

## Ashfield's Education and Skills Improvement Strategy

### Introduction

It was outlined as an action in the Economic Recovery Plan for Ashfield District Council to create an "Education and Skills Improvement Strategy". Ashfield's Education and Skills Improvement Strategy has been developed with partners from across the district to improve the local careers and advisory services, align skills provisions to local employment needs and to ensure that residents are able to access the opportunities on their doorstep.

Our vision is that by 2031 Ashfield will have a high quality, local education and skills offer that is accessible and responsive to resident and employer needs. This offer will support all residents to build resilience and develop valuable workplace skills for a strong local economy now and in the future.

The skills landscape is changing; Ashfield District Councils Education and Skills Improvement Strategy is also a local response to the findings of the data that emerged from the UK Prosperity Index 2021 – putting education as an area for improvement & investment within the district (you can see more from the UK Prosperity Index 2021 findings in [part 1 - The UK Prosperity Index 2021](#)). Our local Education and Skills Improvement Strategy will help us form new partnerships with local stakeholders and take new approaches to skills delivery. The Strategy will enable the district to speak with one voice to current and future funders about the needs of businesses, residents, and local providers, ensuring that our local providers are well positioned to access resource in the future.

The Education and Skills Improvement Strategy was adopted by the council in (February 2022 to be updated) . It sets out the district's ambition on skills and sets out the priorities and ambitions under the below themes:

- [Talent Attraction & Retention](#)
- [Skills to Meet Demand](#)
- [Skills for Future Growth](#)

The purpose of this delivery plan is to detail how our local Education and Skills Partnerships will work together to achieve our skills priorities. It identifies the activity that is already taking place to achieve our goals and ambitions, the impact we want to have and the activity we commit to undertake collaboratively.

The lifetime of the Education and Skills Improvement Strategy will be for 10 years, where we will identify key objectives that we want to achieve. However, the strategy is a flexible document that can change over the time.

We are keen to undertake a review after 5 years, celebrate our achievements, and amend the strategy based on the economic data and what our key objectives will be for the remaining 5 years.

We will break down the objectives in the strategy by creating a separate action plan of activities. The action plan will be set out into short, **medium** and **long term** activities, outlining what skills provision we currently have in the district, with associated actions on what we commit to undertake collaboratively. The action plan is designed to provide flexibility, so our local skills offer is able to respond and adapt to new challenges and take advantage of resources and opportunities that become available over the lifetime of the strategy.

Our identified short term activity will be the areas we want to focus on as we start to recover from both the economic impact imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the challenges we will face as we fully transition from the European Union exit. This will be delivered over the next 1-2 years, recognising that identified activity won't all be achieved in this time, but we commit to start work towards the achievement, focusing on priorities that are set within the strategy. **Medium term** activity will take place in both year 3-4 and year 5-6 of the delivery plan and **long-term** activity in both years 7-8 and years 9-10 of the strategy. At the end of each term, we will review our progress against the actions, mark the actions that have been completed, and agree and display our priorities & actions for the next term. We will also send out "skills needs surveys" to businesses, towards the end of each term. This will help shape our priorities to focus on for the next term. The data in the "Annex of Indicators" part of the plan will be revisited and celebrated if an improvement has been made. We will also collate case studies from businesses & residents that have been impacted positively from the action plan of activities.

### **Managing the delivery plan – Ashfield's Education and Skills Partnerships**

Though led by the council, this strategy is intended to be delivered in partnership to ensure that there is a consistency in vision and ambitions across our district and that the available resources are maximised. In order to continue the partnership arrangements, "**Ashfield's Education and Skills Partnerships**" will be formalised. These Partnerships will include members from: schools, D2N2 Local Enterprise Partnership, East Midlands Chamber of Commerce, the Department of Work and Pensions, Further Education, Higher Education, and Adult Skills providers, businesses (including Business Forum members) and colleagues from across Ashfield District Council and Nottinghamshire County Council. The purpose of Ashfield's Education and Skills Partnerships are to:

- Ensure ongoing cross partnership support
- Endorse and support the delivery of activity
- Oversee the progress of the delivery plan and review outcomes
- Advise on future skills activity and support effective prioritisation
- Influence and inform sub-regional, regional, and national decision makers, ensuring that Ashfield's voice is heard

It is proposed that Ashfield's Education and Skills Partnerships will **perform a prominent role** in the delivery of the strategy, providing a useful mechanism to advise and inform formal decision-making processes across the partnerships.

