

Contents

Foreword	2
Key Features.....	3
Introduction	4
The Stevenage Works Skills Framework	8
Key Sectors	9
Key Ambitions for Stevenage	10
The Skills Focuses for Stevenage.....	11
Focus One: An Opportunity to Improve Skills Levels & Extend Opportunity.....	11
Focus Two: Concentrations of Socio-Economic Disadvantage.....	12
Focus Three: Securing Impact from the Regeneration of the Town.....	14
Focus Four: Targeted and Quality Advice and Guidance to Open Exciting Routes for Young People	15
Focus Five: Deepening Partnerships with Businesses to Create Local Opportunities.....	16
Links to the Hertfordshire Skills & Employment Strategy 21-24	17

Foreword



Cllr Richard Henry, Leader of the Council

It gives me immense pleasure to introduce this Skills Framework. Stevenage stands not just as a place but as a thriving community, a vibrant place to grow, live, and work. Our town's strength lies not only in its history but in the promising horizon it holds for the future.

At the core of our council's newly adopted Corporate Plan, '*Making Stevenage Even Better*' lies the pivotal emphasis on Skills and Enterprise. Whilst skills provision does not typically fall within the statutory duties of a borough council, our ambition is to cultivate a bespoke approach to skills delivery that ensures our residents and economy reap the benefits unique to Stevenage.

This approach comes at the right time, building on the 'Stevenage Town Investment Plan' which also has Skills & Enterprise as a core tenant, given our ongoing once in a generation regeneration plans, which have seen us attract £37.5m through the Town's Fund and which we expect could deliver as many as 8,000 new jobs to the local economy in the coming decade.

Alongside this, we have also been successful in attracting £2.7m in funding to support Community Wealth Building and Skills Development over the last three years. As a result, we've been able to build essential strategic partnerships with Hertfordshire LEP, the University of Hertfordshire, North Herts College and Mission44 a charitable foundation founded by Sir Lewis Hamilton to transform the lives of young people facing disadvantage and discrimination.

Looking ahead, our goal is clear, to open doors to the array of high-quality local jobs for Stevenage residents. We are committed to equipping them with the requisite information, guidance, and tools, ensuring they stand ready to seize these opportunities.

Cllr Sandra Barr, Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhoods, Communities, Co-operative Councils & Young People

As a community-driven person, this work on skills and opportunity is very close to my heart. I am very proud of my roles as a voluntary school governor for several Stevenage schools for over 37 years in addition to my tenure as a local councillor and portfolio holder. I have watched Stevenage grow, mature, and thrive, and am very proud to consider myself a resident.

I am deeply invested in the journey toward enhancing the lives of our residents. Stevenage stands unique amongst the Hertfordshire landscape, not just in its geography and history as the UK's first 'New Town', but also in the challenges we face.



It's an unfortunate reality that 73% of our Lower Super Output areas fall within the bottom 30% most deprived areas in our county. While pockets of deprivation exist elsewhere in Hertfordshire, Stevenage experiences a more pervasive and general form of it, one that demands our focused attention and collective action.

However, what is also clear is the wonderful opportunities that are right on our doorstep. Few towns like Stevenage would boast opportunities to be rocket scientists, defence specialists, doctors, nurses, genetic scientists, engineers and much more. We want to make sure that our residents are best equipped to make the most of these diverse and high value roles.

