

SKILLS ACTION PLAN & LOCAL SKILLS REPORT 2020/21

AN EVIDENCE AND INTELLIGENCE-BASED
SKILLS ACTION PLAN FOR THE
ENTERPRISE M3 AREA



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THE ENTERPRISE M3 (EM3) AREA

A GLOBALLY COMPETITIVE REGION, UNIQUE FOR ITS KNOWLEDGE, DIGITAL & DESIGN-BASED ECONOMY



INTRODUCTION



**Barney Ely, Chair,
EM3 Skills Advisory Panel**

The talent of individuals is behind the success of everything – our own lives, the vitality of our communities, the prosperity of the UK and every nation across the world.

For many of us, jobs and employment are a major outlet for our talent and skills, and it is the employment landscape that has been so dramatically disrupted by Covid19.

Enterprise M3 LEP is working through its Skills Advisory Panel, and hand in hand with partners across Surrey and Hampshire, to support an economic environment which maintains the area's outstanding skills and talent base and its specialisms in digital, design and knowledge-based industries and sectors.

This Skills Action Plan & Local Skills Report is part of that work. It flows directly from [Revive and Renew, A Recovery and Renewal Action Plan for the Enterprise M3 Area](#) to focus on identifying the evidence-based interventions needed to ensure the region has the skills and jobs for a strong economic recovery, and an ambitious vision for

grasping the labour market and skills opportunities in the future.

The findings in this document are based on a significant amount of comprehensive evidence and analysis from work done with the Department for Education, the EM3 area Local Industrial Strategy and, in light of the pandemic, an update for Revive and Renew.

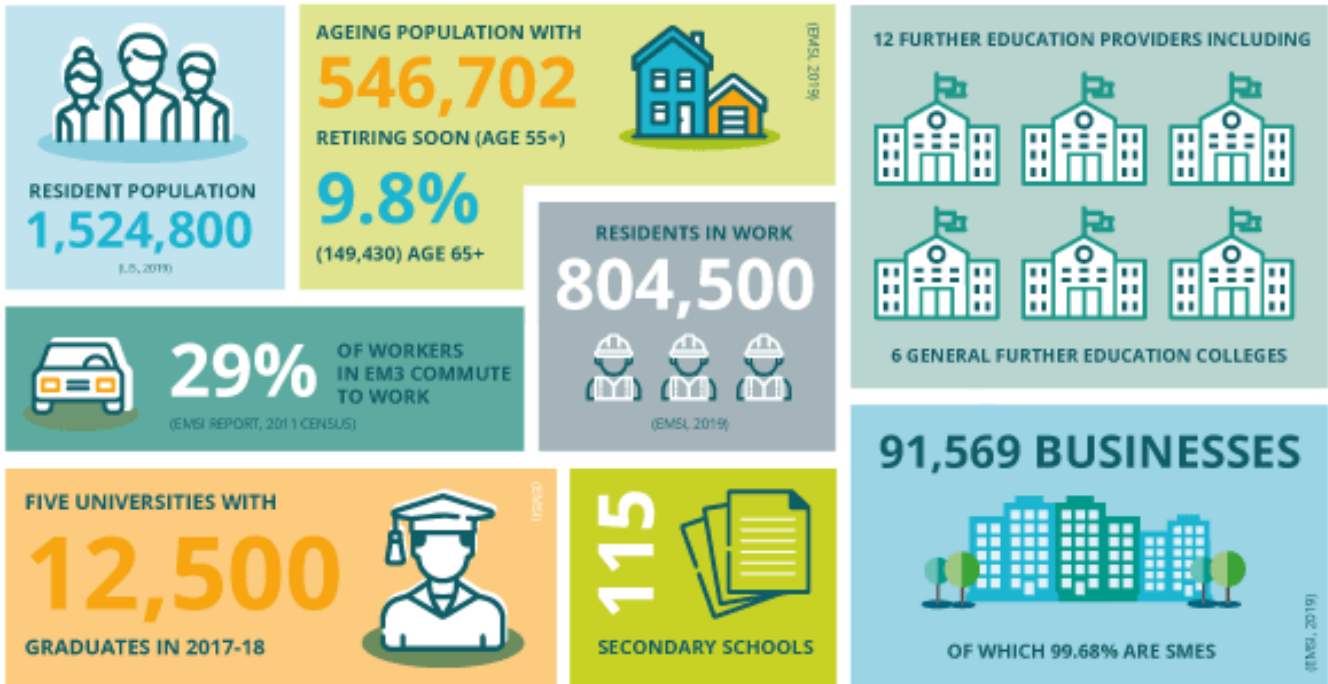
However, the real value of these findings relies on what comes next.

This Action Plan marks the beginning of several stages of conversation and discussion with partners on how to mobilise the capacity and resources to take forward transformative actions.

It is my hope that the most ambitious interventions set out offer a valuable focal point and inspiration for partners to work collectively to realise results that combine the many strengths of individual organisations.

Convened by the LEP, and its Skills Advisory Panel, I am confident a strong collaboration of partners can work together to ensure this ambitious framework of interventions is taken forward to deliver exceptional results, and the widest recognition of the EM3 area as a beacon of talent, education and quality skills.

Barney Ely
Director, Enterprise M3 LEP Board & Managing Director South East, Hays



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

VISION & AMBITION

The Enterprise M3 area has a population that is among the most highly skilled in the UK.

That is not to say the area faces no challenges over the supply of skills needed by employers; and nor can it afford to be complacent about existing strengths.

The pandemic has disrupted the regional labour market significantly. It is shifting from one of almost full employment to one of rising levels of unemployment, particularly among the young. The extent of this disruption, at the time of writing, is uncertain.

Alongside this new scenario, persistent longer-term challenges have not gone away, as examples: skills shortages in digital sectors and a gap in the supply of people with technical level qualifications and skills continue to hold back economic growth.

But these significant challenges are real opportunities to build on existing strong foundations with future-facing transformational skills and employment opportunities for the EM3 area.

From the evidence gathered for the [EM3 Local Industrial Strategy](#) and [Recovery & Renewal Action Plan](#), three ambitious priority projects have been identified for the EM3 area.

They prioritise accelerating and expanding education and training in:

- High level digital skills for workers in an increasingly digital economy and specialist roles
- The sustainable buildings construction industry
- Technical jobs in emerging low carbon sectors

The EM3 Skills Advisory Panel will progress these ambitions as a main focus of their work.

ESTABLISH A LOCAL DIGITAL SKILLS PARTNERSHIP

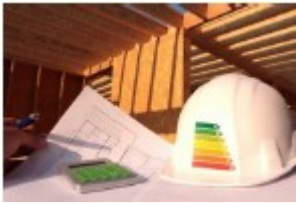


The EM3's business innovators and knowledge and design-based economy create high demand for a strong supply of people with high level digital skills including for specialist roles in the digital economy. Local Digital Skills Partnerships are backed by the Dept for Culture Media and Sports and flow from the Government's UK Digital Strategy. An EM3 Digital Skills Partnership would bring together public, private and charity sector

organisations to focus on innovative delivery of high-level digital skills.

BECOME A NATIONAL CENTRE FOR SKILLS FOR SUSTAINABLE CONSTRUCTION

To meet net zero targets on carbon emissions, the UK needs to transform practices in the construction and built environment industries. This will need to be matched with substantial changes in training and education, at all levels, for employment in these industries.



The EM3 area has a large construction industry and, with large scale housing developments such as Manydown in Basingstoke, demand for construction skills is high. This is coupled with an ambition for many of these new developments to be carbon neutral. Led by the LEP, and working with partners such as Urban & Civic, local authorities, private developers, colleges, universities and our enterprise zones, the EM3 area

has the potential to establish a National Centre for Skills for Sustainable Construction.

