



East of England

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East of England
Local Government Association

EAST OF ENGLAND LEVELLING UP DELIVERY PARTNERSHIP

Towards a Strategic Framework for
Levelling Up Skills in the East Of England

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The East of England APPG is kindly supported by British Sugar, London Stansted Airport, the East of England LGA, AstraZeneca, Anglian Water, Transport East, the UK Innovation Corridor, Freeport East, England’s Economic Heartland, CityFibre and BuildEast.



The academic partners of the East of England APPG are the Centre for Public and Policy Engagement at the University of Essex, The University of Cambridge, Anglia Ruskin University and the University of East Anglia.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Improving employment and skills is crucial to the levelling up agenda as skills are a major driver of economic disparities between people and places. In a region such as the East of England - which has great potential for economic growth given its strengths in innovation and renewable energy – getting skills right is also critical if the projected 600,000 new jobs that are to be created are to be filled over the next ten years.

The Government has sought to **raise skill levels and address skills and employment challenges** through a number of strategies and initiatives including its target included in DLUHC's Levelling Up White Paper: ***By 2030 the number of people successfully completing high-quality skills training will have significantly increased by 200,000.***

The joint APPG and EELGA report **Levelling Up the East of England 2023-2030: The East of England's Progress Towards Achieving the Government's Twelve Levelling Up Missions** assessed that to meet this target in the East of England there would need to be in the order of 20,000 more people undertaking training with 8,000 more people completing courses in the lowest skilled areas.

However, skills participation has been declining significantly over the past 10 years, across all regions in England. In 2022/23 the indicative participation rate per 100,000 population was 2,573 (approximately 2.7% of adults) for the East of England, the ***lowest of all the regions in England***. The report therefore concluded there was "low confidence" that this mission will be delivered.

The East of England APPG met with the Minister for Skills, Apprenticeships and Higher Education to discuss the issues holding back greater skills provision in the region and then, as part of the Levelling Up Delivery Partnership agreed between the APPG, EELGA and DLUHC, it was agreed to explore in more detail the barriers to more education and training and to identify solutions.

The result is this strategic framework document which has been written by partners from the region's Chambers of Commerce, local authorities, Universities, Further Education colleges and private providers. It begins with an overview of the region's four Local Skills Improvement Plans; looks at how to increase apprenticeships; identifies what is needed to get infrastructure and funding right; and finishes with the required other actions to deliver levelling up. It also highlights a range of case studies of best practice across the region.

Local skills improvement plans

Norfolk and Suffolk, Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire, Essex, and Cambridgeshire and Peterborough all have well-defined local skills improvement plans (LSIPs) aimed at enhancing education, boosting employment, and addressing the mismatch between the skills possessed by the local workforce and the demands of the labour market. The following sectors were identified as priority sectors in most of the region's LSIPs:

- **Green Skills:** Norfolk and Suffolk for example have seen a surge in demand for green skills, particularly in the renewable energy sector. Skills such as environmental engineering, ecological surveying, and sustainable construction have become increasingly vital to keep up with a growing green agenda. Hertfordshire, Essex, and Cambridge are also witnessing an increasing need for green skills in eco-friendly agriculture, conservation, and renewable energy technology, aligning with the broader national and global focus on sustainability and environmental conservation.

- **Digital Skills:** The demand for digital skills is required in all the mentioned regions, with a focus on areas such as software development, data analysis, cybersecurity, and digital marketing. Employers are seeking individuals proficient in coding, digital content creation, and the use of various software tools and platforms as well as those with the technical skills to support the convergence of AI and Life Sciences.
- **Soft Skills:** Such as communication, teamwork, and adaptability play a crucial role in the success of individuals in these regions. Employers in all the regions consistently emphasise the importance of soft skills, recognizing that they are essential for effective collaboration, problem-solving, and innovation in the workplace.

Increasing Apprenticeships

Apprenticeship uptake has been impacted by the Apprenticeship Levy (2017) and Covid-19 such that all UK regions saw a fall in apprenticeship participation between 2018 and 2023. In 2022/23 apprenticeship participation rate per 100,000 for the East of England was 1,644 (approximately 1.6% of adults) compared with the South-West with the highest participation rate of 2,160 and London with the lowest at 1,120. **The East of England is the second worst - 8th out of 9 regions in England.**

The report identifies eight barriers to increasing apprenticeships and proposes ten solutions, summarised as follows:

- Further devolution of all post 16 skills funding, including all funds raised by the Apprenticeship Levy, and further amendments to Apprentice Levy Transfers (which should be made more flexible).
 - Incentivise through tax credits companies to: a) volunteer their staff to provide teaching support on apprenticeship courses in key sectors; and b) support and encourage (especially via procurement) their UK supply chains to hire apprentices
- C) Government should work with Local and Combined Authorities and regional partners to tackle the practical barriers which prevent young people from taking up apprenticeships including:
- *amending child benefit rules to ensure child benefit is maintained for apprentices under the age of 20*
 - *being more flexible regarding the Maths and English elements of apprenticeships at Levels 1 and 2.*
 - *ensuring Degree Apprenticeships have meaningful parity with academic Degrees, by:*
 - *provider funding for Degree Apprenticeships to be increased in line with funding for traditional university Degrees;*
 - *provider regulatory burden for Degree Apprenticeships to be decreased in line with regulatory burden on traditional university Degrees;*
 - *national campaign to dispel myths about Degree Apprenticeships in comparison to traditional university Degrees.*

Getting further education & other skills infrastructure and funding right

Three main challenges are identified in the report: lack of infrastructure, widespread teacher shortages, and insufficient and inflexible funding. Five specific recommendations are made, summarised as follows:

A) Increasing the Adult Education Budget in the East of England to support infrastructure projects including the delivering at least one more Institute of Technology in the region.

B) Greater funding and/or flexibility of funding to allow providers to:

- deliver the courses in skills that are in reality needed rather than just deliver qualifications;
- allow adults to acquire a free **second** Level 3 (A level, T level or NVQ) qualification, which is meeting a skills need linked to the local and/or regional economy;
- support initiatives to recruit and retain teaching staff within skills shortage areas.

C) There needs to be a region-wide plan to meet the need of Health and Social Care skills across the East of England.

Other actions to deliver levelling up

The following three barriers to the further uptake of skills, especially by young people, were identified: an increasing number of young people not in education, employment or training; a lack of access to employability skills training to progress into the workforce, including training in Maths and English; and a lack of awareness of training/earning routes available post-16/-18. A range of 'best practice' actions that the region is already taking forward are identified along with four recommendations for Government action, summarised as follows:

A) The Government's planned 'one stop shop' website, which will 'join up' and present the various support services and training opportunities available, should be launched as soon as possible.

