

Bedford Borough All Age Skills Plan

2019 - 2023



Foreword

Welcome to Bedford Borough Council's plan for working towards full employment.

This All Age Skills Plan identifies key actions in order to ensure that we and our partners invest in the right skill sets for the future, regardless of age or current skill levels, to ensure no-one is left behind as our economy changes, over the next four years and beyond.

Bedford Borough must ensure that our communities have the best opportunity to access good local jobs and that we make the Borough a great place for people and business to prosper.

The Borough has an above average rate of employment, a high proportion of 'top level' occupations and a skilled workforce. However, there are skill shortages, as we have an above average level of people with low level or no qualifications. This disparity must be addressed if Bedford is to enjoy a sustainable labour market.

If our employers are to thrive we must address both the supply and demand side of the labour market. We need to create employment in existing and future sectors enabling local people to have the skills to access these jobs.

This strategy will set out how to get people into these jobs. Some people will need retraining as old industries become less relevant. Some will have little or no skills as the result of multiple and complex needs. Working with our partners and employers, this strategy will facilitate co-operation so that everyone of all ages can all share in the benefit of the economy.

Bedford benefits from good strategic connections and our position at the centre of the Oxford-Cambridge Arc providing the potential to transform our economy. With challenging targets to deliver 19,000 homes and 11,400 additional jobs by 2035 we must embrace this opportunity for growth. Through development of new business sites and the new housing to accommodate this growth, the Arc provides job opportunities in the short and long term.

This is the opportunity to forecast jobs in specific sectors through partnerships with working businesses alongside having the ability to understand the new skills that are needed as new technologies come into the workplace. Through this approach we will be able to ensure that apprenticeships provide the right skills needed by employers therefore allowing people to find ways to employment, regardless of age, qualification level or previous work experience.

We're committed to encouraging and championing skills development as the key to employment, which will help all our population grow, support and benefit from Bedford Borough's economic growth.



Dave Hodgson

Dave Hodgson
Mayor of Bedford Borough

Partner Cooperation

- Using our relationships with key agencies, employers, providers and partners, we will establish the Bedford Employment and Skills Board, allowing the sharing of data and intelligence about employment.
- We will use this board to consider and identify future skill needs so that training for future skill demands can be shaped in advance, rather than lagging behind and being reactive.
- We will work with our delivery partners and our employers to ensure that we provide the skills to help our residents into a job, fuelling progression into better jobs and then a career.
- We will recruit employers from our key sectors to be skills champions, tapping into their connections and expertise to work with skills providers, and sign-posting to the right providers for their needs.

Raise Aspiration, Celebrate Achievement

- We will work with partners to ensure targeted interventions focus on the needs of residents most at risk of exclusion from the labour market and the long term unemployed or economically inactive.
- We will continue to provide basic and functional skills, employability skills (CV writing, interview preparation) and confidence building to those without qualifications or the basic skills required for work.
- Our Skills Board will commit to addressing the barriers to employability such as poor health, lack of confidence, as well as practical issues like childcare or transport access to work.
- We will provide schools with the latest employment information and use employer speakers along with presentations to illustrate career pathways as inspirations to the next generation.
- The Jobs Hub will provide year round information advice and guidance to clients, free of charge.

Develop the Future Workforce

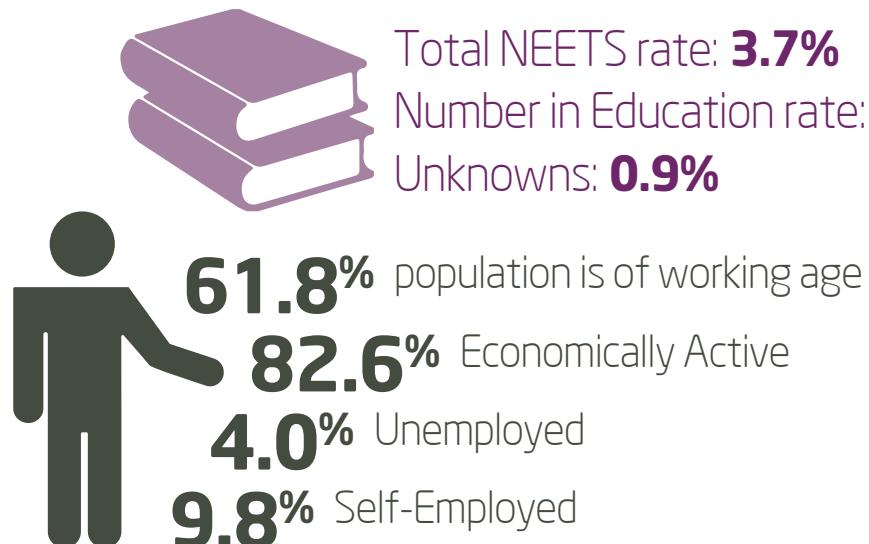
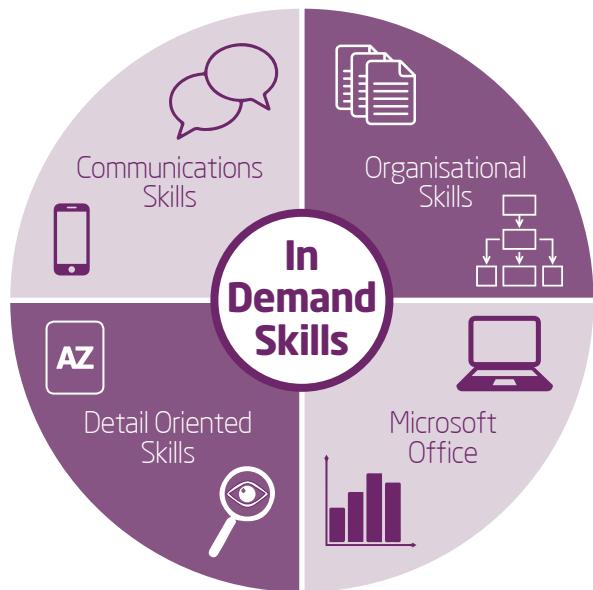
- We will use our Key Sector Ambassadors to ensure new trends in their sectors are identified and shape training provision to ensure it is fit for purpose in the modern labour market and meets real needs.
- Apprenticeships will continue to be promoted, as well as their benefits; both to employer and apprentice. We will encourage larger employers to share these opportunities with SMEs / Micro businesses.
- Bedford Borough Council commits to creating a work experience scheme for school students in order to be standard bearers that encourage other employers and partners to do likewise.

