

Southwark Skills Delivery Plan 2023-25

Introduction

This document sets out the shared priorities of the Southwark Skills Partnership and its intended response to them over the next two years. Building on the ambitions of Southwark's Skills Strategy 2018-2022, the 2023 Skills Delivery Plan supports the council's vision for a greener, fairer and more resilient borough, central pillars of our forthcoming economic strategy and [Borough Plan](#). Central to a greener, fairer and more resilient borough is an economy that works for all, with a first-class and accessible skills system that supports every resident – regardless of age, circumstance or background – to pursue and progress in their career of choice. The purpose of the skills partnership and this delivery plan is to ensure that such a skills system exists here in the borough.

Chaired by the Cabinet Member for Jobs, Skills and Business, the Southwark Skills Partnership has a core membership of council departments, skills and employment providers, large employers and business groups, which draws upon the knowledge and expertise of a wider network of stakeholders. The partnership is responsible for the delivery of the actions set out in the delivery plan and the plan itself, ensuring it continues to be reflective of, and responsive to, current and emerging skills needs.

The partnership's focus is the skills system here in Southwark, however it recognises the need to align with skills initiatives that have a broader geographic focus. [The central-London Local Skills Improvement Plan](#), for example, which will make recommendations for improving the post-16 technical education system in the central-London area, is fully aligned with this plan.

An equitable and inclusive skills system

Sadly, the great diversity of our borough isn't reflected in all sectors of our economy. [Southwark Stands Together](#) is the council's commitment to tackling racial inequality and helped shape this delivery plan, and ensuring residents from all backgrounds have access to our skills system, enabling them to access employment opportunities within key sectors of our economy, is an overarching objective. In addition to racial inequalities – and all too often intersecting with them – are barriers such as mental and physical health conditions, financial difficulties, and caring responsibilities, which our response will also pay attention to.

[Southwark Works](#) supports populations deemed furthest from the labour market, including vulnerable young people and care leavers, older-aged residents with physical health conditions, residents with mental health conditions, learning difficulties or disabilities, and the homeless. The partnership will work closely with Southwark Works to ensure these residents, who face the most significant barriers to employment, are supported by the local skills system.

Working with employers

Effective employer engagement will be key to the success of each of the actions set out in this plan. To implement the changes we propose, and for residents to benefit from them, employers must be willing to invest in their workforce and work collaboratively with skills providers to help

improve the local skills offer. In return, they need access to training provision that responds to their needs and allows them to recruit locally. They also need advice and support to engage with the skills system and provide more work-based learning opportunities.

The Southwark skills system

The borough's skills system supports residents of all ages and provides a wide range of learning options. Preparing our youngest residents for life and further study are our schools and academies located throughout the borough, including a number of schools supporting residents with special educational needs and disabilities. Further Education is delivered by our Sixth Forms and colleges, including [Southwark College](#) and [Morley College](#). Residents looking to advance to Higher Education have on their doorstep a number of top universities, including [London South Bank University](#), [University of the Arts London](#), [King's College London](#), and [The Engineering and Design Institute](#). Operating alongside our formal educational institutions are providers such as [Southwark Council's adult, family learning and skills service](#), the [Southwark Construction Skills Centre](#), as well as a network of community-based organisations offering a range of accredited and un-accredited learning options.

Communications

Across all of the skills themes, the partnership will deliver a range of activities to promote new and existing opportunities and increase engagement with the local skills offer. To maximise reach and impact, communications may be geographically and/or demographically targeted and a variety of media will be utilised, including social media. Work will also be undertaken to ensure our digital offers are accessible and engaging. This is about more than just keeping information relevant and up to date, it's also about exploring new and innovative options, like virtual work experience and automated information and advice services.

Skills themes

The first six skills themes focus on key sectors of our economy: those that support our ambitions for a fairer, greener and more resilient economy here in Southwark. The final three skills themes cut across all sectors of our economy. They are important aspects of any skills system and key pillars of ours, serving to raise awareness of and increase engagement with the local skills system, prepare low-skilled residents for life, learning and work, and to encourage the provision and take-up of work-based learning opportunities.

In each section we set out our priorities and what we intend to do and when. We also list which members of the Southwark Skills Partnership have put themselves forward to help deliver each action. Support will also be provided by organisations that are not yet part of the partnership, so the lists are not exhaustive.