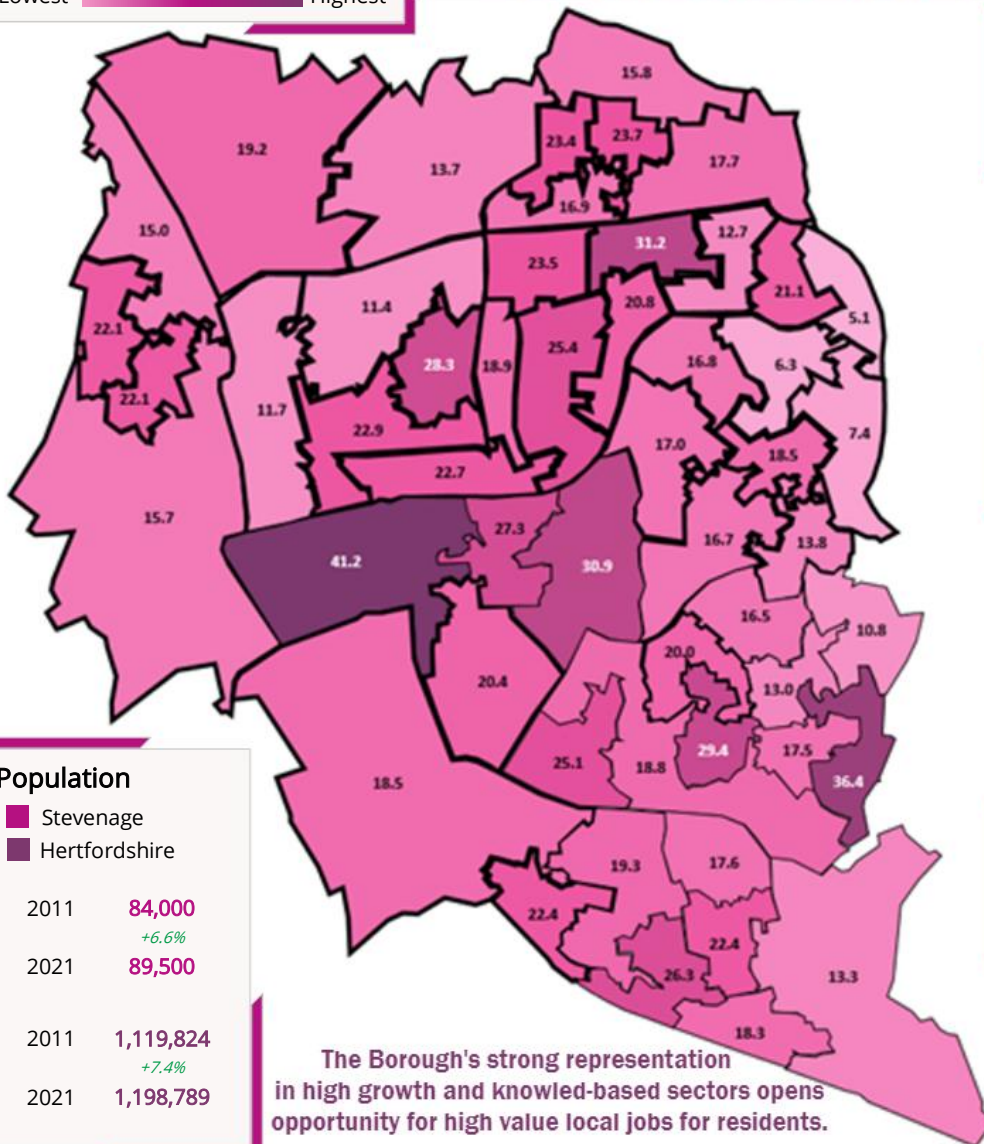
This framework isn't just a statement of intent; it's a promise—a promise to elevate opportunities and to ignite the prospects of every resident and it symbolizes our unwavering dedication to enhancing the life chances of our community.

Key Features

Deprivation

Lowest Highest

"Stevenage: a pioneering town with a proud history, a place where the heart of the town lies in its people and all people can share in its success".



Economic activity status



Highest level of qualification



Employment history



Population

	Stevenage	Hertfordshire
2011	84,000	
	+6.6%	
2021	89,500	
2011	1,119,824	
	+7.4%	
2021	1,198,789	



The Opportunity

A 20 year, £1bn regeneration programme to 2035, designed to maximise the Town's potential and deliver significant transformation.

Including the Stevenage Town Investment Plan (STIP) £37.5m of Government Funding.

The STIP places significant emphasis on delivering opportunities for local people, particularly in relation to enhancing skills and training.



The Ambition

An approach that delivers for all those with barriers to employment.

Young people are provided the tools and knowledge to make the most of the opportunities available to them.

Those in work are given opportunities for career progress and retraining.

Ensure targeted work in areas of greatest deprivation to break down barriers to employment.

Ensuring that interventions are designed and delivered at a local level.



The Challenge

High levels of deprivation throughout the town.

Lower levels of attainment and lower levels of qualifications than neighbourhood areas in Hertfordshire.

Resident earnings are lower than the Stevenage workforce.

Challenges for residents to identify the opportunities available in the town.



The Response

A joint effort to open doors to Stevenage's outstanding opportunities.

Collaboration between the public, private and third sectors.

Establishing Stevenage as a Skills Centre of Excellence

Ensure the once in a generation regeneration activities achieve a great result for this and the next generation of Stevenage residents.

Introduction

Stevenage is a pioneering town with a proud history, the UK's first New Town, founded with a vision of being a modern, sustainable, and thriving town. A place where 'the heart of the town lies in its people' and all people can share in its success.

Built in the 1950s, its infrastructure now needs modernising and Stevenage Borough Council, along with partners has been working hard to regenerate the town and extend opportunities for local people. This includes:

- Establishing the 'Stevenage Works' partnership to ensure social value benefits in construction contracts are being realised, including things such as apprenticeships, local labour, sustainable development etc.
- Attracting over £2.7m in external funding since 2021 in funding to support Community Wealth Building, Enterprise & Skills Development.
- Developing the policy context within the Stevenage Development Framework (2015) and setting out how the town can be regenerated.
- Establishing a broad programme of regeneration and investment through Stevenage Borough Council, Hertfordshire Local Economic Partnership (LEP) and Hertfordshire Growth Board to level up opportunities for residents and businesses.
- More than a decade of close partnership working with the Hertfordshire LEP supporting business development, growth, and improved skills.
- Establishing strong partnerships with North Herts College and the University of Hertfordshire to strengthen the skills base and seize new curriculum opportunities as the Town develops and the skills that local people need to meet these opportunities evolve.

