The Skills and Business Hub

Prospectus

June 2025

Introduction to The Skills and Business Hub

The **Skills and Business Hub** is a small **independent, not for Profit** company employing **25 staff** and based in **Berkshire**. Established in **December 2011**, initially as **Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)**, the company **purpose** is to **drive** and **support** sustainable **local economic growth**. We do this by **delivering activity** which supports this, including **business support**, **skills development**, **careers education services** and **development of strategies**.

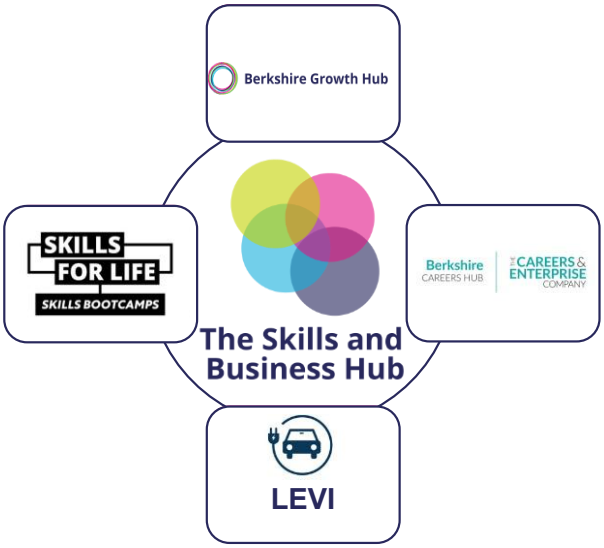
We have a **mandate** to deliver the following **Government grant funded programmes** for Berkshire.

Berkshire Growth Hub
Department for Business and Trade (DBT)

Skills Bootcamps
Department for Education (DfE, Skills for Life)

Berkshire Careers Hub
Careers and Enterprise Company (CEC/DfE)

LEVI
Local Authorities



Berkshire Growth Hub – delivers fully funded (Department for Business and Trade) support to small and medium sized businesses, from start-up to growth.

Skills Bootcamps – manages the Department of Education funded Skills Bootcamps programme for Berkshire via internal and external providers.

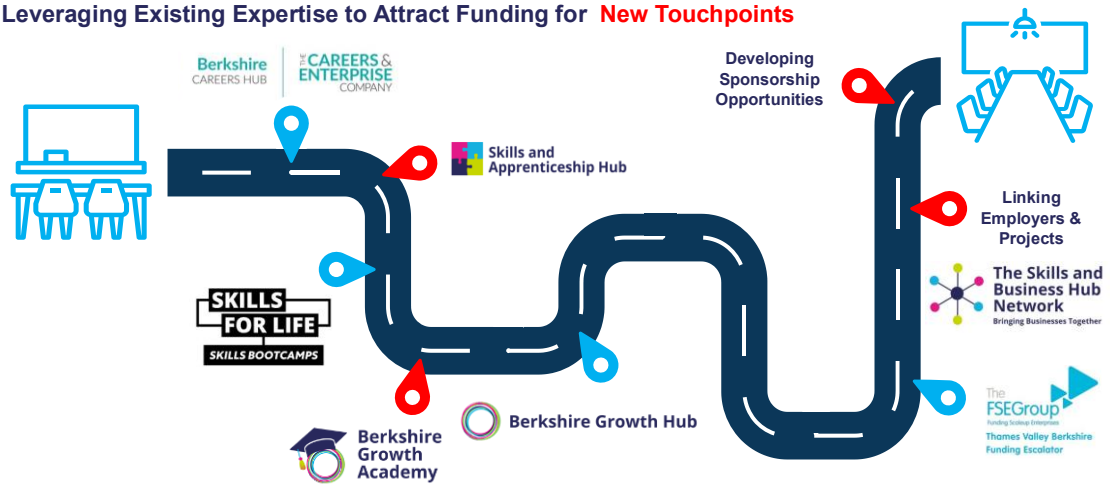
Berkshire Careers Hub – as part of the Careers and Enterprise Company delivers fully funded careers support to educational institutions and young people. Engages with employers and volunteers.

Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure – We support the Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) project roll out with Project Management expertise.

The **core purpose** of The Skills and Business Hub is to **drive and support sustainable local economic growth**. We **equip individuals and businesses** with the tools they need to thrive by delivering activity which supports this. We l**everage the three Government funded programmes and attract further funding into Berkshire** though developing new touchpoints. From **education to enterprise**, we serve Berkshire and the surrounding areas as a **trusted partner.**

Supporting individuals and businesses at Every Stage - Key Moments along the way

Empowering Journeys: From Classroom to Boardroom
Leveraging Existing Expertise to Attract Funding for New Touchpoints



Our Government Grant Funded Programmes

Here is a bit more detail on each of the Programmes.

Careers Hub

Berkshire CAREERS HUB | THE CAREERS & ENTERPRISE COMPANY

We deliver the Careers Hub in Berkshire through our contract with the Careers and Enterprise Company, the national body for careers education in England

Aims

- To **improve careers education** across Berkshire by **connecting** schools, colleges, and employers
- **Support institutions** in delivering **high-quality** employer **encounters**, **align** education **with local labour market needs**, and help **young people** make informed **decisions** about their **futures**
- Support high-quality, multiple **work experience** opportunities **for students**

Who benefits

- **Students**: access to meaningful career guidance, employer encounters, and pathways aligned with local economic needs
- **Schools and Colleges**: structured support, training, and resources to improve careers provision
- **Employers**: Engage with future talent, help shape a workforce that meets regional skills demands
- **Teachers and Careers Leaders**: Benefit from professional development & industry engagement opportunities through our **Teacher Encounters** programme

