

LSIP Conference '24

Building a Talent Base for Liverpool City Region

Impact Report



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1 - Introduction

The Liverpool City Region (LCR) Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) Conference stood as a dynamic platform dedicated to the exploration and advancement of essential skills shaping our collective future. The primary focus was to identify and discuss the challenges, and opportunities linked to skills crucial to the success of the evolving landscape of all industries/sectors.

To bridge the skills gap and foster innovation, we collectively need to empower individuals and organisations so they can thrive in a rapidly changing world. The conference was designed to be a nexus of knowledge exchange, providing actionable insights and strategies to navigate the challenges and opportunities presented by the modern workforce.

Key areas of focus:

1. **Digital Proficiency:** Unpack the digital landscape, emphasising the skills needed to navigate the ever-expanding realm of technology, and stay ahead in the digital age.
2. **Innovation and Creativity:** Explore the nexus of creativity and innovation, showcasing how these skills drive progress and competitiveness in diverse industries.
3. **Adaptability and Resilience:** Address the importance of adaptability and resilience in the face of change, equipping attendees with the tools to thrive in dynamic environments.
4. **Collaboration and Communication:** Emphasise the role of effective communication and collaboration as foundational skills, essential for fostering teamwork and driving collective success.
5. **Industry-Specific Expertise:** Tailor content to the unique skills demanded by your specific industry or sector, ensuring practical takeaways for participants.

2 - Objectives

The event was held at Aintree Racecourse on January 23rd 2024 with an ambition to improve communication, awareness, and drive future collaboration opportunities. The event was highly ambitious with a set number of key priorities:

- To engage with industry and further education providers, ensuring that the conference ascertained and then met their needs.
- Promote the Liverpool City Region (LCR) Local Skills Improvement Plan and update all stakeholders on our current position.
- Facilitate **6 panel sessions** with speakers from colleges and local businesses.
- Deliver an event that was accessible and had equal representation, hosting:
 - o **100 representatives** from all main industry sectors
 - o **50 representatives** from education, independent training providers (ITPs), colleges and universities
- Facilitate focus group sessions in 'construction', 'manufacturing/logistics/PBS' & 'Non industry specific'.
- Receive **30 survey responses** for 'Future Skills'.

3 – Planning and Delivery

Timetable

November 2023

- Initial meetings and market engagement to determine the objectives.
- Mobilisation of project/event.
- Briefing sessions with key stakeholders.
- Project timetable and resource model agreed.
- Target list of speakers identified.
- Speaker recruitment campaign commenced.

December 2023

- Marketing plan agreed, collateral prepared including a press release.
- Priority booking offered to LCR LSIP Year 1 representatives from industry.
- Wider marketing and invitations distributed to businesses and ITPs across LCR.
- Planning sessions scheduled and completed.
- Venue agreed.

January 2024

- Site visit to venue.
- Resource model and event plan finalised.
- Additional marketing and communications sent to all registered bookings.
- Capacity reached in all booking categories.
- Final event planning sessions.
- Event held at Aintree Racecourse.

The event was led by St Helens Chamber and the LSIP project team with significant support from Paul Cherpeau, Chief Executive of Liverpool Chamber of Commerce, and the events and marketing leads.

As part of delivery, special consideration was given to:

- User experience, meeting the objectives set.
- Governance, ensuring a best practice approach was taken.
- Finance, maximising investment.
- Resource, effective use of staffing.
- Evaluation, to better understand future needs.
- Risks and issues.

Following internal planning sessions, event and marketing leads within St Helens Chamber and Liverpool City Chamber of Commerce assigned the following responsibilities:

- Event promotion and wider communications to all stakeholders.
- Speaker engagement and briefing sessions.
- Staffing requirements.
- Logistics (equipment).
- Facilitation and planning.