1. Life sciences

With an annual turnover nationally of £90bn, the life sciences sector is a key driver of economic growth. It is also a sector that has the potential to fundamentally improve the length and quality of life of our residents. Southwark and Lambeth's emerging life sciences district, SC1, is expected to generate approximately 9,000 jobs in the next 3 years and 33,000 once fully established. To meet the demand for a skilled workforce, the local skills offer will need to cover a range of new areas and our life sciences sector will need to provide sufficient opportunities for work-based learning. Across the UK, Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups are underrepresented in the sector, with Black employees occupying less than 1% of roles. Thus, the sector will bring not only jobs to the borough, but equality and diversity issues too. Addressing these challenges must therefore be a key priority for SC1.

Objectives

- Ensure pathways are in place, particularly for communities underrepresented in the UK life sciences sector, to access the skills and employment opportunities arising from the SC1 Life Science District, integrating and building upon existing activities.

Actions	Supporting partners	Delivery period (indicative)
<p>1.1 As part of the SC1 Employment and Skills Strategy Group, working alongside Lambeth Council and King's Health Partners, develop an Employment and Skills Actions Plan informed by the recommendations from the 2023 SC1 Employment and Skills Study, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - increasing levels of science capital amongst young residents; - development of career pathways, including an integrated, local approach to the delivery of life sciences apprenticeships; - upskilling careers leads and advisers on routes into the sector; - delivery of a local engagement and outreach programme. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - British Land - Morley College - Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust - London South Bank University - Southwark College - Southwark Council Adult Education Service - University of the Arts London 	TBC
<p>1.2 Promote local skills and employment support and opportunities for life sciences careers via the SC1 Life Science District Talent Page.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Southwark Council Local Economy Team 	Ongoing

2. Green

The green sector encompasses a wide-range of activities that contribute to carbon reduction and other environmental goals. In Southwark, it is expected to be fast-growing sector and generate a significant number of employment and training opportunities over the years to come. This is good news for the borough, but if our residents are to benefit they must acquire the skills necessary to work in the sector, and our local skills system must keep pace with the growing demand for these skills. As well as those looking to enter the sector, many workers will need to reskill, with the greatest level of reskilling expected in construction, transport and manufacturing. These sectors have higher proportions of Black, Asian and minority ethnic workers and the local skills response must ensure that these communities are not further disadvantaged in the move to net zero.

Objectives

- Support residents, particularly those at the greatest risk of being disadvantaged by the move to net zero, to access employment and training opportunities within the green economy.
- Responding to emerging needs, explore new ways to develop local capacity to deliver green skills locally.

Actions	Supporting partners	Delivery period (indicative)
<p>2.1 Through the Green Skills Hub at London South Bank University, provide careers information, advice and guidance on green careers and skills pathway, and opportunities for Southwark residents to equip themselves with the skills to work in the green sector.</p> <p>2.1.1 Provide 382 jobs/apprenticeships, 119 work placements, and 1,230 qualifications.</p> <p>2.1.2 Deliver a programme of marketing and engagement, including jobs fairs, a schools programme and employer workshops.</p> <p>2.1.3 Provide virtual work experience opportunities in local green sectors.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - London South Bank University / Green Skills Hub - Southwark College - Southwark Construction Skills Centre - The Engineering and Design Institute London (TEDI) 	<p>To 31 December 2024</p>
<p>2.2 In partnership with Lewisham and Lambeth Councils, develop local capacity to deliver green skills.</p> <p>2.2.1 Conduct a feasibility study into establishing a retrofit skills centre.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - GoodPeople - Morley College - Southwark Council Adult Education Service - Southwark College - Southwark Works - University of the Arts London 	<p>2.2 – Ongoing</p> <p>2.2.1 – To 31 December 2023</p>
<p>2.3 Secure employment and skills opportunities for residents from the Council's investment in net zero initiatives, including construction of low-carbon homes and energy efficiency retrofit of buildings.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Southwark Council 	<p>Ongoing</p>

3. Digital

Digital jobs – also referred to as Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) jobs – make up over 9% of the jobs here in the borough, and over 13% of our businesses are operating in the sector. Demand for advanced digital skills is increasing, yet participation in digital skills within formal education is falling. Alternative skills pathways, such as boot-camps and self-teaching, are increasingly popular and better able to keep pace with the fast moving sector. However, integration with the skills system and access to them needs to be improved, particularly for those facing barriers to learning. Within the sector, significant gender and ethnicity imbalances exist, and people from lower-income backgrounds are underrepresented. This suggests barriers to awareness, understanding and access to opportunities, alongside challenges with recruitment and employment practices.