Case Study: Stevenage Business & Technology Centre (BTC)

Supporting the Community Wealth Building approach, the Stevenage Business and Technology Centre (BTC) is managed by a local not-for-profit social enterprise, Wenta.

BTC offers affordable workspace of varying sizes for SMEs to start and grow, including a business start-up incubator providing advice, training and hot desk facilities.

A resident business adviser is on hand to support all businesses with free advice and training including startups, those growing into their first office space, and those looking to expand. Fully equipped meeting rooms and conference space ensure businesses can provide a good first impression to customers and space for confidential conversations.



- A long history of investing directly in infrastructure to support skills, jobs, and growth for example the established Stevenage Business and Technology Centre to more recently the Co Space offer both providing workspace and business support to local start-ups and SMEs.

In March 2020, the Stevenage Development Board (SDB) a senior multi-stakeholder partnership was established to oversee the development of a Town Deal for Stevenage. Subsequently, £37.5m funding was secured from the Government's Town's Fund to deliver the ambitious Stevenage Town Investment Plan (STIP). The STIP forms part of a 20 year, £1bn regeneration programme to 2035, designed to maximise the Town's potential and deliver a significant transformation. Over this time the programme is expected to deliver circa 7,600 new homes, 1.4 million ft² of commercial space, 8,000 new jobs and an uplift in GVA of over £2.5bn.

Thus, the Borough's strong representation in high growth and knowledge-based sectors, opens opportunities for high value local jobs for residents, meaning it is vital we work with providers, businesses, and local people to make the most of the opportunity. And new technologies alongside increasingly efficient working practices demand higher level skills and enhanced employee productivity. We must provide Stevenage residents with the tools and opportunities to acquire the right skills to meet the changing demands of the labour market to ensure they have the best access to fulfilling careers.


As it stands, this change to the labour market poses a challenge for Stevenage residents. Faced with higher levels of deprivation across the town, lower levels of attainment and lower levels of qualifications than neighbouring areas and the national average, and resident earnings lower than in-commuters, many residents are not approaching the situation from an equitable platform, especially when compared with some of the most affluent areas in Hertfordshire.

Whilst there has been a positive direction of travel in recent years, this is still very much in line with changes at a county and national level which means that the gap between Stevenage and especially Hertfordshire is not narrowing further as illustrated below:

Case Study: Primary School Quality Mark (PSQM)

PSQM is an evidence-informed professional development and school improvement programme developed by the University of Hertfordshire, which equips primary science subject leaders with the knowledge, confidence, and expert support they need to transform the quality and profile of science education in their schools.

Seven primary schools across Stevenage are currently engaging with the PSQM programme through a collaborative hub, which means 122 teachers and 2862 children are seeing a positive impact on science teaching and learning. The hub is being led by a Stevenage-based hub leader who is part of the PSQM network of science experts at the forefront of pedagogical practice.



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Stevenage Resident Qualifications	Stevenage		Hertfordshire		England	
	2011	2021	2011	2021	2011	2021
Qualified to NVQ Level 4	23.1%	29.6%	32.1%	39.4%	27.4%	33.8%
Qualified to NVQ Level 3	12.0%	17.1%	11.8%	15.9%	12.4%	16.9%
No Qualifications	20.8%	17.0%	18.2%	14.7%	22.5%	18.2%

However, In January 2020, SBC introduced a community wealth building approach across the council, recognising that traditional economic development policy and practice has not always delivered local economic, social, and environmental benefits for residents. Often, and despite significant inward investment, the beneficiaries of this investment have been distant shareholders and in-commuters, as opposed to local people and communities.

Community wealth building takes a different view of economic development; one where rather than extracting wealth from local economies, wealth is retained, circulating, and delivering for the health and wellbeing of residents and the environment. SBC established its Cooperative and Inclusive Economy Charter, with the goal of creating a fairer society and more resilient economy.

The Charter includes four themes to support the delivery of its approach:

1. Growing the social economy
2. Training and skills
3. Tackling climate change
4. Procurement and social value.

The Skills Framework aims to utilise this community wealth building approach to rectify Stevenage’s current labour market imbalance. It describes a collaborative and forward-facing skills and employability system in Stevenage designed to equip residents, especially young people, with the information, tools and high-quality provision needed to enable them to aspire and achieve their full potential. And deepening our relationships with businesses to bolster the workforce development ecosystem to support career development, productivity, and success of employees, which in turn will help strengthen organisational innovation, growth, and prosperity.