Key features

- **Schools and colleges** receive **tailored assistance** from the local team
- **Strong partnerships with local employers** provide real-world insights and opportunities
- Programmes to **align education with industry needs**
- **Berkshire Opportunities website** supports career exploration with over **10,500 unique users**
- **Coordination of 60 volunteer Enterprise Advisers** support **87 institutions** across Berkshire
- **99%** of state secondary schools, middle schools, all PRUs and SEND schools and FE colleges in Berkshire

Funding source

- The programme is funded by the **Department for Education** (DfE) as part of its national Careers Strategy
- **Annual £100k funding contribution** from the Skills and Business Hub

Key stakeholders

- **Schools and Colleges** in Berkshire
- **Local Employers and Businesses**
- Volunteer **Enterprise Advisers** from business
- **Careers Leaders** and **Teachers**
- **Local Authorities** and **Education Providers**
- **Government Departments** and **Funding Bodies**

Timescales/commitments

- **Ongoing Support**: Continuous engagement with 87 institutions across Berkshire
- **Annual Induction**: 40 new Careers Leaders inducted in September 2024
- **Sustained Partnerships**: Long-term collaboration with employers to ensure consistent and impactful careers education

Cornerstone Employers

To support the work of the Careers Hub, we work with Cornerstone Employers to strengthen our delivery. A Cornerstone Employer is a business that is invested in the successful education for young people. We work with our Cornerstone Employers to;

- Offer **Teacher Encounters** to upskill teachers through providing days in industry and visits to workplaces
- Provide **work experience placements** and **careers support** with a particular focus on **disadvantaged young people**
- Lead the way in completing and promoting the national **Employer Standards** self-assessment survey to support **Early Careers**
- Promote **Apprenticeships** and **Technical Education (ATE)** in schools, helping schools to measure impact
- Help schools to achieve the eight **Gatsby Benchmarks**, designed to improve careers education and guidance in schools and colleges
- Provide additional support to **SEND** and **Alternative Provision (AP)** Institutions as well as those with the highest level of **Free School Meals**

In addition to our Cornerstone Employers, we partner with a wide range of employers to provide a range of support to schools including **Teacher Encounters**, **Enterprise Advisers** and **Work Experience**.

Berkshire Growth Hub

Berkshire Growth Hub

We deliver the Berkshire Growth Hub on behalf of The Department for Business and Trade and as part of a network of national Growth Hubs aligned to the national SME Strategy

Aims

- To provide **comprehensive business support** to help Berkshire businesses to achieve sustainable business growth
- Act as a **vital link between businesses** and **national and local** policy and initiatives

Who benefits

- **Small and Medium sized businesses** in Berkshire
- **Potential entrepreneurs** who want to **start** a business and those who want to **scale up and to provide improvement support to those running a business** (help to start, run and grow)

Key features

- **Access** to 1:1 meetings with Business Advisers for all businesses
- **Launch**: Start-up programme live webinar support for new businesses
- **Grow**: 1:1 support for established businesses
- **Scale:** intensive support programme with tailored 1:1 support
- **Webinars** - learning and skills development
- **Funding** – referrals to Funding Escalator **(FSE Group)**

Funding source

- The programme is funded by the **Department for Business & Trade and free at point of delivery to SMEs**
- Historically, this **DBT grant** has been further **levered** through use of **ERDF and UKSPF** (highly successful pan-Berkshire three-year programme funding ceased March 2025 **)**

Key stakeholders

- **Local Businesses, SMEs and potential entrepreneurs**
- **Department for Business & Trade** (DBT)
- **Local Authorities,** particularly economic development teams
- **Sector representative** groups
- **Business Improvement Districts**
- **Employer representative bodies**
- **Other government agencies,** e.g. Innovate UK, British Business Bank

Timescales/commitments

- **Ongoing Support:** Continuous engagement with businesses in Berkshire
- **Regular updates and enhancements** to align with evolving business needs and Government policy changes
- **Annual funding cycle**

Skills Bootcamps

SKILLS FOR LIFE
SKILLS BOOTCAMPS

We are the managing authority for Skills Bootcamps in Berkshire, responsible for the delivery through a network of Independent Training Providers and Colleges

Aims

- Skills Bootcamps provide **flexible**, **employer-led training programmes** lasting **up to 16 weeks**
- Offering **sector-specific skills** and **fast-track** for participants to **new opportunities** or **interviews** with employers, or **upskill** them to enhance **job opportunities** or **promotion**
- Programme **addresses** the **needs of LSIP** priority sectors and **local areas of skills shortages** and delivers aspects of the **Berkshire Economic Strategy action plan**

Who benefits

- **Employed**, **unemployed**, or **self-employed** or **co-funded** by their employer to attend a Skills Bootcamp
- **Adults aged 19+ with the Right to Work in UK**
- **Berkshire businesses** able to develop and recruit talent required for growth and subsidise their training

Key features

- **Skills Bootcamp Courses help Berkshire Local Authorities** deliver in key areas identified in the **LSIP and BES:**
  - Business
  - Engineering and Construction
  - Education
  - Digital and Data
  - Sustainability
- All Bootcamps are subject to **OFSTED inspection**

Funding source

- The programme is funded by the **Department for Education** (DfE)

Key stakeholders

- **Department for Education**
- **Local Authorities**
- **Employers**
- **Training Providers**
- **Participants** (employed, unemployed, self-employed)

Timescales/commitments

- The **programme** will **deliver** aspects of the **Berkshire Economic Strategy action** plan for **2025/26 onwards**