B) We welcome the launch of the DfE's Skills for Life website and encourage the Government to avoid single 'product' campaigns (e.g. T levels) in favour of a 'know your options' approach so that young people and adults may make informed choices e.g. across A levels, T levels, apprenticeships and jobs at each age/stage/life transition point.

C) Funding for transport for young people to industry placements (for T levels; 45 days+ and work experience) and to meet the costs of travel to first jobs should be provided.

CASE STUDY – Utilising devolved funding

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Mayoral Combined Authority is an example of how devolution of skills budgets can drive success. In the past three years Cambridgeshire and Peterborough region has increased AEB participation, against a backdrop of national decline. It has achieved this by targeting further education cold spots, deprived areas and seldom-engaged cohorts. This has included diverting 50% of AEB funding to deprived areas, and fully funding ESOL (English for speakers of other languages) and bursaries for care leavers progressing into Further Education.

This success can be replicated with apprenticeships and can be used to drive the much-needed diversity in apprenticeship take up (especially in key sectors such as Aerospace, Artificial Intelligence, Automotive, Construction, Creative industries, Digital, Life Sciences, Nuclear, Offshore Wind, Rail, Tourism). We therefore call for a further devolution of skills budgets, for a single, devolved funding pot for all skills, post-16, including apprenticeships in order that system-wide solutions for regional skills challenges can be adopted.

LOW CONFIDENCE IN DLUHC'S SKILLS MISSION IN THE EAST OF ENGLAND

Improving employment and skills is crucial to the levelling up agenda as skills are a major driver of economic disparities between people and places. The Government has sought to raise skill levels and address skills and employment challenges through a number of strategies and initiatives including this target included in DLUHC's Levelling Up White Paper:

By 2030 the number of people successfully completing high-quality skills training will have significantly increased by 200,000. [To meet the target in the East of England there would need to be in the order of 20,000 more people undertaking training with 8,000 more people completing courses in the lowest skilled areas.]

The joint APPG and EELGA report **Levelling Up the East of England 2023-2030: The East of England's Progress Towards Achieving the Government's Twelve Levelling Up Missions¹** assessed there was "low confidence" that this mission will be delivered.

In finding "low confidence that this would be met the East of England APPG and EELGA recommended that:

- **To meet the future needs of the region, there needs to be much greater in-work education provision and participation in further education and skills training for adults, improvements in the overall quality of training, access to training (linked to rurality and transport factors) and a better alignment with employer needs.**
- **The Government should promote "skills devolution" to allow opportunities for greater local oversight of skills funding and coordination across local partnerships.**

The East of England APPG met with Rt Hon Robert Halfon MP, Minister for Skills, Apprenticeships and Higher Education in July of 2023 to discuss levelling up skills. After the meeting a letter was sent to the Minister raising five key points, which are listed here with the Minister's response noted against each one in italics:

- A) *The need for a further East of England Institute of Technology*** – There are currently no plans or funding available for additional IoTs, however if Ministers do decide to make plans in future to expand further, we would very much welcome working with East of England on any new proposals.
- B) *Simplification of bureaucracy, brokerage and messaging*** – We want to go further, and bring careers and skills-related services together across government to create a one-stop-shop where people can compare the full range of occupations, training, and education opportunities available to them, and take the next steps.
- C) *Skills training is not just about certificates*** – We are delivering key flagship skills programmes that contribute towards Levelling Up skills, including Free Courses for Jobs, Multiply, Skills Bootcamps and apprenticeships. We have made good progress in transforming the skills system and making it more responsive to employer need and have taken steps to ensure skills provision is responsive to specific local labour market needs in places.
- D) *Skills devolution could and should move on apace*** – We are committed to further devolution for new areas [not just Combined Authorities], but it is important that areas that want additional skills powers and funding do so through an earned autonomy model. They must be able to evidence strong outcomes, which demonstrate the impact that skills provision is having in their area in supporting progression and getting people into well paid, sustainable jobs.

E) Meeting the DLUHC target for skills will require significant effort nationally and regionally - The government is committed to creating a world-leading skills system which is employer-focused, high-quality, and fit for the future. Our reforms are strengthening higher and further education to help more people get good jobs, upskill, and retrain throughout their lives, and to improve national productivity. Our skills reforms aim to provide a ladder of opportunity for everyone to succeed, particularly young people, regardless of their background.

This Strategic Framework for levelling up skills in the East of England demonstrates the East of England's ongoing efforts to help meet the Levelling Up target for skills by looking in depth at key issues affecting young people and those regarding increasing apprenticeships; getting infrastructure right; and the required other actions to deliver levelling up. It begins with an overview of the region's four Local Skills Improvement Plans with the priorities they identify if the region is to meet the skills challenges it faces, both now and in the future.

CASE STUDY – Creating a youth movement to improve skills

Essex County Council has worked with local charities and businesses to create a youth movement, starting in Canvey Island. This youth movement is 'by the youth, for the youth' in that they have set it up (with mentoring support), they have branded it (with marketing support) and they are promoting information on local training, jobs, apprenticeships and mental health services to young people on youth-led social media. The youth movement is called 'We Rise'- with plans to roll out across Essex – recognising that many young people don't engage with corporate channels and local government services directly. Each youth founder has a business mentor, usually a young person themselves e.g. Microsoft staff who came through the apprenticeship route.

Key facts

- The East of England was the region with **the fastest growing population** between 2011 and 2021 – up 448,000 people or 8.3%. It is now home to a population of 6.35 million people.
- The East of England is **one of the most economically successful regions** in the UK, contributing £162 billion GVA to the UK's economy (2021). Its GVA per capita is third highest in the UK and the region is a net contributor to the Exchequer.
- The region is home to many of the growing industries of the future and is projected by ONS to deliver around **600,000 new jobs by 2036**.
- During the period from May – July 2023 in the East of England there were 3,250,000 people economically active (16+) – of these 3,112,000 are in employment and 139,000 unemployed, 4.3% (compared to 3.2% for UK). There are 734,000 people (16+) economically inactive.
- Skills participation has been declining significantly over the past 10 years, across all regions in England. In 2022/23 the indicative participation rate per 100,000 population was 2,573 (approximately 2.7% of adults) for the EoE, the **lowest of all the regions in England**. 42% of the resident population aged 16-64 had an NVQ4 or above qualification - the UK rate is 45.5%.
- Apprenticeship uptake has been impacted by the Apprenticeship Levy (2017), Covid-19 and other apprenticeship reforms (e.g. the introduction of Standards and End Point Assessments) such that all UK regions saw a fall in apprenticeship participation between 2018 and 2023. In 2022/23 apprenticeship participation rate per 100,000 for the East of England was 1,644 (approximately 1.6% of adults) compared with the South-West with the highest participation rate of 2,160 and London with the lowest at 1,120. **It is the second worst - 8th out of 9 - regions in England.**²

² 2022/23 data - Updated Oct 23 [Apprenticeships and traineeships, Academic year 2022/23](#)

OVERVIEW OF THE REGION'S LOCAL SKILLS IMPROVEMENT PLANS (LSIPS)

Norfolk and Suffolk, Hertfordshire, Essex, Cambridge, Luton & Bedfordshire all have well-defined LSIPs (Local Skills Improvement Plans) aimed at enhancing education, boosting employment, and addressing the mismatch between the skills possessed by the local workforce and the demands of the labour market.