Objectives

- Provide residents, particularly those underrepresented in the sector, with the opportunity to explore and further their understanding of the range of digital careers.
- Support those interested in a career in the sector to acquire the skills and to take their first steps.
- Explore ways to integrate alternative skills pathways, such as boot-camps, into the local offer.
- Improve employment outcomes from higher level FE and HE digital skills courses, particularly for underrepresented groups.

Actions	Supporting partners	Delivery period (indicative)
<p>3.1 In collaboration with industry representatives, deliver a comprehensive entry to digital careers programme, aimed explicitly at widening access to the sector, encompassing the following activities.</p> <p>3.2.1 Taster sessions, covering a range of digital careers and career routes, delivered by sector representatives from underrepresented communities.</p> <p>3.2.2 A training programme that will equip residents with the skills and knowledge required to either (a) enrol on a recommended digital skills boot-camp, (b) apply for an entry-level digital position, or (c) progress through further education.</p> <p>3.2.3 Employment support for higher-level FE and HE learners from underrepresented groups to improve progression to industry employment, including support with the application process and interview preparation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Better Bankside Business Improvement District - Morley College - Southwark College - Southwark Works - University of the Arts London 	<p>1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025</p>

4. Health and social care

Southwark’s health and social care sector accounts for 11% of the borough’s jobs, spread across a diverse range of health and social care providers, including two leading NHS Foundation Trusts. Demand for health and social care services is increasing, as is complexity of need, presenting challenges as well as opportunities. As the sector grows and adapts, new employment opportunities will emerge for those looking to enter the sector and progress within it, which the skills system must respond to. Despite high vacancy rates, the sector continues to face workforces challenges and support is needed to improve access for our residents. There are opportunities to build on sector-focussed skills programmes locally, such as the Healthcare Sector-based Work Academy Programme (SWAP) at Southwark College, and to deepen our understanding of the skills requirements of social care providers locally.

Objectives

- Integrating existing skills programmes, explore how pathways to health and social care employment can be improved to help address longstanding workforce challenges and unlock local opportunities for our residents.
- Work with social care employers to raise the profile of the sector locally and align local skills provision with local skills need.

Actions	Supporting partners	Delivery period (indicative)
4.1 Healthcare Sector-based Work Academy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Southwark College - Guy’s and St Thomas’ NHS Foundation Trust 	Ongoing
4.2 Trial a programme of job application support integrated with the SWAP at Southwark College. Learnings to inform a longer-term solution for both health and social care.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Guy’s and St Thomas’ NHS Foundation Trust - Southwark Works - Southwark College 	To 31 March 2024
<p>4.3 Mayor’s Academies Health and Care Hub. Working alongside five other London Boroughs, support the South East London Integrated Care System with the design of activities to be delivered through the hub, including working with employers to understand their needs and improve the local skills offer, increase take-up of local roles, and raise the profile of the sector.</p> <p>4.3.1 Explore developing a bespoke SWAP linked to entry-level vacancies with local health and social care employers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Department for Work and Pensions (Job Centre Plus) - Guy’s and St Thomas’, King’s Hospital, and South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trusts - London South Bank University - Southwark College - Southwark Council Adult Education Service - Southwark Council Public Health Team - Southwark Works - Southwark-based social care providers 	To 31 March 2025

5. Creative and cultural

The creative and cultural sector covers television, film and video, music, the performing arts, and plenty more. It's the reason why many people choose to live, work and visit our borough, which is considered a centre of creative excellence. However, "straight, able-bodied white men dominate London's creative sector", and only 16% of the workforce are from lower-income backgrounds ([Creative Majority Report](#)). A likely reason for this lack of diversity is the level of risk involved with entering the sector, for those wishing to establish a business as well as those seeking employment, whose first step may well be an unpaid internship. Those with greater financial capital are better able to bear the associated risks and find their way into the sector, putting those from low-income backgrounds at a significant disadvantage.

Objectives

- Inspire residents from disadvantaged backgrounds to pursue a career in the creative and cultural sector, including inspiring school-age residents to progress to FE, HE and other learning.
- Help those from disadvantaged backgrounds mitigate the risks associated with establishing themselves within the creative and cultural sector, as an entrepreneur or an employee.