Thames Valley Berkshire Funding Escalator

Skills Bootcamp Courses delivered in Berkshire

SKILLS FOR LIFE
SKILLS BOOTCAMPS

Supporting skills shortage areas identified in the BES and LSIP

Business

Project Management | Leadership and Management | AI for Business | Entrepreneurship | Sales

Engineering and Construction

Civil and Highways Engineering | Welding Engineering | Telecoms Engineering | Construction and the Built Environment

Education

Teaching Assistants - Supporting SEND needs in the classroom | Pathway to Accelerated Apprenticeships in Early Years

Digital and Data

Data Analytics with AI | Software Developer | Digital Marketing with AI | Generative AI for Business | Digital Innovator | Cyber Security | High Performance Full Stack Software Developer

Sustainability

Retrofit - Domestic Energy Assessment | Retrofit Assessment | Solar Photovoltaic and Electrical Energy Storage Systems design, installation, service and maintenance | Design and Installation of Air Source Heat Pump | Domestic Ventilation Systems Design, Installation, Services and Maintenance | Low Temperature Heating and Domestic Heat Networks | Sustainability and Carbon Management

Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure

LEVI

We support the Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) project roll out with Project Management expertise

Aims

- **Support local authorities** to improve the **roll out** and **commercialisation** of public **EV charge points**
- **Coordinate** activity to achieve common goals and deliver pan-Berkshire activity, e.g. 11 July Pan - Berkshire EV experience event

Who benefits

- **Berkshire residents** without off-street parking and a need to charge their EVs
- **Berkshire local authorities,** e.g. intervention by the coordinator enabled 5 of the 6 Berkshire LAs to be green lit by EST or procurement prior to change in public procurement rules, saving an average of £12k each in the process.

Key features

- Bimonthly **LEVI meetings sharing learning** and **best practice**
- **Shared Knowledge Management platform** for pan Berks LEVI
- **Monthly Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks** (SSEN) meetings to review **Grid capability**
- **Secure** optimum pan Berkshire **economies of scale** , where appropriate

Funding source

- A capital grant scheme administered by **Office for Zero Emission Vehicles (OZEV)** and a capability grant provided to each of the six Berkshire LAs

Key stakeholders

- **Skills & Business Hub**
- **Berkshire local authorities**
- **Office for Zero Emission Vehicles (OZEV)**
- **Charge Point Operators (CPOs)**

Timescales/commitments

- **Funding** for the pan **Berkshire LEVI Project** Manager until **March 2026**
- **Additional £22m of LEVI capability funding** recently allocated to local government could fund pan-Berkshire LEVI Project Manager role until **March 2027**

The Funding Escalator was established to:

- Support **high-growth businesses** unable to secure traditional financing
- Provide **projection-let funding**, unlike banks that focus on historical funding
- Create and safeguard jobs in Berkshire. **These jobs would not exist without the funding escalator**
- Drive regional productivity growth
- Collaborate with SME finance ecosystems and **inject private sector capital** into supported businesses
- Become an '**evergreen**' loan fund to support **Berkshire's economic prosperity**

Thames Valley Berkshire Funding Escalator

Debt Funds £50,000 - £500,000

The Thames Valley Berkshire Funding Escalator is a £11.3m initiative funded by Berkshire LEP. The escalator consists of an expansion loan scheme & a short-term trade loan scheme, which provides eligible companies with funding for activities that will deliver high-growth and employment opportunities across Berkshire. View our portfolio of supported businesses here. For business support and growth advice in Berkshire, reach out to our partners at Berkshire Growth Hub.

Use of funds

- Delivering to large organisations
- Entering new markets
- Exporting abroad
- Hiring new staff
- Increasing UK market penetration
- Moving to new premises
- New product development
- Purchasing new equipment
- Sales & marketing activity
- Upfront working capital

Thames Valley Berkshire Funding Escalator | The FSE Group

The FSEGroup
Funding Scaleup Enterprises

TVB Funding Escalator Mission:

Berkshire LEP invested Growing Places Fund into a revolving loan to address the funding gap by investing in high growth businesses, enabling sustainable economic growth across the Thames Valley Berkshire area

- Supporting **growing** SMEs with business loans
- **Creating jobs** across Thames Valley Berkshire
- Promoting new product development & **innovation**
- Encouraging **private investment** – money coming into area from private sector sources
- Working with the **wider finance community** to increase reach

Preferred Sectors for investment aligned to the Berkshire Economic Strategy:

Life Sciences & Healthcare, Digital Tech, Creative Industries and Energy (Green environmental)

The Skills and Business Hub

Addressing the needs of the Berkshire economy

Those programmes support delivery of the Berkshire Economic Strategy and Local Authority Strategic Plans

Economic Development and Business Support

- **Support SMEs** and increase business **start-up** and **scale-up** support, aligning with the **Berkshire Economic Strategy**.
- Promote **economic success** by working with **councils, economic development officers, business representative organisations** and supporting **local businesses.**
- **Create** secure and productive **jobs** and develop enterprise ecosystems.
- **Attract** and **support businesses** to grow and thrive.

Education and Skills Development

- **Develop** a **skills system** that works for all, including **higher** education and **digital** skills.
- **Support children** and **young people** through **education** into **adulthood**.
- **Enhance routes** to **employment** through lifelong learning, **apprenticeships**, and **further education**.
- Develop workforce skills to
- Delivering in line with **Local Skills Improvement Plan priority sectors.**

Partnerships and Collaboration

- Strengthen **partnerships** with charities, voluntary sector **organisations**, **businesses**, and other partners.
- **Work** with **local councils** to secure **devolution benefits** and promote regional success.
- Contribute to the **Berkshire Business Board** and support their strategic ambitions
- **Engage** with **local businesses** and hold **annual** business **conferences**.

