



# Borough of Telford and Wrekin

## Communities Scrutiny Committee

Thursday 12 February 2026

### Telford and Wrekin Skills Strategy

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<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Cllr Shirley Reynolds - Cabinet Member for Early Years, Children, Young People, Education and Skills
<b>Lead Director:</b>	Simon Wellman - Director: Education & Skills
<b>Service Area:</b>	Education and Skills
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<b>Wards Affected:</b>	All Wards
<b>Key Decision:</b>	Not Key Decision
<b>Forward Plan:</b>	Not Applicable
<b>Report considered by:</b>	Communities Scrutiny Committee – Thursday 12 February 2026

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#### 1.0 Recommendations for decision/noting:

The Committee is asked to:-

- 1.1 Note the broad range of activity that is taking place to support the objectives set out in the Skills Strategy and the positive impact that is having on local people.
- 1.2 Note that the national policy and funding landscape around skills and employment is currently evolving significantly, which will have an impact on the range and type of support available to local residents. This presents opportunities to influence how this looks locally for maximum impact and possibly funding opportunities, however it is currently too early to be clear what this could be.

## **2.0 Purpose of Report**

2.1 The purpose of this report is to provide a progress update regarding the attached Skills Strategy, which reaffirms the Council's commitment that every child, young person and adult will live well in their community and everyone will benefit from a thriving economy.

## **3.0 Background**

3.1 The Skills Strategy sets out our vision for Telford and Wrekin to become 'a learning borough for all', so that whatever an individual's aspiration, current skill base or age, they can access learning opportunities relevant to employers today and in the future. The strategy's vision will be realised through 6 objectives and aims:

- Improve the overall skills levels of residents.
- Nurturing and supporting aspiration whatever an individual's background or existing skill level to fulfil their talent.
- Developing progression pathways to provide a clear route for people to progress through the skills system to employment.
- A skills system which is fully inclusive and representative of our borough.
- A skills system which provides the skills required by businesses, both current and future, and contributes to economic growth and the prosperity of the town.

The structure of what follows outlines progress so across a broad range of service activity to support the above 6 objectives. Much of the activity spans multiple objectives, so has been broken down into relevant sections. The report also provides some context on relevant initiatives that have been announced by the government that will have a significant impact in the area of skills and employment.

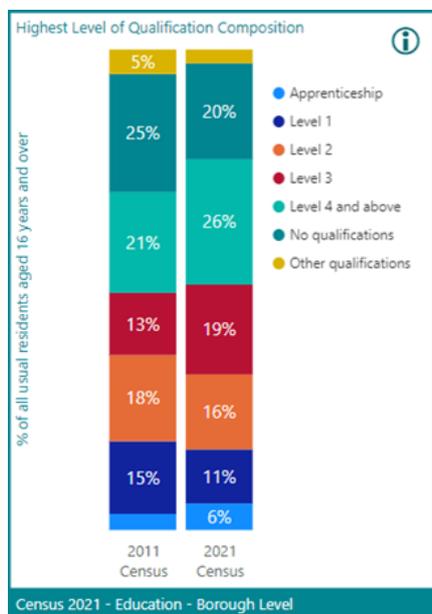
## **4.0 Summary of main proposals**

4.1 Local Curriculum Offer

- The Borough continues to have a broad and successful range of provision, with over 300 courses available and accessible through the Telford 16 – 19 website. This includes A levels, BTECs and T levels in an array of vocational subjects, including those of identified skills shortage areas such as digital, health, engineering and construction. The curriculum at Level 4 and above is in place locally, with recent additions around digital skills, leadership and management, and nursing, and is being further developed with local FE and HE providers.
- The skills strategy outlines the picture of qualification levels amongst the local population, with the borough having higher proportions of the population qualified at Level 3 or below than the England Average (NOMIS, Annual

Population Survey). However the borough has 28.4% qualified at Level 4 compared to the England average of 37%.

- Progress is being made in raising the qualification levels of the borough. The most recent census data (2021) shows a significant increase in the numbers of people with Level 4 and above qualifications compared to 2011.



