3% in the South East, and 2.2% nationally.¹⁹

All parts of Kent have not benefitted equally from recent economic growth and as a result, there is also considerable District variation in unemployment from 0.9% in Sevenoaks to 3.9% in Thanet. Like other parts of the South and South East, seaside towns and thereby, Coastal Districts, have fared less well than their neighbours.

Of 67 Districts in the South East, only 9 have unemployment above the National Average [September 2014 figures]. Five of these are in Kent. Notably, the other four are all Coastal Districts, (Hastings, Eastbourne, Havant and Medway)

Although unemployment in Kent as a whole is below the national average, both youth unemployment and adult unemployment levels in five Districts remain above the national averages (young people aged 18-24 at 3.7%, and Adults at 2.2%). In Dover these figures are 4.9% and 2.2%, Gravesend (4.2% and 2.3%), Shepway (4.6% and 2.4%), Swale (5.4% and 2.2%) and Thanet (7.8% and 3.9%).

And within each District there is variation, as unemployment is concentrated in a handful of wards. There are also some localised pockets of unemployment and below average qualification levels, at ward level, within Districts that appear to be doing well. For example, Stanhope in Ashford, Joyce Green in Dartford, Parkwood in Maidstone, Swanley St. Mary's in Sevenoaks and Trench in Tonbridge all have claimant counts significantly above the national average. This means there is a need to target resources at ward and neighbourhood level.

It is clear that a reduction in unemployment and an increase in adult skill levels will only be achieved with particular targeted effort in the five Districts and other localities described above.

The LGA report proposes that the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) and the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) jointly place more emphasis on upskilling unemployed adults. It concludes that Local Authorities 'need a wide acceptance that ...the effectiveness of employment and skills support is critical to developing local

¹⁹ Kent Unemployment Bulletin. Kent County Council. October 2014

economies and to reducing the social costs of unemployment and poverty' It proposes a more co-ordinated approach between agencies at local level.²⁰

For this reason KCC works in partnership with DWP and training providers to address unemployment, particularly of young adults, and is developing a Social Impact Bond to address this issue.

Meanwhile, disabled people, including those with learning difficulties, and adults with mental illness continue to be under- represented in the workforce. In terms of equality and social justice this is unacceptable – but it also represents an under- used resource and, often, an unnecessary cost to society. There is a compelling case to support more disabled adults into the workplace. The work of Kent Supported Employment (KSE) and its partners will continue to address this imbalance

More Equal Access to Learning

THE NIACE survey of Adult Participation in Learning determined that 'engagement in learning is not evenly distributed across society'²¹. The survey shows that participation in learning is determined by social class, employment status, age and prior learning.

Adults in work are more likely to access learning than those out of work (45% compared to 21%); adults who left school at 16 are less likely to attend future learning than those who stayed on, even for a short time (25% and 47% respectively); and adults in professional occupations are more likely to participate than adults in elementary occupations (57% versus 28%).

This has implications for this Strategy. It determines a need for targeted work, including distribution of resources, towards those groups who are currently not participating in learning and training. This will include a call to providers for some geographical targeting at neighbourhood level and for specific work with under- represented groups. Community Learning has a role to play in engaging adults that might otherwise be excluded from learning. This 'second chance' education is an end in itself and has proven benefits for the health and wellbeing of its participants. In providing basic training in numeracy and literacy, family learning and neighbourhood projects, Community Learning also provides the first rung of the skill training ladder for adults that might otherwise stagnate in their learning.

This Strategy includes a priority to meet the needs of people with a learning disability, autism, sensory loss and mental health issues to participate in training and learning, not only to achieve suitable employment but also for social inclusion, health and wellbeing.

In the interests of social justice, equality and the economy it is important to include all adults in the skills agenda and this will require targeted work and additional support for some groups of adults.