LAUNCH EM3 APPRENTICESHIP AND SKILLS HUB AS A SPECIALIST IN TECHNICAL SKILLS FOR EMERGING LOW CARBON INDUSTRIES

EM3 has strategic priorities to drive clean growth, to decarbonise transport and buildings, to pursue a green energy strategy and protect our natural capital. All of these areas are being supported by Government and offer many employment opportunities. In the EM3 area we are already seeing education and training in EV car maintenance (BCoT) and at the University of Winchester a Master's degree in sustainability and social justice demonstrates a growing interest in the emerging Green Industries.



With the launch of the EM3 Apprenticeship and Skills Hub, Enterprise M3 will support the Hub to focus on technical skills for the low carbon economy. As examples, this will include skills at level 4 and above (beyond A level) for delivering energy efficiency, low carbon heat installation, low carbon transport maintenance, and environmental jobs such as land-based rangers. The Hub will establish strong working

relationships between key employers and local training providers, and will help address a longstanding gap in skills for technical roles.

ECONOMIC IMPACT OF COVID19 – THE EVIDENCE

The EM3 area economy is resilient. Relative to many other regions, the EM3 area economy is not being hit as hard by the economic impact of Covid19. A diverse business base, a large number of scale-ups in high innovation sectors, a highly qualified resident working population and the area's good connectivity to London and international markets are all factors contributing to the area's fundamental resilience.

Service industries including hospitality, arts, recreation & leisure, tourism, wholesale and non-food retail are being hit hard. These are heavily reliant on customer contact, are a stronger part of the EM3 economy than the national average and are high volume employers.

Some of the EM3 area high value, knowledge-based and innovation-led sectors are also disrupted. These include Aviation & Aerospace (less so Defence), Advanced Manufacturing, and some aspects of the Digital Sector. As examples, Heathrow is a significant employer for districts in the north of the EM3 area, particularly Spelthorne; supply chain companies from across the patch have/had business with the airport. McLaren, Stannah Stairlifts, BP oil group, Compass and Gartner, Cooper Vision and Arqiva have all reported job cuts or a downturn in income.

The EM3 has a large resident high skilled workforce in professions and occupations suited to home working - these have generally avoided job losses and income falls. This group, typically

managers and other professionals, includes large numbers previously travelling to work outside of the area. In the future, many of these may opt longer term to abandon full-time commuting in favour of working close to home.

Analysis carried out for the Local Industrial Strategy identified skills/employment priorities where action remains just as necessary, or has accelerated in urgency:

- To address a recent decline in new jobs growth – particularly those from frontier/high tech industries – in the EM3 area.
- Retain and connect more of the highly skilled resident workforce to jobs in the area.
- To stimulate a better match between education and training responsiveness to area skills needs – now and in the future, this includes addressing long-standing skills shortages e.g. in digital, construction, health and social care

Preventing long term unemployment is critical to avoiding permanent scarring to prospects for individuals and the regional and national economies. Analysis suggests the groups most vulnerable to sustained unemployment are those made redundant from middle skilled occupations, and younger people, hoping to enter the permanent jobs market for the first time – including those on Apprenticeships.

SKILLS AND EMPLOYMENT CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES IN EM3 AREA

Many of the skills and employment challenges – some new, some long-standing – also present opportunities. In general, supporting the supply of high-quality skills for the area’s employers is a well-established priority for Enterprise M3 LEP. A strong supply of the right skills in the area are not only seen as key to individual and employer success, but also a major “selling point” for the area to potential investors at home and abroad.

Supporting re-employment and new employment. Many made redundant from service industries will need careers support to find similar, sustainable work. Others will need to redeploy or enhance their skills into other buoyant occupations. There is an opportunity and a challenge here for local education and training providers to meet this demand. The prize is the potential to address a longstanding deficit of technical, higher level skills in stubborn shortage areas such as digital, construction, health and social care.

Capitalising on a trend towards new ways of local working. Employment which blends home working and local working fits with the EM3 Local Industrial Strategy challenge to retain and attract more of our high skilled residents to local jobs. This opportunity is underpinned by the LEP’s ambitions to drive investment in a step change in digital connectivity and in development of town centre work spaces, as set out in the “Revive & Renew Action Plan”

SKILLS & EMPLOYMENT PRIORITIES

Four strategic priorities for skills have been identified, and flow from the evidence and analysis collected for both the emerging [Local Industrial Strategy](#) and [“Revive and Renew”](#), the Recovery and Renewal Action Plan.

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- **Priority 1:** Use economic data to build business resilience, address skills gaps and match skills supply to employer demand.
 - **Priority 2:** Enable EM3 residents to identify their skills strengths and needs.
 - **Priority 3:** Work with employer and education partners to identify skills needs in key high growth EM3 industries and emerging sectors.
 - **Priority 4:** To stimulate education and training providers to meet skills needs now and as they evolve.

CHAPTER 1: STRENGTHS, GAPS, & OPPORTUNITIES

THE ENTERPRISE M3 SKILLS CONTEXT

The evidence base for our **emerging Local Industrial Strategy**¹ presented the following economic and sectoral insights into the Enterprise M3 Local Enterprise Partnership (EM3) area:

Economy and Sectors



The Enterprise M3 (EM3) area is a **£50.1bn economy** by GVA, containing **1.5 million people** and **770,500 jobs**. With GVA per hour worked of £38.60, it is the **third most productive LEP** area behind only London and Thames Valley Berkshire.

Specialisms in Hi-Tech, Knowledge-based Industries

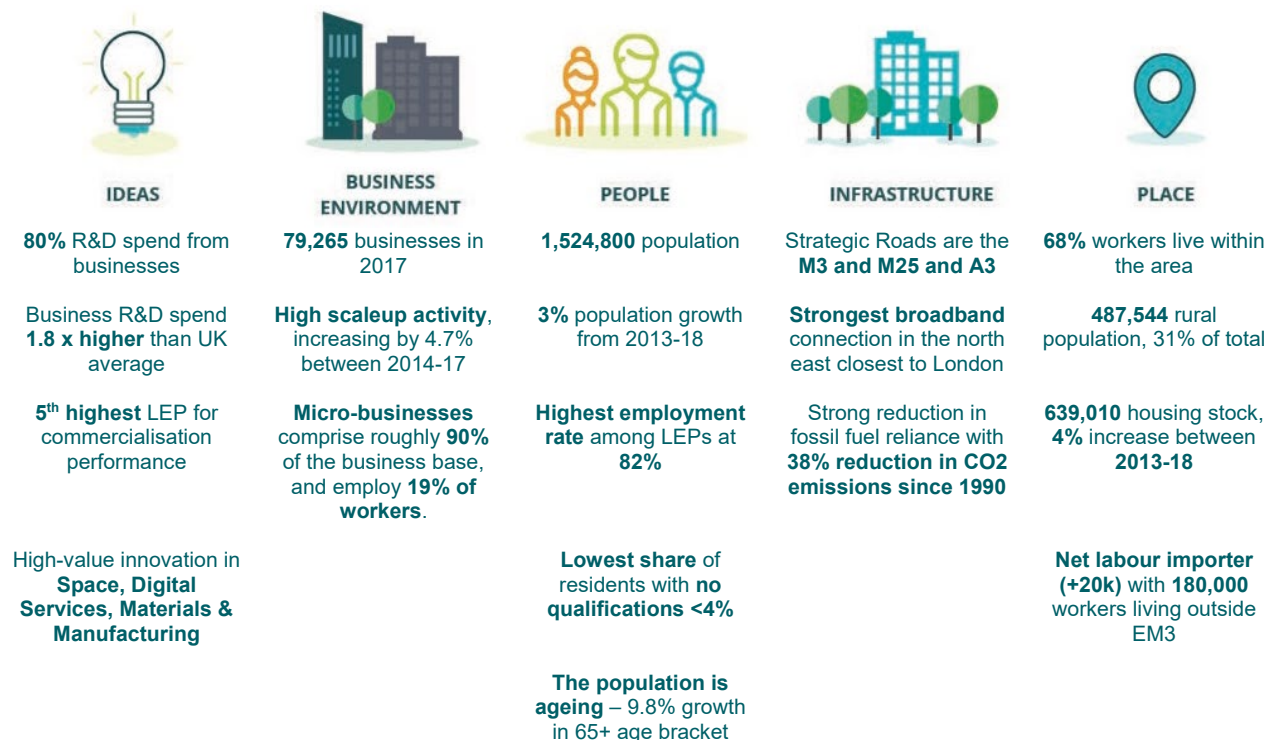


The economy prospers on multiple fronts but with particular specialisms showcased by its **knowledge-driven, globally competitive, digital and design-based businesses**, drawn to the

¹ EM3 emerging Local Industrial Strategy: <https://www.enterprisem3.org.uk/local-industrial-strategy>

EM3 area by the skilled labour force, proximity to London, and excellence in exporting goods and services.