Case Study; Hertfordshire Opportunities Portal (HOP)

The premier gateway in Hertfordshire for Students, career explorers and employers to explore career opportunities and access advice and guidance on jobs, qualifications and apprenticeships via one single portal.

Students and career explorers can use a series of interactive tools to find out about career paths, employment opportunities, apprenticeships and work experience, skills development and professional qualifications programmes.

Employers and training providers can reach and recruit their future talent and upskill & provide progression opportunities for existing staff.

Schools can access a rich bank of Hertfordshire-specific careers resources including labour market infographics, a Virtual Employer Encounter webinar series and a range of classroom resources based on the Hertfordshire Skills Framework.



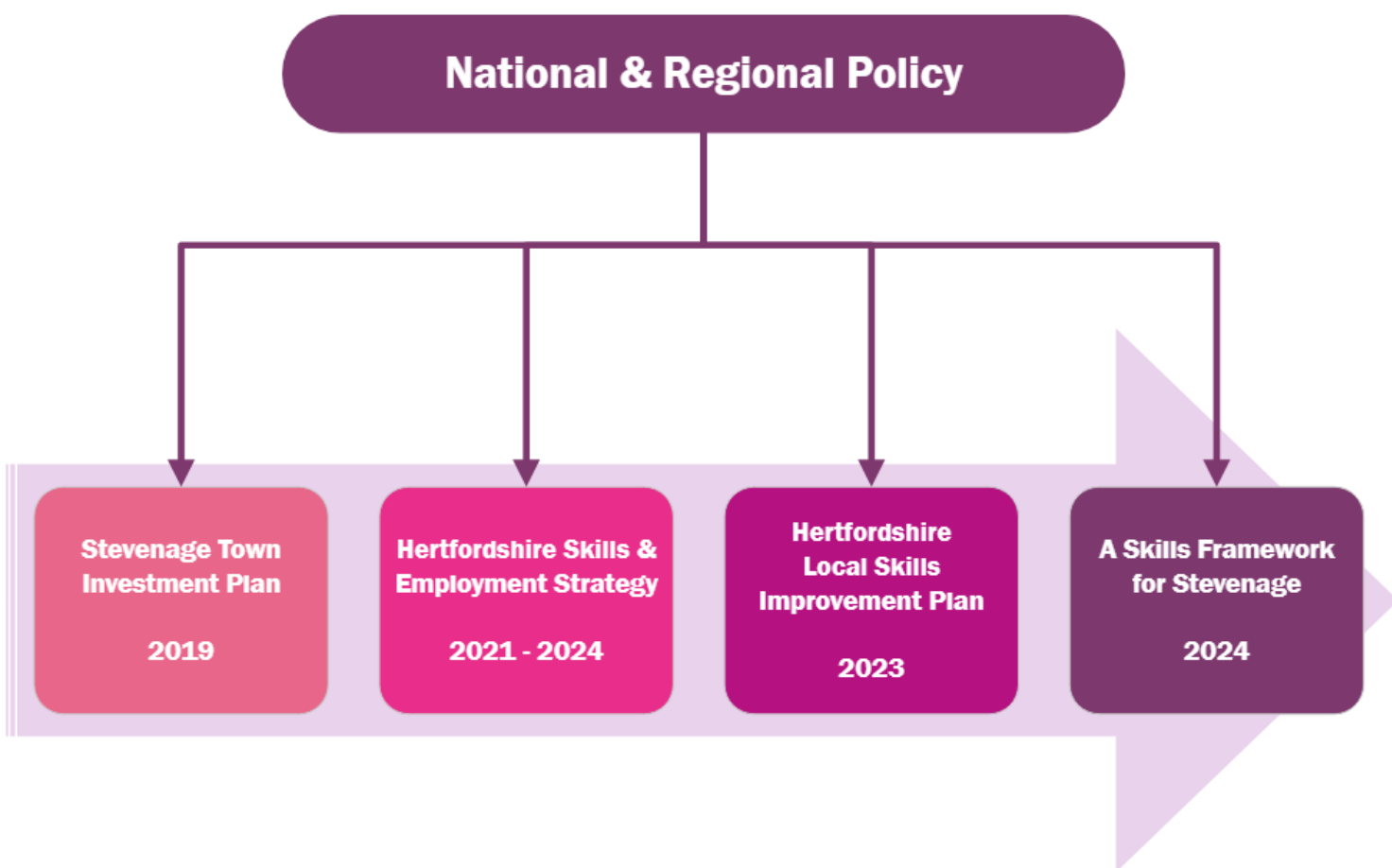
It sets out a clear direction of travel for Stevenage, providing a long-term framework to deliver positive, focused interventions to secure a more sustainable economy for the future and one that aims to close the gap between high skills levels in the region and town, and in commuting/out commuting.

And it reflects the needs and ambitions of Stevenage’s residents as set out in the STIP, proposing an approach to level-up opportunities for residents, and to foster the ambition and aspiration of our businesses.