Each of the region's LSIPs were based on:

- Collaboration between local businesses, educational institutions, and governmental bodies to develop tailored skills training programs, apprenticeships, and work-study initiatives.
- The establishment of specialised education and training centres, such as Institutes of Technology, designed to equip individuals with the skills needed for high-demand industries.
- Active engagement with STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) ambassadors, reinforcing the focus on promoting proficiency in these areas.

Priority sectors for the region's LSIPs were identified using a number of different factors, including:

- High growth potential – expected to be capable of significant above-trend growth in near future subject to barriers being addressed (e.g. green skills);
- High need/change - expected to be or currently subject to significant barriers to growth or adverse business conditions in near future (such as workforce recruitment and retention, technology including automation, skills development, and significant regional capacity loss - e.g. the agri-food sector in Norfolk and Suffolk);



- *LSIPs also took account of, rather than duplicating, existing initiatives already underway to develop skills provision to meet the needs of key sectors, for example existing construction skills initiatives and social care and health training (please see the exemplar case study at the end of this chapter).*

The following sectors were identified as priority sectors in most of the region's LSIPs:

- **Green Skills:** Norfolk and Suffolk for example have seen a surge in demand for green skills, particularly in the renewable energy sector. Skills such as environmental engineering, ecological surveying, and sustainable construction have become increasingly vital to keep up with a growing green agenda. Hertfordshire, Essex, and Cambridge are also witnessing an increasing need for green skills in eco-friendly agriculture, conservation, and renewable energy technology, aligning with the broader national and global focus on sustainability and environmental conservation.

- **Digital Skills:** The demand for digital skills is required in all the mentioned regions, with a focus on areas such as software development, data analysis, cybersecurity, and digital marketing. Employers are seeking individuals proficient in coding, digital content creation, and the use of various software tools and platforms. In Cambridgeshire and Peterborough it has also been identified that a shortage of people with technical skills to support the convergence of AI and Life Sciences is a limiting factor to growth.
- **Soft Skills:** Such as communication, teamwork, and adaptability, play a crucial role in the success of individuals in these regions. Employers in all the regions consistently emphasise the importance of soft skills, recognizing that they are essential for effective collaboration, problem-solving, and innovation in the workplace.

Each LSIP includes priority actions to be delivered to improve skills provision and close skills gaps. The skill system priorities across the Norfolk and Suffolk, Hertfordshire, Essex, Cambridge, Luton & Bedfordshire regions reflect a unified focus on addressing key challenges and opportunities within their respective labour markets.

Some priority programmes include:

- **Tailored Training Programmes:** LSIPs emphasise the need for customised training programmes that offer the specific skill requirements of local industries. By tailoring training initiatives to the demands of the labour market, LSIPs aim to ensure that individuals are equipped with relevant skills to meet the evolving needs of employers.
- **Collaboration with Education Institutions:** Collaboration with universities, colleges, and vocational training providers is a key priority. By working closely with education institutions, the regions aim to align the curriculum with industry needs and promote pathways for career advancement in high-demand sectors.
- **Apprenticeships and Work-Study Initiatives:** Prioritising apprenticeship programmes and work-study initiatives is a shared focus across the four LSIPs. Efforts are geared towards creating practical, hands-on learning experiences that bridge the gap between education and employment creating a skilled workforce with industry-specific competencies and experience.
- The Local Skills Improvement Fund (LSIF) is now enabling further education (FE) and independent training providers across England to respond collectively to the priorities set out in LSIPs. LSIF awards covering the period 2023 to 2025 have been made by the Department for Education. The overwhelming majority of this funding is for capital expenditure e.g. new facilities and equipment; a small percentage is for revenue – in other words for new courses and curriculum and to support excellence in college leadership, governance and teaching.
- In the East of England, the following awards have been made by the Government:
 - Cambridgeshire and Peterborough - £2.5 million for Green Construction, Green Engineering & Manufacturing, Digital, Life Sciences skills improvements;
 - Essex, Southend and Thurrock - £5.6 million for Green, Digital, Creative and Cultural, Green Construction, Health and Social Care, Education, Engineering and Manufacturing skills improvements;
 - Hertfordshire - £3.1 million for Digital, Green Construction, Health and Care, Creative Industries, and Life Sciences skills improvements;
 - Norfolk and Suffolk - £4.8 million for Agri-Tech, Construction, Engineering and Manufacturing skills improvements;
 - South East Midlands (including Bedfordshire and Luton) - £5.2 million for Green, Digital, Green Construction, Health and Social Care, Logistics, Agri-Tech, Engineering and Manufacturing skills improvements.

- By articulating and prioritising these skill system areas, Norfolk and Suffolk, Hertfordshire, Essex, Cambridge, Luton & Bedfordshire are strategically positioning themselves to meet the demands of a rapidly evolving economy by creating sustainable, inclusive, and opportunity-rich environments for their residents. These priorities are also aligned with the UK government's levelling up agenda, which aims to promote economic prosperity and social mobility.

CASE STUDY: Addressing social care and health sector skills needs

Working in partnership, Norfolk and Suffolk County Councils are developing **a Social Care & Health Sector Skills Plan**, which will provide a clear structure and foundation for prioritising workforce skills development. The flexible, evidence-based, skills plan will also ensure that the sector is best-placed proactively to seek funding for future projects and programmes across the region.

The plan sets out key priorities, with associated actions, focused on:

- increasing the qualification levels and accreditation of the workforce;
- diversifying the talent pool;
- promoting training to develop specific skills;
- supporting workforce retention through the creation of positive working environments.

The priorities and actions, which will be overseen by the Social Care and Health Sector Skills Partnership, are designed so that they are transferable into, and will serve to enhance, the range of work already being undertaken by partners in the two counties. The aim is that stakeholders will use the plan and the network of relationships across the partnership to maximise the impact of activity.