The three partnerships that will play a prominent role within the delivery of the strategy are:

- The Primary Schools Partnership
- The Secondary Schools Network
- The Adult Skills Partnership

**Organisations within the Primary Schools Partnership:**

- Abbey Hill Nursery & Primary School
- Broomhill Junior School
- Butlers Hill School
- Craft Primary School
- Greenwood Primary & Nursery School
- Hillside Primary & Nursery School
- Hucknall Academy
- Hucknall National
- All Saints C of E Infants School
- Leamington Primary Academy
- Mapplewells Primary & Nursery School
- Morvern Park Primary School
- Orchard Primary School
- Priestsic Primary School
- The West Park Academy

**Organisations within the Secondary Schools Network:**

- Ashfield School
- Bracken Hill School
- The Holgate Academy
- Kirkby College Academy
- Quarrydale Academy
- Selston High School
- Sutton Community Academy

### **Organisations within the Adult Skills Partnership:**

- Department for Work & Pensions
- D2N2
- Nottinghamshire County Council
- East Midlands Chamber of Commerce
- University of Nottingham
- University of Derby
- Nottingham Trent University
- Vision West Notts College
- Inspire
- Academy Transformation Trust
- Framework
- Ingeus
- Sherwood Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
- Reed
- Serco
- Care4Notts
- Qdos Training
- Futures
- CITB
- One to One Support Services
- Portland Pathways
- Enable

### **Health and Wellbeing Partnership:**

In addition to the three Education and Skills Partnerships, Ashfield District Council has a Health and Wellbeing Team which includes a “Health and Wellbeing Partnership”. The aims of the partnership are to encourage and provide opportunities for residents within the Ashfield area to lead a healthy, active lifestyle. This groups leads on the Be Healthy, Be Happy element of Discover Ashfield. Organisations within the partnership are:

- Nottingham & Nottinghamshire Clinical Commissioning Group
- Sutton Community Academy
- Active Notts
- Everyone Active
- Ashfield Voluntary Action
- Nottingham Carers Association
- Nottinghamshire County Council
- Portland Pathways
- Mind

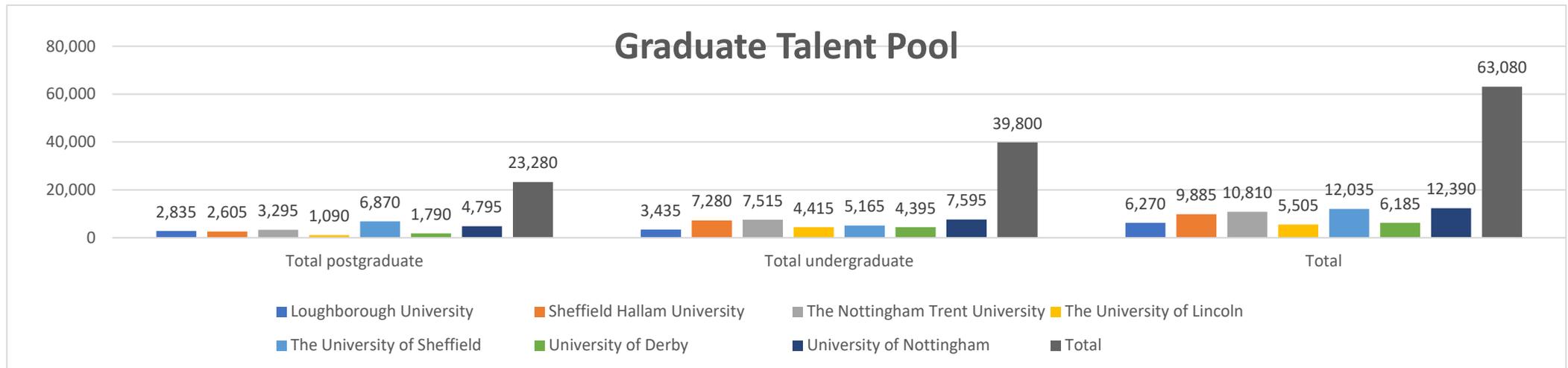
- Self Help UK
- NIDAS
- Age UK
- Citizens Advice Ashfield
- Nottingham Trent University
- ABL
- National Church of England Academy
- Sutton Community Academy
- Academy Transformation Trust
- Department for Work and Pensions
- Transform Notts
- Nottinghamshire Police
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This partnership are working collaboratively to meet the objectives within **Ashfield's Health and Wellbeing Strategy** which can be found [here](#) . In relation to their part in improving Education and Skills within the district, this partnership will work collaboratively to bid and deliver community-related projects that will improve social inclusion in the area and help vulnerable residents remove particular barriers that are preventing them in conducting work related activity. The impact of these projects should inform a reduction of economically inactive residents within the district.