As a result, the aim is that Stevenage’s approach to increasing social mobility, especially in relation to STEM careers, becomes recognised as good practice across the county, and in time regionally and nationally. Its approach is seen as an exemplar; it is seen as a Centre of STEM excellence.

The Skills Framework and the associated Sector Skills Plans have been developed with funding from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Mission 44 and have involved extensive consultation with stakeholders and partners from the public and private sectors.

A robust baseline review ensures that the elements outlined within this Framework are aligned with the direction of travel of existing local, sub-regional and regional plans. As such, the Stevenage Sector Skills Framework sits firmly within and contributes to the delivery of the Hertfordshire Skills and Employment Strategy 2021 – 2024. Hertfordshire Local Skills Improvement Plan and the Stevenage Town Investment Plan, which are illustrated below:



The Stevenage Works Skills Framework

The overall aim of the Stevenage Skills Framework is to close the gap between high skills levels in the region and town, and in commuting / out commuting. It will do this by ensuring Stevenage residents are aware of and have the capability to benefit from the valuable employment opportunities on their doorstep.

To deliver this, we need to focus on the key cohorts that will be targeted by interventions, including the key objectives for each of these groups as well as three cross cutting elements that intersect across all cohorts:

People in Employment

1. **Ensure** those already in the workforce are aware of and able to access high quality local opportunities.
2. **Provide** opportunities to retrain in response to these local opportunities.
3. **Work** with industry to promote and enable career progression and development.

People Outside or with Barriers to Employment

1. **Ensure** that targeted work is undertaken in areas with the highest levels of deprivation in order to break down barriers to employment.
2. **Support** adult learning opportunities and ensure a bespoke tailored approach focused on matching local people with local opportunities.

Young People

1. **Ensure** that Young People have the knowledge and understanding of outstanding opportunities available to them.
2. **Instill** the confidence and provide the tools to pursue those routes.
3. **Provide** opportunities throughout the education system to inspire curiosity.

Stevenage Works

Build on the strong links established through Stevenage Works, embedding the ethos and using this as a template for future skills development.

Town Centre Regeneration

Ensure the once in a generation Town Centre Regeneration achieves a great result for this and the next generation.

Stevenage Centre of Excellence in Skills & Career Development

Harness the momentum of the ongoing activity to establish and build a Stevenage Centre of Excellence in Skills & Career Development.

Key Sectors

To build upon the Skills Framework, the skills dimension will be augmented by a series of Sector Skills Overviews which will to the key actions that form the action plan. Each of these will follow a similar outline and approach. The overall aim is to ensure Stevenage residents have the necessary skills and qualifications to secure good employment in Stevenage's target sectors:

A clear focus for the town, specifically targeted on Advanced Manufacturing and Life Sciences, building on the opportunities presented by key STEM employers. Integrating with the work being undertaken in collaboration with Mission 44.

Science, Technology, Engineering & Maths (STEM)



Construction

Building on the foundational work undertaken through the 'Stevenage Works' programme to feed into the council's prioritisation of Enterprise and Skill as well as key established links to the ongoing Regeneration of the town.

Taking advantage of the considerable public sector presence in Stevenage which will see not only Stevenage Borough Council and the Lister Hospital but also an increased Hertfordshire County Council presence in the near future.

Public Sector Services



Creative & Cultural

Building on Stevenage's rich cultural and creative history by ensuring that the town continues to thrive in these areas. Tying into the council's Regeneration plans, which have culture-led regeneration at the heart of proposals.

Building on the established STEM presence and tying into key emerging sectors. This work will align with the council's focus on Climate Change ensuring that Stevenage is geared to ensure that these roles benefit local people.

Environment, Technology & Energy





Retail & Hospitality

The regeneration strategy for Stevenage is based on creating a thriving destination town centre to increase footfall and support businesses. We know that we need to ensure that the offer is future proofed to meet the emerging demands of the sector.

Key Ambitions for Stevenage

Building on the engagement with core stakeholder groups, we have brought together several key ambitions for the framework. Through strategic initiatives and innovative local approaches that are built because of interventions highlighted in this framework, we aspire to elevate skill development, promote lifelong learning, and continue to bridge the gap between aspirations and achievements.