Other local initiatives to support the skills needs of the social care sector are key to addressing the ongoing challenges for the sector in terms of workforce capacity. Supporting recruitment to health and social care, **The Apollo Project - East Coast College**³ is a £5.5m investment from NHS England for Further Education colleges in Norfolk and Suffolk.

The Adult Social Care Workforce Strategy Steering Committee oversees the delivery of the "Norfolk and Waveney Adult Social Care Workforce Strategy: Living a Good Life – Excellence in Care 2021-2026". This publication identifies strategic priorities to overcome challenges facing the Adult Social Care workforce across Norfolk and Waveney and ensures continued high quality and person-centred care and support to local people and families. Representatives from NCC, NorCA, SCC, Voluntary Norfolk, the ICB and UEA are part of the committee.

From 1st January 2024, Norfolk County Council's 'The Care Market Workforce Team' will provide end-to-end support for care providers and members of the workforce on recruitment, retention, training and skills development. For more information see **Social care and health training and skills development - Norfolk County Council**⁴ and **How to Become a Care Worker - Jobs & Careers at Norfolk Care (norfolkcarecareers.co.uk)**.⁵

³ <https://www.eastcoast.ac.uk/projects/the-apollo-project/>

⁴ <https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/42764>

⁵ <https://www.norfolkcarecareers.co.uk/>

APPRENTICESHIPS

Apprenticeship uptake has been impacted by the Apprenticeship Levy (2017), Covid-19 and other apprenticeship reforms (e.g. the introduction of Standards and End Point Assessments) such that all UK regions saw a fall in apprenticeship participation between 2018 and 2023. In 2022/23 apprenticeship participation rate per 100,000 for the East of England was 1,644 (approximately 1.6% of adults) compared with the South-West with the highest participation rate of 2,160 and London with the lowest at 1,120. **It is the second worst - 8th out of 9 - regions in England.**

Key issues acting as barriers to more apprenticeship take-up

- A) ***Growing a thriving regional workforce requires system-wide leadership and strategic focus*** but our skills system is fragmented, and this includes apprenticeships. Harvard University's recent report: ***Why hasn't UK regional policy worked?*** makes a strong case of deeper skills devolution and an acknowledgement that skills policy must align with local business needs and industry strategy. Despite the best intentions of LSIPs, in many areas practical mechanisms are still not in place to enable strategic, joined up place-based skills delivery which addresses sub-regional needs. Often "joining up the dots" is frustrated by too many differences in mechanisms of implementation, including funding streams, commissioners and governance.
- B) ***Training money levied in the region is not fully invested back into the region.*** Nationally, the amount raised by the Levy in 2022/23 was £3.5bn and the amount made available by Treasury for Apprenticeship funding in England was £2.5bn (with a further £600m for devolved nations). This means over £400m of money raised by the levy was kept by the Treasury. This is estimated to rise to £800m in 2024-25. This is despite there being a chronic shortage of funding across the skills system. There are also large numbers of employers

who do not spend their full Apprenticeship Levy, which results in much-needed local funding being sent back to the Exchequer.

- C) ***Lack of work-readiness*** in apprenticeship applicants contributes to unfilled vacancies. In large part due to Covid, too many young people are now insufficiently prepared for how to survive and thrive in the workplace. We agree with the evidence Sir Charlie Mayfield, Chair of QA and Be the Business, provided the 2023 Education Committee inquiry into post-16 qualifications: that around half of young people were not ready for work. This is supported by further evidence to the Committee that 66% of current skill-shortage vacancies were at least partially caused by a lack of people or personal (not technical) skills.

It is worth noting Norfolk County Council are developing a pre-apprenticeship programme to tackle just this, supporting young people who are not yet ready to start an apprenticeship including those who are NEET or from disadvantaged cohorts. Norfolk delivered an increase of 18% in apprenticeship starts, over double the national increase of 8.6% in 2021/22. This has been achieved through a range of projects that recognise that support for both employers and individuals is required in order to stimulate demand.

- D) ***Many companies lack commitment to workforce and next-generation training*** preferring to hire rather than train (despite the tight labour market). Lack of work-readiness and an overly complex skills system are cited as the key reasons for lack of employer engagement, especially for those who don't have in-house training expertise/capacity.
- E) ***The Maths and English element of assessment leads to low completions*** with, otherwise excellent, apprentices, failing to successfully finish their training. Currently, 50% fail due to difficulties meeting the English and Maths functional skills element of their apprenticeship.

Moreover, the removal of traineeships has resulted in those without the required functional skills being unable to progress onto level 3 apprenticeships. This will lead to further future workforce shortages as regional and national trends show higher levels of young people missing education, and they will struggle to re-engage with apprenticeships at a later date.

F) **Colleges can't recruit enough tutors due to comparatively low salary levels;** becoming an apprenticeship tutor is therefore not an attractive career move. In Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, a college withdrew from delivering Skills Bootcamps, citing tutor shortages as the underlining reason. In Norfolk & Suffolk, the delivery of electrician and plumbing apprenticeships is impacted adversely by tutor shortages, despite buoyant demand from industry for more of these. The number of apprentices cannot increase without addressing this critical shortage of tutors.

G) **We don't have parity of esteem between traditional university degree routes and degree apprenticeship routes** among applicants and their influencers, including parents and school/college careers advisors. Too often, degree apprenticeships are portrayed as academically less challenging than a traditional university degree – whereas degree apprenticeships are, in fact, a different mechanism for accessing vocational learning which is equivalent to a traditional university degrees.

H) **Many universities lack the necessary incentives to offer Degree Apprenticeships,** stymying national growth of provision. This is because:

- **There isn't parity in funding.** The funding received by an education provider to deliver a degree apprenticeship is less than the funding received by an education provider to deliver a traditional university Degree – even though more resource is required for a Degree Apprenticeship: for example, to facilitate regular progress reviews and to meet detailed management/reporting/compliance requirements.

- **Ofsted inspection of degree apprenticeships** is culturally out-of-step with the regulation of Higher education in general – in terms of exercising top-down 'judgement', rather than working collaboratively on required improvement where improvement is necessary.

CASE STUDY - Cambridge Unlocked

Cambridge Unlocked is a programme run by Form the Future in conjunction with Cambridge Enterprise and other venture capital investment firms working with start-ups in Life Sciences and tech. The goal is to give year 12 students from disadvantaged backgrounds opportunities for internships in start-ups and in professional services firms that support the Cambridge ecosystem, opportunities that normally feel closed to young people who lack family connections. Form the Future recruit and match students to the companies, supporting the companies to make the placements successful. The students find the experience extremely rewarding; "the best thing I've ever done in my life" was how one student recounted her experience – and some have been offered part-time work while they complete year 13. These internships, which are paid, have given the students access to a whole new network of contacts, valuable experience and belief in their abilities.