Staffing

To ensure the overall success of the event, the following resources were allocated:

- **Project Management** – St Helens Chamber
- **Marketing and Promotion** – St Helens Chamber / Liverpool Chamber of Commerce
- **Event Management** – St Helens Chamber / Liverpool Chamber of Commerce
- **Audio and Visual** – St Helens Chamber
- **Focus Group Facilitators** – All LCR Chambers
- **Marketing** – All LCR Chambers

Delivery

The LCR LSIP Conference centred on the discernible skills gap that currently exists within the dynamic landscape of the Liverpool City Region. As existing or emerging sectors grow and diversify, there is an evident need to align the skillsets of our workforce of today for tomorrow.

The decision to bring together businesses, schools, colleges, universities, local authorities, and training providers stems from feedback when engaging with stakeholders in the pre planning phase.

Supported by reports highlighting the existing disparities, including insights from the LSIP report and the LSIF projects, the conference facilitated a higher degree of business engagement. By bringing together a diverse range of stakeholders, we fostered meaningful contact and future collaboration.

Conference Content *Please see appendix for full agenda and panellists.*

Upon arrival guests were treated to complimentary refreshments with networking sessions taking place.

The outline for the morning sessions were:

- Welcome, outline the day intentions & set the scene by host.
- Labour Market Overview & Strategic Objectives.
- LSIP – The Voice of Business in the skills system.
- Panel Discussion with College Representatives from LCR.
- Business Spotlight – Employment Skills Gaps.
- Plugging the Gaps: panel discussion with ITP Representatives.
- Networking Lunch.

The afternoon sessions comprised of:

- Welcome Back - Setting the Scene for the Afternoon.
- Panel Discussion on Key Future LCR Opportunities/Projects.
- The Graduate Market – contributing to the skills challenge.
- Building Careers: School to Lifelong Learning.
- Focus Group Discussions.
- Summary of afternoon session.

During the day we captured key statements from each session, a snapshot is provided below:

Panel 1 - The Voice of Business in the Skills System

“As a specialist business, we do not expect candidates to necessarily have exactly the right skillset. Instead, we recruit on whether they have the right attitude and approach to personal development. The talent comes afterwards.”

Laura Cordwell, Carpenter Additive

“We regularly receive multiple requests for work experience and other support from colleges and schools, which we are not always able to facilitate. It’s important that we find ways to make it easier for employers to train and support people on placements and we are using technology to try and meet that challenge.”

Gill Roberts, Morgan Sindall

“Succession planning is crucial as it allows you to plan your future skills needs, however most businesses tend to have more urgent needs, focussed on filling a specific vacancy.”

**Peter Ross, Morgan Ryder Associates / LCRCA
Employment & Skills Board**

“We are identifying pilot projects with employers to ensure training is fit for purpose, covering topics such as low carbon and digitisation technology, developing the curriculum to suit. Our new cross-college recruitment service alongside Hugh Baird College will also be an important positive step.”

Peter Sandman, City of Liverpool College

Panel 2 - LCR College Representatives

“It’s important that we understand the values of businesses and what they require, so we encourage an open dialogue and joint delivery with employers. It also helps to motivate students if we can begin with an end in mind and allow them to see the employment opportunities that do exist.”

Rachel Hennigan, Hugh Baird College

“Employers cannot exist without colleges, and vice versa. Skills has become everyone’s domain and not everyone necessarily understands what a college does and how it can deliver skills and talent to meet current and future needs. A high percentage of our team are dual professionals, with enormous industry experience.

“Some barriers can feel self-created - partnership and trust are key to removing those barriers and we need a long-term national skills strategy that simplifies processes and allows us to be even more effective.”

Elaine Bowker, City of Liverpool College

Panel 3 - Plugging the Employment Skills gap

It is often said that young people need to develop greater 'soft skills' - what does this entail and precisely what skills do businesses want to see?

"Neurodiverse candidates can offer strengths and talents that are needed in industry, and we offer neurodiversity training packages that help businesses to understand how to tap into that workforce.

Jon Dobson, The Brain Charity

"We don't have enough of the right people coming into the industry. The advent of mobile phones and social media means some younger people struggle to analyse or focus over a longer period.