## Key Skills needs for the future (strategy focus)

### Higher-level skills:

In regard to attracting highly skilled talent into Ashfield, there is a cluster of higher education institutions with 7 Universities nearby, producing world-leading research and **39,800** skilled undergraduates each year (HESA data 2019/20) <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/students/outcomes>



Ashfield has an aspiration to ensure more higher-level skills residents are working within the district. We are therefore working with local universities to ensure their careers teams are aware of the local labour market and can effectively match their postgraduates to job opportunities in Ashfield. We are also offering work experience incentives for local businesses to take on graduates, with the hope that the opportunity for the graduate will progress them into a sustainable career.

### Key Graduate retention project:

We recently invested in a new business hub in Sutton in Ashfield. From the hub you will see Nottingham Trent University delivering a “Graduate Talent” programme there; offering short-term, part funded Graduate Placement opportunities for local businesses.

To help inspire residents to progress into the Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics (STEM) sectors, we have secured investment to improve the Sherwood Observatory Science Discovery Centre by adding a new Planetarium to the site.

## **Sherwood Observatory Science Discovery Centre and Planetarium:**

To create a unique education and landmark visitor attraction with the existing observatory building extended and refurbished and the creation of a new planetarium, utilising a half-submerged, brick built Victorian underground reservoir. The new centre will deliver inclusive and innovative community and educational programming with a focus on promoting astronomy to visitors of all ages and engaging people in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) related subjects. The centre will bring science to life in fun, entertaining and informative ways and support the skills and knowledge essential for future employment.

### **Rationale:**

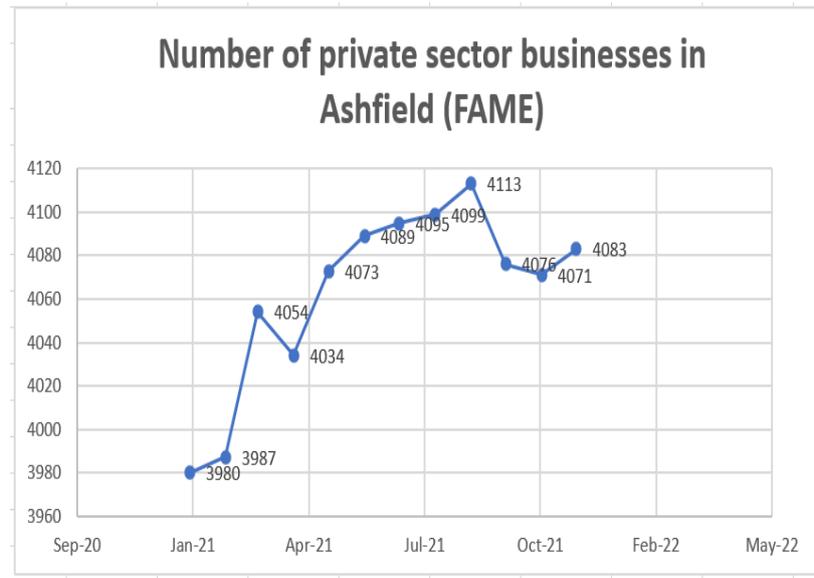
This project provides the opportunity to create a unique visitor attraction, generating income and employment through the visitor economy and helping raise the profile of the area as a place to visit. Visitor demand at the observatory is already high and is increasing year on year. The project will utilise a redundant structure and will allow visitors access to a hidden heritage asset. The focus on STEM related subjects will raise awareness of the opportunities a career in STEM can unlock which will support projects within the Succeed in Ashfield theme.

As the UK enters the 'Fourth Industrial Revolution', a time of significant technological, and economic shift, STEM will be one of the accelerating forces for economic growth. Research undertaken on behalf of the British Association of Planetariums shows that people from deprived areas are under-represented in the visitor statistics for planetariums.

## Business Start-Up Skills:

Ashfield has high aspirations of ensuring there is enough skills support and opportunities for individuals that would like to set up their own business in the area. Over the next 2 years in particular, Ashfield are keen to support newly redundant individuals (impacted by the pandemic) that have an entrepreneurial spark, be successful in opening a new business in the district. See below the number of business openings, number of business deaths and also business number growth/decline stats in Ashfield over the last year:

Month	Births	Deaths
Jan-21	47	40
Feb-21	68	1
Mar-21	65	85
Apr-21	63	24
May-21	41	25
Jun-21	39	33
Jul-21	32	28
Aug-21	46	32
Sep-21	35	72
Oct-21	42	47
Nov-21	33	21
Dec-21	37	33



Ashfield are keen to ensure there is a support pathway for local entrepreneurial talent, making them successful in starting a business in the area. Ashfield will ensure there is enough business support services in the area that can help these new businesses grow and bring in prosperity and revenue into the district.