- Developing pathways through to higher level qualifications (Level 4+) remains a priority and partnerships with providers such as Harper Adams University and Telford College, delivering new routes such as the innovative digital skills provision now running at The Quad in Station Quarter.
- Looking forward, there are further changes coming that will evolve the local curriculum offer. In October 2025, the Government published the Post16 Education and Skills White Paper, which outlined the introduction of V Levels, designed to streamline and simplify the current landscape of vocational qualifications and sit alongside A Levels and T Levels. The reforms also include new English and maths qualifications aimed at better supporting progression for learners who do not achieve Grade 4 or above at age 16.

## 4.2 Learn Telford

- Learn Telford is the adult and community learning service operated by the Council using DfE/DWP funding. It offers a range of courses to adults aged 19+. The core of the Learn Telford curriculum is improving essential skills such as English, maths and digital skills.

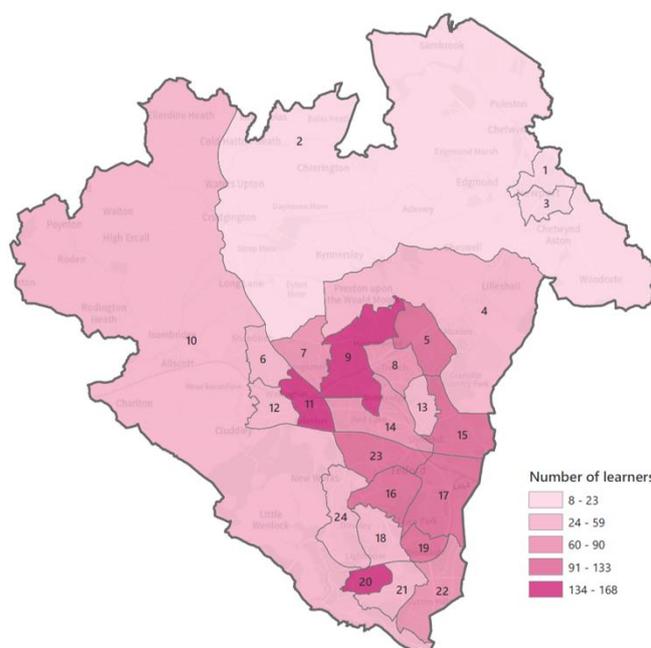
## Telford and Wrekin Skills Strategy

- However, many adult learners need ‘stepping stones’ of shorter, lighter courses to build confidence, aspiration and motivation before engaging in longer learning to address gaps in essential skills.
- Of the 7,480 adult learners in the borough (DfE Data). Learn Telford is the largest provider of adult learning having over 40% of the total adult learning enrolments, with Telford College second at 22%.
- The service runs courses in a wide range of local community venues, to help remove barriers to learning. The image below shows the effectiveness of the service at engaging learners in the areas with greatest need.

### Learn Telford Learners by Postcode

#### Key to MSOAs

- 1 Newport North
- 2 Edgmond & Church Aston
- 3 Newport South
- 4 Muxton & Lilleshall
- 5 Donnington
- 6 Dorthill & Shawbirch
- 7 Apley & Leegomery
- 8 Wrockwardine Wood & Trench
- 9 Hadley & Horton
- 10 Ironbridge, Admaston & High Ercall
- 11 Wellington East
- 12 Wellington West
- 13 St Georges
- 14 Oakengates & Ketley
- 15 Priorslee
- 16 Malinslee
- 17 Hollinswood & Randlay
- 18 Dawley & Aqueduct
- 19 Brookside
- 20 Woodside
- 21 Madeley
- 22 Sutton Hill
- 23 Town Centre, Overdale & Dawley Bank
- 24 Lawley, Horsehay & Lightmoor



- In the last academic year, Learn Telford had over 1200 adult learners undertaking over 3000 instances of learning (many learners taking more than one course). 80% of learners were unemployed. 73% of learners had low (Level 2 or below) or no qualifications. 50% of learners were from black and minority ethnic communities. Over 90% of learners completed and achieved their qualification and learning outcomes, and 80% of learners progress into further learning or employment.
- Learn Telford also offers a range of Family Learning courses, by working in partnership with local schools. Delivered in schools by Learn Telford tutors, these courses support parents to develop their skills to be able to better support their child’s learning and development.