"Apprenticeships have been positive for us and we have been able to identify skills and potential in people after employing them in entry level jobs."

Rob Clemson, Flamco

"Technology sectors are transforming quickly and we need skills to align. A whole value approach is essential, with a well-thought out programme that brings together all aspects of construction, education, housing etc in a single approach to work as a team. The automotive sector already leads the way in this approach."

Sue Patterson, Manufacturing Technology Centre

"The most difficult role to fill is a design engineer. The skills and qualifications of applicants are simply not sufficient to perform the role properly. There is also a common misconception that manufacturing is dead in the UK, but in reality the opposite is true and we are the eighth largest manufacturer in the world."

David Millar, Heaps and Partners



Panel 4 - Key Future Projects

"The LCR Investment Zone plans to create 4,000 new jobs, including plenty of local talent, and its potential is very exciting. In terms of skills, we focus on the power of inspiration, and we take children on tours of the various specialisms in Knowledge Quarter Liverpool to show them what career paths are possible in their own city region."

Rachael Stevens, Knowledge Quarter Liverpool

"As businesses are incentivised to invest in the Freeport radius, we look closely at how we can turn those incentives into social value and create highly skilled jobs in the local area. The sectors we aim to attract such as logistics or maritime are traditionally undersubscribed, so we want to drive more individuals into the courses and opportunities that exist."

Jonathan Coleman, Liverpool Freeport

"It is important for innovators to understand what investors are looking for in order to take ideas and projects forward. We need to ensure the local workforce is equipped with the necessary skills."

Martin, Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine

"Decarbonisation is a big growth area, such as replacing large commercial boiler systems with heat pumps, solar panel installations and major LED lighting schemes to help boost energy efficiency.

"Attracting girls into the industry is a huge challenge for us as we bid to diversify our workforce. We also need to highlight that there are lots of roles beyond muddy building sites, such as management, design, estimating or technical roles, which candidates can access after T-Levels."

Matt Breakwell, Kimpton

Panel 5 - The Graduate Market - Contributing to the Skills Challenge

University graduates are an important part of the talent market. This session, facilitated by Liverpool Chamber Chief Executive Paul Cherpeau, featured representatives from all three universities in Liverpool.

“There is often a clamour for graduates to be oven ready for work, but I think it’s better if they are part-baked with room to develop, rather than the finished article. We also recognise that universities need to make it as easy as possible for businesses to access us and that we are agile to change.”

Iwan Williams, University of Liverpool

“Universities originate from a position of satisfying the needs of their local communities. We work hard to ensure our students leave us prepared to enter their sector of choice and help their local communities.

Claire Brownlie, Liverpool Hope University

“The term ‘soft skills’ is quite misleading as skills such as teamwork, public speaking and networking are actually really difficult to develop. Having a degree might get a candidate an interview, but their mindset and approach will be what gets them the job, so we ask that students gain some of those skills as a part of their studies.”

Chris Finn, Liverpool John Moores University

Panel 6 - Building Careers: School to Lifelong Learning

“This is our sixth year of developing children from Year 7 to 13, with a focus on collaboration and employer support. We look at positive distinctions for young people and ensure fewer end up without key skills and we are operating above the national Gatsby benchmarks that define world class careers provision.”

Gill Walsh, Careers Hub Lead for LCR

“If businesses are able to give their time to offer careers advice, take part in mock interviews or present an assembly, I would encourage them to do so and also spread the word around their peers.

Lynn Delaney, CIPD Regional Facilitator



4 – Results and Outcomes

The event was oversubscribed to allow for any natural attrition, the venue was chosen as it offered scalability.

Event bookings were generated quickly, the booking information was clear to ensure expectations could be managed as spaces for industry was limited to one space per organisation.

This was to ensure the event was accessible to as many organisations as possible. Whilst a few exceptions did exist this was very minimal.