### Key business start-up project:

We recently invested in a new business hub in Sutton in Ashfield. From the hub will see a “Headstart” programme being delivered by Nottingham Trent University there, giving new entrepreneurs the skills they need to start their own business.

In the business hub there will also be:

- A Maker Space – allowing individuals to use and test equipment before purchasing the capital themselves
- Council owned commercial units which will be available to rent, at affordable prices.

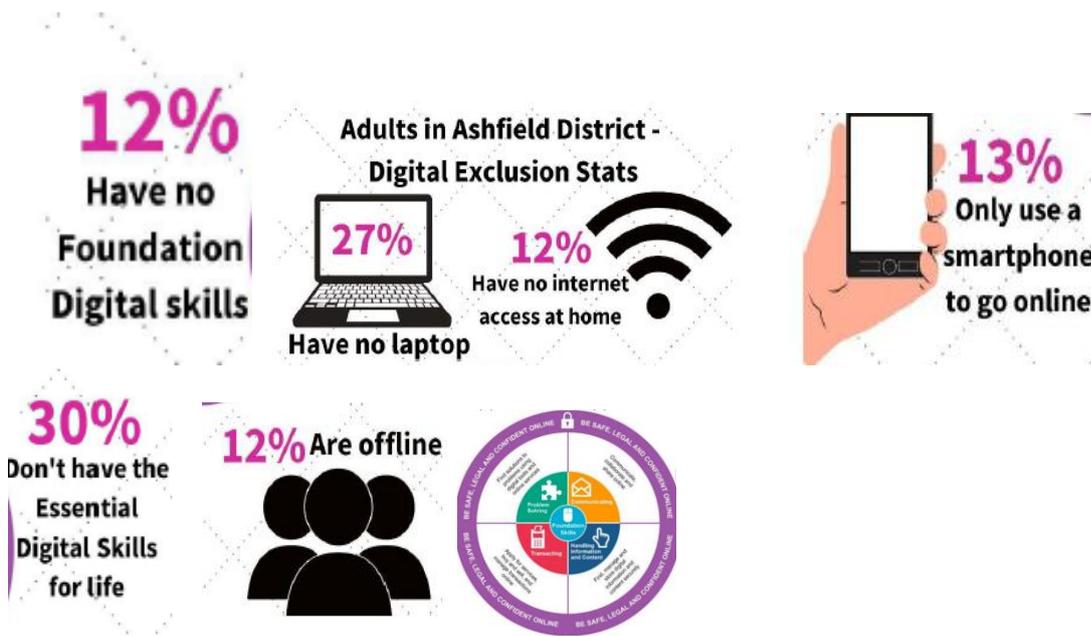
## Digital Skills

Digital skills are a paramount requirement for individuals in the modern world. They are how we store and process data, research relevant opportunities, configure artificial intelligence, and allow us to communicate on a universal scale through platforms such as instant messaging, emails, telephone calls, social media, and video chat.

Data shows that in Ashfield there is a relatively low level of digital skills, affected by factors including access to equipment; skills and connectivity; age and for disabled people, cost and access to assistive technologies. Digital skills contribute to productivity across Nottinghamshire & Derbyshire, and c.32% lower for the information and communications sector.

Nottinghamshire & Derbyshire research shows that vacancies for ICT in the area result in the highest level of lost income after public sector nursing and education roles of £396m.

In May 2020, Citizen’s Online undertook an analysis of digital inclusion across Ashfield. The results show that 27% of residents have no laptop at home, 12% have no internet access at home, and 30% don’t have the digital skills required to complete day-to-day activities online such as paying a bill or connecting with a friend or family member.



To improve residents’ digital skills across the district, we have secured investment to refurbish both Sutton and Kirkby Libraries to make available as “Digital Hubs” for local residents. We have also secured investment to provide a mobile provision which will travel to harder to reach communities in Ashfield, offering digital skills support in these areas.

### **Library Innovation Centres and Mobile Provision:**

Creation of a multi-use hub for a range of information, digital, cultural and community services to support a wider range of activity to facilitate innovation, learning, cultural programmes and community activity, with a focus on digital skills.

The main Innovation Centre at Sutton will provide a venue for small business conferences, seminars, and networking through the refurbishment of a disused lecture theatre and re-purposing of adjacent areas.

The innovation centres at Kirkby and Sutton will provide digital access and access to technology, a job seeker/ employability hub / Information Advice and Guidance services and Adult and family learning and skills programmes as well as community led activity – Inspire ‘community makers’ coffee & chat.

A mobile unit will be used to provide digital learning in areas outside of the town centre.