Support for Vulnerable Groups

- **Support residents** with **long-term health** conditions into **work**.
- **Improve educational** attainment and **narrow** the **gap** for **disadvantaged** children.
- Enable **children** and **young people** to live, **learn**, and **thrive** locally.
- Create an **inclusive** and **fair employment** landscape with support and **opportunities for all.**

Innovation and Sustainability

- **Nurture productive, knowledge economy** businesses and support local retail initiatives.
- Support the **move to electric vehicles** and attract businesses to the region.
- **Diversify** the **knowledge economy** to capitalize on growth in sectors like **AI, digital, software development**, and **green industries**.

And this is the Impact of our delivery across Berkshire

Careers Hub

All data Since Sept 2024

87 Schools engaged with (99% of eligible schools) to improve careers education for young people

81,870 students reached with careers advice and support through careers leader support and guidance

26 teachers spent a day with a local business to get practical industry experience, through our **Teachers Encounters** programme

60 volunteer **Enterprise Advisers** from business recruited and trained, to work in schools

67 additional projects to engage students delivered to schools with the highest levels of disadvantage

LEVI

Facilitated investment of **£5,022,000** LEVI Capital Funding

Growth Hub Funding Escalator

62 High growth businesses helped to grow and develop in **2024/25**

Business Advisers spent **2,845** hours with individual business in **2024/25**

1314 SMEs triaged through the Growth Hub offer in **2024/25**

113 Start Up business supported in **2024/25** a positive job outcome

106 businesses supported, **1,528** jobs created/ safeguarded, **£63.17m** private investment leveraged, **£22m** invested by FSE **since 2013**

Skills Bootcamps

Since April 2023

685 Learners completed a sector-specific Programme

544 SB graduates have had a job interview as a direct result of completing the programme

384 Learners completed a sector-specific Programme

136 Learners received additional needs support

50 Skills Bootcamps delivered in Digital, Engineering, Life Sciences, Green Skills, Film and Television, Health and Social Care, Education, Leadership and Project Management, Sales, AI, Construction and Entrepreneurship.

Our delivery in Bracknell Forest

Careers Hub

Since Sept 2024

8 Schools engaged with (100% of eligible schools) to improve careers education for young people

8,822 students reached with careers advice and support through careers leader support and guidance

1 teacher spent a day with a local business to get practical industry experience, through our **Teachers Encounters** programme

5 volunteer **Enterprise Advisers** from business recruited and trained, to work in schools

9 additional projects to engage students delivered to schools with the highest levels of disadvantage

LEVI

£350,000 LEVI Capital Funding

Growth Hub Funding Escalator

11 High growth businesses helped to grow and develop in 2024/25

215 SMEs triaged through the Growth Hub offer in 2024/25

21 Start Up business supported in 2024/25 a positive job outcome

16 businesses supported, **275** jobs created/ safeguarded, **£3.75m** private investment leveraged, **£3.25m** invested by FSE since 2013

Skills Bootcamps

Since 2023 **38** Learners completed a sector-specific programme

28 Graduates have had a job interview as a direct result of completing the programme

19 Graduates gained a positive job outcome

8 Learners received additional needs support

Our delivery in Reading

Careers Hub

Since Sept 2024

14 Schools engaged with (93% of eligible schools) to improve careers education for young people

9,759 students reached with careers advice and support through careers leader support and guidance

17 teachers spent a day with a local business to get practical industry experience, through our **Teachers Encounters** programme

12 volunteer **Enterprise Advisers** from business recruited and trained, to work in schools

19 additional projects to engage students delivered to schools with the highest levels of disadvantage

LEVI

£866,000 LEVI Capital Funding

Growth Hub Funding Escalator

11 High growth businesses helped to grow and develop in 2024/25

248 SMEs triaged through the Growth Hub offer in 2024/25

21 Start Up business supported in 2024/25 a positive job outcome

34 businesses supported, **475** jobs created/ safeguarded, **£13.8m** private investment leveraged, **£7.2m** invested by FSE since 2013

Skills Bootcamps

Since 2023 **216** Learners completed a sector-specific programme

158 Graduates have had a job interview as a direct result of completing the programme

100 Graduates gained a positive job outcome

52 Learners received additional needs support

Our delivery in Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead

Careers Hub

Since Sept 2024

17 Schools engaged with (100% of eligible schools) to improve careers education for young people

12,628 students reached with careers advice and support through careers leader support and guidance

2 teachers spent a day with a local business to get practical industry experience, through our **Teachers Encounters** programme

11 volunteer **Enterprise Advisers** from business recruited and trained, to work in schools

13 additional projects to engage students delivered to schools with the highest levels of disadvantage

LEVI

£927,000 LEVI Capital Funding

Growth Hub Funding Escalator

13 High growth businesses helped to grow and develop in 2024/25

225 SMEs triaged through the Growth Hub offer in 2024/25

14 Start Up business supported in 2024/25 a positive job outcome

21 businesses supported, **281** jobs created/ safeguarded, **£16.3m** private investment leveraged, **£4.76m** invested by FSE since 2013

Skills Bootcamps

Since 2023 **128** Learners completed a sector-specific programme

120 Graduates have had a job interview as a direct result of completing the programme

108 Graduates gained a positive job outcome

16 Learners received additional needs support

Our delivery in Slough

Careers Hub

Since Sept 2024

18 Schools engaged with (100% of eligible schools) to improve careers education for young people

22,068 students reached with careers advice and support through careers leader support and guidance

4 teachers spent a day with a local business to get practical industry experience, through our **Teachers Encounters** programme