²⁰ Realising Talent: employment and Skills for the future', a report for the Local Government Association. Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion.(July 2014)

²¹ NIACE Adult Participation in Learning Survey (2014)

As low skilled employment opportunities decrease there is potential for adults with disabilities or mental illness to be further squeezed out of opportunities for independence. Providers need to recognise this and continue to provide learning opportunities as well as encouraging employers to engage with these vulnerable people.

Drivers for Change

The changing nature of work arising from rapidly developing technologies and globalisation has created a pressing and urgent need to improve the skill levels of the UK workforce.

There are already significant gaps in the skill requirements of the economy and the skill levels of the adult population which cannot be addressed simply by improving the abilities of young people entering the workforce from school. Upskilling and retraining the existing workforce is vital if we are to gain the benefits of growth arising from the economic recovery and the opportunities available in a global market.

Failure to improve skill levels will certainly lead to more unemployment in the medium to longer term which, as has been demonstrated, is both wasteful, costly and socially divisive. It is therefore important to engage with adults at all stages of learning. The role of basic skill training and engagement in learning is fundamental.

A considerable amount of resource is invested in adult learning. In order to maximise the effectiveness of this resource there must be co-ordination at a local level requiring collaboration between providers. This Strategy has as a key priority the importance of engaging employers in adult vocational education and training. Such training should have 'a clear line of sight to work'.

In addition to the requirements of a growing economy for more and better skills another driver for change is social inclusion. It is apparent that the levels of financial returns, - wages and salaries - for low skilled and high skilled workers are polarising, leading to greater inequality. Community Learning has a role to play in engaging with those communities and vulnerable groups that might otherwise suffer from such potential inequality.

The Key Performance Indicators within this Strategy focus on these key issues or drivers for change.

The Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)

The Heseltine Review 2012²² recommended that resources for economic development and regeneration were devolved to local level and Local Enterprise Partnerships were created as the vehicle to manage this process. Kent is part of the South East LEP that

²² 'No Stone Unturned - In Pursuit of Growth'. The Rt Hon Lord Heseltine [October 2012]

includes Essex, East Sussex and three Unitary Authorities (Medway Thurrock and Southend).

Importantly for this Strategy LEPs have been given responsibility for distributing the next round of the European Social Fund. In the South East LEP £82.5 million of revenue funding is available to support employment, social inclusion and skills for the next six years to 2021. Kent’s share of this fund based on population of the six Local Authorities amounts to a nominal sum of approximately £30m.

A considerable amount of work has been undertaken by officers from the various local authorities to determine the priorities and criteria for this funding. This Strategy takes account of the work already undertaken by the LEP and the Key Performance Indicators set out at the back of this strategy are aligned with the priorities of the South East LEP.

Key Partners

We recognise that this Adult Learning, Skills and Employment Strategy can only be delivered by working in collaboration with all stakeholders, which include the partners listed in the table below:

Table 2: Partner organisations and funding bodies

FE Colleges	Schools	Training Providers (inc. those outside KATO)	UK Commission for Employment and Skills
Community Learning Providers	Job Centre Plus (DWP)	National Careers Service	Business sector organisations (e.g. Chambers, FSB)
Recruitment Agencies	Sector Skills Councils	Skills Funding Agency	Voluntary and Community Sector
District Councils	Infrastructure bodies (e.g. Locate in Kent)	Strategic Bodies (e.g. ELS Partnership Board, LEP)	Universities
Employers			

As has been described employers’ organisations (CBI, FSB), research bodies (UKCES), and educational bodies (CAVTL, Ofsted) have each recently called for a stronger relationship between employment and education; ‘earning and learning’; skill training with a ‘clear line of sight to work’; and a ‘two way street’ between training providers and employers.

Any collaborative models that are developed in the County need to include the substantial involvement of employers and employer representative groups. This Strategy includes a key priority to improve the engagement of all providers and partners with employers to involve them fully in the skill training infrastructure.