TEN APPG ASKS

- 1. Further devolution of skills, to single devolved funding for all post-16 skills, including apprenticeships.** Devolution, to date, has enabled us to make good progress on regional skills development – e.g. Cambridgeshire and Peterborough region has increased participation in Adult Education against a backdrop of national decline. This has included directing 50% of AEB funding to the region's deprived areas, fully funding ESOL and bursaries for care leavers who progress into FE. This success can be replicated with apprenticeships, driving the much-needed diversity in apprenticeship take-up (especially in key sectors such as Aerospace, Artificial Intelligence, Automotive, Construction, Digital, Creative industries, Life Sciences, Nuclear, Offshore Wind, Rail, Tourism, Utilities). make good progress on
- 2. Legislation to enshrine the Apprenticeship Levy Transfer into one, devolved, skills funding pot for Upper Tier Local Authorities.** Essex, Norfolk and Cambridgeshire County Councils have all successfully established an Apprenticeship Levy Transfer Service, which allows Levy donors to utilise unspent levy to support the apprenticeship training costs for smaller businesses. This has led to increased learning and training opportunities for residents, and long-term benefits for levy donors and recipients. Levy-paying businesses can transfer up to 25% of their annual funds to SMEs to fund apprenticeship training. Please see [Essex Transfer Levy Transfer Scheme, Main- Essex County Council - YouTube](#)
- 3. Reform of the Apprenticeship Levy.** Employers are calling for greater flexibility in how their Levy can be spent to support skills development – e.g. spend on pre-apprenticeship/work readiness, supplementary training/ modular course spent on areas such as digital skills and transferring greater amounts to SMEs.
- 4. Increasing Apprenticeship funding bands in line with inflation.** Many remain unchanged since 2017 despite huge inflation in delivery costs during this time. It is worth noting that if the full amount raised by the levy each year were to be made available by Treasury for apprenticeship funding, this would facilitate annual increases in all apprenticeship funding bands.
- 5. Companies that volunteer their staff to provide teaching support on apprenticeship courses in key sectors receive incentives such as tax credits.** We need to encourage employers to play their part in growing and sustaining apprenticeships for the future, to help widen opportunities for young people and ultimately secure their own skilled workforce pipeline. Enabling companies to claim tax credits, should they release staff to teach apprenticeship courses in key sectors (such as Aerospace, Artificial Intelligence, Automotive, Construction, Creative industries, Digital, Life Sciences, Nuclear, Offshore Wind, Rail, Tourism, Utilities), will also incentivise them to work more closely with training providers.
- 6. Companies that formally support and encourage (especially via procurement) their UK supply chains to hire apprentices (based on workforce size) receive support such as tax credits, or other incentives.** Creating a culture that rewards companies that offer apprenticeships, by giving them a competitive edge in the marketplace, will help to drive the required change. Providing tax credits to companies that formally support and encourage (via procurement) their UK supply chains to hire apprentices will stimulate that competitive edge.
- 7. Government should work with Local and Combined Authorities and regional partners to tackle the practical barriers that prevent young people from taking up apprenticeships.** We recommend that government work with Local and Combined Authorities and regional partners to develop a package of support for apprentices up to the age of 25 in entry-level and low-paid work. This will address travel cost concerns often faced by apprentices.

8. Government should amend child benefit rules to ensure child benefit is maintained for apprentices under the age of 20. For would-be apprentices from disadvantaged backgrounds, the cost of living while training can be a strong barrier, especially for those who do not have families that are able to financially support them throughout their training. Amending child benefit rules to ensure child benefit is maintained for apprentices under the age of 20, will go some way to ease the burden of living costs while training for apprentices from disadvantaged backgrounds.

9. Maths and English elements of apprenticeships should be more flexible, with alternative accreditation – especially at Levels 1 and 2. The current route for acquiring the Maths and English element of apprenticeships is not sufficiently fit for purpose for those potential apprentices who did not achieve the required standards at GCSEs. Colleges and other further education providers report that those individuals tend to bounce around the system before disengaging until their mid- to late-thirties. This is especially acute at Levels 1 and 2.

10. Degree Apprenticeships to have meaningful parity with academic degrees. We welcome UCAS including Degree Apprenticeship opportunities alongside traditional Degree routes. However, there is still much further to go to achieve full parity between the two routes to achieving a Degree. To do this the following would take us forward:

- UCAS to include a 'clearing' process for Degree Apprenticeships as well as traditional Degree routes.
- Funding for Degree Apprenticeships for the provider to be increased in line with funding for traditional university Degrees.
- Regulation and compliance requirements of delivering Degree Apprenticeships to align with regulation and compliance for traditional university Degrees.
- Post-nominals (letters after one's name) to be awarded to all those who have completed a Degree Apprenticeship in the same way an individual with an academic Degree is entitled to use BA or BSc.
- National campaign, aimed at constituent audiences (parents, learners, employers), to dispel the myth that a Degree Apprenticeship is at a lower academic level than a traditional Degree.

CASE STUDY - The East Of England Centre of Excellence For Health Apprenticeships

The University of Suffolk (UoS) established an East of England Centre of Excellence for Health Apprenticeships (CEHA). They are the central hub for all enquiries and then each of the partner colleges will offer different Health-related apprenticeships e.g. Suffolk New College will offer a Dental Nurse Apprenticeship. This will help with cohort building across the region through partnership working and ensure apprentices use the best providers relative to their standard, including specialist facilities.

GETTING FURTHER EDUCATION & OTHER SKILLS INFRASTRUCTURE AND FUNDING RIGHT

The East of England has a very well-developed network of further education as well as higher education providers who have an excellent track record of working with the private and third sectors to meet the skills needs of its communities. There are, however, several key issues affecting the sector.

Key issues acting as barriers to meeting the skills challenges of the region

A) *Lack of infrastructure*

- The East of England currently has one Institute of Technology, the South East IoT which is a partnership between 6 further education Colleges, 3 Universities – including Anglia Ruskin University and the University of East Anglia – and a wide range of employers. Its current programmes reflects the priority sectors identified by the South East of England Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) area: Health & Life Sciences, Business, Logistics, Construction, Digital, Engineering and Automation. With the ending of LEPs, the curriculum of the SEIoT is likely to shift from SELEP towards that of the Eastern region, for example renewable energy technologies and agri-tech/food production. However, as the IoT is based in Thurrock, Harlow and Chelmsford its accessibility to those who live in the five counties in the East of England other than Essex is significantly limited.
- The National College for Nuclear (NCfN) is however recognised as a pseudo-IoT and is planning to meet the particular skills needs of the Sizewell C project. Established in 2016, the delivery model of the NCfN is one of a federated network of twelve Approved Providers across the country, who deliver training and education to meet the skills needs of major nuclear employers and their supply chain, in particular for higher-level technical skills.