12 volunteer **Enterprise Advisers** from business recruited and trained, to work in schools

7 additional projects to engage students delivered to schools with the highest levels of disadvantage

LEVI

£2,233,000 LEVI Capital Funding

Growth Hub Funding Escalator

5 High growth businesses helped to grow and develop in 2024/25

196 SMEs triaged through the Growth Hub offer in 2024/25

16 Start Up business supported in 2024/25 a positive job outcome

5 businesses supported, **31** jobs created/ safeguarded, **£2m** private investment leveraged, **£925k** invested by FSE since 2013

Skills Bootcamps

Since 2023 **58** Learners completed a sector-specific programme

48 Graduates have had a job interview as a direct result of completing the programme

24 Graduates gained a positive job outcome

7 Learners received additional needs support

Our delivery in West Berkshire

Careers Hub

Since Sept 2024

16 Schools engaged with (100% of eligible schools) to improve careers education for young people

14,437 students reached with careers advice and support through careers leader support and guidance

1 teacher spent a day with a local business to get practical industry experience, through our **Teachers Encounters** programme

10 volunteer **Enterprise Advisers** from business recruited and trained, to work in schools

7 additional projects to engage students delivered to schools with the highest levels of disadvantage

LEVI

£382,000 LEVI Capital Funding

Growth Hub Funding Escalator

9 High growth businesses helped to grow and develop in 2024/25

197 SMEs triaged through the Growth Hub offer in 2024/25

23 Start Up business supported in 2024/25 a positive job outcome

21 businesses supported, **276** jobs created/ safeguarded, **£24.4m** private investment leveraged, **£3.9m** invested by FSE since 2013

Skills Bootcamps

Since 2023 **109** Learners completed a sector-specific programme

94 Graduates have had a job interview as a direct result of completing the programme

79 Graduates gained a positive job outcome

18 Learners received additional needs support

Our delivery in Wokingham

Careers Hub

Since Sept 2024

14 Schools engaged with (100% of eligible schools) to improve careers education for young people

14,156 students reached with careers advice and support through careers leader support and guidance

1 teacher spent a day with a local business to get practical industry experience, through our **Teachers Encounters** programme

10 volunteer **Enterprise Advisers** from business recruited and trained, to work in schools

12 additional projects to engage students delivered to schools with the highest levels of disadvantage

LEVI

£264,000 LEVI Capital Funding

Growth Hub Funding Escalator

13 High growth businesses helped to grow and develop in 2024/25

233 SMEs triaged through the Growth Hub offer in 2024/25

18 Start Up business supported in 2024/25 a positive job outcome

9 businesses supported **190** jobs created/ safeguarded, **£2.8m** private investment leveraged, **£1.96m** invested by FSE since 2013

Skills Bootcamps

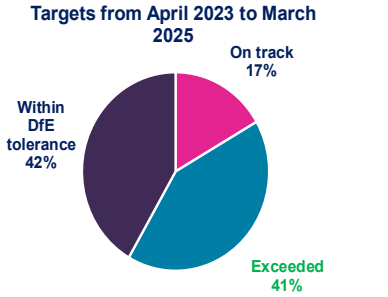
Since 2023 **76** Learners completed a sector-specific programme

54 Graduates have had a job interview as a direct result of completing the programme

33 Graduates gained a positive job outcome

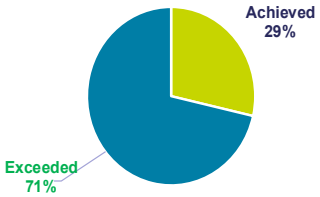
24 Learners received additional needs support

And the overview of our programme results against Government Grant requirements, many of which exceed expectations



Of the targets exceeded for Skills Bootcamps:

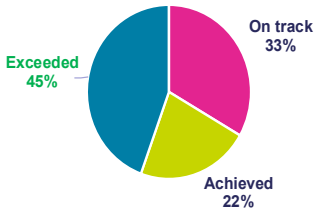
- Average course **attendance rate** – **93.82% against** a min. **target of 80%**
- Average course **dropout rates – 7.3% against** a **target** not exceeding **20%**



Berkshire Growth Hub

Of the targets exceeded for Growth Hub:

- **221** start-ups receiving focused business support against a target of **180** (equates to roughly 246 hours of additional support)
- 805 light-touch against a target of 600 (equates to roughly 102 hours of additional support)
- 349 medium intensity support against a target of 340 (equates to roughly 45 hours of additional support)
- 52 jobs created following high growth business support against a target of 18



Berkshire CAREERS HUB | THE CAREERS & ENTERPRISE COMPANY

Of the targets exceeded for CEC:

- **29** schools against a target of **20** have an excellent careers programme (that is fully achieving all eight Gatsby benchmarks)
- **80** schools having 80% or more of their students having a meaningful encounter with employers and employees, against a target of **74**

Local Authority Input

How The Skills & Business Hub makes a difference

Delivery

- Our strong **delivery record** and **continued achievement of targets (always in top 5 delivery partners, often number 1)**
- We **start** some **programmes "at risk".** Funding is received after delivery has started.
- Because we are **small** we are very **nimble** and were the **first to deliver wave 6 Skills Bootcamps** courses in the UK
- **Lean operating model:** a small expert team which **consistently deliver** to **targets**
- Our **provision** is **inclusive** and **accessible**

Relationships

- We **work closely** with all our **key stakeholders** to **ensure** the **programmes align with local needs**
- We are a **trusted delivery partner** by **Government** through prior delivery and engagement, enabling us to **increase Skills Bootcamps Funding 5 fold**
- We created **strong bonds with Colleges** where **Skills Capital** investments were made, and they are now delivery **partners for the Skills Bootcamps**

Resourceful

- **We subsidise the Careers Hub** as CEC funding requires a direct match **(annual investment = £100k)**
- We find **solutions** where **funding** is a **challenge**: e.g. Our **Growth Hub** and the **BES Action Plan** identified a clear requirement to run **Entrepreneurship** courses, was addressed using **Skills Bootcamps funding**
- We **leverage** the **interconnectivity** of our **programmes** to fill gaps. E.g. Running **Sales Skills Bootcamps** where **gaps in skills** were **identified** by the **Growth Hub**

Whilst many of our Government Grant Funded Programme delivery parameters are set, there are areas where the Local Authorities can influence at a Berkshire-wide level to better meet their priorities.