### **Rationale:**

The project will help to address digital exclusion across the area and support people to gain digital foundation skills. People can go on to gain more advanced digital skills through the provision at Vision West Notts. College, providing a clear pathway for development.

The mobile provision will ensure maximum reach, particularly within harder to reach communities such as Leamington and Coxmoor, as well as areas with higher numbers of older people and industrial estates.

## **Functional Skills**

Functional skills are essential for further studies and are applicable in most jobs. Most people need these vital skills to work, learn and contribute to society effectively. Functional skills enhance proficiency in numeracy and literacy, which is essential in daily trade and service transactions. Learning material for functional skills qualifications is based on practical and real-life situations. Developing functional skills can increase confidence and improve both work performance and productivity.

In addition to foundation digital skills, there are two other types of functional skills that are an imperative requirement that residents need in order to progress into employment:

### **Functional Skills – English:**

Functional skills qualifications in English provide students with fundamental skills to use the English language in personal and work situations. The entry-level functional skills qualification in English teaches students phonics and vocabulary to read and spell correctly. These qualifications test a student's listening, speaking, communicating, writing and reading skills.

These skills help students with punctuation, spelling and correct grammar rules in written communication. The qualification ensures that students can spell and apply punctuation and grammar rules without using computer aids or dictionaries. Communicating efficiently improves confidence and effectiveness in the student's work performance, which should enhance their career prospects.

### **Functional Skills – Mathematics**

The mathematics section of functional skills covers four separate elements: data handling, numbers, measurement and shapes. The purpose of the mathematics section is to strengthen students' knowledge of mathematical concepts without using a calculator. The mathematics examination requires students to perform numerical reasoning tasks with practical life situations. Depending on the functional skills qualification level, however, students may be allowed to use a calculator during the examination.

### **Key skills programmes in Ashfield – AEB Functional Skills & Multiply**

Many educational organisations in Ashfield have funding to deliver the Adult Education Budget. Functional skills English, Mathematics and Information Technology courses are available for residents and businesses to access for free through the Adult Education Budget (AEB). These courses need to be offered to all residents that currently have no qualifications.

There is also a new £560 million “Multiply” programme that will be available from Spring 2022. Adults who don't already have a GCSE grade C/4 or higher in Maths will be able to access free courses that fit around their lives – whether that be in person or online, at work or in the evening, part time or intensive – with additional support to meet their needs.

## Human-Robot Collaboration Skills

**Automation and Robotics** are now being manufactured and are operating within businesses around the world. The benefits of using automation and robotics within business operation are:

- To enhance productivity & efficiency
- They don't need to rest or sleep so are able to work 24 continuous hours a day, for 7 days per week.
- They are able to complete detailed & arduous tasks with minimal mistakes
- Removes workers from conducting dangerous tasks
- Minimising material waste.

The big question is, will automation replace human employment? Research and surveys state the answer to this being no. In fact, it can be the exact opposite; it can create jobs. But the importance of educating the workforce is key to its success. Although robots can work 24/7, business leaders are doubtful that robots could be as creative and emotionally intelligent as human beings. Therefore, skills that revolve around social relationships, responsibility, creativity, imagination and leadership will continue to be in the hands of human beings. It is up to the organisational leadership, HR departments and workplace strategist to re-arrange working environments in a way that allows individual employees to bring these unique skill sets to life, side by side with automated technology.

Ashfield District Council are keen to give local businesses the flexibility of adopting artificial intelligence into their operations. We, however, want to ensure the employees have the skills to successfully work with automation and robotics in the workplace. We therefore have invested in two large capital projects that will give business leaders and their workforce the skills required to successfully adopt artificial intelligence into their organisation:

## **Automated Distribution and Manufacturing Centre (ADMC)**

The Midlands' distribution, logistics and specialist manufacturing community, along with many parts of the UK, are at risk of being left behind by overseas competitors due to the slow adoption of automation.

Through consultation with this sector, the concept of a purpose-built innovation facility has been developed, targeted at improving international competitiveness and inward investment attractiveness. The ADMC will support the adoption, integration and expansion of automated technologies for businesses, locally and across the Midlands region in a sustainable manner. The ADMC will focus on providing:

- Automation equipment technology and solution demonstration to businesses considering adopting or expanding automated processes/systems and who want to gain insights into how automation is employed and the barriers to implementation they may face.
- A prototyping and test facility, where businesses can work with equipment suppliers, systems integrators and university partners to develop solutions to the automation challenges; without having to reduce their own capacity or invest in staff resource.
- An early-stage innovation capability where businesses already using automation can work with researchers, equipment suppliers and systems integrators to test the potential of emergent technologies.
- Access to skills training to meet the increasing need for talent and upskilling by employers to meet the requirement of automation technology. This will link to Vision West Nottinghamshire College's (VWNC) Automation and Robotics programme and the emerging higher-level education programmes being developed by Nottingham Trent University (NTU).