There are three locations in the East of England - East Coast College in Lowestoft, West Suffolk College in Bury St Edmunds and Suffolk New College in Ipswich. Again, accessibility to these sites is clearly limited for those not living in Suffolk.

- There is a shortage of venues in our region whereby apprentices can undertake their End Point Assessments. This can delay course completion for between 90 days to six months. Some of these are in subjects where there is a particular local skills shortage, such as C&J/Brick, Plumbing/Gas and Installation Electrician. Funding needs to be released to increase the number of suitable EPA venues in regions where there is a shortage.
- Transport to education providers to enable learners to access courses is a significant challenge in rural areas, which tend to have lower participation rates in further and higher education than urban areas. Fenland in Cambridgeshire is a particular example of an area where residents face significant barriers to learning owing to transport difficulties.

B) *Widespread teacher shortages*

- All of the providers in the region are experiencing the same problems and challenges in terms of recruitment and retention of skilled staff in specific sectors. The skills shortage areas regionally are aligned to areas where there is a distinct local demand e.g. construction and engineering, to meet the need of the large infrastructure projects in the region.
- An unintended consequence of COVID is that due to flexible working the travel to work radius has broadened for the technical workforce. This means they are in greater demand and even less likely to want to teach. In short, many potential teachers can command a higher salary in industry.

- There have been a range of efforts between FE colleges and employer stakeholders to create a “dual workforce” to address common skills shortages. Many providers are experiencing skills shortages themselves, for example in digital and engineering, and it is therefore in their interest to help meet the skills gap by ensuring their own staff can work part-time as teachers.
- The Norfolk County Council Workforce Skills Initiative has developed a series of pilot projects working with the four local largest AEB providers to develop and trial a range of potential solutions aiming to create scalable models through which teaching staff can be attracted and retained in the profession, increasing the capacity across providers.

C) *Insufficient and inflexible funding*

- The current LSIF and AEB funding, unless increased, won't be sufficient to deliver on the skills agenda and support the large infrastructure projects required to deliver the skills of the future. In fact, the AEB allocations to devolved areas are based on the 2017/2018 formula return in terms of the proportions. This clearly is becoming more outdated as we go forward.
- Flexibility is needed for Level 3 courses and to provide free courses for jobs and shorter course qualifications. For example, to make a difference in meeting the demand for green skills, we have to put greater incentives in place. The qualifications have not kept up with the skills demand, so providers often have a skill versus qualifications dilemma. Providers have had to fund extra time in order to allow learners to learn new skills that meet learner and employer demand, but it is qualifications that are funded and are still the currency for progression through levels of learning. Therefore, there is a quandary as to what providers deliver.

- The Cambridge and Peterborough Mayoral Combined Authority (CPCA) have introduced some flexibilities for particular disadvantaged cohorts, such as young people leaving care. Going forward across a wider geography and accessing the devolved AEB can begin to align flexibilities, increasing access for individuals and simplification for providers.

CASE STUDY – South Essex advanced technical skills brokerage

One successful innovation has been South Essex Advanced Technical Skills, a training brokerage established to support Essex businesses which do not individually have sufficient apprenticeship opportunities/wider training needs to attract a specialist training provider (e.g. for advanced ‘green’ engineering). Essex County Council, together with South Essex Councils, and Thames Freeport have worked to pool training needs (across employers) collaborating with university and other training partners, to enable businesses to recruit residents to these STEM skills shortages and improve upskilling opportunities.

FIVE ASKS

1. **Increasing the Adult Education Budget in the Eastern Region to support infrastructure projects.**

The greatest challenge for the East of England is the amount of Adult Education funding the region receives and then ultimately allocates to its providers. The current rate of funding will certainly not be sufficient to allow the region to support the skills requirements for the many large infrastructure projects in the East of England such as Sizewell C and the Lower Thames Crossing. At least one other Institute for Technology is required in the region. Moreover, as recommended in Chapter Two, there should be a single funding pot for all skills post-16, including AEB and Multiply, which is devolved to Upper Tier Local Authorities or combined Authorities.

2. **Greater flexibility of funding to allow providers to deliver skills rather than qualifications.**

Due to the model of funding around study programmes, the sector faces a challenging dichotomy between the delivery of qualifications and the delivery of skills. A number of the existing qualifications offered by Awarding Organisations are out-dated (2016 specifications) and do not include modern methods – the skills that our employers currently require. For example, Suffolk New College delivers a range of programmes as part of its Construction offer, but very few of these qualifications reflect modern, sustainable construction methods.

- Finding the correct balance between the teaching of qualifications and the delivery of skills can be problematic and restrictive. Therefore, more flexibility in funding to allow for skills-related delivery rather than a system that relies purely on qualifications, which are often out-dated or not necessarily meeting skills requirements, is very much needed. It would also be good to consider 'licences' such as a Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) card, that would enable more people to move into employment. In addition, there should be flexibility for up to 50% of Skills Bootcamps funding to be utilised to develop Bootcamps that meet local labour and skills needs in any sector.

3. **Flexibility of funding to support adults in acquiring a second Level 3 (A level, T level or NVQ) qualification, which is meeting a local and/or regional skills need.**

The further education sector craves flexibility in allowing adults to receive full funding for second Level 3 qualifications, particularly where they are meeting particular local or regional skills needs through their retraining. Currently, adults only receive full funding to study for a first full Level 3 qualification. However, this often prevents adults looking to retrain and subsequently move from one sector area to another. Where a particular adult wishes to upskill and move into a skills shortage area or where there is a particular need, it is somewhat perplexing that this is not fully funded.

4. **The Government and the region should support initiatives to recruit and retain teaching staff within skills shortage areas.**

Teacher shortages must be addressed if the skill challenge is to be met. Various initiatives - including Suffolk New College's Industry Partner Programme - have encouraged "dual working" arrangements. Through this work, employers now see the benefits of releasing their staff (the industry professionals) to support the delivery of skills in colleges, as it is an investment into their future workforce. Funding to implement findings from such pilot activity should be found so these approaches can be rolled-out across the region.