Attendance Objective:

1. 100 Business Attendees
2. 50 College/ITP Attendees
3. Host 6 panel discussions
4. Focus Group discussions
5. Receive 30 responses for the Future Skills Survey

Attendance Outcome:

1. 120 Businesses Attended
2. 50 Colleges/ITPs Attended
3. Hosted 6 panel discussions
4. Focus Group discussions cancelled
5. 24 responses to Future Skills Survey

Event evaluation and feedback was excellent with 100% satisfaction in the venue, 98% in the booking process and 93% in overall satisfaction of the event.

Example feedback from delegates

“The balance of education provider and employer feedback was good - it added depth to the conversation surrounding the skills gap and what we were doing to address this as a city. As a LCR Youth Hub offering an alternative to college/ school and focused on solid employment and apprenticeships, it would have been very positive to hear from those representing this sector alongside the colleges. Not all students learn formally and organisations like youth hubs and social mobility charities may hold the answer to developing those ‘softer skills’ needed for work and those life skills employers seem to desperately need. Panels kept the discussion interesting”.

“I found it incredibly informative and the panels were brilliant - great choice of speakers. My biggest disappointment is that there were no people of colour on any of the panels. When hearing and talking about raising the profile of diversity and being disability inclusive - the event itself did not reflect this. As a person of colour in Liverpool, it would be great to see diversity reflected both on panels and in the audience”.

“Excellent venue, excellent and relevant speakers. Really good choice of panellist’s Well organised”.

“Felt that the whole conference was aimed at larger companies. I am a small trader in the building trade and have many ideas of ways the government can help with training and skills for businesses like mine”.

“Well organised with brilliant facilities. Speakers were very knowledgeable and confident during sessions”.

“A well-rounded event considering skills provision from all perspectives”.

“It would be good to have an attendee list prior to attendance and support from the Chambers to connect people”.

As part of the event the attendees were asked about the Future Skills that are required for their businesses within the next 1-5 years. Each attendee had a choice of options within each area (digital and IT, communication skills etc) to choose the top skills to focus on.

Below are the top 5 within each area in priority order:

Digital and IT

1. Computer Literacy
2. Email Skills
3. Social Media
4. Web Based Communications
5. Microsoft Applications

Communication Skills

1. Active Listening
2. Speaking with Confidence
3. Respect
4. Soft Skills
5. Speaking with Clarity

Math Skills

1. Time Management
2. Data Analysis
3. Attention to Detail
4. Numeracy
5. Mathematical Reasoning

Green Technologies

1. Recycling
2. Electric Vehicles
3. LED Lighting
4. Paperless Provision
5. Smart Power Management Systems

Automation and Robotics

1. AI
2. Cyber Security
3. Chatbots
4. AI Customer Service Solutions
5. Scripting and Computer Skills

5 - Recommendations

A post event review was undertaken to determine the lessons that could be learned and outline some key recommendations. Below is a headline overview:

What worked:

- Collaboration between St Helens Chamber and Liverpool Chamber of Commerce as lead delivery partners with wider support from LCR Chambers.
- Leveraging the best assets from the LCR Chambers, utilising expertise in marketing and events.
- Level of engagement and support from our 6 main colleges and ITPs.
- Marketing and event booking.
- Identifying and recruitment of a wide range of stakeholders for panel sessions.
- Consistent planning and briefing sessions with all key stakeholders.
- Oversubscribing bookings and confirmation calls and emails to delegates pre event ensured we had 100% occupancy reached.
- Good range of businesses from different industries invited through chamber networks. This included SMEs aswell as large businesses.

What didn't work:

- Very busy schedule, some sessions overran regardless of good facilitation.
- Whilst time was allowed for networking during the core event more time should be allowed.
- Focus group sessions cancelled to allow sufficient time for all panel sessions to complete, this has meant that additional market engagement and research post event is required.
- Whilst considered during the planning stage the panel diversity did not reflect the overarching theme of diversity and inclusion.
- Interactivity for attendees within panel sessions was felt to be lacking.



