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Norfolk and Suffolk skills plan to train local people for local jobs

Norfolk and Suffolk Chambers of Commerce have today published a new three-year skills plan setting out how training across the two counties must change to meet demand from the region's fastest-growing industries, including offshore wind and nuclear to advanced manufacturing and agri-tech.

[The Norfolk & Suffolk Local Skills Improvement Plan \(LSIP\) 2.0](#) is one of 39 such plans published across England today (July 13)¹. It sets out how the two Chambers, working with Strategic Authorities and [Skills England](#), will partner with colleges, universities, independent training providers and Job Centres over the next three years to make sure local training delivers the skills local employers actually need.

This is the second Norfolk & Suffolk LSIP, building on the first plan published in 2023. Employer Representative Bodies and Strategic Authorities followed statutory guidance published last November by Skills England when developing it, meaning Strategic Authorities now play an enhanced role in shaping the plan, and the actions within it are agreed jointly with universities, colleges and training providers rather than being aspirational.

Powering the Energy Coast

Norfolk and Suffolk are home to 24 energy Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects, spanning offshore wind, nuclear and solar, one of the UK's most substantial and diverse clean energy pipelines. With over £39 billion forecast in offshore wind and nuclear

infrastructure investment over the next two decades, including the development of Sizewell C, the LSIP prioritises the engineering and technical skills the region needs to deliver this pipeline.

A region built on agri-tech, digital, and advanced manufacturing

The plan also highlights the strength of the Norwich Research Park, Europe's largest hub of plant science research, enterprise and training, and home to the John Innes Centre, the Quadram Institute and the Sainsbury Laboratory. Alongside strengths in veterinary and equine science in West Suffolk, the wider agrifood sector employs more than 93,000 people across Norfolk and Suffolk.

Advanced manufacturing contributes over £3.8 billion annually to the regional economy and employs almost 90,000 people, in West Norfolk alone accounting for roughly 28% of the area's total economic output. The region's digital sector, supported by the University of East Anglia, Adastral Park, the University of Suffolk, Norwich University of the Arts and the A11 Tech Corridor linking Norwich to Cambridge, outperforms the regional average for productivity and in places exceeds Cambridge itself.

Five priorities for the next three years

The Norfolk and Suffolk LSIP sets out five priorities for 2026-29:

- Improving system navigation for employers, particularly SMEs
- Aligning further and higher education provision with employer demand
- Equipping the net zero and technical workforce for the Energy Coast
- Increasing foundation digital skills, including cyber safety and AI literacy
- Improving leadership and management training, an area under particular pressure with several widely-used management apprenticeships being defunded from September 2026

The plan has been developed together with local councils and steered by national government and Skills England, reflecting a shared view that skills policy only works when it's shaped locally.

Phil Smith, Chair of Skills England, said, "The Local Skills Improvement Plans give areas a clear roadmap that will help create better skills for better jobs all across the country.

"These LSIPs, alongside the emerging sector jobs plans and the other stakeholder dialogues we are having, is helping us build a much better picture of the skills needs throughout the nation.

"Skills England is excited to play a key role in that journey, so that employers and learners can benefit in local communities."

That local focus is central to the government's wider skills reforms, which put regional leaders in charge of matching training to the jobs actually available in their area.

Jacqui Smith, Minister for Skills, said: "For too long too many people have been locked out of opportunity, and businesses have struggled to recruit the skilled staff they need to build their workforce.

"Local leaders have a unique insight into the skills needs and opportunities in their area, which is why we are putting them in the driving seat to support their community.

"Our reforms, including to the Growth and Skills Levy and the Youth Guarantee, will build a workforce prepared for the demands of today as well as the jobs of tomorrow."

In Norfolk, that local leadership role falls to Norfolk Chambers of Commerce, which has represented the county's business community for over a century.

Nova Fairbank, Chief Executive of Norfolk Chambers of Commerce, said: "Norfolk Chambers of Commerce has championed business in this county for 130 years, and this

next iteration of the LSIP is about making sure that continues. Building on the first version published in 2023, it reflects lessons learned since then. Local authorities now have a stronger role alongside Chambers in shaping the plan, and the actions in it are agreed jointly with universities, colleges and training providers, not just aspirations on paper.

"Norfolk and Suffolk sit at the heart of the UK's energy transition, with 24 major infrastructure projects and billions of pounds of investment heading our way over the next two decades. That only works if we have the engineers and technicians here to deliver it, which is exactly what this plan is designed to secure.