5. **There needs to be a region-wide plan to meet the need of Health and Social Care skills across the region.**

The DHSC's recently published NHS Long Term Workforce Plan shows a national picture of skills pipeline planning. There is a need to develop a complementary East of England plan that draws on, supports and extends, the strengths of the various providers of the region. This would also ensure the East of England generates its own pipeline of healthcare undergraduates who will remain in the region and meet the needs of its communities.

LEVELLING UP SKILLS

To level up skills will require more of those without qualifications to receive training, especially in the areas in the region with lowest skilled rates. This chapter examines three challenges in progressing that agenda.

Key issues acting as barriers to levelling up skills

A) *After the pandemic, there are increasing numbers of children absent from school and young persons not in education, employment or training (NEETs)*

In common with national trends there are increased rates of young people missing from education. Figures reported for the East of England show for 2021/22 academic year (the last when statistics were available) a total of 12,530 children were missing from education at some point during the year⁶. Essex had the highest figure in the East of England region with 3,890 children identified as missing from education. This regional trend will inevitably lead to lower levels of attainment, leading to increased levels of young people (16+) not in education, employment or training (NEET).

This situation has been compounded by the Government's removal in August 2023 of pre-employment traineeship programmes for young people (16 to 24 year olds). There is no alternative national programme in place to support those without the requisite qualifications/employability skills to progress onto an apprenticeship or Level 3 study. Post-Covid the skills delivery sector has therefore experienced a rise in young people who have not gained the relevant qualification level to progress onto their desired courses, particularly those at entry level and Levels 1 and 2.

B) *Lack of access to functional skills training in Maths and English and to employability skills training to progress into the workforce*

There is Multiply for adults. This is targeting the 'hardest to reach' with significant funding deployed to support adults (19 years and above) without the equivalent of a 'grade C' at GCSE in maths. However, many young people (16 to 19) lack the requisite maths – and English – qualifications to access skills training unless they are in 'mainstream education' (college or school). This is a barrier to Levelling Up, particularly for the increasing numbers of home-schooled children, and those supported by Youth Services.

In addition, entry requirements for vocational courses at Level 1+ (GCSE or equivalent) are proving to be a barrier for young people accessing courses and gaining skills for work. Often the courses offered as an alternative to a Level 1 course are classroom-based learning with no vocational element. This can be the very style of learning with no practical application with which the young person may struggle to engage.

C) *Lack of awareness of training/earning routes available post 16/18*

Many young people find the online vacancy apprenticeship portal quite daunting and complex to navigate. This is evidenced by the fact that the Careers Hub in Essex reported (in October 2023) that approximately 86% of young people had information about apprenticeship pathways through schools' careers education and 72% understood apprenticeships were an option but only 2% actually became apprentices.

Overall, the training provision offer for 16 -18 is very confusing to navigate and is very dependent on where the learner resides. Learners report having trouble in finding face-to-face support for young people to navigate the pathway to education/training post-16. The blanket move to online services for applications, inclusive of bursary enquires, is also a barrier.

There is a need for young people from families where literacy and/or digital skills are low to access a high level of support to gain access to education and training places. Additionally young people from economically disadvantaged backgrounds are hindered from taking up an apprenticeship, due to family financial constraints (losing some benefits due to the young person being classified as in employment rather than learning).

Opportunities to 'level up' skills in the East of England

Levelling up the skills system requires us to think differently about how to engage with communities, how and where provision is delivered and systemically rethinking how the skills system is organised and operated to overcome the barriers outlined above. There are a range of best practice actions that should be taken forward by East of England key organisations and stakeholders:

A) *Ensure the service offer is clear and provides a route to access:* Many of the barriers outlined above stem from a lack of visibility and consistency in the services that are available. It is necessary to focus on the interconnectivity of services and initiatives, avoid duplication and ensure services are built around people's lives, to empower them. Pathways, ladders and bridges are needed. An example would be Essex County Council's 'Project Jigsaw' where the County Council has begun sharing initiatives, information and co-funding to improve work and life choices through a single publicly accessible portal known as Essex Opportunities (www.essexopportunities.co.uk). This is a 'one-stop shop' for information and advice on jobs, careers, skills and training that provides all the information needed to help an individual build a career. This bringing together of services and focus is particularly needed at transition points in life.

B) *Enhanced Public Sector Leadership:* The relationship between the public sector and employers should be strengthened to ensure that there is ongoing and constructive dialogue on skills needs and how employers can play a key role in supporting local employment and the development of talent. The social value requirements of many procurement contracts are evolving with a greater focus on tracking and making explicit Corporate Social Value requirements in this regard and there is a profound opportunity to work with employers to showcase and explain how they do this. Chambers and Local Authorities can also lead greater coordination/propagation of programmes such as those developed by John Lewis Partnership to provide work-based higher education (earn and learn) for care leavers. This approach is of course relatively simple for a large organisation, whereas most employers, especially SMEs, lack resources to strategically address the skills gaps.

Regional Education directorates should also be encouraged to support longer-term strategic planning for the labour market, with a view to at least 2030. This will increasingly require the education system to provide young people with higher-level communication, collaboration, creative problem solving, and comprehension skills, using project-based learning methods, harnessing industry engagement with Career Hubs/ Enterprise Coordinator networks and regional business networks.

There is also potential to explore creating new commissioning models for gaps in provision or study programmes for young people (16 to 19) which may be more accessible under devolution. Opening the possibility of widening the market to include more support via the independent training provider sector could provide flexible starts plus to increase opportunities in-year.

C) Ensure financial support is available to enable individuals to access levelling up opportunities:

Financial support is necessary to ensure those from disadvantaged backgrounds facing barriers can access the opportunities available. Critically, support is needed for travel to/from work experience (not just college) as this is a huge barrier to building soft/work readiness skills, confidence, and accessibility. This is particularly of relevance in coastal/rural and other Levelling Up localities.

There is also a need to help those seeking apprenticeships who reside in boroughs located on the outskirts of London and therefore face disadvantage compared with counterparts who are in receipt of Transport for London free or subsidised travel. Consideration should also be given to exploring the provision of training bursaries helping those who are not eligible or suitable for an apprenticeship and would normally have to pay towards their training. Specifically this could support those who are NEET or have limited knowledge of the training routes post 18 to develop new careers or change careers to higher-value, higher-quality employment without the barrier of financial expenditure which affects many of those on low incomes.

D) Focus on broader employability skills and creating a culture of learning: It is imperative to ensure a culture of learning that begins at home. This means influencing parents/carers to support young people by explaining how they have a key role in enabling achievement. Further resource should be dedicated to instruction on work etiquette and preparing for interviews/work environment. Some examples include the “Super 8”⁷, the Skill Builder Hub⁸ and Cities of Learning⁹ approach. Local authorities have key roles in these type of projects.