Local Authorities have opportunities to influence programme delivery by The Skills and Business Hub to meet local priorities

Delivery:
Appoint a Local Authority representative on CEC Steering Group which sets priorities and direction

Berkshire CAREERS HUB | THE CAREERS & ENTERPRISE COMPANY

Delivery:
The BES and Business Board determine the local priority sectors to support.

Note: 50% of local Skills Bootcamp funding can be allocated to deliver in any sector or skill area needed locally outside those deemed a national priority for the Skills Bootcamp programme

Timing for input: August for following Financial Year

SKILLS FOR LIFE SKILLS BOOTCAMPS

Delivery:
BES, Business Board and Local Authorities can help determine the local priority sectors for targeted support.

Berkshire Growth Hub

Investment in preferred sectors:
Funding Escalator is targeting priority sectors identified in the BES. Potential for Business Board to influence through the Scrutiny Group (which has Local Authority representation)

The FSEGroup Thames Valley Berkshire Funding Escalator

Testimonials

Delivery against targets is great, but the real satisfaction is hearing the wonderful experiences of those involved, be it learners, employers, or delivery partners. Below is a very small selection of feedback.

Careers Hub testimonials

Berkshire CAREERS HUB | THE CAREERS & ENTERPRISE COMPANY

Supporting Schools' Initiatives

"The consistent relationship we have with the Berkshire careers hub has helped our school's Careers Leader to test ideas and shape new initiatives. Work related learning has been one of our areas of focus and Berkshire Careers Hub colleagues have supported us to step up our activities in the past year.

We've been able to introduce work experiences for years 10 and 12. All our year 10 students have been involved in work experience and work -related learning. One of our new initiatives was a 2 -day project with a local care home, looking at the wide range of roles involved from healthcare to business. Our latest evaluation of the Gatsby benchmarks, carried out in conjunction with our Enterprise Coordinator, shows we are now meeting benchmark 6 (experiences of workplaces) at 100%.

We have also been supported to bring guest speakers into school and to introduce more focus on apprenticeships. Our Careers Leader has lots of ideas so having the support of the Careers Hub team, with its breadth of knowledge and experience, has led us to increasing our careers offering."

Katie Moore, Executive Principal at King's Academy, Binfield and King Academy, Oakwood (Bracknell)

Teachers Encounters

"I had an invaluable day learning so much more about the tech industry and what Egnyte looks for and I look forward to bringing this back to share with our students, inspire them and guide them about their options for the future."

Lalita, Careers Team, Activate Learning (Reading)

"Thank you Gita Bhanderi, Dean Clark and Donna Payne for supporting Teachers and Careers Leads in showering us with a wealth of knowledge on employment opportunities with Mars. Trust me when I say, I was totally blown away seeing behind the scenes of Mars. AMAZING!"

Linda Derby, Careers Adviser, Berkshire College Of Agriculture (RBWM)

Collaborating for Careers Leader Support

"Thanks to our work with the careers hub we've been able to really drive careers education forward. By utilising the careers hubs resource as a network, we have enhanced our careers provision. The majority of our schools are now 100% Gatsby benchmark compliant. We've been supported with links into workplaces too, which has increased our activities around apprenticeships and technical education.

Rob Buck, Director of Maiden Erlegh Institute and Trust Professional Learning (Wokingham)

Supporting Alternative Provision

"The Berkshire Careers Hub has been invaluable providing staff training attending employer meetings and sharing beneficial events for icollege. Their extensive knowledge and local connections are tremendous assets. Our termly compass+ meetings help keep icollege well connected."

Ali Haynes, Careers and PHSE Lead, icollege (Newbury)

Empowering School Governors

"The Berkshire Careers Hub has been crucial in my role as careers link governor at Desborough school. Their guidance has helped us embed careers education into the curriculum and meet Gatsby benchmarks, ensuring our students receive the best advice on careers and opportunities."

Emma O'Connor, Vice Chair of Governors, Desborough College (RBWM)

Supporting Alternative Provision

"The Berkshire Careers Hub has been a great source of information to help me support out students. In addition, it has provided opportunities for collaboration with other settings to share best practice and improve what we offer"

James Whybra, Deputy Headteacher and Careers Leader, The Castle School (West Berkshire)

Some Growth Hub testimonials

Berkshire Growth Hub

"Since I discovered Growth Hub at the end of 2024 I have been truly impressed by the services and support available. Since then I attended quite a few sessions and found them very helpful and empowering. I would recommend Growth Hub to anyone who is either at the start of their business journey or needs some support or simply talk through things. It still amazes me how much support is available through GH, from 1-2-1 sessions, Lunch & Learn, to start up programme and bootcamps. It is truly amazing and definitely more people should hear about you and the range of services available!"

Izabella Jakubowska, Grace In Colour Studio (Reading)

"I have found the Growth Hub extremely useful. Being a new inexperienced business owner, I have found the sessions and recommendations from Sara invaluable.