Foundations of Productivity



Productivity in EM3 stems from **business-led research and innovation activity**; high concentrations of **micro-business activity in rural settings**; a **highly skilled population** typically in professional and senior roles; a **connected workforce** with close proximity to London and many enjoying **working and living in the area**.

Covid19

The evidence presented above outlined the EM3 skills context pre-Covid19. As we continue to work through this pandemic, it is also important to consider the impacts it has had on our area.

EM3 recovered strongly from the last economic shock and is fundamentally resilient. However, this recession is different in its origins and its unpredictable course. **Revive and Renew – The Recovery and Renewal Action Plan**² presents refreshed, evidence-based insights into the economy in light of Covid19, and identifies the opportunities for recovery and renewal. This **Skills Action Plan & Local Skills Report** flows directly from Revive and Renew to focus to identify the evidence-based interventions needed to ensure the area has the skills and jobs for a strong

² EM3 Revive and Renew – The Recovery and Renewal Action Plan: <https://enterprisem3.org.uk/hub/revive-and-renew-recovery-and-renewal-action-plan>

economic recovery, and an ambitious vision for grasping the labour market and skills opportunities in the future.

What follows are further insights into the **skills strengths, gaps and opportunities** in the EM3 area.

SKILLS STRENGTHS

The EM3 area contains a higher concentration of **high-skilled jobs** than the national average. 12% and 7% of employment is within **Professional, Scientific & Technical activities** and **Information & Communications** compared to 9% and 4% nationally³.

Other high-skilled professions reflect proportional employment levels similar to the national average: **Education, Health** and **Financial professions**³.

EM3 has a concentrated **professional** and **technical** resident workforce. Between 2019-20, **60%** of EM3 residents were employed in **managerial, professional** and **technical** skilled occupations; much greater than the national levels at 49%⁴.

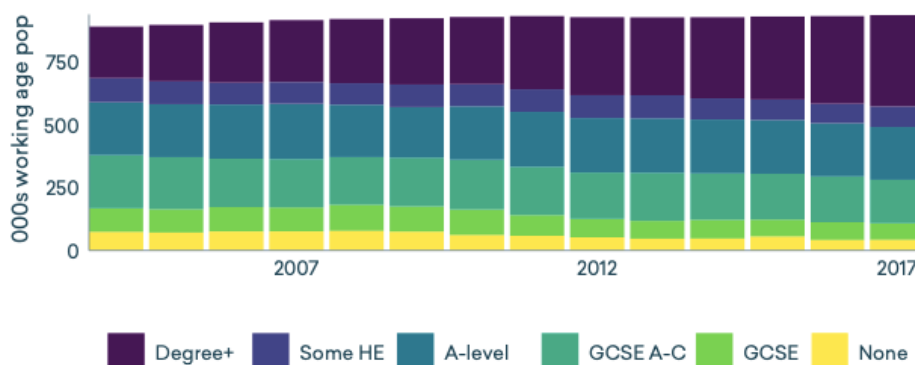


Figure 1: Enterprise M3 resident working age population highest skills levels, 2004 - 2017. **Source:** Emsi analysis of Annual Population Survey via Nomis, Skills and Labour Market Analysis.

EM3 has long been a **relatively well-educated region**: Between 2004-2017, the number of working age people educated to degree level or higher rose from 23% to 39%; the number with no qualifications halved from 8% to 4%. Measured on all working age people with some participation in higher education, EM3 is fifth among other LEPs with 48%⁵.

Pre-university skills levels show a similar pattern of **academic performance**: For average 16-19 attainment to level 3 (A Level and equivalent), EM3 is fifth among LEPs.

The **educational quality** of the resident workforce together with **low unemployment levels** historically, suggests a tight labour market for local, high-skilled roles.

³ EM3 emerging Local Industrial Strategy: <https://www.enterprisem3.org.uk/local-industrial-strategy>

⁴ Annual Population Survey: <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/datasets/apsnew>

⁵ Skills and Labour Market Analysis, 2020: <https://enterprisem3.org.uk/hub/skills>

SUMMARY: Skills strengths and priority sectors

- A higher concentration of high skilled jobs compared to national levels
- More highly skilled workers compared to national levels
- A highly qualified resident workforce
- Priority sectors:
 - Digital
 - Low Carbon
 - Space & Satellite
 - Health & Med Tech
 - Gaming and Immersive Technologies

SKILLS GAPS

EM3 prospers on multiple fronts: through its knowledge-driven economy but also through its **service-driven economy** which supports the resident population. For example, where **Retail** employment is high across the country, the story is no different within EM3. The **emerging Local Industrial Strategy** described how employment in **Retail & Hospitality** represented 25% of the LEP-wide employment, providing jobs to an estimated 182,000 individuals.

However, **Revive and Renew** reveals as a result of the pandemic and lockdowns, those working in businesses in retail and hospitality, arts and recreation & leisure and tourism have been hit particularly hard due to their reliance on close or direct customer contact and a steep decline in demand.

Analysis of the particular occupations hit hardest suggest it is those made redundant from **middle skilled jobs** – chefs and retail managers as examples – who will find it hardest to find re-employment and instead need to consider re-skilling or upskilling to levels 4, 5 (higher technical skills) and beyond (i.e., degree level).

There is an opportunity to support wider and longer-term business growth by encouraging skills provision in priority sectors such as digital and emerging sectors such as low carbon.

A closer look at the education and training provision in EM3 reveals that although there is plentiful supply of courses at level 3 (i.e., A Level and equivalent) and level 6 (i.e., Bachelor's degrees), there is less provision at levels 4 and 5⁶.

Aligned to employers' needs, these courses would be ideal for those struggling to find employment – particularly in the mid-skilled jobs market. One form of this provision could be as Higher **Apprenticeships**.

⁶ Skills and Labour Market Analysis, 2020: <https://enterprisem3.org.uk/hub/skills>

Apprenticeship take-up by young people after their GCSEs is low (5% for EM3 compared to 6% for England, making EM3 seventh lowest among LEPs)⁶

This is perhaps the downside to the strengths and well-established appeal of the academic route and high university participation in the EM3 area.

Nevertheless, there were over 11,000 apprenticeships achieved in EM3 in 2017-18 – most at level 3 and 350 at levels 4 and 5.

Apprenticeship take-up from employers is typically greater for larger organisations with 250+ employees. These organisations are also incentivised to offer apprenticeships as a way to spend their apprenticeship levy⁷. However, although around 52% of EM3's workers are employed in large businesses, the majority of firms in the area are micro and small businesses with less than 10 employees⁸.

These employers are likely to be amongst the 38% of employers who did not offer any training in 2019⁹ - perhaps choosing to recruit directly rather than address skills shortages through training.

Employer-reported levels of skills shortage are relatively moderate in EM3¹⁰. Nevertheless, both the Finance and the Health sectors continue to report local shortages: Between February-November 2020, the National Health Service was the employer with the most job postings in EM3.

Recruitment (as measured by analysis of job postings) in the EM3 labour market was significantly affected by the Covid pandemic¹¹. At the early stages of Lockdown 1.0, EM3 ranked 12th out of the 38 LEPs experiencing one of the biggest falls in recruitment, and one of the sharpest in the greater South East, significantly above Solent, Thames Valley Berkshire and Coast to Capital LEPs.