The current drive from central government is for employers and individuals to shoulder some of the burden of training – hence increasing the use of adult loans and a reduction in the skills budget, despite calls from employer organisations for more and better skills.

It is vital that employers understand the requirement for them to contribute to skills training with finance and resources.

Adult Learning, Skills and Employment Strategy Framework and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

Context – Recent Developments

In February 2015, during the period of consultation for this Strategy, the Skills Funding Agency announced a reduction in the Adult Skills Budget of 17%. Within this, Apprenticeships are ring fenced and protected, so for the remainder of the Adult Skills Budget this represents an effective cut of 24%.

At the same time the Department for Business Innovation and Skills (BIS), and subsequently the Skills Funding Agency (SFA), have expressed concern at the quantity and quality of subcontracting by SFA contract holders and have placed additional requirements on these arrangements.

Both of these announcements have potential for a serious adverse impact on adult skills provision in the County. To mitigate we aim to ensure that providers:

- collaborate and co-ordinate their offer;
- encourage larger employers to fund or otherwise resource training;
- and encourage adult learners, through co-ordinated marketing, to utilise adult loans

Vocational Qualification Review

In response to a series of reports that have reviewed the quality of vocational qualifications (Wolf 2011, CAVTL 2013, Richards 2013, Whitehead 2014), such qualifications, including adult vocational qualifications are currently undergoing significant change.

The number of qualifications has been reduced and there is a focus on ensuring greater relevance to the workplace, 'a clear line of sight to work'. This is consistent with the demand for employers to be more engaged with the design and delivery of skills training. The range of new qualifications becoming available are designed to provide better quality and more work related vocational pathways, that are more accessible to more learners. This could transform vocational learning in this country. Our priority is to ensure these new opportunities are widely available across Kent.

Priorities and Key Performance Indicators

The following framework and Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) forms the basis of the Strategy against which a three-year Action Plan and Annual Work Programmes will be developed, in consultation, and subsequent collaboration with key partners.

The Strategy outlines the key priorities and what we aim to achieve. This has wide agreement among all our partners and stakeholders. A more detailed action plan will set out how we will achieve our objectives, which we will develop with partners between May and September 2015.

Priorities

1. Reduce Unemployment

Activity to reduce unemployment is centred on Job Centre Plus, the key agency that works with unemployed people, to provide benefits but also to support adults back into employment. Job Centre Plus delivers projects to this end, largely funded by the Flexible Support Fund provided by DWP.

There is also much activity taking place in FE Colleges and with other training providers to provide adults with the tools, such as basic skills, job-search skills, self-confidence and self-presentation, to obtain employment. It is important that this valuable work is co-ordinated to gain the maximum impact on unemployment

The work undertaken in schools and colleges with 16-18 year old students, and the related work for NEET young people and those at risk of NEET has an important contribution to make to reducing unemployment further down the line.

Recently, the KCC Skills and Employability Service, JCP and several training organisations worked together to deliver short term engagement programmes specifically targeted at 18 year olds claiming Job Seeker's Allowance. These pilots successfully moved many of the participants into work and the evidence from the pilots is being used, alongside other projects, to support an application for a Social Impact Bond to combat Youth (18-24) Unemployment.

The concentration of unemployment in the Coastal Districts and some other wards in other Districts will require targeting of the work.

The ambition is to reduce unemployment in Kent to at least levels commensurate with our neighbouring Local Authorities in the South East and to achieve this it will be necessary to reduce unemployment to below national levels in the Coastal Districts. This ambition is reflected in two separate KPIs.

Reduce unemployment KPIs		
KPI.1.1	Reduce adult unemployment in Kent to at least match and or decrease to below the South East Average.	Baseline: [June 2014]: National 2.4%. South East 1.4%. Kent 2.0% Source: NOMIS July 2014
KPI.1.2	Reduce adult unemployment in all Districts to below the national adult unemployment level	Baseline [June 2014]; Districts above National Level (2.4%): Dover 2.6%, Gravesham 2.5%, Shepway 2.5%, Swale 2.5%, Thanet 4.5% Source: NOMIS July 2014

2. Improve Adult Skill Levels

Schools and Colleges have an important role to play in ensuring that more young people achieve higher level qualifications by the age of 19. The 14-24 Learning, Employment and Skills Strategy has clear targets and actions to deliver this agenda.