## Telford and Wrekin Skills Strategy

- Learn Telford is targeted at adults with the greatest need and the data shows it is effective at reaching them, and that the learning empowers them to achieve and progress. Learn Telford contributes significantly to all the objectives within the Skills Strategy. The website for Learn Telford can be accessed at: [www.learntelford.ac.uk](http://www.learntelford.ac.uk)

### 4.3 Youth Unemployment

- The figure for NEET & Not Known young people aged 16 – 17 continues to be below both regional and national averages, with recent figures (December 2025 DfE LA tables) showing Telford & Wrekin at 5.2% against England at 6.3% and the West Midlands at 6.4%. This has remained consistent, with Telford & Wrekin being below England & the West Midlands in both December 2024 and December 2023 (DfE LA tables). Strong risk of NEET work undertaken by FutureFocus, the careers team for young people, during Year 11 has positively impacted Year 11 young people moving into a successful post 16 outcome, along with ongoing supportive casework for post 16 NEET young people. However, the numbers of 18 – 24 claimants have seen an increase of just under 6% (ONS taken from NOMIS December 2025). National issues are reflected locally, including ‘the experience paradox’, with employers often preferring experienced candidates and the rise in long-term sickness, particularly due to poor mental health. This report outlines the initiatives being developed and/or delivered under the umbrella of the Skills Strategy to look to address these figures.

### 4.4 Tackling Inequality

#### Stay Near Go Far

- Our Stay Near, Go Far campaign supports the aims of the Skills Strategy, by raising awareness of the wide range of skills, learning and employment support on offer in Telford and Wrekin to help residents thrive.
- Whether leaving school, changing careers or returning to work after a break, the message is there is no need to move away to succeed.
- From apprenticeships and adult learning courses to careers in global industries based locally, the borough offers a wealth of options, all accessible right on the doorstep. It shines a spotlight on local talents and aims to support those who may have been out of work due to illness, caring responsibilities or other challenges.
- Developed with and supported by key partners, including educational providers, employers and skills networks, the campaign supports the Council's wider skills strategy and vision 2032 ambition to build a strong, more inclusive

local economy. To date there have been 24 posts and across all networks, these have generated 284 total clicks, 33.6k reach and 49.3k impressions.

### Employer & School Engagement

- Employer and school engagement in Telford is supported by our "Telford Together" initiative, which connects local businesses with schools to strengthen talent pipelines through career interventions and work experiences. The initiative is supported by key partners, including Telford College, Harper Adams and local employers. The Council promotes work-based learning, including Year 10 work experience, and connects students with industries through initiatives like 'Digital Sparks', featuring partners such as Capgemini and Harper Adams University.
- The Marches Careers & Enterprise Hub is a partnership between the Careers & Enterprise Company and the three local authorities of Telford, Shropshire and Herefordshire. It works to transform careers education across The Marches region by linking education with business and helping secondary schools, colleges, and specialist institutions achieve the standards set out in the Gatsby Benchmark framework. It recruits industry volunteers as Enterprise Advisers, who work with schools as a strategic critical friend and helps employers provide work experience days and teacher encounters. Cornerstone employers locally include Cap Gemini, Housing Plus Group and the Shrewsbury & Telford Hospital NHS Trust, who work together with their networks and wider business community to provide opportunities for young people to be prepared for the world of work.
- The Telford Skills Show also supports school to employer engagement as referenced later in this report.

### Young Carers

- Young carers are identified as a sub-group of the Get Marches Working plan, recognising that they face major barriers to employment due to their caring responsibilities. We know that numbers of young carers increased in Telford to 236 in 2025 up by 0.7% from figures in 2024. Work is planned in partnership with schools to identify and support young carers and will be a focus in terms of considering transition and opportunities post 16.

## 4.5 Employment Support Summary

### Connect to Work

- Connect to Work is a DWP funded programme being delivered by the Council, that was created by the Get Britain Working white paper (November 2024). Its purpose is to provide intensive 1:1 case-loaded support to adults with

disabilities, health conditions and other complex needs to move into and/or sustain employment.