By October 2020, this position had improved to 17th place, mid-table in comparison to the other LEPs, but was still 5% lower than in February 2020. Although EM3 is still yet to obtain a positive job creation position, **a number of industries have shown gains in recruitment activity** (e.g., Construction, Education, Agriculture and Public Sector).

SUMMARY: Skills gaps in Enterprise M3

- Redeployment opportunities from high volume employment sectors (e.g. retail, hospitality) are limited, especially at middle skill levels
- Supply of higher technical skills is limited
- Low take-up of Apprenticeships by young people and smaller employers

⁷ Apprenticeship Levy: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/apprenticeship-levy/apprenticeship-levy>

⁸ EM3 emerging Local Industrial Strategy: <https://www.enterprisem3.org.uk/local-industrial-strategy>

⁹ Employer Skills Survey 2019: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/employer-skills-survey-2019-england-results>

¹⁰ Skills and Labour Market Analysis, 2020: <https://enterprisem3.org.uk/hub/skills>

¹¹ Coronavirus Labour Market update November 2020: <https://enterprisem3.org.uk/hub/skills>

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- Skills shortages are prominent in Finance and Health sectors
 - Recruitment activity in EM3 is showing signs of recovery, but very uneven across sectors

SKILLS OPPORTUNITIES

In 2019, EM3 was the **11th largest labour market** and had the **highest employment rate** (82%; UK rate was 75%) among all LEPs¹⁰.

However, jobs growth was stagnant between 2016-2019 with **12,200 net job losses** - equivalent to an employment shrinkage of -1.6% compared to +2.8% jobs growth in England. This placed EM3 at the second lowest in employment growth across LEPs.

This presents the EM3 economy and its agents of change with a challenge and an opportunity: to address the decline in net job losses and create new jobs especially in the **high value, high productivity and high growth sectors** for which our highly skilled resident workforce is well qualified.

The area's resident workforce in **professions and occupations suited to home working**, has generally avoided job losses and income falls during the pandemic. This group – typically managers and other professionals – includes large numbers previously travelling to work outside of the area¹². With the right job offers local businesses and employers may find a ready local supply of high skills and talent among the managers and professionals who may be prepared to abandon full-time commuting in favour of working close to home.

This offer of high prospect jobs and careers might similarly appeal to younger people in their twenties. Many of these have tended to leave the area to launch their careers.

As previously outlined, our residents typically follow academic pathways; many progressing to university, although the pattern of **progression to higher education is typically not within EM3**.

With reference to the figure below, the area sees a large outflow (roughly 2,000-person net outflow) in the 18- to 20-year-old bracket as students leave the area to study at universities in other parts of the country. There is then a sustained inflow of around 2,500 persons aged 30 to 45 years old; perhaps reflecting EM3 as a desirable place to settle down, whilst maintaining a career in the capital.

¹² Skills and Labour Market Analysis, 2020: <https://enterprisem3.org.uk/hub/skills>

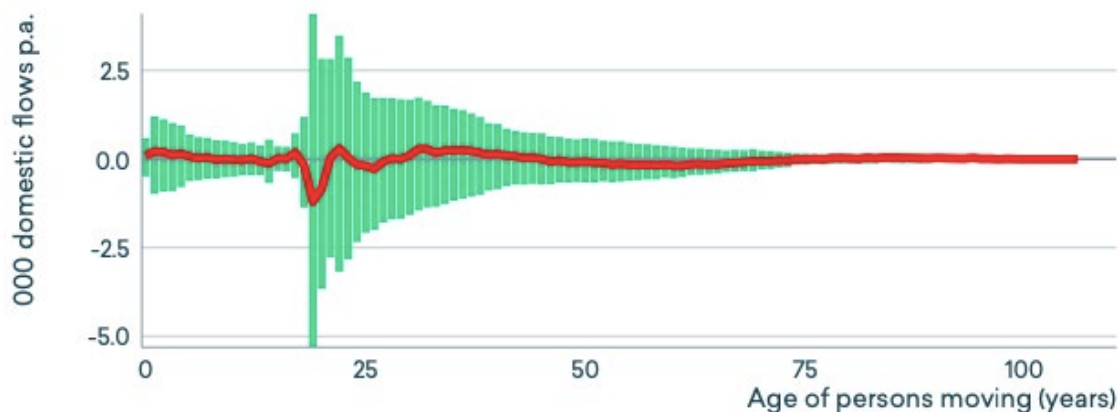


Figure 2: Age profile of Enterprise M3 net migration. **Source:** Emsi analysis of ONS Internal Migration: detailed estimates, 2016-18, Skills and Labour Market Analysis (February 2020)

Destination data for our graduates¹³ is similar to national, with nearly 80% moving into full-time or part-time employment. EM3 graduates also tend to remain in the South East or London¹⁴.

The appeal of semi-rural, less densely populated areas such as Surrey and Hampshire have grown in the pandemic. The creation of good jobs is among the combination of factors that will maintain the appeal of the area to the young and highly skilled needed to sustain a high growth economy.

The supply of technical skills is also a gap and opportunity in this area. This is especially for future-facing and emerging sectors such as the low carbon industry and digital sectors. There is also an opportunity for technical training beyond Level 3 (A Level equivalent) to address the middle skilled, mid-career employees who are being laid off in the pandemic and need to upskill or re skill.

An increase in apprenticeship opportunities in the EM3 area can help support the creation of local jobs and offer training directly linked to employers' skills needs.

Employers and providers consistently report difficulties with the administration of apprenticeships and frustrations with the scope of the Apprenticeship Levy.

The **EM3 Apprenticeship and Skills Hub** is developing relationships with employers to learn more about the skills and recruitment challenges and working with them and providers to find solutions.

T Levels¹⁵ offer a vocational alternative to the A Level alongside BTECs and similar qualifications. Designed with employers, the T Level includes a 45-day industry placement and there is an opportunity for the area's local providers and employers to work together on this. The EnterpriseM3 Skills Advisory Panel is an ideal forum to facilitate this.

¹³ HESA, 2017/18 graduates: <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/graduates/table-6>

¹⁴ Graduate Outcomes in 2017/18: https://data.explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/api/download/graduate-outcomes-leo-provider-level-data/2017-18/ancillary/Provider_Table_GB.xlsx

¹⁵ T Levels: <https://www.tlevels.gov.uk/>

SUMMARY: Skills opportunities

- *Job Creation and Skills for Employment* is a key priority in **Revive and Renew**
- High value job creation in high productivity sectors can take advantage of existing supply of highly qualified talent amongst resident population
- Step change needed in supply of technical level skills esp. in low carbon and digital
- Work with providers and employers to advance supply and take up of apprenticeships
- Support roll out of the T Level qualification in FE colleges

CHAPTER 2: KEY FINDINGS ON THE IMPACT OF COVID19 ON SKILLS AND EMPLOYMENT IN THE ENTERPRISE M3 AREA

IMPACT ON EMPLOYMENT ¹⁶

Employment and jobs supply are at the sharp end of impact. The EM3 labour market is the part of the area's economy experiencing particularly dramatic change because of Covid19 and the subsequent steep decline in customer demand and confidence.

Government support is to some extent masking the full affect. Even so, the unemployment rate in the area – the latest estimate for August is 4.1%¹⁷ - has already reached levels unprecedented in recent years.

The number of unemployed people, as measured by those claiming work-related benefits, is already higher than during the 2008/9 financial crash peak (although lower than during the 1990/1 recession)¹⁸.

The numbers and rate of unemployment is constantly changing. All age groups in EM3 are being adversely affected. There are signs that youth unemployment could emerge as the biggest challenge. Even so, EM3 young people are not affected as badly as those in the South East and UK wide. Constant monitoring of trends is important to guide the most appropriate interventions.

During August 2020, every broad age group saw the rate of rise in claimant counts accelerating. This was especially amongst the more mature resident workforce (i.e., anyone over 25).