To achieve this, subsequent sector skills action plans will be broken down across five themes:

<p>Stevenage Borough Council is well placed to build skills co-ordination at a local level. Bringing partners together and aligned to the work that is ongoing at a county level, whilst also ensuring that the best outcomes are being delivered for Stevenage residents.</p>	Co-ordinate Activity	
	Connect Stakeholders	<p>It is clear that establishing and working with key stakeholders must be an essential part of the framework. Not only is this about the council building these relationships, but is also about how these groups can be enabled to create those links between themselves.</p>
<p>One of the most crucial aspects, is how we ensure that the right information is conveyed to the right individuals through the right channels. This focus will work to ensure specific focus for those groups with the greatest and most entrenched barriers.</p>	Communicate Effectively	
	Create Opportunity	<p>At the heart of this work is the desire to create opportunities for people to achieve their potential. We want to ensure that target groups are provided with tangible experiences, links between learning and employment, and access to mentors and role models.</p>
<p>Framing all of this is a desire to continue to capture insight and feedback from stakeholders to learn lessons and cultivate a culture of continuous iterative improvement of the approach to ensure that it most effectively meets the needs of Stevenage residents.</p>	Capture Insight	

The Skills Focuses for Stevenage

To response to these key ambitions, The Stevenage Skills Framework is designed to respond to five key focuses connected to the skills agenda and designed to respond to the skills challenges experienced by local people. These are set out below:

Focus One:

An Opportunity to Improve Skills Levels & Extend Opportunity

Compared to Hertfordshire and England, Stevenage's residents possess a lower volume of higher-level qualifications (Level 4). Whilst there has been marked improvement over the last decade, the same improvement margin is seen for England and so the skills gap remains the same; however, the gap at Level 4 has widened slightly compared to Hertfordshire. At level 3, Stevenage is comparable to England and above Hertfordshire.

Stevenage's labour force can be broadly distilled as containing two distinct but overlapping markets:

- i. The market in which organisations in the Borough employ labour, which, especially for larger employers and the highest value roles as candidates can be attracted from much further afield.
- ii. The market in which residents seek work, proves more challenging as residents face more competition to access the higher-value local employment opportunities.

This is best demonstrated when looking at larger employers, who tend to account for a disproportionate amount of high value roles and as they can attract workers from further afield, businesses do not appear to be unduly constrained if those skilled workers are not from the local area. This is largely because of Stevenage's excellent transport links which means that skilled and talented employees can easily commute into the Borough.

Case Study: Stevenage Works

Stevenage Borough Council (SBC), North Hertfordshire College (NHC) and JobCentre Plus signed the Stevenage Works Partnership Agreement to work together to provide training and job opportunities for the construction sector, including apprenticeships for young people and unemployed adults.

Utilising social value commitments in SBC contracts, JobCentre Plus identifies local candidates and North Hertfordshire College delivers training to provide new and long-term unemployed jobseekers with basic construction skills as well as CV and interview training.

Working with several local employers, Stevenage Works has so far:

- Provided 33 CSCS courses
- Supported 221 course participants
- Provided 132 site ready candidates
- Delivered 33 jobs in construction
- Delivered 13 apprenticeships
- Benefitted 71 local people with employment & training initiatives.



All of this means that when we look at Stevenage residents' average earnings rather than Stevenage employees there is a noticeable gap below the regional average. There is a need to ensure the gap between high skill levels in the region and town, and in commuting/out commuting closes.

There is a key challenge here around not only improving the quality of the overall skills base but also ensuring residents are aware of local opportunities and how to access them.

What this means for Local People/Young People

There will be more opportunity for people/young people to gain opportunities to enhance their skills.

What this means for Businesses & Providers

Working collaboratively will ensure that local provision meets the needs of employers and education providers.

Role of the Framework

To provide the platform for more local people in Stevenage to enhance their skills and opportunity, and to work with businesses to target employment and skills opportunities (including apprenticeships) for Stevenage residents.

Focus Two:

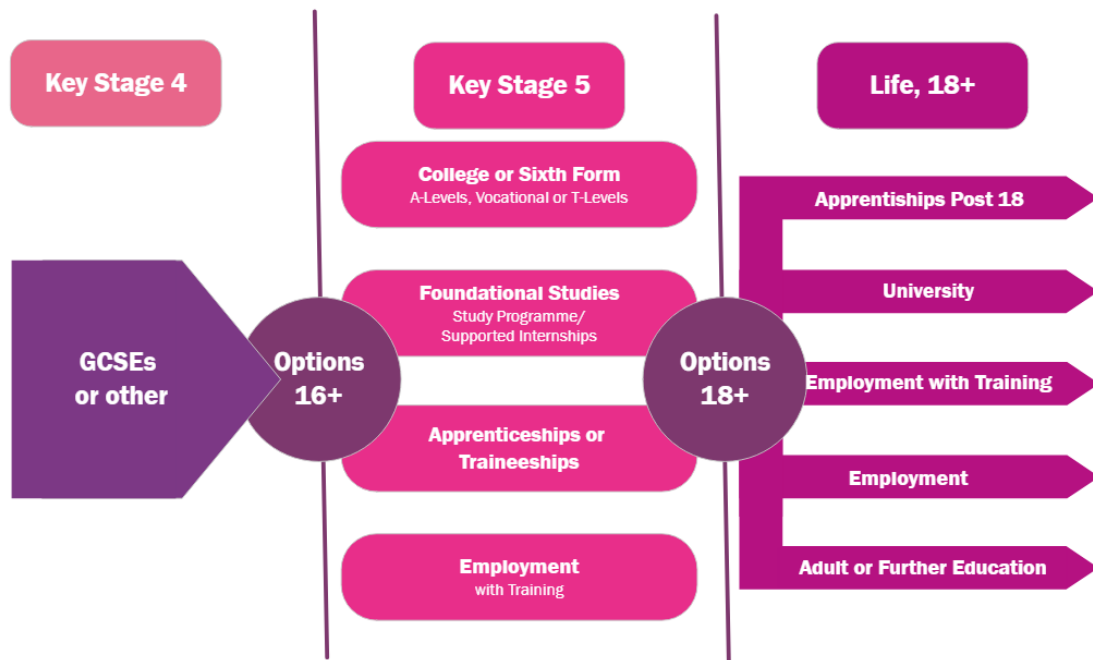
Concentrations of Socio-Economic Disadvantage

