

East Suffolk Community Partnership Board skills workshop: 27 July 2023

Following the main Board meeting of the East Suffolk Community Partnership, the East Suffolk Economic Development Team and colleagues from the Suffolk County Council Skills Team lead a workshop on the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) people and skills programme in 2024/25 in order to identify local priorities for the use of the funding.

Ahead of the workshop there was a briefing pack circulated that provides data and the current context of the skills landscape, which is re-attached to this pack, and at the meeting a presentation was provided (slides also attached).

During 2024/25, East Suffolk Council will be investing £250,107 into an East Suffolk specific local economy led skills programme. This is in addition to the £396,001 that is allocated to a Suffolk wide skills programme which will address county wide challenges and opportunities whilst achieving economies of scale.

Within the workshop, participants were asked to note down what they consider their top-5 gaps in local skills provision they feel exist and up-to 5 suggested programmes that could address these. These were then discussed in groups and collective responses were compiled.

Following a full review of the responses individually and as groups, the following key themes have been identified:

- Sector specific skills gaps, including: health and social care, tech / IT / creative, agriculture, environmental / green, hospitality and traditional trade sectors. As well as transferrable cross sector skills.
- The need for more entry level employment opportunities and diversifying pathways to employment.
- Increased apprenticeships for university level courses.
- Supported apprenticeships for those with SEN and disabilities.
- Improved career advice within education settings.
- Improved volunteering opportunities and specialist volunteer support for those with SEN.
- Life skills education.
- Mental health support / neurodiversity / health and wellbeing support for those in employment and those seeking employment.
- Rural community support – particularly around rethinking how adults can access employment support services.
- Transport for employment and education opportunities.
- Youth employment support and the continuation of programmes such as YES and Personal Development Service.
- Pre-apprenticeship work opportunities, supported internships and intensive support for NEETs and pre-NEETs.
- Literacy support for adults.
- Intergenerational unemployment support and upskilling of the older workforce.
- Higher technical skills.
- Support for employers to understand the needs of employees and how / where to access support, such as for mental health. In addition to this, employers support to navigate recruitment support to fill sector and skills gaps.

Given the limited budget available and the short delivery timeframe, the East Suffolk Economic Development will now be focused on refining these priorities and developing a local economy led skills programme. However, from an initial review, this is likely to focus on developing an intensive youth employment support service that fully embeds employer support, including mentoring to businesses and coordination to develop clear pathways, gaining employer commitment, coaching, and mentoring in how to support employees and connecting with local projects to support sector recruitment gaps.

The Economic Development Team will also be feeding into the development of the county wide skills programme over the coming months in order to embed local priorities identified during the workshop where these synergise with other districts priorities.

We will feedback to the Board in September and December 2023 on decisions that have been taken and how the programmes are being shaped for implementation from April 2024 onwards.