The number of unemployed people in the 25-50 age group and the 50+ age group rose by 5.5% and 8% respectively, compared with a 2.2% rise across younger people, the 16-24-year-olds. Although the rate of increase in youth unemployment from June to August was not so steep compared with other residents, evidence suggests young people are bearing the brunt of growing unemployment, and are more likely to be without work than other age groups.

¹⁶ This chapter refers to the latest data at the time of writing. Bi-monthly updates and analysis of the EM3 economy and labour market are available to download on the Revive and Renew page of the EM3 website [here](#)

¹⁷ Statistics for Aug 2020 from Hants CC economic research monthly bulletin for EM3 LEP

¹⁸ Ibid

The following table sets out the picture of unemployment in EM3 according to age, as at August 2020¹⁹:

Age	Unemployment Rate (%)
All 16+	4.1
16 -24	5.0
25-49	4.4
50 +	4.9

However, the rate of youth unemployment in EM3 is lower than in the South East (6.4%) and UK-wide (7.6%).

At 4.1%, the unemployment rate in Enterprise M3 is well below both the UK and the South East averages, 6.5% and 5.4% respectively.²⁰

The EM3 economy is resilient, but there is some small variation across the area. Relative to many other regions, the EM3 area economy is not being hit as hard by the economic impact of Covid19. A diverse business base, a large number of scale-ups in high innovation sectors, a highly qualified resident working population and the area's good connectivity to London and international markets are all factors contributing to the area's fundamental resilience.

To illustrate:

August's estimated unemployment rate of 4.1% is relatively high for the EM3 area, but it is the joint lowest LEP rate across the country, alongside Oxfordshire.

Within the Enterprise M3 area, the highest unemployment rate in August 2020 was in Spelthorne (5.6%). This is above the South East average (5.4%). Unemployment rates in all other EM3 districts were lower than across the South East.²¹

IMPACT ON EMPLOYERS

Customer-facing service industries including hospitality, arts, entertainment, recreation & leisure, tourism, wholesale and non-food retail are being hit hard and are shedding jobs.

These are heavily reliant on customer contact, are a stronger part of the EM3 economy than the national average and are high volume employers. High numbers of staff in these industries have been furloughed and face uncertain futures.

¹⁹ Ibid

²⁰ Ibid

²¹ Ibid

Some of the EM3 area high value, knowledge-based and innovation-led sectors are also disrupted. These include Aviation & Aerospace (less so Defence), Advanced Manufacturing, and some aspects of the Digital Sector.

- As examples, Heathrow is a significant employer for districts in the north of the EM3 area, particularly Spelthorne; supply chain companies from across the patch have/used to have business with the airport. The Aviation and Travel sectors are three times more important in Farnborough's local authority area, Rushmoor, than the English average.

McLaren, Stannah Stairlifts, BP oil group, Compass and Gartner, Cooper Vision have all reported job cuts or a downturn in income.

APPROACHING CHALLENGES AS OPPORTUNITIES

Analysis carried out for the Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) identified several skills/employment priorities. Action in these areas remains as necessary, or has accelerated in urgency:

- To address a recent decline in new jobs growth – particularly those from frontier/high tech industries – in the EM3 area. During the last ten years, some large employers have moved out of the area (e.g., Huawei in 2013 and Virgin Media in 2019), taking skilled jobs with them.
- Retain and connect more of the highly skilled resident workforce to jobs in the area.
- To stimulate a better match between education and training responsiveness to area skills needs – now and in the future, this includes addressing a general deficit in technical skills, some long-standing skills shortages e.g., in digital sectors, and growing the skills supply in newer industries such as low carbon.

The EM3 has a large resident high skilled workforce in professions and occupations suited to home working - these have generally avoided job losses and income falls. As highlighted in evidence for the LIS, this group, typically managers and other professionals, includes large numbers previously travelling to work outside of the area.

In the future, some qualitative evidence suggests, many of these may opt longer term to abandon full-time commuting in favour of working close to home. This change could potentially provide an opportunity for some employers to invest in high value jobs in the knowledge there is an increased pool of local highly skilled talent to draw on. This is a potential opportunity to begin to reverse the recent decline in local jobs in high tech industries.

Digitalisation has proved to be a key factor in business and organisation resilience during lockdown. Although the outlook in the digital sector is mixed, an imperative to address a long-standing (and pre-pandemic) shortage in digital skills remains high priority.

- In the Education sector, providers had to rapidly move teaching and learning online as lockdown commenced. Informal feedback suggests colleges and universities were able to

adapt, but many schools were not so well trained and equipped to be able to deliver face to face 'live' teaching.

- Demand for video games has increased, with signs of encouraging recruitment activity in the EM3 Guildford games cluster and the launch of a new Esports BTEC at Queen Mary's College in Basingstoke. However, other evidence suggests many IT services are not faring so well as many IT projects are on hold and reduced budgets may hit IT infrastructure firms and vendors.
- Importantly, though, the connection between business resilience and its access to a robust digital infrastructure and a supply of digital skills has been writ large during lockdown.
- The LEP's strategic priority to advance a project to deliver ultra-fast broadband across the area, as highlighted in the LIS, has been underlined by the evidence during lockdown.
- An imperative to address a long-standing (and pre-pandemic) shortage in digital skills goes hand in hand with this.

The impact of Covid19 makes the long term need to address and support training and up-skilling for much needed technical roles even more critical. Action here also amounts to an opportunity to help certain groups of workers at risk of long-term unemployment. The prevention of long-term unemployment is critical to avoiding permanent scarring to prospects for individuals and the regional and national economies.

Analysis suggests the groups most vulnerable to sustained unemployment are those made redundant from middle skilled occupations – chefs and retail managers, as examples - and younger people, hoping to enter the permanent jobs market for the first time.²²

These middle skilled people may find it hard to apply their relatively specialist skills in sectors other than those equally vulnerable to the impact of lockdowns and falling customer demand.

Here training for mid-career people from levels 3 to levels 4 and 5 and beyond becomes even more critical. This would be in line with many long-term employment opportunities, and many employers have been calling for an expansion of this sort of adult vocational education and training for years.

- To date, in line with most of the rest of England, in EM3, motivation amongst well-qualified young people, in particular, to choose a vocational path of education and training over an academic route has been limited. This is in spite of the efforts of many employers to promote the employment opportunities in technical areas:

²² See Emsi report [here](#)

“In the UK, we have an inadequate supply of graduates with the right skills in engineering technology for our business as a whole, but, more importantly, we do not have enough people leaving further education with engineering subjects. That leads to the side-effect that we recruit people with academic qualifications to technical roles for which they are not equipped.”

Martin Hottass, Lead Siemens Professional Education EMEA, Siemens, 2018

On apprenticeships, although private sector employers are turning away as they struggle to cope with the impact of lockdown, a potential opportunity exists working with public sector partners where recruitment activity has remained buoyant.

Apprenticeship vacancies on the “Find an Apprenticeship” website dried up by over 80% in England during April and May 2020. In EM3, this was less noticeable due to existing low numbers of apprenticeship opportunities compared to other LEP areas.

However, analysis suggests recruitment in parts of the public sector (e.g., in health and care workers) has remained relatively static and may offer an opportunity for new apprenticeship provision as an alternative recruitment strategy.

CHAPTER 3: SKILLS ACTIONS

PRIORITY 1: USE ECONOMIC DATA TO BUILD BUSINESS RESILIENCE, ADDRESS SKILLS GAPS AND MATCH SKILLS SUPPLY TO EMPLOYER DEMAND.

There is an ongoing need to maintain a good understanding of the economic impact of Covid19 on skills and employment in the EM3 area. This is not only to help guide economic recovery, it is also about enabling economic renewal, that is resisting a return to old ways where opportunities to improve can be grasped.

The evidence we collect should focus on trends and should be presented clearly and succinctly for a non-expert audience. Data insights that do not help shape our practical plans or inform them in a useful way will fail our “so what?” test.