Actions	Supporting partners	Delivery period (indicative)
5.1 Working with industry representatives, expand the offer of creative sector insight opportunities available locally, such as paid work experience and internships, with a focus on young and underrepresented residents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Better Bankside Business Improvement District - London South Bank University - Morley College - Southwark College - Southwark Council Culture Team - Southwark Council Public Health Team - Southwark Education Business Alliance - University of the Arts London 	1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025

Actions	Supporting partners	Delivery period (indicative)
<p>5.2 Deliver a programme of support for residents looking to enter or progress within the creative and cultural sector, as an employee or entrepreneur, targeting underrepresented groups. Activities may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - mentoring and advice around career development and sustainability; - show-casing local examples of creative leadership - networking opportunities - a programme of paid work experience and employment opportunities with Southwark-based creative organisations. 	<p>Same as 5.1</p>	<p>1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025</p>

6. Hospitality

As a central-London borough, Southwark is home to a diverse and bustling hospitality sector catering to a wide range of tastes, enjoyed by residents and visitors alike. Despite continued strong employment growth in the sector, large recruitment and skills gaps still exist. The sector also has a poor reputation, with many citing low pay, long hours and a lack of opportunities for progression as reasons not to pursue a career. Despite this negative perception, many good jobs and careers exist within the sector, but awareness of these and of the pathways to them is lacking. These issues of reputation and awareness sit alongside an issue of provision, with the local skills offer currently unable to meet sector demand for skilled labour.

Objectives

- Raise the profile of the hospitality sector locally.
- Increase awareness of the employment and training opportunities available locally and of the pathways to them.
- Improve and increase capacity for hospitality skills provision locally to provide new pathways to hospitality jobs locally.

Actions	Supporting partners	Delivery period (indicative)
6.1 Establish a Hospitality Skills Centre in Southwark, designed and delivered in partnership with industry representatives, to improve and increase capacity for hospitality skills provision within the borough.	- Sea Containers	TBC
6.2 Alongside Lewisham Council, support the Mayor's Academies Hospitality Hub at Lewisham College with the design and delivery of its activities, working with employers to formalise the regional skills response, provide work-based training and employment opportunities, and inspire residents to work in the hospitality sector.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Better Bankside Business Improvement District - British Land (Canada Water Connect) - Guy's and St Thomas NHS Foundation Trust (hospitality) - London South Bank University - Southwark Education Business Alliance 	To 30 September 2024

7. Careers Information, Advice and Guidance

Careers Information, Advice and Guidance (CIAG) enables residents to make informed decisions about which learning and career pathways to follow. There is a range of CIAG support available, yet the offer is fragmented and difficult to navigate for both residents and employers. Further, work is needed to ensure CIAG is accessible to everyone who needs it, regardless of age, circumstances or career aspirations. It must also meet a range of additional needs, such as physical and mental health conditions, which act as barriers to engagement. Finally, our schools and colleges have a key role to play in providing CIAG to our young residents, but require ongoing support from the local employment and skills system to do so.

Objectives

- Support our residents to navigate the local CIAG offer, as well as regional and national offerings.
- Provide residents with low-intensity needs with an easily accessible, light-touch online CIAG service.
- Ensure residents receiving employment support have access to suitable higher-intensity CIAG, where required.

Actions	Supporting partners	Delivery period (indicative)
7.1 Reinstate National Careers Service support for Southwark Works advisors, better enabling them to provide higher-intensity, one-to-one support to residents who need it, particularly those furthest from the labour market.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Southwark Works 	To 31 December 2023
7.2 Explore options for a digital CIAG offer, aiding navigation of existing offers and capable of providing high-volume support to residents with low-intensity needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Better Bankside Business Improvement District - British Land - GoodPeople - Southwark College - Adult Education Service - Southwark Council Post-16 Service - Southwark Council SEND Team - Southwark Education Business Alliance - South London and Maudsley and Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trusts (7.4) - Southwark Works 	1 October 2023 to 30 September 2024