400 businesses have been contacted regarding the ADMC and their feedback has helped shape ADMC provision. The Manufacturing Technology Centre (MTC), part of the High Value Manufacturing Catapult (HVMC), have also contributed to its outline design.

The ADMC is the first of its kind in the UK. It will be the centrepiece of inward investment activity within Ashfield, will support aligned activity in other Towns Fund bids (including the Smart Innovation, Supply Chain and Logistics Zone proposed in Newark), be a key element of the forthcoming D2N2 LEP and LLEP Freeport bid, as well as being a sentinel project for the economic levelling up agenda across the Midlands region.

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“There is a lack of skilled people within the automation industry in the UK. Centres like this will only improve the situation. It is also a great place to showcase advanced automation technologies and invite multiple companies for open days. Plus work with companies on specific automation projects”.

ADMC is “aligned to our priorities on improving skill and employment levels and on promoting digital skills and low carbon industry. ADMC has potential for international reach and will be a flagship project for the whole region”  
-D2N2 LEP

“We are developing batteries for use in robotics and automated systems. The new centre would be an invaluable testing ground with potential new customers”  
- Local company

## **Automation and Robotics courses from the Engineering Innovation Centre (Vision West Notts College)**

West Nottinghamshire College are running level 2-3 courses in Automation and Robotics from their new Engineering Innovation Centre. The two-year courses will equip students with a range of skills, including:

- Electro-pneumatic circuits
- Programmable Logic Controllers
- Maintenance of Automation – Mechanical and Electrical
- Fault finding and diagnosis for automation and robotics
- Robot processes and functions
- Automated Control Systems
- Machine Software Design Principles
- Robot Programming
- Simulation Engineering
- Process Optimisation

Beyond the formal course, there are opportunities for the upskilling of existing employees and knowledge transfer into smaller local businesses.

### **The Benefits**

- A group of local young people equipped to be able to support businesses in their automation and robotics infrastructure, ready to develop their skills further.
  - The transformation of the conversations around automation from one of fear and trepidation to one of development and opportunity
  - The potential to attract the brightest young people to see their futures in the local area in jobs with great potential within their own community.
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West Nottinghamshire College have secured a mobile training facility in the shape of an electric vehicle that will be able to visit employer premises across the area to deliver tailored training in new technologies in this sector. The touring vehicle will also be visiting partner colleges, local schools and community centres (including Sutton & Kirkby libraries) to introduce individuals to this developing area of engineering. The investment will be integrated to support businesses across the East Midlands to successfully embrace automation and robotic technologies. Residents will be able to practice on automation & robotics equipment as a part of their learning, complimenting any “code clubs” that the centres may want to run.

## Green Growth Skills

In the lead up to COP26 and beyond, the government, businesses, and wider stakeholders have a big focus on the UK's progression towards net-zero. In 2020, the government launched their ten-point plan for a green industrial revolution, and throughout this year they were looking to support policies to accelerate decarbonisation and build a sustainable future for the UK. A huge part of this will mean ensuring that the right skills and training is available to support both individuals and businesses in the transition to a low-carbon economy.

The Confederation of British Industry (CBI) engaged with members and stakeholders across three key areas undergoing transition - home efficiency, automotive and electric vehicles, and clean energy - to identify the opportunities and challenges to delivering the skills and training on the path to net-zero. They found that the 'green economy' is going to require a range of different skills that goes well beyond what many consider to be specific 'green skills'. The paper delves into each of the three key areas to assess the job opportunities available and how skills and training can support the transition of workers into new green jobs.

The paper identifies three challenges that apply to all sectors of the green economy which the government needs to consider:

1. **Lack of awareness of the green economy** – at present there is a huge task in educating the public about the path to net-zero to support the growing consumer market and stimulate demand. Without a stronger brand, individuals are less likely to consider career opportunities in home efficiency, automotive and clean power.
2. **Stability and direction through government policy** - the government's *Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution* sets a broad vision for the priority sector transitions needed to achieve net-zero emissions. This direction is helpful for business and policy makers, but it stops short of offering a full net-zero strategy from government, and businesses are looking for more certainty to help invest with confidence. The threat of changing government policy, particular support schemes such as grants and funding, is a risk to business, which can be offset by long-term policy commitments and goals.
3. **Transitioning into changing industries and new jobs** – industry will have a major role in preparing their workforces for change, meaning huge amounts of upskilling. However, anticipated changes also likely to see some people leave the industry rather than retrain, and new workers with better matched skills join. There is an important role for government to support more fundamental retraining that keeps people in work, and to support transitions between industries.