Case study: UK Space Agency

The Enterprise M3 Local Space Cluster project will include cross-sector skills workshops to learn from employers about their skills needs to support growth and prosperity of the Space sector in EM3. Providers will also be invited to offer solutions to address these skills gaps.

ACTIONS

1. The LEP will commission and publish research that helps the LEP, SAP members and wider partners understand the state of the economy and the labour market. This will include insights into key industries and comparisons with other LEP regions.
2. The LEP will collect and share labour market intelligence and skills insights from partners and stakeholders.
3. The LEP will lead on dissemination of this information widely across the area to help align the supply of skills to the demand of employers and enable an effective dialogue between providers and employers.

PRIORITY 2: ENABLE EM3 RESIDENTS TO IDENTIFY THEIR SKILLS STRENGTHS AND NEEDS

This includes enabling residents to understand the value of their own skills and experience. Some may require access to support to redeploy those skills and/or develop new ones to enhance their employability and find jobs.

The work of the Careers and Enterprise Company, the National Careers Service and Job Centre Plus can provide some of this tailored support to residents including young people in schools and colleges.

The analysis suggests those individuals with higher skills are in a much stronger position to maintain and transfer their employment.

Case study: EM3 Jobs Fuse

Covid19 has caused both unemployment and staff shortages. Between July – October 2020, the EM3 Jobs Fuse service from the National Careers Service matched the unemployed to appropriate vacancies. The service has been helping those made jobless as a result of the pandemic in the Enterprise M3 LEP area get back into work while also supporting key regional employers fill gaps in their staffing caused by the pandemic, such as those in the care sector.

Younger people and middle skill workers have particularly likely to face unemployment according to our analyses of groups particularly hard hit by the impact of the pandemic.

Support will involve suitable training to take their skills to levels 4, 5 and beyond.

It is essential these skills are aligned to employers' needs and that training and education should be delivered in such a way that is convenient for the individuals.

For young people in schools and colleges, four priorities are identified in the Careers and Enterprise Action Plan 2020 – Education Engagement, Employer Engagement, Stakeholder Engagement and Skills promotion – as vehicles to ensure they are able to make informed career decisions about their futures.

As Government launches funded opportunities to reskill / upskill / gain work experience it is important to communicate those to the widest audiences and identify appropriate delivery partners. A good example is the Kickstart Scheme where Hampshire and Surrey Chambers of Commerce together with Hampshire County Council are already delivering access to valuable work experience for young people and the LEP is sign posting and promoting.

Case study: Hampshire County Council

Hampshire County Council has committed to provide a minimum of 30 direct Kickstart placements across the organisation – including maintained schools. In addition, the Council is also acting as a Gateway organisation for the Kickstart Scheme with a focus on supporting District Councils, the Police, Fire Service, Education, Health and Social Care and the Voluntary and Community sector. Although many of these sectors have maintained recruitment activity during the pandemic, the Kickstart Scheme offers an innovative, alternative strategy to benefit young people struggling to enter the labour market.

Another example is the LEP's support for local colleges keen to deliver higher technical level workplace skills demanded by employers, by establishing an Institute of Technology (IoT). A Wave 2

competition for bids to this programme was recently launched by the Department for Education and the LEP continues to have constructive discussions with colleges about what this might look like in our area, and aligned to this Plan.

ACTIONS

1. Work with education and training providers and Government to support middle skill workers' access to qualifications at levels 4, 5 and above, e.g. through Higher Apprenticeship provision and Institutes of Technology.
2. Support the work of the Careers and Enterprise Company in delivering careers education to EM3 schools and colleges, informed by business via the Enterprise Adviser Network.
3. Signpost to career services which help the unemployed understand the transferable aspects of their career experience, existing skills and general "know-how" for jobs and employment opportunities.
4. Lead on exploring and promoting options for work experience and enhancing individuals' employability offer to help young people to achieve a successful entry to the labour market.
5. Play a central role in communicating and promoting Government schemes to create employment opportunities (e.g. Kickstart Scheme), to address skills gaps (e.g. National Skills Fund) and help to further our wider aims (e.g. supporting delivery of Green Homes Grant).

Case study: Making Digital Skills Work

More than 7,000 learners across Surrey and Hampshire will benefit from a £2.2 million investment in the digital infrastructure of the six Further Education Colleges in the Enterprise M3 area. This will upgrade colleges' digital assets, transforming the delivery of further and higher education courses, effectiveness of teaching, and equip learners for current and future employment. The project would represent an investment in every student studying in an Enterprise M3 College over the next five years.

PRIORITY 3: WORK WITH EMPLOYER AND TRAINING PARTNERS TO IDENTIFY SKILLS NEEDS IN KEY EM3 INDUSTRIES AND EMERGING SECTORS.

Through Revive and Renew, the LEP has identified a number of growth and priority sectors – including Low carbon & clean growth and digital. A key action to support growth in these sectors and agendas will be to identify skills and jobs.

There are opportunities identified in '[A Plan for Jobs 2020](#)' including the creation of thousands of green jobs linked to infrastructure, decarbonisation and maintenance projects and the roll out of the Green Homes Grant that will create jobs for tradespeople.

Case study: Hampshire County Council

Hampshire County Council recently secured funding for a project to deliver a training programme working in collaboration with employers and training partners to offer courses across the EM3 for the immediate skills gaps the Construction industry is facing and skills required to meet new methods of construction. The target is to provide additional support for industry employers to create a minimum of 1,450 training/retraining opportunities.

The Government target of greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050 can be used to inspire the career aspirations of school students today. This is an opportunity to use existing programmes such as the Careers and Enterprise Company and other education-business partnership organisations to connect representatives from relevant businesses with schools and colleges, to raise awareness about green career pathways to jobs of the future.

Case study: BCOT Electric Vehicle and Hybrid Technology

The EM3 LEP has awarded Basingstoke College of Technology (BCoT) £160,000 towards a project to build an Electric Vehicle and Hybrid Training Centre, as part of a scheme costing in excess of £400,000. This development will create a sustainable and scalable centre to meet future changes in electrification and automation within the automotive industry.

ACTIONS

1. Work with EM3 Growth Hub, EM3 CEC and EM3 Sector specialists in space/satellite, clean growth, transport and creative immersive technology to identify skills needs and opportunities particularly in high innovation, high productivity sectors.
2. Use the Skills Advisory Panel to identify and take forward funding opportunities to deliver skills
3. Facilitate collaborative activity to address long term skills shortages in digital sectors, construction, health and social care.
4. Promote and support development of EM3's technical workforce in areas particularly aligned with other LEP priorities such as low carbon sectors, digital, game & immersive tech industries. space and satellite, health innovation.

PRIORITY 4: TO STIMULATE EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROVIDERS TO MEET SKILLS NEEDS NOW AND AS THEY EVOLVE.

This priority acknowledges the Department for Education goal for local skills provision to better meet labour market and needs, now and in the future. It also recognises the LEP and SAP roles in providing local leadership and creating conditions where employers can share and discuss their skills needs with providers with a view to finding solutions.

There are current examples of good practice where, for example, employers are consulted in new provision; close working relationships are formed between institutions and business membership organisations such as the Chambers of Commerce and employers are directly involved in delivery (e.g. work placements that contribute towards a qualification).

Case study: Careers and Enterprise Company

The energy company, SSE, wanted to recruit more apprentices and turned to the Careers and Enterprise Company (CEC) for support. Through the CEC, SSE began working with a group of disengaged boys in a secondary school in Hampshire. SSE introduced the students to a group of apprentices who have become their mentors, taking them to the SSE Thatcham training centre to learn about the apprenticeship roles available at SSE. This is an example where the EM3 CEC has had a direct impact on both an employers' talent pipeline, and the career aspirations of young people.

Apprenticeships have been identified as part of the solution to getting people back into work: a job with training in a vocational area required by employers.