Summary

The level of interest and attendance at the conference demonstrated a genuine appetite from all stakeholders to engage and collaborate. The feedback was excellent with a recommendation that the event is repeated annually.

The LSIP project, conference and other significant projects, such as those planned using LSIF, provides an opportunity to transition to lifelong learning which has emerged as a cornerstone of personal and professional development.

This extends beyond formal education, encompassing a spectrum of experiences, from self-directed learning initiatives to professional development courses. There is a distinct relationship between continuous education and strategic guidance, empowering individuals ensures they develop alongside an evolving landscape.

6 - Appendix

The event followed the agenda outlined below:

10:30 - 11:00	Arrival & Networking
11:05 - 11:05	Opening Welcome
11:05 - 11:15	Labour Market Overview & Strategic Objectives
11:15 - 11:40	LSIP - The Voice of Business in the Skills System Laura Cordwell (Human Resources Director, Europe, Carpenter Additive), Peter Ross (Group Managing Director at Morgan Ryder Associates & Deputy Chair of Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Employment & Skills Board), Gill Roberts (Senior Social Value Manager, Morgan Sindall), Pete Sandman (Commercial Director, City of Liverpool College) Moderated by Tracy Mawson, CEO, St Helens Chamber
11:40 - 12:10	Panel Discussion - LCR College Representatives Elaine Bowker (City of Liverpool College), Michelle Brabner (Southport College), Rachel Hennigan (Hugh Baird College), Gill Banks (Wirral Met College), Ben Barton (Riverside College), Simon Pierce (St Helens College) Moderated by Paul Cherpeau, CEO, Liverpool Chamber
12:10 - 12:30	Plugging the Gaps - Employment Skills Gaps Ian Lomas (CEO, GMLPF), Rob Clemson (Technical Director, Flamco), Lisa Johnson (Managing Director, Square One Training), David Millar (MD, Heaps and Partners), Chloe Foran (SEND Employment Support Officer Liverpool City Council), Sue Patterson (Sector Development Management for Construction, Manufacturing Technology Centre), Jon Dobson (Training Manager, The Brain Charity) Moderated by Lesley Martin-Wright, CEO, Knowsley Chamber
12:30 - 13:15	Networking Lunch
13:15 - 13:20	Welcome Back
13:20 - 13:40	Panel Discussion - Key Future Projects & Opportunities in the Region John Leake (Business Growth Director, Sci Tech Daresbury), Jonathan Coleman (Freeport project Manager), Matt Breakwell (Business Development Manager, Kimpton), Rachael Stevens (Head of Partnerships and External Relations, Knowledge Quarter/ Sciontec), Dr Becky Jones-Phillips (Head of Innovation and Enterprise, Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine) Moderated by Rachael Owen, CEO, Halton Chamber
13:40 - 14:00	The Graduate Market - Contributing to the Skills Challenge Chris Finn (Director of Student Futures Team, Liverpool John Moores University), Iwan Williams (Director of Careers and Employability, University of Liverpool), Claire Brownlie (Director of Student Futures, Liverpool Hope University) Moderated by Paul Cherpeau, CEO, Liverpool Chamber
14:00 - 14:20	Building Careers: School to Lifelong Learning Gill Walsh (Careers Hub Lead for LCR), Gill Ditchburn (CEO, Elevate EBP), Michelle Dow (Managing Director, All About STEM), Lynn Delaney (Exec Coach, Degree Apprenticeship Mentor, Regional Facilitator, Strategic HR and L&D Consultant, CIPD), Councillor Kate Groucutt (Cabinet Member - Economy, Business and Skills), Kelly McAnally (Vice Principal at Litherland High School) Moderated by Paul Cherpeau, CEO, Liverpool Chamber
14:20 - 14:50	Focus Group Discussions
14:50 - 15:00	Afternoon Summary
15:00 - 15:15	Refreshments
15:15 - 16:20	School Business Network