Having a local business advisor that has 'been there and done it' and who can advise on the business essentials for small business owners has been a godsend at a critical time of the business. I also enrolled on the AI for business online course, which was well structured and a useful insight into the rapid changes that AI is having to the business world."

Simon Miller, Managing Director, Focal Point Advertising (West Berkshire)

"Very grateful for the focused help with creating a business plan to progress a grant application. The sessions I have had provided clear and actionable tasks to help with setting up a business. I'm grateful for the advice, resources and opportunities I've had since finding the Berkshire Growth Hub. The staff have a genuine interest in what they do and go out of their way to assist small businesses grow. Thank you so much!"

Sheena Bulpitt, Shenna Bulpitt Fine Art (Slough)

"I was so happy when I discovered Berkshire Growth Hub - it feels like I have somewhere to go for impartial advice, help and support. I have gained valuable suggestions from the 1-2-1 video calls I have had with Sara Charlesworth. She's brilliant! I am buzzing with ideas and motivation afterwards and she steers me in the right direction with fabulous sound advice. It's free and they have my back and I am extremely grateful for this."

Dawn Barnes, Corporate Wellbeing (Bracknell)

"Working with Lesley at the Growth Hub has been an absolute pleasure. She listened attentively to my business needs and provided insightful suggestions that truly helped me refine my target audience in ways I hadn't considered before. I was struggling to address certain aspects, but Lesley's guidance made the process much clearer and more manageable. Additionally, her willingness to meet up again for a follow-up demonstrates her commitment to supporting businesses like mine. Overall, my experience with the Growth Hub, especially with Lesley, has been invaluable to my business growth journey".

Stanley Innocent, OfficeTech Setup Services Ltd (RBWM)

"The support provided is fantastic. Being a business owner can be quite lonely at times, so it's great to have a place where you can turn for support and guidance when needed. The training is also incredibly helpful, equipping you with all the tools to succeed."

Mark Summers, Summers Print and Promotions (Wokingham)

Skills Bootcamps testimonials

Learner Voices

"The update to date knowledge that received helps us to stay relevant and find new avenues of work, especially in the renewables area. Talking to other people in the industry is one of the best parts of it. It's what we're interested in and it's well worth it."

Daniel Corkin, Retrofit Skills Bootcamp, Langley College (RBWM)

"The Skills Bootcamps programme provides valuable, practical training directly supporting professional development and career readiness. It offers a fast-tracked, focused approach to gaining essential skills for SEN roles, making it an excellent alternative to traditional qualifications."

Swati Waghmare, Skills Bootcamp for SEN professionals with Educate2gether Training (Slough)

"The Skills Bootcamp helped me develop my written skills through things like e-mail marketing and gaining certificates through completing the extra learning materials through the Semrush Academy. I have gained more confidence to identify my strengths and tailor aspects of my CV to match job descriptions."

Shanjida Begum, Skills Bootcamp In Digital Marketing, The Curious Academy (Reading)

Employer Testimonials

"We truly believe in the Skills Bootcamps programme. We've already recruited two graduates, and their skills are making a real difference in our business!"

The Skills and Business Hub (Berkshire)

"The bootcamps have created a pipeline of local people with the right skills to help us thrive in the future. This initiative has really boosted our company's ability to stay relevant and competitive in the fast-changing construction industry."

Cara Beeby, CEO, BuildTech (Wokingham)

The skills bootcamps provided by Newbury college have been invaluable in filling a skills gap identified in our graduate community as it is uncommon for them to have gained 'hands on' experience during their degrees. The quality of the course in all aspects has been exceptional and enabled these early careers staff to work more efficiently across the business by understanding the design to manufacture process in its entirety. We have also taken the opportunity to roll this boot camp out to established staff to upskill them as a part of career development."

Julie Symonds, Future Talent Manager, AWE (West Berkshire)

Delivery partner feedback

"A heartfelt thank you to the Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership skills bootcamp team for trusting Matt and I to deliver the data analytics and digital marketing programmes which allow us to work with some amazing people."

Louize Clarke, Co-owner, The Curious Academy (Reading)

"I love them. We've had a long-standing relationship. Alison's great. Joanna's great. You know, Claire is brilliant. The team ofthe data guys, they're just lovely and they're wonderful. They have my total support, and I love working with them".

Jo Houghton, Vice Principal – HE and Skills, Newbury College (West Berkshire)

Funding Escalator Testimonials

Reading

*"At the time we received debt funding from FSE, it was the only reasonable option we had to get our **project off the ground** – a project that would have been abandoned without this support. As a result, we are now working with leading pharmaceutical companies and are currently raising £3m equity to **power our growth**. Thanks FSE!"*

Dan Hydes Co-founder & Managing Director

Slough

*Borrowing money of any sorts is a daunting prospect and in business terms there always follows an arduous process. In the case of FSE we felt **very much supported** through the application process and help was on hand whenever we needed it from the team; indeed as a client we asked a lot of questions and these were all dealt with in a detailed and respectful way. Communication from the team at FSE has been clear and concise, and we have found a **genuine interest** in our business, its plans and its developments."*

Nicola Bell – Motion Simulation

West Berkshire

*"Our relationship with FSE has been **crucial** not only to our growth but to our survival. In 2017, with sales around £0.5million, our Investment Manager took the time to understand our business and was able to provide funding when conventional banking could not. Seeing the possibilities rather than the problems, FSE continued to stand by us through the significant challenges brought about by the pandemic and a further loan helped to keep the business going. With FSE's support we have **increased employee numbers**, we continue to trade internationally and, with our loans now repaid, we are on track to reach **£5million** turnover this year. We are so grateful that we found in FSE a true funding partner that enabled this unique technology to survive and thrive."*

Andrew Bride / Group Finance Director, Torftech

Bracknell Forest

"As a relatively early-stage business there are limited options to raise funding from mainstream finance providers, but The FSE Group **fills this gap** with their funding for newer companies that are looking to expand. We're delighted to be working with them as we enter the next phase of our growth journey; their support will be **instrumental** in helping us reach new customers and continue to promote the incredible work of independent UK roasters."