"We see the same principle in action through our Future Careers Expo, which is free for schools and brings over 50 schools and 6,000 students to Norfolk Showground each spring. It gives businesses, large and small, the chance to show young people what careers in their industry actually look like, and it's a direct way of keeping local talent in Norfolk rather than losing it elsewhere.

"This updated plan gives us a clearer framework to keep doing that well, working with employers, colleges and training providers so Norfolk's skills pipeline matches what Norfolk businesses actually need."

Across the county border, Suffolk Chamber of Commerce has taken the same approach, working directly with employers to shape the plan's priorities.

John Dugmore, Chief Executive of Suffolk Chamber of Commerce, said:, "Suffolk is entering a period of significant economic opportunity, with major investment planned across clean energy, advanced manufacturing, digital technologies and infrastructure. However, unlocking that opportunity depends on having the right skills available locally.

"Employers consistently tell us they need easier access to training that reflects the realities of today's labour market and prepares people for the jobs being created across

our region. This refreshed Local Skills Improvement Plan builds on the strong foundations established in 2023 and puts employers firmly at the centre of shaping future provision.

“By working collaboratively with colleges, universities, training providers, Strategic Authorities and Skills England, we have a shared commitment to ensuring local people can access the skills they need to succeed, while businesses can recruit and retain the talent they need to grow. Ultimately, if we want Norfolk and Suffolk to remain competitive, attract investment and deliver long-term prosperity, we must ensure our skills system is aligned with economic demand. This plan provides a practical framework for achieving that over the next three years.”

Employer Representative Bodies and Strategic Authorities/Local Councils followed statutory guidance published last November by Skills England, which explains how key players will work together to plug local skills gaps, when developing the new LSIPs.

The plans have collaboration hard-wired into them, so actions committed to with universities, colleges and independent training providers are not just aspirational, they are mutually agreed.

LSIPs also recognise that skills devolution cannot work in isolation, as getting local skills provision right is vital for unlocking national growth. They will have an important role to play in delivering the Government's ambition for two-thirds of young people to participate in higher level learning, either academic, technical, or an apprenticeship, by the time they are aged 25.

Businesses and training providers wanting to get involved can find out more at the brand new Norfolk and Suffolk LSIP website, www.nslsip.co.uk. The site sets out how employers of any size, from sole traders to large corporates, can help shape local skills

priorities, connect with training providers, and access labour market insight specific to Norfolk and Suffolk.

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Notes to Editors

1. All 39 Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs) from across the UKL are available: [here](#).
 2. Skills England's news release can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/skills-plans-to-train-local-people-for-local-jobs>
- This is the second round of three-year LSIPs. The first plans were published in 2023.
 - Skills England's statutory guidance gave Strategic Authorities an enhanced partnership role in LSIP development with designated Employer Representative Bodies.
 - Employer Representative Bodies are responsible for engaging local small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) with development and delivery of LSIPs – to make sure their training need are met.
 - The full Norfolk & Suffolk LSIP 2.0 is available at www.nslsip.co.uk

For media enquires please contact:

Norfolk : Adam Cracknell adam.cracknell@norfolkchambers.co.uk.

Suffolk: Luke Saunders luke@suffolkchamber.co.uk

About the Norfolk & Suffolk Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP)

The Norfolk & Suffolk Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) is designed to put employers at the heart of the skills agenda in this region.

Working in collaboration since September 2022, Norfolk and Suffolk Chambers of Commerce, in conjunction with the Department for Education (DfE), continue to highlight the fundamental skills requirements for key sectors across our region and have developed a roadmap for change to help address those skills shortages.

The LSIP advances stronger relationships with a range of stakeholders, including local authorities, colleges and independent training providers and has continued to ensure that the employer voice is clearly heard.

About Norfolk Chambers of Commerce

The Norfolk Chambers is a not-for-profit independent business and is one of 53 accredited Chambers by the British Chambers of Commerce.

We are a business membership organisation, from start-up businesses, small and medium enterprises, and on to global brands, the Norfolk Chambers of Commerce embraces and represents the County's business community.

About Suffolk Chambers of Commerce

The Suffolk Chamber of Commerce has been providing unwavering support for the success of businesses in Suffolk, and the region's thriving economy, since 1884.

As a private sector, not-for-profit member led organisation, our core competencies of Connect, Support, Inform, and Inspire reflect our commitment to advocating for our members' interests at all levels. Through lobbying and advocacy, strong relationships with policymakers, networking events, professional development, business resources, and access to exclusive services, we empower businesses to grow and thrive.

