

Priority enabler 2: Workforce and skills



Public sector employment, including health and care, underpins the local economy in Lincolnshire. The health and care sector is vital for employment locally, and we know through work led by the Greater Lincolnshire LEP there is an existing and growing demand for workforce and skills levels that cannot be met by the current working age population.

Occupations reporting the highest volume of vacancies in 2020 were nurses and care workers (5.9% and 5.7% of job postings respectively). Data for 2021 shows nursing and care occupations continuing to report the highest number of vacancies and a recent, but increasingly frequent issue reported by employers is the lack of care staff with the ability to drive. Data in January 2022 suggests caring occupations continue to be one of the toughest roles to fill.

Pre COVID, long term forecasts indicated that nationally health and social work will be an employment growth sector, with health and social care associates, health professionals, and caring personal service occupations the top three growth occupations. This presents future opportunities at a range of skill levels including occupations requiring degree level education. However, 'replacement' demand is likely to be the biggest challenge faced in the coming years.

An ageing and retiring population across Lincolnshire is projected to account for approximately 90% of replacement demand over the next decade, with the remainder being the result of new positions being created. Additionally, new technologies are shifting the demand for labour towards higher skilled occupations especially in terms of digital skills. In order to stay competitive in the labour market,

residents will need to retrain and upskill more often. Equally, working conditions and salaries will also need to be attractive to people to work in the health and care sector.

Our approach as an ICP to tackling these issues and delivering this priority is to integrate it with the work being led by the Greater Lincolnshire LEP Employment and Skills Advisory Panel, which identified two main skills themes:

Theme 1: To inspire and support young people to stay and work in the area

Theme 2: To train and support people who are already working, or seeking jobs, so they gain the skills needed to take up future job vacancies.

In addition to these themes the Lincolnshire health and care system People Board will also drive improvements specifically in health and care organisations, covering challenges such as recruitment and retention. This sits outside the direct scope of the ICP, however connections will be made as necessary to ensure work remains aligned, with particular consideration given to the Rural and Coastal Transformation Programme 'Developing health, care and communities through workforce, education and training'.



Theme 1: To inspire and support young people to stay and work in the area

The challenge of graduate and young-people retention is driven, in part, by a perception that the health and care sector within Lincolnshire does not offer sufficient career growth opportunities. The health and care sector is currently not understood sufficiently to inspire younger people about the career opportunities available on their doorstep. This can also lead to long-term worklessness due to a lack of awareness about local opportunities.

To meet the high replacement demand by health and care services within Lincolnshire, younger people (starting with primary school age children) need to be informed about the occupations, careers, and growth opportunities Lincolnshire can offer. As part of this, the links between the sector and jobseekers need to be supported and strengthened.

To support the delivery of this, working with partners, we will:

- Continue the expansion of the Enterprise Adviser Network across Lincolnshire - this will include ensuring Enterprise Advisers fully understand the careers and opportunities in the health and care sector so they feed into schools' career programmes, as well as looking to increase the number of Enterprise Advisers from the health and care sector who are able to showcase these organisations and opportunities to the local community.
- Use the Greater Lincolnshire Careers Hub to promote opportunities and careers in the local health and care system – this will include careers fairs, facilitating links between schools and the sector, organising experiences such as visits to the Lincoln Medical School and improving information held about local jobs and careers so young people can access it and feel informed.

Theme 2: To train and support people who are already working, or seeking jobs, so they gain the skills needed to take up future job vacancies

With job vacancies increasing locally and a shrinking workforce there is an immediate focus to support the health and care sector employers find new staff and retain those already in the workforce, in a wide range of occupations and at different levels.

Literacy and numeracy skills in Lincolnshire are below those seen nationally. With fewer jobs available for people with fewer basic qualifications, upskilling these people will allow them to participate more fully in the local health and care system labour market.

Apprenticeships provide an important route into skilled employment for young people, and so it's vital the local health and care system builds on the recent Apprenticeship Strategy and address the decline in numbers. This includes maximising the impact of apprenticeship budgets, including flexible apprenticeships, new levy transfer mechanisms, and incentives to increase apprenticeship opportunities for people of all ages.

Although digital skills have long been seen as crucially important, the need for such skills to avoid social and labour market exclusion has been emphasised by the COVID pandemic. There has been an increased preference for working, learning and engaging remotely on digital platforms.

To support the delivery of this working with partners we will:

- Develop skills priority statements for the local health and care sector that maximise future opportunities for local people and focus on upskilling and retraining workers.
- Raise awareness locally and nationally of the priorities from the recently published Apprenticeship Strategy, that are particularly relevant to the health and care sector, and take the actions forward.
- Ensure a quality online offer is available to maximise the uptake and delivery of this approach.
- Encourage businesses to develop workforce and skills strategies and implement them.
- Build on the recommendations of the Digital Skills Workshop to develop a plan specifically for the health and care sector e.g., finding new ways to bring learning to people and target intergenerational groups and create a digital skills strategy for the health and care sector.

