



Department for Education

The Rt Hon Bridget Phillipson MP
Secretary of State for Education

02 June 2025

Dear Tessa and Sarah,

SKILLS ENGLAND PRIORITIES FOR 2025-26

I am delighted that Skills England is now fully established and empowered to equip our national workforce with the skills to power economic growth, and support people to get better jobs faster. This letter sets out my priorities for Skills England for the year ahead, which I look forward to seeing reflected in your business plan for 2025-26.

Skills are central to the Government's Missions and Plan for Change – for growth and opportunity, but for the other missions too, and for our plans to deliver 1.5 million homes over five years.

Building on its work in shadow form, Skills England will identify skills gaps across the economy - including in key sectors - and use this insight to drive improvements. Skills England should work with the Department and across Government to bring the skills system together so that people and employers can benefit from the training they need to get on. Your work will help young people starting out on their careers, as well as adults who need to reskill, to have access to clear education and training pathways.

As you take the following priorities forwards, I know you will be responsive to employer need, and work innovatively to keep pace with technological change and the labour market. Your contributions to the Industrial Strategy, and close working with the Industrial Strategy Council, will support growth sectors and enable the country to take the growth opportunities of the next decade. And your work as part of the Labour Market Expert Group will underpin a new national approach linking immigration, skills and workforce strategies – understanding and reducing reliance on overseas labour.

Skills England should co-design new approaches with industry and regional partners to improve the skills of our workforce, collaborating with a wide range of interested parties across the skills system, including Devolved Government counterparts where appropriate. You can continue to work proactively with Strategic Authorities and local leaders to help co-create solutions that respond to national priorities, skills gaps, and local labour market needs, and ensure we spread growth and opportunity to all of our regions.

The support of your newly appointed Chair, Vice Chair and Board of Skills England will be fundamental; we will all benefit from their diverse experience and expertise.

I ask the senior leadership of Skills England to focus on the following priorities over the next year.

Understanding our nation's future skills needs and improving our skills offer

Skills England will be data driven. Working with partners across Government and beyond, you should provide the single authoritative voice on the country's current and future skills needs, so our skills strategies and policies can work together to meet them. This will enable government departments to make informed decisions on labour market policy and sectoral/regional priorities, including through the publication of your annual skills assessment.

Skills England will use data and insights to inform the development and maintenance of the right skills training at a national and regional level. This should include co-creating and refining the occupational standards underpinning a set of qualifications and training products with employers and other partners, to ensure that employers are driving the training required to meet labour market and economic need and deliver our Missions. In line with Government priorities, you are already responding to employer need including developing the first foundation apprenticeships and first short apprenticeships which will give employers greater flexibility in key sectors.

Simplifying access to skills

Skills England will bring together the fragmented skills system, helping people take up technical education and apprenticeships, and employers access the skilled workforce they need. Your work will improve employer engagement in technical education, and understanding of the pathways among learners, providers and employers. You should ensure a high-quality employer experience of Skills England, and use insights and experiences with stakeholders to enable the Department to improve the wider skills system too, tackling bureaucracy and duplication.

Mobilise and co-create

Skills England should drive action across Government and co-create solutions with our partners – nationally, in key sectors, and across regions.

Drawing on your data and insights from employers, trades unions, Further and Higher Education training providers, and others, Skills England will have a role to:

- Advise Government to enable responses to skills gaps, including continuing to develop the Growth and Skills Levy offer.
- Drive progress in the Labour Market Evidence Group, working with the Migration Advisory Committee, Industrial Strategy Council and Department for Work and Pensions to boost the domestic pipeline of skilled workers in priority areas, reducing our reliance on migration.
- Collaborate with local partners to ensure there are consistent, high quality Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs) that respond to national priorities and

local labour market needs. This will include a clear role for Further Education and Higher Education provision.

- Mobilise local partners and employers to help shape and deliver the local training offers, to ensure opportunity and employer access to a highly skilled workforce across the country.
- Regularly and deeply engage Strategic Authorities, putting them at the core of Skills England's ways of working to shape a responsive and future-facing skills system.
- Attract significant internationally mobile investors. Working across Government, you will develop a service to help investors navigate the UK skills offer, providing access to skills and talent development through convening key partners.

This agenda is urgent and central to the Government's Missions. I know you will build on the momentum from Skills England's time in shadow form to firmly establish the organisation at the centre of our national skills landscape.

I look forward to your success and to reviewing Skills England's business plan and progress against it.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Bridget Phillipson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

The Rt Hon Bridget Phillipson MP
Secretary of State for Education