Hampshire County Council recently announced the EM3 Apprenticeship and Skills Hub which will be central in helping to stabilise and grow apprenticeship provision in the LEP area.

It will offer single point of contact for more than 360 SMEs to help identify and source suitable apprenticeship provision from local training providers over the next three years.

Although the impact of Covid19 on the capacity of employers to take on apprenticeships will require analysis and monitoring, partners are reporting strong interest.

As with the rest of England, the Enterprise M3 area has a longstanding gap in skills training for technical roles.

Employer engagement in the Institutes of Technology (IoT) model will, in principle, help close this gap and underlines the strength of the case for such an institute in the EM3 area.

Other delivery models could be developed in partnership with large employers that have been less impacted by Covid19 (e.g. employers in some parts of the Information and communication sector). This partnership could capitalise on the acceleration of digitalisation across the area and beyond, making way for a return to flexible / part-time / blended forms of delivery from different providers to widen access to provision and in line with Government's [announcement on a major expansion of post-18 education and training](#).

ACTIONS

1. Work with the EM3 Growth Hub to encourage and enable business and employer contributions to the design and delivery of skills provision including use of apprenticeship levy funding.

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2. Support the work of the EM3 Apprenticeship and Skills Hub to help to stabilise and grow apprenticeships and other employer-led provision, such as paid internships, across the LEP area as a way to address employer-led skills needs.
 3. Explore diverse ways of addressing the longstanding gap in the economy for training and skills for technical roles, specifically at levels 4 and 5.
 4. Work with high volume employers in less disrupted sectors (e.g. Information and Communication) in an exploration of innovative education and training delivery models alongside FE and HE providers.
 5. Engage closely with colleges and universities in the LEP area to help promote their education and employability offers, their areas of research excellence and innovation and support and enhance their business engagement.
 6. Position the LEP and SAP as an established partner with Government to contribute to and pilot national skills policy developments.

CHAPTER 4: ASSESSMENT OF PROGRESS

TAKING A LOCAL LEADERSHIP ROLE

The economic impact of the pandemic is disrupting the local labour market significantly. It is too early to know the lasting effects. The EM3 Skills Advisory Panel (SAP) has been rapid in its response to fluctuating circumstances. During the last 6 months, the EM3 SAP has gone through positive changes which have helped sharpen its focus on actions and increased its awareness of relevant evidence, data and local intelligence. A core group of members are using a broad pool of refreshed insights to inform strategic direction and recovery & renewal activity.

The employer voice at SAP meetings

Employers and business are having a louder voice. With a focus on employer skills needs, SAP meetings have increasingly been designed to give employers opportunities to share their skills and recruitment challenges, with providers on hand to listen and respond. The SAP has welcomed insights from a diversity of sectors key to the EM3 economy including Hays **Recruitment**, **Airbus**, **Hampshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust**, **Space/Satellite**, **Morgan Sindall** and **other employers in the construction industry**. These insights stimulate constructive discussions to identify actions to address the challenges raised.

Keeping SAP members informed

Ahead of each SAP, members receive updates on the most recent economic and labour market data and intelligence, together with reports on SAP achievements and updates on skills projects and investments. LEP investments in skills projects have always followed strategic economic priorities and been informed by the skills needs of employers. For example, the **Innovation South Virtual Campus** and the **Electric vehicle and Hybrid Technology Training Centre**²³.

Implementing this Skills Action Plan

The SAP has made good progress implementing the recommended actions in the plan. This includes work towards the three transformational ambitions:

- Discussions have begun with neighbouring LEPs and local employers to establish a **Digital Skills Partnership** to fill specialist digital skills gaps
- Employers, local authorities and providers are expressing very positive interest in establishing a **National Centre for Skills for Sustainable Construction**

²³ EM3 skills pages: <https://www.enterprisem3.org.uk/hub/skills>

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- The **EM3 Apprenticeship and Skills Hub** team are involved in discussions with employers and providers about recruitment and skills challenges especially for technicians in the clean growth and low carbon sectors.

Through local representation from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), the SAP has also been able to support delivery of elements from **A Plan for Jobs 2020**²⁴:

- The Kickstart Scheme fuelled action from both Hampshire and Surrey Chambers of Commerce, together with Hampshire County Council to become gateway organisations – supporting local businesses to apply for kickstart job placements;
- Borough and district councils across EM3 are working with the DWP to create community-based Youth Hubs, providing vital employment support services for disadvantaged young people;
- A series of sector-based work academies have taken place across EM3, training and connecting young people to job opportunities in (e.g.) health and social care and customer service.

“Keeping Your Business Alive” - Responding to the needs of small businesses

In direct response to a problem highlighted at an EM3 Skills Advisory Panel (SAP) meeting on supporting entrepreneurs, SAP members, Surrey & Hampshire Chambers of Commerce, DWP and Surrey and Hampshire Federation of Small Businesses are being led by EM3 LEP to run eight “Keeping Your Business Alive” Academies for business owners. DWP reported a growing number of their clients are running their own businesses and needing advice, skills and coaching to sustain their businesses through this economic downturn. Through the SAP, the EM3 LEP proposed the solution and brought the Chambers, FSB, the EM3 Growth Hub and DWP together to make it happen.

Impact on local skills provision

Economic and labour market reports from EM3 LEP are influencing education and training partners so that their offer better meets area skills needs.

For example:

- The presentation of this Skills Action Plan and labour market data to further education and higher education leaders and governing bodies is informing their strategic plans and shaping

²⁴ A Plan for Jobs 2020: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-plan-for-jobs-documents/a-plan-for-jobs-2020>

curriculum development in line with the LEP agenda that emphasises the right skills to back up job creation and economic growth. Colleges and Universities in Basingstoke, Guildford and Surrey are good examples of this.

- Investment in the South's first **E- sports (electronic sports) training facility**²⁵, is a direct response to industry intelligence of growing demand for the specialised digital skills needed in the digital games and entertainment industry – booming in the lockdown
- Supporting EM3 Institute of Technology bid application, involving employers' colleges and universities, with a focus on clean growth.

Leading on regional collaboration

Building on existing collaboration activities between LEPs in the South East region, the EM3 SAP Chair was invited to chair a virtual skills conference, involving representatives from each of the Catalyst South group of LEPs – cited by the LEP Network²⁶. The event was so successful, the group continues to meet every two months to work through common skills and employment challenges that will help support economic recovery in our region.

Celebrating successes

Through the EM3 communications team the SAP has instigated a social media campaign to raise the profile of the SAP and celebrate successes. Posts on LinkedIn and Twitter are curated to drive traffic to the EM3 website where they can also learn more about the SAP.

Recent examples include:

- Launch and roll out of the EM3 Apprenticeship and Skills Hub
- Investment in a dedicated gaming learning environment space at a college
- Launch of Innovation South Virtual Campus

²⁵ EM3 skills pages: <https://www.enterprisem3.org.uk/hub/skills>

²⁶ Collaboration on skills a catalyst for economic growth: <https://www.lepnetwork.net/news-and-events/2020/august/collaboration-on-skills-a-catalyst-for-economic-growth/>

CHAPTER 5: ENTERPRISE M3 SKILLS GOVERNANCE

THE ENTERPRISE M3 LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP

The Enterprise M3 area can boast outstanding strengths in skills. It has a highly skilled population, five Universities and six FE Colleges.

The LEP works to sustain these strengths and ensure the supply of skills adapts to the changing needs of employers.

The LEP Board oversees this strategic direction and includes senior representatives of the further and higher education sectors in the region and employers.:

- Barney Ely, Managing Director South East, Hays - Recruitment Consultants
- Professor Joy Carter, Vice-Chancellor, University of Winchester
- Virginia Barrett, Principal, Farnborough College of Technology

This Action Plan has been endorsed by the Enterprise M3 LEP Board, and the Enterprise M3 Skills Advisory Panel will help drive oversee and monitor its progress.