According to the 2019 English Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD), Stevenage continues to be the most deprived authority in Hertfordshire, with 73% of its 52 Lower Super Output areas occurring in the bottom 30% of all areas in Hertfordshire.

Some communities in Stevenage experience severe levels of disadvantage. The challenge here is around ensuring that communities within Stevenage can take advantage of local opportunities, existing and new. By supporting the local population to be aware of the opportunities that are available and equipped to take advantage of them the Borough will be able to provide residents with both individual and community agency. Overall, properly addressing this focus will allow Stevenage to achieve its full economic potential and residents will be better placed to make the most of local opportunities.

SBC's approach to Community Wealth Building alongside specific programmes of support has been made available via the Hertfordshire LEP and through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund to support residents to upskill and/or retrain to enable them to either enter or return, to the labour market.

This is aligned to the Adults Learning and Employment strand of the Hertfordshire Skills and Employment Strategy 2021 – 2024 that seeks to ensure measures are in place to support adults to retrain for advanced and higher technical skilled jobs and that all residents can benefit from career progression as illustrated below:



What this means for Local People/Young People

There will be more opportunity for people to upskill and or retrain for advanced and higher technical skilled jobs.

What this means for Businesses & Providers

Provision will align to the needs of business and as people upskill and become more skilled, productivity will increase.

Role of the Framework

To support Stevenage’s most deprived communities to access valuable local employment opportunities and to receive the maximum possible impact from the available support. Particularly focusing on those with the most entrenched and generational challenges.

Focus Three:

Securing Impact from the Regeneration of the Town

Ten projects were submitted as part of the STIP ranging across Transport and Active Travel infrastructure, Skills and Enterprise, Arts, Heritage and Culture and Town Centre Regeneration. These projects included the Towns Fund Technology Centre and the Stevenage Innovation and Technology Centre (SITEC), key infrastructure projects supporting the skills agenda.

As such, several plans will be coming forward for the redevelopment and reconfiguration of various parts of the Town. It is important, therefore, that planned development, especially as it relates to economic functions is taken forward in a complimentary fashion to ensure that Stevenage communities, especially residents, keep pace with developments and have a vested interest in them. The overall, desired result is that these activities complement each other economically with each one effectively reinforcing the economic impact of the others with the community buying into the vision.

What this means for Local People/Young People

All residents will benefit from opportunities arising from the Town's regeneration.

What this means for Businesses & Providers

The provision of skills and training will meet demand so that businesses will have access to a skilled workforce.

Case Study: Stevenage Innovation & Technology Centre (SITEC)

The recently opened Stevenage Innovation & Technology Centre (SITEC) aims to capitalise on Stevenage's position in the 'Golden Triangle' of Research and Development between Oxford, Cambridge and London.



It is phase one of the broader NHC project to develop and deliver a range of new T-Level and apprenticeship qualifications in Science, Engineering, Digital and Sustainable Technologies at Levels 3-5.

It aims to raise the aspirations and skills of residents and employees by providing accessible opportunities in the key growth areas for the region, including life sciences and advanced manufacturing.

Working with industry partners 'FourPlus', 'LifeArc', 'UCL Vax Hub', 'Autolus' and the 'Cell and Gene Therapy Catapult SITEC Phase 1 has seen the creation of a simulation life sciences laboratory, immersive technologies space, a new digital training suite and virtual reality training capabilities in a virtual environment.



Role of the Framework

To provide guidance on the development of economic activities across the various projects to ensure Stevenage communities are engaged and vested in them.

Focus Four:

Targeted and Quality Advice and Guidance to Open Exciting Routes for Young People

Stevenage is in a unique position. With very strong representation in STEM sectors, particularly life sciences and advanced manufacturing, a unique approach to career guidance is required to ensure residents, especially young people fully understand the depth and breadth of local opportunities.