There should also be a ‘blanket provision’ commitment to the 14 -18 age group, including face-to-face support where necessary to enable access to a Functional Skills – Maths and English - programme as a minimum (including for those who are Electively Home Educated). This would avoid a significant number of young people being left unskilled and unqualified and going on to poor outcomes in health and employment.

What must the Government do to level up skills?

A) Introduce the Government’s planned ‘one stop shop’ website as soon as possible. At the East of England APPG meeting in July, the Minister, the Rt Hon Robert Halfon MP, was specifically asked what the Government was doing to ‘join up’ and present the various support services/training opportunities available in England, to ensure individuals and support services (like Essex County Council) may present support services and training opportunities collectively. The Minister responded that this would be launched at the end of 2023. However, this has not yet happened.

B) Increase the value of apprenticeships. There is an urgent requirement for a Government drive to increase the currency and value of apprenticeships, as at present very few vacancies include them as a required skills/qualification. Promotion of apprenticeships should take place alongside (not separately from) the highlighting of A levels and T levels at Level 3, with degree apprenticeships highlighted alongside traditional university degrees at Levels 4-6. A key ‘win’ would be to increase flexible access to pre-apprenticeship/short employability programmes/entry to employment programmes to compensate for the loss of traineeships.

⁷ Super 8 are a set of 8 ‘soft’/employability skills in a framework for education by Strode College/Somerset schools. Employers in Somerset have agreed to guarantee interviews to students who complete the Super 8. There are other systems which provide for collation of evidence of skills for work readiness e.g. Skill Builder Hub (below) being explored and adopted by some schools in Essex.

⁸ Skill Builder Hub is a free-to-use online platform hosting all the resources and impact measurement tools for building the eight essential skills as outlined by the Skills Builder Universal Framework. The essential skills are defined as those which are needed in any kind of job, and are what The Careers & Enterprise Company define as ‘employability skills’.

⁹ Cities of Learning - Design for Life - RSA. Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Region of Learning was created to establish a way for young people to gain digital badges that demonstrate their achievements in a range of non-academic pursuits. Sometimes young people fail to make the connection between things they’ve done or skills gained in one walk of life

The Government also needs to present options and opportunities by age/stage/life transition points - e.g. choosing sixth form/post 16 options at 15, or returning to work/ changing careers, 'earn and learn' options. We welcome the launch of the DfE's Skills for Life website and encourage the Government to avoid single 'product' campaigns (e.g. T levels) in favour of a 'know your options' approach so that young people and adults may make informed choices e.g. across A levels, T levels, apprenticeships and jobs.

C) Address the lack of funding for transport to industry placements (for T levels; 45 days+¹⁰ and work experience, as well as for travel to first jobs), where transport barriers currently impede Levelling Up. Qualifications alone do not prepare any age group for skilled employment. Funding for travel to training is also necessary, at least initially. In Essex, this means that Levelling Up target places, such as Canvey, Basildon, Harlow, Tendring, and target cohorts, are unable to build employability skills and experience, which are vital to employment. These young people are hugely disadvantaged by missing vital opportunities with Ford, Leonardo, London Southend Airport, Simarco, DP World and many more local businesses.

D) Review the current Functional Skills requirement. This is a blockage to apprenticeship completion rates (both a mental barrier for participants and lacking in content/application to the real world of work). A review of functional skills is also required because, despite the recent funding increase, there is still a feeling amongst training providers that the system requires more flexibility to ensure that what is taught is applicable to the wider learning experience. Functional skills shouldn't just be viewed as an exit/completion requirement, it should be a requirement explicitly linked to vocational need.

CASE STUDY – Skills infrastructure to support NHS long-term workforce plan

The University of East Anglia (UEA) provides training for a wide range of healthcare occupations including nurses, midwives, doctors, clinical psychologists, health and social care workers, paramedics and physician associates. UEA's latest infrastructure investment will provide a new Anatomy Suite located next to the Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital.

Aiming for completion by April 2025, the new facilities will offer increased capacity for teaching at undergraduate, postgraduate, apprenticeship and specialist training levels. Alongside expansion of existing training courses for nurses, allied health professional and clinical psychologists in response to the NHS workforce plan, UEA is seeking to grow the Norwich Medical School by offering a new Graduate Entry Medical course to fast-track doctors to practice medicine in our region within four years of starting their training. The course will focus on tackling health inequalities often experienced by coastal and rural communities to ensure that new medics are well suited to staying in the East of England after graduation.

One area of notorious skills shortage in the East of England is dentistry. Norfolk's dental desert – in terms of access to NHS dentistry – is the worst in the country. UEA is working with partners – the Norfolk and Norwich University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust and the Quadram Institute (which specialises in gut health, microbiology and food research) – to progress the Norwich Centre for Dental Development into a new UEA Dental School to train the next generation of dentists for our region and beyond. The NHS Long Term Workforce Plan aims to provide 28% more dental undergraduate places by 2028-9 and 40% more by 2031-2. New dental training places must be allocated to those areas, like Norfolk, where the NHS dental access need is most acute.

¹⁰ T level placements require learners to engage in at least 45 days on the job training in the industry they are studying. Unlike apprenticeships, where often the learners work close to their employers or have established relationships for regular travel to work it is often the case that T level placements are some distance and transport is at cost for the learner. This can be prohibitive to those on low incomes.

WITH THANKS TO ALL CONTRIBUTORS

Chapter 1 prepared by Toby Warren (Suffolk Chamber of Commerce) and Dean Pierpoint (Norfolk Chambers of Commerce) in collaboration with Andy Sparks (Essex Chamber of Commerce).

Chapter 2 prepared by Claire Paul and Constance Anker (Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority) with input from Claire Pike (Anglia Ruskin University) and Katy Dorman (Norfolk County council).

Chapter 3 prepared by Alan Pease and Amie Howard (Suffolk New College), Jan Feeney (Norfolk County Council) and Saskia Hervey (University of East Anglia).

Chapter 4 prepared by Ruth Gilbert and Johnathon Cuthbertson (Essex County Council), Paula Hornett (Essex Provider Network) and Anne Bailey (Form the Future).

The East of England APPG is kindly supported by British Sugar, London Stansted Airport, the East of England LGA, AstraZeneca, Anglian Water, Transport East, the UK Innovation Corridor, Freeport East, England's Economic Heartland, CityFibre and BuildEast.



The academic partners of the East of England APPG are the Centre for Public and Policy Engagement at the University of Essex, The University of Cambridge, Anglia Ruskin University and the University of East Anglia.