THE ENTERPRISE M3 SKILLS ADVISORY PANEL

The National Context

Skills Advisory Panels (SAPs) bring together employers, skills providers and key local stakeholders to better understand and resolve skills mismatches at a local level.

There are 36 SAPs across England as part of Mayoral Combined Authorities and Local Enterprise Partnerships. The Department for Education (DfE) supports SAPs with grant funding primarily to produce high quality analysis of local labour markets, Skills Action Plans and Local Skills Reports.

These Action Plans and Skills Reports aim to influence local partners and feed intelligence to central government, including the national-level Skills and Productivity Board (SPB).

In January 2021, DfE published its White Paper “Skills for Jobs: Lifelong Learning for Opportunity and Growth,” which set out a number of reforms aimed at putting employers more firmly at the heart of the skills system.

The White Paper outlined plans to test in 2021-22, in a small number of areas, “Local Skills Improvement Plans” created by business representative organisations. The White Paper committed to build on the work of SAPs to date. SAPs and their Local Action Plans and Skills Reports will continue as the DfE trailblazes “Local Skill Improvement Plans” and until any potential changes are made to an SAP’s remit and responsibilities.

The Local Context

The EM3 LEP prioritises collaboration, and the Enterprise M3 Skills Advisory Panel (SAP), is an exemplar of this approach.

The Enterprise M3 Skills Advisory Panel (SAP) meets every two months and brings together senior representatives from employers, training providers, not-for-profit organisations, local authorities, universities and colleges in the area. They work together to pool knowledge on skills and labour market needs, and to understand and address key local challenges.

The EM3 Panel will have a critical role in overseeing the successful development and implementation of the Skills Action Plan.

Skills Advisory Panels are run by LEPs with funding from the Department of Education. To maximise the inclusivity and diversity of contributions the EM3 SAP operates a “carousel” of members, so that not every member attends every meeting; but every member is kept informed. The full list of current members is as follows:

Alison	Galvin	Invotra
Anna	Marshall	Department for Work and Pensions
Barney	Ely	Hays Recruitment (Chair of SAP)
Catherine	Scott	Department for Work and Pensions
Catherine	Hope-MacLellan	Hampshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
Jamie	Mackay	Enterprise M3 LEP
Jamie	Ross	Enterprise M3 Growth Hub
Jeremy	Greaves	Airbus
Jude	Robinson	Hampshire County Council
Louise	McKenzie	Ashford and St Peter's Hospital NHS Foundation Trust
Louise	Punter	Surrey Chambers of Commerce
Martin	Broad	University of Winchester
Nicola	Bailey	Federation of Small Businesses
Osama	Khan	University of Surrey
Paula	Neal	Surrey County Council
Ross	McNally	Hampshire Chamber of Commerce
Sarah Jane	Chimbwandira	Surrey Wildlife Trust
Scott	Green	Careers and Enterprise Company
Sue	Littlemore	Enterprise M3 LEP
Sue	Taylor	Association of Learning Providers in Surrey
Virginia	Barrett	Farnborough College of Technology
Xav	Anderson	Clockwork City Ltd

THE ENTERPRISE M3 CAREERS AND ENTERPRISE COMPANY

The Careers and Enterprise Company Programme (CEC) is match funded by the EM3 LEP. It is a national programme which is delivered through the 38 LEPs.

It works with employers and schools to give students an up to date insight into the world of work and the skills they will need.

The CEC helps schools embed the Government's careers strategy in their curriculum, and deliver quality careers education as set out in the Gatsby benchmarks.

The EM3 Careers and Enterprise Company (CEC) programme is entering its third year of delivering support and signposting to schools and colleges in the Hampshire and Surrey area, and has been recognised as one of the top performers nationally for their work.

CHAPTER 6: LOOKING FORWARD

OPPORTUNITIES IN THE “SKILLS FOR JOBS” WHITE PAPER

Local Skills Improvement Plans

Skills Advisory Panels are ideal vehicles to advance and implement many of the proposals in the January 2021 Skills for Jobs White Paper, especially with its emphasis on employer and business-led solutions. SAPs themselves promote and facilitate the employer voice and the Panels sit within the framework of strategic plans of business-led Local Enterprise Partnerships and their Growth Hubs.

The EM3 SAP should grasp the opportunity to put business and employers at the very heart of skills provision and take this agenda to the next level. Working with all SAP members including Chambers, FSB, the EM3 Growth Hub, and private corporate members such as Airbus, the EM3 SAP should make the case to become a Trailblazer area.

The SAP and partners would then work to develop Local Skills Improvement Plans involving innovative and scalable models of skills supply that would be led by employers and supported by providers.

Strategic Development Funding

The EM3 SAP is the ideal forum to bring together groups of colleges to bid for the New Strategic Development Fund. Within this setting, colleges and, importantly, supportive employers and other partners can unite around the evidence-based local skills agenda as set out in this Skills Action Plan and the EM3 Action Plan for economic recovery and renewal, “Revive & Renew”.

College Business Centres

We propose using the EM3 SAP to test interest among our FE partners in developing a network of College Business Centres. This could be a work stream flowing from a joint collegiate local bid for the New Strategic Development fund.

A collaborative approach to College Business Centres would build capacity and offer choice between a greater range of industry focused specialisms for the learner. The convening influence of the EM3 SAP would mean the network of Business Centres could draw on employers’ and other expertise on the Panel and utilise the stream of economic data including the well-established evidence-based Local Skills Reports and Action Plans to focus on local priority sectors.

AMBITIONS FOR THE EM3 AREA

The initial response to the three transformational ambitions set out in this Action Plan and Local Skills Report has been very positive. It is important momentum builds and is maintained.

The EM3 SAP will have a critical role in that and will be an important forum for uniting employers, trainers, educators and other partners in the EM3 area around these clear objectives:

- **Establish a local Digital Higher Skills Partnership:** Organisations involved in the supply / demand of higher specialist digital skills are invited to contribute as we work towards creating a local Partnership.

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- **Become a National Centre for Skills Training for Sustainable Construction:** Employers from the Construction industry are invited to lead the discussion and shape the supply of skills needed for sustainable construction, and a low carbon-built environment from architects to hydrogen boilers engineers.
 - **Launch EM3 Apprenticeship and Skills Hub as a specialist in technical skills for emerging low carbon industries:** The Hub welcomes employers in the low carbon industries feeding into their understanding of skills needs; now and in the future. This could also involve employer involvement in helping to design new forms of provision.

Similarly, for each of the four skills and employment priorities, activity is underway but there is much more to be done:

- Each SAP meeting includes an opportunity for employers to share their skills and recruitment challenges. We would be particularly keen in hearing from local employers from Digital, Low carbon, Space & Satellite, Gaming & immersive technologies and Health & social care sectors.
- We welcome wider dissemination of our labour market insights, available on our website, across the EM3 area to help raise awareness of employers' skills needs.
- We welcome opportunities to connect employers with providers to explore potential new forms of provision to address skills gaps, particularly at levels 4, 5 and above, and where provision does not already exist.
- At a time when remote teaching and learning is becoming a norm, we encourage collaboration between employers and providers to explore innovative education and training delivery models, especially to upskill and reskill adults.
- The Careers and Enterprise Company welcomes volunteers from business to support delivery of careers education to EM3 schools and colleges as part of the Enterprise Adviser Network²⁷.
- Work experience enhances an individual's employability. We encourage employers, schools, colleges and universities to engage with each other to explore forms of work experience to help young people enter the labour market.

²⁷ Careers and Enterprise Company Enterprise Adviser Network: <https://www.enterprisem3.org.uk/role-enterprise-adviser-em3-zone>

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- Large employers should consider donating unspent apprenticeship levy through the EM3 Apprenticeship and Skills Hub to cover the costs of apprenticeship training for smaller businesses.

Get involved

If you / your organisation would like to know more about how you can support delivery of the **Skills Action Plan**, please contact:

Dr. Jamie Mackay | Skills Strategy Manager

Email: Jamie.Mackay@enterprisem3.org.uk