The All Age Skills Plan will be underpinned by the creation of the Bedford Employment and Skills Board, which will bring together stakeholders to co-ordinate skills and employment activity, and to identify new trends so that employability and skills training is relevant to need.

The work of this board and plan delivers the Developing People objective of the Bedford Growth Plan 2018-22.



Snapshot of Bedford Borough...



Source: year change to Jan 18-Dec 18 and pop estimates 2017

Top Vacancies by Sector:



Science, Research,
Engineering and Technology



Teaching Educational
Professions



Business, Media and
Public Services



Access to Centres of Excellence from Bedford

Cranfield:

20 minutes

Colworth Park:

25 minutes

Cambridge:

40 minutes

Level 4 - still higher than average

940 Apprenticeships in past year

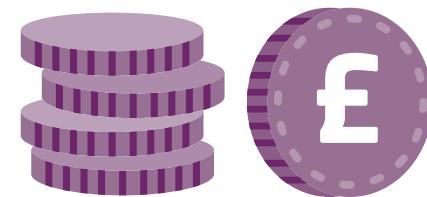
Sources: gov.uk Aug 17-18 & ONS Annual Population Survey 2018



Key Facts & Figures

Area	476 sq km
Population	169,900
Workforce	90,800
Businesses	6,915
Employees	75,000
Households	72,900

Source ONS Jan 2018-Dec 2018



Average Weekly Workplace Wage £577.0

Source: ONS ASHE 2018

Strategic Context

This Skills Plan is being produced at a time of profound political change; but there are structural changes happening in our economy as we experience the growth of new technologies such as automation and artificial intelligence. These changes will affect the type of jobs we will need.



Nationally:

- The UK Industrial Strategy boosts productivity and earning through a focus on science, innovation and technology. When European funding ends, the Shared Prosperity Fund will finance projects that deliver the UK Industrial Strategy.
- There is no National Skills Strategy at present to underpin the Industrial Strategy; as a result, service provision is fragmented.
- The Apprenticeship Levy continues to be a useful source of funding for skills development.



Regionally:

- SEMLEP's Strategic Economic Plan, is the key document, providing steer for the £265m Local Growth Fund which has supported projects in Bedford to unlock growth.
- SEMLEP's Skills Strategy works to ensure that the right skills are there so that employers have the workers for the economic growth.
- The SEMLEP Local Industrial Strategy is the local version of the UK Industrial Strategy.
- The Oxford to Cambridge Arc hangs off this, creating a "Silicon Valley" corridor (which includes Bedford) between the great research centres of Oxford and Cambridge.



Locally:

- The Council's Corporate Plan 2017-2021 and Local Plan 2035 aim to make Bedford a place where people, communities and businesses can grow and realise their potential.
- The Growth Plan 2018-22 sets out how that growth will be achieved, by working on "Growing Business", "Enhancing Place" and "Developing People".
- The All Age Skills Strategy will sit under that Growth Plan, with a particular focus on the "Developing People" element.
- The council also has local strategies to support client groups communities, that we will accommodate within this plan. Skills plan connection with other current strategies.

Skills plan connection with other current strategies

Enablers (what we will do to achieve our aims)

Working towards full employment

Partner Cooperation

- Ensure that the skills needs of businesses, the growing economy and individuals are met through collaborative approaches
- Anticipate and respond to the skills needs of employers and the wider labour market



Raise Aspiration, Celebrate Achievement

- Encourage increased access to work and learning opportunities, appropriate for all, including our most vulnerable citizens
- Provide local labour market intelligence to empower young people and adults make informed choices



Develop the Future Workforce

- Enable Bedford's businesses to gain a competitive edge through investing in the workforce
- Maximise opportunities for workbased learning, including work placements, apprenticeships and traineeships



We will use these three pillars to steer our work, split into 6 objectives (two in each pillar). An extensive list of actions (detailing resources, timeframes and delivery) will be regularly monitored and is available on request.

Measuring Success

The success of this plan will be measured by the following primary indicators. The indicators reflect an overall picture of Bedford Borough's economy and will be monitored over time.

- *Total number of Jobs*
- *% increase or population in work*
- *% decrease of economically active people who are unemployed*
- *% Self Employed*
- *% Reduction in NEET numbers*
- *Reduced level of reported skills gaps*
- *Increased participation of 16-18 year olds in apprenticeships*
- *% increase in population qualified to NVQ level 2+*
- *% decrease in unqualified population*



A Skills Analysis for Bedford has been undertaken and is available upon request

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