Whilst much is currently underway through for example the work of STEMPOINT, activities via the STEM Discovery Centre, North Herts College, the Hertfordshire Opportunities Portal etc., as well as Generation Stevenage events, these would benefit from greater opportunities for alignment. Currently, the full potential impact is not understood.

In November 2022, focus groups took place with young people between the ages of 13 to 17, from North Hertfordshire College and Thomas Alleyne School specifically to gain an understanding of young people's views about STEM. Key findings from the focus groups were that young people didn't feel they knew about STEM pathways or STEM opportunities and that their school/ college wasn't able to or didn't equip them with information. They felt that information, advice and guidance (IAG) available through their school/college didn't look at jobs for the future, and although resources are available via the Hertfordshire Opportunities Portal (HOP), the young people in the focus groups were not aware of the HOP.

What this means for Local People/Young People

All residents will have access to career advice that meets the needs of the Town now and into the future.

What this means for Businesses & Providers

Working collaboratively will ensure provision meets the needs of businesses.

Role of the Framework

To coordinate and measure the impact of local career activity to ensure Stevenage's young people are fully aware and informed of the breadth of local opportunities, particularly high value opportunities.

Focus Five:

Deepening Partnerships with Businesses to Create Local Opportunities

Given that SMEs make up roughly 90% of the Stevenage business base and that skills levels and productivity in Stevenage are lower than in Hertfordshire overall it makes sense to actively support people in employment and our SMEs, to enhance their existing knowledge and skills, develop new learning and secure accreditations and /or formal qualifications. Workforce development is the vehicle through which this happens. It supports the career development, productivity, and success of employees, and it helps organisational innovation, growth, and prosperity.

What this means for Local People/Young People

All residents will be aware of local opportunities and the career paths to access them.

What this means for Businesses & Providers

Working collaboratively will enable all businesses to take advantage of local growth opportunities.

Role of the Framework

To work with businesses to identify opportunities across the whole skills spectrum to enable good career progression for both those transitioning from education, as well as returners to the labour market.

Case Study; Hart Learning & Development with Marks & Spencers

Hart Learning & Development's collaboration with Marks & Spencer (M&S) has helped launch the retail careers of local people in Hertfordshire through the Marks & Spencer's Employability Programme.

The bespoke Employability Programme was designed and launched ahead of the new M&S superstore opening in Stevenage back in April 2022. The programme is designed to teach local people about the core M&S brand values and prepare them for a successful career in a retail environment.

Since the programme's initial launch in January 2022, Hart Learning & Development have delivered three courses which have taught and supported 72 unemployed candidates through the programme and assessment centre.

Since inception, 82% of these learners have been offered a role at the new M&S Stevenage store upon completion of their training, with several of their peers still on an extended work experience pathway that will ultimately lead to employment.



Links to the Hertfordshire Skills & Employment Strategy 21-24

Whilst the Framework has a strong local focus, it also takes account of and responds to sub-regional policy. This recognises the important role the Borough plays in the wider economy and ensures that interventions are shaped to support the delivery of sub-regional priorities. This section considers the wider policy context within which the Skills Framework has been developed.

Most notable is the Hertfordshire Skills and Employment Strategy 2021 – 2024, which aims to ensure the county’s skills provision addresses the local skills challenges and opportunities, meets the employment needs of the future, and supports all residents to reach their potential. The Stevenage Skills Framework delivers to the Hertfordshire Skills and Employment Strategy 2021 – 2024 as follows:

The Focus	The Role of the Framework	Link to Hertfordshire Skills & Employment Strategy Themes
An opportunity to improve skills levels and extend opportunity	To build on the recent positive direction of travel to provide the platform for uplift in the quality of the skills base in Stevenage and to work with businesses to maximise opportunities (including apprenticeships) for Stevenage residents.	Placemaking - <i>opportunities arising from Hertfordshire's internal geographies and proximity to London and the Oxford/Cambridge arc</i>
Concentrations of socio-economic disadvantage	To support Stevenage’s communities to access valuable local employment opportunities and to receive the maximum possible benefit from the available support.	Adult learning and employment – <i>working towards lifelong learning and full employment</i>
Securing impact from the regeneration of the town.	To provide guidance on the development of economic activities across the various projects to ensure Stevenage communities are engaged and vested in them.	Priority & Growth Sectors - <i>harnessing the opportunities and investing in skills of the future</i>
Targeted and rich advice and guidance to open exciting routes for young people	To coordinate and measure the impact of local careers activity to ensure Stevenage’s young people are fully aware and informed of the breadth of local opportunities, particularly high value opportunities – with the HOP at the forefront of this.	Unlocking emerging talent – <i>support for young people aged 14-24</i>
Deepening partnerships with businesses to create local opportunities	To ensure that businesses are supported and encouraged in the pursuit of workforce development and to ensure that they are aware of available opportunities.	Skills to grow small and medium sized businesses