

Bridging the Gap: Building a Clear Structured Talent Pipeline for Norfolk and Suffolk

During the last 6 months Norfolk & Suffolk Local Skills Improvement Plan teams have held 4 in-person events for Employers and Training Providers to come together to engage in discussions around skills.

Opportunity Pathway – Maids Head Hotel, Norwich

This event was designed to explore the possibilities of a Skills Brokerage Systems in the region.

Dean Pierpoint, Skills Director for the Norfolk & Suffolk LSIP, presented how a simpler system could help businesses navigate the complex skills system. Katy Dorman, Apprenticeship Strategy Manager at Apprenticeships Norfolk explained how a brokerage system has brought success to Apprenticeships Norfolk and highlighted the ease in which businesses can now access Apprenticeship support through their experienced team.

Employers are clear that brokerage only adds value when it simplifies what is currently a fragmented system. Many businesses struggle to navigate the system and to access the guidance and support they need. A dedicated hub of people who understand business needs – and can match employers with the most suitable training and provision – would make a real difference. Ultimately, the aim of brokerage is to ensure individuals are placed on courses that benefit both them and the business.



Skills Safari – Banham Zoo, Norfolk

Navigating the Future of Workforce Development can be difficult without a clear direction of travel. Ian Bartlett and Ellie Weaver lead the discussion explaining the methods used by the Zoological Society of East Anglia to develop their workforce and how collaborative working can impact organisations.

Employers and education providers need to collaborate more closely with one another. That is the key point raised at the events, current approaches seem fragmented and a more coordinated approach would allow better opportunities for all. Support and guidance through a complicated system could tackle the barriers experienced by a single point of contact showing the visibility of the service.



Businesses Across Suffolk Call for Support to Unlock Workforce Skills

Late last year, the Norfolk and Suffolk Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) surveyed more than 300 businesses across the region to better understand the skills challenges they face. The results were striking: nearly three-quarters of respondents said they would upskill their teams if barriers to training, such as cost, time, and programme accessibility, were removed.

To explore these findings in greater depth, Suffolk Chamber has delivered two interactive LSIP events in February and March designed to bring employers together, share solutions, and identify practical ways to build a more resilient and skilled workforce.

Exploring Skills Solutions Across Suffolk

In February, Suffolk Chamber welcomed a diverse panel of business leaders who shared how they are tackling skills shortages within their organisations. The session attracted more than 70 attendees and prompted detailed, lively discussions about real-world challenges and innovative approaches to developing staff.

Guest Speakers included:

- Ben Smith, Commercial & Operations Director, Cross Country Carriers Ltd
- Janina Phillips, HR Business Partner, Morgan Sindall
- Cassandra Clements, Managing Director, East Suffolk Services
- Richard Bridgman, Founder Owner, Warren Services Ltd



Each speaker brought a unique perspective, from creating new pathways to attract talent, to strengthening relationships with training providers and developing staff from within. Their insights highlighted the range of solutions already taking place across our region and demonstrated that businesses are willing to think differently when it comes to skills.

Attracting and Retaining Young Talent

In March, Suffolk Chamber followed up with a second interactive session, this time focused on futureproofing the workforce by engaging young people entering the world of work.

Guest speakers included:

- Christian Bone, CEO, Lofty Heights CIC
- Mark Jeffery, Deputy Operations Manager, Seetec
- Nicci Dedman-Munro, Head of Group Learning & Development, James Hallam
- Chris Wright, Post-18 Lead & The Family Business Project Manager, Suffolk County Council



The panel challenged common misconceptions around employing young people and emphasised the untapped opportunities for businesses to support and shape the next generation through local skills initiatives. Discussion groups explored practical steps employers can take, including offering work experience, supporting entry-level training, and collaborating with local education partners.

Insights to Shape the Next LSIP

More than 120 businesses participated across the two events, offering rich insights into the skills that will be critical over the next five years and the barriers preventing them from accessing the training

they need. These contributions will directly inform the next phase of the Norfolk and Suffolk LSIP, ensuring the plan reflects real employer need while strengthening connections between business, education and training.

A Region Ready to Grow

What emerged clearly from both events is that businesses across Norfolk and Suffolk are ambitious and ready to grow, and that skills are central to unlocking that growth. With continued collaboration and targeted support, the Norfolk and Suffolk LSIP is well positioned to help build a skilled, adaptable, and inclusive workforce that drives long-term prosperity for our region.