Significantly, three out of four learners achieve level 2 by age 16 (5 or more GCSE grades at A*-C), but only two out of four go on to achieve level 3 by age 19. Clearly, more needs to be done to ensure that young people succeed in achieving the level 3 qualification regarded as the benchmark by the LGA.

It is not sufficient to rely on producing more skilled young people – it is also necessary to upskill the existing adult population at all levels. This means reducing the number of adults with no qualification at all, and increasing the numbers that achieve levels 2, 3 and 4 so that our adult population has skill levels in line with or better than the South East region. This Strategy includes KPIs for each of these skill levels.

In order to achieve these targets it will be necessary for more people to access learning, at all levels and this is reflected in KPI 2.1 which is for more people to participate in learning.

The Apprenticeship model is key to delivering high quality adult training and we will continue to promote and develop Apprenticeship opportunities. Much has been achieved by KCC, FE Colleges and training providers working together to promote 16-18 Apprenticeships; and the Kent Employment Programme team, working with JCP, has delivered over 760 Apprenticeships to 18-24 year olds.

However, the number of Adult Apprenticeships (25+) has recently fallen, largely due to the changes to funding introduced in 2013, and the introduction of Adult Loans. There were over 5000 starts in 2012-13 but in 2014 the number of starts has fallen to 2030. This trend must be reversed to achieve the step change in adult skill levels required. It is important that this growth is achieved by adults developing their skills through the Adult Apprenticeship framework delivering high quality training.

2. Improve Adult Skill Levels KPIs		
KPI.2.1	Increase participation in learning amongst the adult population of Kent to over 65,000 learners	Baseline: in 2012/13 61,820 adult (19+) learners were funded by SFA
KPI.2.2	Decrease the number of adults with no qualifications to below 6%	Baseline : Kent 7.3%, SE 6.5%, GB 9.3% Source: ONS Population Survey 2013
KPI. 2.3	Increase the proportion of adults at level 2 and above to at least 80%	Baseline: Kent 74.6%, SE,76.5%, GB 72.5% Source: ONS Population Survey 2013
KPI. 2.4	Increase the proportion of adults at Level 3 and above to at least 60%	Baseline : Kent 55.4%, SE 59.3%, GB 55.8% Source: ONS Population Survey 2013
KPI. 2.5	Increase the proportion of adults in Kent at level 4 and above to at least 40%	Baseline: Kent 33.6%, SE 38.3%, GB 35.2% Source: ONS Population Survey 2013
KPI 2.6.	Re-establish the number of Adult (25+) Apprenticeship starts to 5,000 per annum.	2012/13 5,000 starts. 2013/14 2,030 starts to quarter 3

3. Increase Training and Employment in Priority Sectors

The South East LEP has identified the following as its priority sectors: Advanced Manufacturing; Transport and Logistics; Life Sciences and Health Care; Environmental Technologies and Energy; Creative, Cultural and Media and the Visitor Economy.

The LEP also allows for some local discretion for each Authority to determine its Priority Sectors and Kent has determined the following as its priorities: low carbon and environmental goods and services; life sciences and medical technologies; creative and media industries; food production; manufacturing and engineering; construction; higher education; and tourism.

Determining which sectors of the economy will generate growth and employment is not an exact science and these priorities will be subject to change. However, they provide a useful starting point to indicate where the emphasis should be placed for adults seeking training or employment. It is sensible to direct more adults into training and re-training opportunities in those sectors where they are more likely to obtain a job – and contribute to productivity and growth.