Actions	Supporting partners	Delivery period (indicative)
7.3 Develop a 'CIAG+' offer catering for the needs of residents facing additional barriers to work, such as physical, mental and financial barriers.	- Same as 7.2	1 October 2023 to 30 September 2024
7.4 Explore a work experience model for older-aged residents, including those with CIAG+ needs.	- Same as 7.2	1 October 2023 to 30 September 2024
7.5 Develop a more joined-up approach to the delivery of CIAG within our schools and colleges, particularly for young people at greater risk of becoming NEET.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Southwark Council Post-16 Service - Southwark Council SEND Team - Schools and College leads (incl. Morley and Southwark Colleges) - Southwark Education Business Alliance 	1 October 2023 to 30 September 2024

8. Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships are a great way for residents to start their career and offer the opportunity to work in a wide range of fields. They're also an attractive alternative to more costly options such as degrees, as students can earn while they learn. Promisingly, demand in Southwark for higher-level apprenticeships is growing, however demand for intermediate-level apprenticeships is falling and overall we are seeing fewer young people taking up apprenticeships. Alongside this, the number of SMEs offering apprenticeships is also falling, with costs and difficulty navigating the apprenticeship system cited as reasons for this. Finally, preparation for an apprenticeship is crucial and pre-apprenticeship programmes have a key role to play here, yet take-up is low and the effectiveness of existing programmes is questionable.

Objectives

- Provide more apprenticeship opportunities locally, particularly for our young and disadvantaged residents, with a focus on intermediate level and our priority sectors.
- Support our residents to be 'apprenticeship ready'.
- Better integrate pre-apprenticeship options, such as traineeships, with the apprenticeship system locally.
- Provide advice, guidance and assistance with training costs to Southwark-based businesses looking to create apprenticeship opportunities for Southwark residents.

Actions	Supporting partners	Delivery period (indicative)
8.1 Transfer up to 25% of Southwark Council's annual apprenticeship levy to SMEs based in the borough to cover training costs. Participating SMEs to also receive support with setting up an apprenticeship.	- London Progression Collaboration	Ongoing
8.2 Establish a Southwark Apprenticeship Levy Pot in partnership with other large employers, securing a greater share of unspent apprenticeship levy for Southwark businesses and our residents. Participating SMEs to also receive support with setting up an apprenticeship.	- London South Bank University - London Progression Collaboration	Ongoing
8.3 Southwark Council and its partners to commit to providing more apprenticeship opportunities for Southwark residents.	- All partners	Ongoing

Actions	Supporting partners	Delivery period (indicative)
8.4 Explore sector-specific pathways to apprenticeships, including advice and guidance, insight opportunities, pre-apprenticeship learning and apprenticeship application support.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- British Land- Better Bankside Business Improvement District- London South Bank University	To 31 March 2024

9. Essential skills

Essential skills – namely maths, English, including for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), and digital skills – enable residents to function in society and progress in learning and employment. It's fundamental that all of our residents have these skills, yet many do not. 13.9% of residents aged 16 and over have no recognised qualifications, and these residents are overrepresented in the more deprived parts of the boroughs. Demand for essential skills learning is high in Southwark, however many seek provision outside the borough, suggesting an issue of supply. Certain populations are less likely to engage with essential skills provision, such as men and the over 50s, with stigma and the intimidating nature of formal education spaces cited as reasons. Finally, essential skills provision outside of formal education spaces, such as in community settings, isn't well understood by the Skills Partnership, hindering strategic planning.

Objectives

- Improve our collective understanding of essential skills provision within the borough, enabling a more informed approach to supply-side interventions, awareness of community need, and stronger links between community and formal education providers.
- Provide more opportunities locally for residents to acquire essential skills outside of formal education spaces.
- Support more of our low-skilled residents to engage with essential skills learning, focussing on underserved communities and alternative forms of provision, such as workplace learning.

Actions	Supporting partners	Delivery period (indicative)
9.1 Provide free English, Maths and Digital Skills in Southwark Council libraries and family centres.	- Southwark Council Children & Adult's Service	Ongoing
9.2 Essential skills provision, demand and capacity across the borough to be mapped, in both community and formal education spaces, informing a set of actions for further improving the local offer and aiding referral and signposting.	- Southwark Council Local Economy Team (with support from appropriate partners)	To 31 March 2024

Actions	Supporting partners	Delivery period (indicative)
9.3 Pilot alternative learning programmes, such as workplace learning, with a focus on supporting populations less likely to engage with the local offer.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- British Land- English for Action- Morley College- Southwark College- Southwark Council Adult Education Service	1 October 2024 to 31 March 2025