- Local delivery launched in October 2025. The service has DWP set targets that will see it engage with over 900 people over the initial 5 years of delivery. As of end of January 2026 local delivery has achieved 41 starts which is ahead of the expected profile.
- Demand for the programme has been positive in these early stages. Employment Specialists from the team are already co-located in the Armed Forces Hub in Dawley, Stirchley Medical Practice, and Telford Job Centre. There is structured partnership working in place with the Care Leaver Team and the Autism Hub. As the team's capacity increases in line with funding, co-locations and partnerships will be expanded to support additional referral pathways.
- The service is also working with Telford College to transition young people with SEND into Connect to Work if they have not already achieved a learning progression or paid job outcome at the end of their course.
- Locally, Connect to Work is delivered as part of our Job Box branding and people can find out further information about the support available via the details on the Job Box website – [Connect to Work](#)

### Job Box Services

- Telford Job Box is the brand for the Council's employment support services, of which Connect to Work is part. However there are additional elements including outreach activity, drop-in service, and case-loaded employment support for those not eligible for Connect to Work.
- The Job Box drop-in desk operates on the ground floor of the Southwater One building in Telford Town Centre. The desk is open Monday to Friday from 10am-5pm, where adults can stop by without an appointment and see an advisor to get information, advice and guidance regarding skills and employment. This includes CV support, tailoring job applications, job searching, interview preparation, skills needs, and local learning opportunities.
- New for this year, Job Box now has the ability to provide 'better off in work' calculations, which supports people to understand the financial implications of moving into employment and how it will affect and change their benefit entitlements.

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- The Job Box outreach team operate out in the community. They run pop-up events in local communities to promote the wider Job Box and Learn Telford offer. They also engage with communities, groups and local organisations to promote the services and support people to engage with them.
- Over the past 12 months, there have been over 1314 appointments delivered at the drop-in desk and over 100 outreach events have taken place in the local community. Case loaded support has led to 204 people moving into employment, and 182 people moving onto education/training.
- The Job Box service make a significant contribution to the objectives set out in the Skills Strategy.

### Job Box website refresh

- To ensure that learners have a clear 'line of sight' of where learning and opportunities can lead, work is ongoing to refresh the Job Box website. To encourage use, young people and adults were surveyed, so they could inform content, identify any gaps and advise the type of resources and support they want to access. A comprehensive review of the current site has taken place to ensure currency of existing content but a full refresh will be launched in Spring 2026.
- The site will retain the Job Box identity but will be clearer, simpler and easier to navigate, supporting residents to both self-serve and access relevant support when needed. It will provide an opportunity to showcase work sectors and promote the Stay Near, Go Far campaign, along with the Skills Show, Learn Telford adult learning and careers advice and guidance services.

Link to [Telford Job Box](#) website

### Skills Show

- The annual Telford Skills Show brings together major local and regional employers and training providers to showcase career, training and apprenticeship opportunities to residents of all ages. It forms part of the Council's wider investment strategy to support jobs, skills and education and ensures residents can access high-quality employment and training opportunities in Telford and Wrekin. In addition to the many adults that access the Show, school pupils from across the Borough also attend, providing them with hands-on activities and direct encounters with employers, designed to inspire our future workforce and create a talent pipeline to meet future skill demands. Last year's Show saw:

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- Over 2,300 school pupils from local schools booked to visit the show
- A further 2,500 people of all ages booked online to attend
- Overall numbers were 1500 up on previous years
- More than 50 regional and national employers and training providers attended
- 300 staff and volunteers supported the show

Link to [Telford Skills Show 2026](#) website

### Get Marches Working Plan

- The Get Marches Working Plan has been developed under the Get Britain Working White Paper and is a local strategy designed to reduce economic inactivity across the Marches region. It is a joint plan shared by the three Local Authorities of Telford & Wrekin, Hereford & Shropshire, as determined nationally.
- The Plan sets out a clear vision - to create an inclusive, dynamic labour market that helps people into sustainable employment.
- The plan aligns employer-led initiatives with training provision, strengthens links between schools and businesses and provides employability support within community services to unlock new pathways into work. Regional partners including the Integrated Care Board (ICB), Jobcentre Plus (JCP), voluntary and community sector organisations (VCSE), local employers and further and higher education providers (FE and HE) have collaborated to shape a plan which highlights the challenges across the region and the actions needed to tackle them.

[Get Marches Working Plan - Telford Job Box](#)

### National Jobs & Careers Service

- Looking forward there are forthcoming changes to the employment support available to people in the borough. Following the Get Britain Working White Paper (November 2024) Job Centres will be merged with the National Careers Service and will provide a unified and joined-up system.
- The details about how this will look locally in Telford are not yet available but it is due to launch in October 2026. However, the new look service is intended to provide cohesive support to help people to move into work, progress in work, deliver skills assessments and careers guidance.