Fiona Jones, Co-Founder at Beans Coffee Club

Wokingham

*"The support we've received from the FSE Group over the years has been **instrumental** in Quintex's growth and success. From the early stages of our development to where we are today, their funding has enabled us to innovate, expand, and stay ahead in a competitive market. **More than just financial backing** the FSE Group brought a deep understanding of our vision and offered strategic insight that proved invaluable along the way. We're truly grateful for their belief in our potential and their commitment to helping UK businesses thrive."*

Emma Brooks, Managing Director at Quintex

Windsor and Maidenhead

*"At a time when the bank wasn't interested and just told me 'don't even bother filling out the forms', my FSE fund manager was **very responsive, professional, friendly and helpful**. But at the same time he was straight, honest and challenging – something I hadn't experienced with any other finance house but which made me feel he was **genuinely interested**. I have been used to a complete lack of communication, being kept at arm's length by a faceless entity. I believe FSE **saved my business**; had it not been for this organisation I would have gone bust in year one."*

Austin Bailey - Lacka Foods

Funding Escalator Case Studies:

Reading

Supporting

IGNITE DATA

Sector: data

Funding: £300,000

The Enterprise

IgniteData's Archer technology is transforming the way hospitals and research sites transfer patient data for clinical trials.

The Funding

A £300,000 loan in 2019 helped hire key executives and further develop their product offerings.

Company recently raised a $8million seed round, which was led by US based Health Tech VC SpringTide.

Supporting

NOVAI

Sector: community

Funding: £350,000

The Enterprise

A leading UK MedTech company fighting blindness and disability with pioneering technology

The Funding

A £350,000 loan in 2023 to assist with the further commercialisation of their technology.

Company won the BioTech Company of the Year and Pharma Contract Services Company of the Year at the Pharma Industry Awards in 2024

Slough

Supporting

Tangent 90

Sector: software

Funding: £325,000 across two loans

The Enterprise

Creators of leading-edge, digital solutions that support Pharmaceutical companies

The Funding

Most recent funding in 2023 with a £125,000 loan to help support the hiring within the sales function and to assist with further product development.

Supporting

MOTION SIMULATION

Sector: design engineering

Funding: £200,000

The Enterprise

Creators of the world's first variable driving position racing simulator.

The Funding

A £200,000 loan in 2015 has helped the business expand its offering and management team.

West Berkshire

The FSEGroup Funding Scaleup Enterprises

Supporting

Torftech Energy

Sector: industrial machine manufacturing

Funding: £200,000

The Enterprise

A design engineering and intellectual property business.

The Funding

A £200,000 loan in 2017 helped the business expand into new sectors and locations.

Company has now in 2024 completed 132 projects worldwide.

Supporting

REDBOX MOBILE PLC

Sector: advertising

Funding: £690,000 across 4 loans

The Enterprise

An award winning social advertising consultancy

The Funding

Most recent loan of £200,000 to assist with the on-going expansion of the business.

Won the Most Effective UA Platform at the Mobile Marketing Awards in 2023.

Funding Escalator Case Studies:

Windsor and Maidenhead

Supporting

Lacka Foods

Sector: food & drink

Funding: £300,000

The Enterprise

A lifestyle health food & drink company specialising in nutritional convenience.

The Funding

A £300,000 loan in 2013 helped the business to launch their products in supermarkets nationally.

Company was acquired by Weetabix Food Co in 2022

Supporting

MyWorkSpot

Sector: real estate

Funding: £280,000

The Enterprise

A provider of flexible office and Coworking space to start-ups & established businesses.

The Funding

A £280,000 loan in 2022 to help the company to fit out and launch their new site in Maidenhead town centre.

Wokingham

Supporting

Quintex

Energy & Grease Management Solutions

Sector: b2b services

Funding: £500,000

The Enterprise

A provider of energy saving and grease management solutions, with over 8000 systems installed in the UK and Europe in a variety of sectors

The Funding

A £150,000 loan in 2022 helped the business to fund the sales and marketing expansion of their team, creatinga number ofnew positions. Most recent funding £300,000 in March 2025.

Supporting

each person

Sector: software

Funding: £500,000

The Enterprise

A provider of flexible office and Coworking space to start-ups & established businesses.

The Funding

A £500,000 loan in 2023 to help support continued software development and enable the recruitment of 7 local hires

Bracknell Forest

Supporting

my first uk

Sector: insurance

Funding: £105,000

The Enterprise

Specialist car insurance for first time drivers

The Funding

A £105,000 loan in 2019 helped the business to ramp up their expansion strategy with national marketing campaigns.

Recently named in the Sunday Times fastest growing businesses 2024.

Supporting

lookingglass

Sector: design activities

Funding: £300,000

The Enterprise

A full-service marketing agency working in the commercial property sector

The Funding

A £300,000 loan in 2019 allowed the business to scale and hire new staff across multiple departments.

The Skills and Business Hub

Contact us

MyWorkSpot Proxima
1 Grenfell Road
Maidenhead
SL6 1HN

info@skillsandbusinesshub.org

Connect with us

Skills-and-business-hub

skillsandbusinesshub.org

HM Government