There is opportunity for our region to have a better-paid workforce, developing and implementing solutions for the low carbon transition and beyond.

The transformation to sustainable energy systems requires new skills growth, upskilling and reskilling in order to provide this growing sector with carbon literate expertise and leadership. We must keep pace with emerging skills requirements as technologies shift.

Our region's large scale coal stations have long been responsible for meeting a significant proportion of UK power generation. The transition from carbon intensive to zero carbon will provide a valuable opportunity to reskill the existing workforce and create high value new jobs to meet the low carbon energy skills needs of the future.

Across the Midlands, there could be an estimated **194,000 jobs** working in low carbon sectors by 2050. Key to this in the Midlands are the retrofitting of homes and buildings and the heat and automotive sectors. There is also an opportunity to focus on Small to Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) and their business needs, since SMEs make up 99% of the regional economy.

As technologies develop, skills requirements will change, and we must adapt quickly and flexibly in our skills provision. The region's skills providers must work collaboratively, building on our world class Higher Education and Further Education network, to provide progressive pathways to residents at all stages of their careers. Having a curriculum focused on net zero ambitions is key and it will be important to provide opportunities and facilities to learn on the job, trialling new technologies and hands-on experience at large scale demonstration sites across the region.

The energy sector remains one of the least diverse sectors, both in the UK and internationally. This poses a significant risk to the future workforce, in terms of limiting creativity and restricting access to talent, at a time when both will be in high demand to meet the needs of the sector in rising to the challenge of net zero carbon. Diversity is also important in addressing the socio-technical challenges that the UK faces; a diverse team has a better understanding of how change will impact a wider sector of society, along with a broader set of perspectives to approach a problem. In Ashfield we plan to develop reskilling programmes with diversity and inclusion at their heart.



## Soft Skills

Soft skills are non-technical skills that relate to how you work. They include how you interact with colleagues, how you solve problems, and how you manage your work.

Soft skills include the personal attributes, personality traits, and communication abilities needed for success on the job. Soft skills characterize how a person interacts in his or her relationships with others.

### Soft skills include:

- Adaptability
- Communication
- Creative thinking
- Dependability
- Work ethic
- Teamwork
- Positivity
- Time management
- Motivation
- Problem-solving
- Critical thinking
- Conflict resolution

Unlike hard skills that are learned, soft skills are similar to emotions or insights that allow people to “read” others. These are much harder to learn, at least in a traditional classroom. They are also much harder to measure and evaluate.

That said, some job skills programmes do cover soft skills. They may discuss soft skills, so job seekers know what they are and the importance of highlighting them on their CV.

Due to the impact that the coronavirus pandemic has caused for children’s education, there soft skills may have been affected also. So, it’s important that schools embed social inclusion into their curriculum by connecting their students to the community projects that are available for their students in order to develop their soft skills. So, activities through programmes such as the National Citizens Service and the Prince’s Trust Team Programme will help students improve their soft skills and make them more confident in being successful in the workplace. Businesses working with schools can offer their support through schemes such as work experience and T Levels, giving students the opportunity to put their developed soft skills into practice.

The coronavirus pandemic will have also impacted adults’ soft skills as their in-person communication skills would have been affected; especially for those that live on their own with no access to digital devices. So employability and confidence building courses are important, as well as ensuring there are enough community projects in the local area for adults to engage in. The Health and Wellbeing Partnership will play a role in ensuring there is enough provision to improve social inclusion within the district.

## Ashfield's Education and Skills Improvement Strategy



**1. Talent Attraction & Retention**

**We want to develop a new demand-led skills programme in close collaboration with employers, offering innovative pathways to high quality jobs and curating bespoke training, recruitment, Continuing Professional Development and progression solutions that will increase productivity and sustain growth by:**

**Objectives:**

1. Creating an infrastructure that ensures all communities within the Ashfield District can play an active part in the economy, unlocking talent and inspiring all people, regardless of ages, into meaningful careers. Showcasing the district outside of Ashfield as the natural place to excel within our educational and business communities
2. Supporting our sectors by providing their leaders with the ability to introduce and embed best practice, technology advancement and innovation that drive competitiveness and productivity.
3. Providing the ability to recruit, progress and develop workforce capability and productivity that meets immediate needs – unlocking expansion and investment in new services and capacity – closing the existing productivity gap.
4. Ensuring there is a support pathway for budding entrepreneurs that want to set up business in Ashfield, as well as supporting established small to medium sized enterprises (SME’s) that have aspirations for growth.
5. Ensuring there is enough support available for businesses to overcome the challenges imposed by both Brexit and the Covid-19 pandemic.
6. Working with Ashfield’s Health and Wellbeing Team to ensure there is an effective support pathway for vulnerable residents, ensuring they have