- We have close working relationships with our colleagues in DWP and will ensure that we continue to work effectively with them through the transition to the new merged service, to ensure we maximise our collective impact for local residents.

### Youth Guarantee

- Also announced in the Get Britain Working White Paper that will bring some changes to the local offer is the government's Youth Guarantee. This will expand the number of 'Youth Hubs'. It will provide more intensive support for unemployed young people, and it will also introduce a jobs guarantee for those aged 18-21 who are long-term unemployed, as well as bring increases to the numbers of placements and training opportunities.
- These policy developments may bring funding opportunities for local authorities and this is something we will monitor closely. Should opportunities arise we will work to maximise the impact they have for local people.

## **5.0 Alternative Options**

- 5.1 Given the intention of this paper is to provide an update on activity under the Skills Strategy it is not an intended to provide a range of options for a decision.

It is important to note that much of the activity outlined above is fully funded by external funding sources from the DWP and/or DfE and is therefore subject to the specifications and limitation of the funders. However, where these services are delivered by the council, we work to ensure they support and align with our strategic objectives and make the most impact for local residents.

Given the statutory or contractual nature of the majority of the above services there are no alternative options to outline at this time.

## **5.0 Key Risks**

- 6.1 Given the majority of activity is reliant on external funding sources from central government, should this cease or change, it will likely have an impact on our capacity to deliver the objectives set out in the Skills Strategy. It is therefore critical that we remain flexible and adapt to any future changes and work to maximise any new opportunities for the benefit of local residents.
- 6.2 Failure of deliver against any contractual obligations could jeopardise service delivery, therefore effective monitoring of performance, and robust governance is maintained to identify any issues and undertake any necessary mitigation swiftly.

## **7.0 Council Priorities**

- 7.1 The proposals set out in this report support the following council priorities:

- Every child, young person and adult lives well in their communities.
- Everyone benefits from a thriving economy.
- A community-focussed, innovative council providing efficient, effective and quality services
- Vision 2032
- Child Friendly Telford

## **8.0 Financial Implications**

8.1 As noted above, much of the funding for skills comes through government grants, some of which have delivery criteria attached. The financial position of the area will be kept under review as part of overall financial monitoring, to ensure that it remains within the financial resources that are available.

## **9.0 Legal and HR Implications**

9.1 The Council has the power to undertake the activities contained within this report and the programme's purpose is aligned to the Council's objectives.

## **10.0 Ward Implications**

10.1 The activity outlined in this report spans the whole borough, and supports residents and families to improve their skills and progress into work, or in work. Increased skills and employment levels is a positive outcome for all wards.

## **11.0 Health, Social and Economic Implications**

11.1 Improved support for adults will lead to increased skills and employment levels. Adults with higher skills and in employment typically have better health than adults who are unemployed, in terms of both physical and mental health.

11.2 Increased levels of skills employment will have a positive impact on the Borough's economy.

## **12.0 Equality and Diversity Implications**

12.1 The service activity outlined in this report serve to broaden access to services and reach those who experience barriers to improved skills and employment outcomes. Therefore, these services have a positive impact on equality and diversity, by leading to improved skills and levels of employment.

12.2 There are aspects of services outlined above that are specifically designed to increase the support available to the Armed Forces community, in terms of improved skills levels and employment outcomes.

12.3 There are also aspects of services outlined above that are specifically designed to increase the support available to Care Leavers, with a particular focus on removing barriers to engagement.

### **13.0 Climate Change, Biodiversity and Environmental Implications**

13.1 The climate change and environmental impact of the above activity under the Skills Strategy is expected to be minimal.

### **14.0 Background Papers**

- 1 Get Marches Working Plan
- 2 Post-16 Education and Skills Whitepaper
- 3 Get Britain Working White Paper

### **15.0 Appendices**

- A Telford and Wrekin Skills Strategy

### **16.0 Report Sign Off**

<b>Signed off by</b>	<b>Date sent</b>	<b>Date signed off</b>	<b>Initials</b>
Director	03/02/2026	04/02/2026	SW
Legal	04/02/2026	04/02/2026	RP
Finance	04/02/2026	05/02/2026	TD