Broad skill sectors alone are a rather blunt instrument to determine future training provision. Within each sector there will be demands for particular skill levels and particular occupations. For instance, in the health and care sector, there is greater demand for workers at level 3; in transport and logistics there is demand for drivers – a very transferable occupation. A level of refinement in planning will be required.

If successful there will be more people training in these sectors and more people employed in these sectors. An important contribution can be made by increasing the availability of Apprenticeships in these sectors. The KPIs under this section reflect these three ambitions.

3. Increase training and employment in priority sectors, KPIs		
KPI.3.1	Increase the number of adults accessing training relevant to each of the priority sectors by 10%	To be agreed once priority sectors are finalised
KPI.3.2	Increase employment in the priority sectors by 10% per annum	To be agreed once priority sectors are finalised
KPI.3.3	Increase the number of apprentices, 18-24 and 25+, in priority sectors by 10%	To be agreed once priority sectors are finalised

4. Increase Employment and Participation in Learning Amongst Priority Groups

As has been described, access to skills education and training is unequal across society – and those who might benefit most from skills education, such as those adults who left school at 16 with no qualifications are less likely to participate. Apart from the social injustice and exclusion that results, it is inefficient to ignore those who would benefit greatly from skills training.

This Strategy calls for more targeted work with two particular under-represented groups: disabled adults and socially deprived adults. The aim is for more adults with disabilities to access education, training and employment; and for more adults from deprived neighbourhoods to engage in learning.

4. Increase employment and participation in learning amongst priority groups, KPIs		
KPI. 4.1	Increase the number of adults with disabilities accessing education and training to 17,500	Baseline: in 2012/13 15,390 adults with a learning difficulty or disability were funded by EFA or SFA
KPI. 4.2	Support 100 adults with disabilities into employment each year.	Kent Supported Employment .FSC contract. 100 adults per annum.
KPI.4.3	Increase participation in learning amongst the adult population in the 20 most deprived neighbourhoods in Kent.	Baseline to be calculated: participation in learning with FE or CLS by postcode (Proxy measure)

Conclusion

The Adult Learning, Skills and Employment Strategy is a key document for KCC and its partners in taking forward our aspirations for greater economic growth, increased employment opportunities and higher levels of skilled adults in Kent.

The Strategy reflects national policy initiatives to improve growth and employment and address skills gaps which reduce productivity and slow economic improvement. The Department of Business Innovation and Skills (BIS) consultation document (March 2015) on the future of adult skills, 'A Dual Mandate for Adult Vocational Education' is consistent with the proposals in the *Adult Learning, Skills and Employment Strategy*.

While the main emphasis of the *Strategy* is rightly on economic growth, adult skill development and employment it also recognises the wider benefits of community learning for social inclusion, community cohesion, health and wellbeing. Adult skills and learning plays a vital role in improving the lives of vulnerable adults, including those with sensory and learning disabilities, autism and mental illness.

We recognise we cannot achieve the priorities in this Strategy without successful partnership with education, skills and training providers, employers and government agencies. To this end the Strategy reflects the Priority Employment Sectors, as defined by the LEP and by KCC, and further work will be carried out to develop more detailed plans for specific occupations within sectors and specific local requirements. This will be reflected in the *Action Plan*.

Our partners make up the Kent and Medway Education, Learning and Skills Partnership Board. This board is an advisory group to the Local Enterprise Partnership on skills. This ensures there are clear interdependencies between the LEP Skills Strategy and the *Adult Learning, Skills and Employment Strategy* for Kent.

Employer engagement is critical to the successful delivery of the Strategy. This will be achieved by working through the Chambers of Commerce and other employer led organisations.

The Strategy also informs the service specification for the KCC Community Learning and Skills Service. The CLS growth strategy and service plan, for provision from September 2015, includes priorities and commissioned services that contribute to the delivery of the Adult Learning, Skills and Employment Strategy.