**Outcome / impact:**

- Increased number of vacancies over time
- HE/FE/Training Providers attracting students and participation, number of residents starts & achievements, number of apprenticeship starts and achievements.
- Careers programmes are embedded into all stages of education; improving Gatsby Benchmark grading for local secondary schools.
- Residents progressing into STEM careers within Ashfield.
- Improved key Stage 4-5 destinations (% in sustained education/apprenticeship/employment by level)
- Outcomes for apprenticeships by level (% sustained employment/sustained learning/any learning)
- Improved business start-ups and SME growth.
- Higher employment, reduced unemployment and reduced economic inactivity residents.
- Increased qualification levels
- Feedback from business needs surveys

every opportunity to remove particular barriers in order to be in a position to undertake work related activity, and eventually progressing into employment.

## 2. Skills to Meet Demand

We want to develop skills innovation and inclusion by working with business leaders, education, skills support and Research, Development & Innovation (RD&I) institutions to support the concept of an Ashfield ‘total skills solution’ through:

### Aims:

1. Working with Primary and Secondary schools to help them to secure the investment needed to allow them to provide “Outstanding” education provision to Young People, helping to inspire our future generations into meaningful careers
2. Ensuring we are helping our older residents develop the skills needed for prolonged careers within our high-profile sectors.
3. Ensuring there is also an inclusion programme which will target Ashfield’s most deprived communities.
4. Helping our residents address critical labour demand by improving their skills set priorities.
5. Working with the Government, national, regional and local organisational bodies to secure skills budgets that work for our businesses and residents, align with Government initiatives and develop innovative funding opportunities.
6. Supporting our employers to adopt and successfully implement the use of artificial intelligence within their operations.
7. Supporting our employers with implementing low carbon initiatives into their business operations.
8. Ensuring that data will be used more intelligently to better understand people’s destinations, identify gaps in training provision and ensure interventions meet the needs for learning and progression routes

### Outcome / impact:

- Improved outcomes for apprenticeships by level (% sustained employment/ sustained learning /any learning)
- Improved quality assurance reports of local schools.
- Young people Employment/Unemployment rate
- Young People sustainable employment rate
- Local schools are engaging with the community projects within the area; improving social inclusion and student soft skills.
- Reduced “Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)” data and “Not Known” data.
- Improved healthy life expectancy (proportion of life spent in good health)
- Improved employment rate for residents aged 50+
- Improved proportion/number of STEM vacancies in Ashfield
- Improved number of 25+ apprenticeships
- Improved low carbon and green growth skills for residents, businesses and their workforce.
- Feedback from business needs surveys

### **3. Skills for Future Growth**

**We want to work with emerging businesses, their supply chains, academia and skills providers to prepare a comprehensive future skills programme through:**

#### **Aims:**

1. Creating the relevant mechanisms by which the emerging sectors and institutions can share common expertise, capacity and innovation, supporting the development of hubs of knowledge & expertise, that can benefit the wider business community and inform Education & Skills Improvement Strategy development.
2. Ensuring we have meaningful digital skills programmes that support business diversification & hybrid working opportunities, as well as allowing residents to obtain the skills needed to work in the new digital age.
3. Extending investment and scope in the local academic centres of innovation and research expertise and developing a new level of collaborative partnerships that embed the needs of future industry at all academic levels. Creating placements and project opportunities that deliver solutions and a future talent pool.
4. Aiming to build skills development programmes, collaboration networks and infrastructure that enables and supports the local supply chain capacity and capability to develop as natural partners in new growth clusters. Understanding how skills can accelerate the cross-fertilisation of priority clusters leading to a network of supported supply chains and an economy of scale for Ashfield.

#### **Outcome / impact:**

- Improved proportion of STEM vacancies, & STEM achievements at further and higher education.
- Increased number of graduates in employment
- Improved digital skills qualifications for residents
- Partners are working collaboratively to meet the objectives within the strategy.
- Partners are working collaboratively to bid for the funding in order to complete the activities within the action plan.
- Improved quality assurance reports for local educational partners.
- Feedback from business needs surveys

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>5. Aiming to build the specialist skills to support leadership, expansion, finance collaboration and research and development that will support new business growth</li><li>6. Working with our local Universities to develop “graduate retention” programmes to support our graduates in progressing into higher skilled jobs within the district.</li></ol> |  |
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