

**FE Accountability Agreement:**

# **Cheshire West and Chester Council's Adult Education Service**

**31 July 2026**

# Purpose

Cheshire West and Chester Council's Skills and Employment Service aims to support residents' who face a range of barriers and enable them to achieve their life goals.

The Service offer's pathways of support and skills development which allows these adults to enter employment and/or progress in work.

Our Intent is to support targeted residents and their families.

***'Cheshire West and Chester Council's Skills and Employment Service provides all the support residents need to find and keep a job'***

We aim to be recognised within the Council, it's wider partners and stakeholders as leaders and influencers in the field of skills, learning and employment support, with specific focus on reducing long-term unemployment in the borough. This will include the Cheshire and Warrington Combined Authority which was launched in February 2026.

We have developed a Service Prospectus to outline the range of provision and support available to residents of Cheshire West and Chester. See: [Prospectus FINAL](#) <sup>1</sup>

To ensure our provision meets local needs, we utilise the economic data available and work collaboratively with key stakeholders such as the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), Cheshire and Warrington Combined Authority (CWCA), Cheshire West Voluntary Action (CWVA), local further education colleges, schools and the West Cheshire and North Wales Chamber (WCNW Chamber) and South Cheshire Chamber (leading on the Cheshire and Warrington Local Skills Improvement Plan and utilising data sets provided by Skills England).

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<sup>1</sup> This is likely to be updated in 2026.

# Context and Place



We are an Adult Education Service which is embedded within Cheshire West and Chester (CWCC) Local Authority, serving a population of approximately 364,000 people.

This Local Authority area shares borders with Cheshire East, Warrington, Wirral, Shropshire and North Wales.

The Skills and Employment Service deliver a wide range of programmes through our four geographically based Skills and Employment Hubs and around 10 commissioned partners. Our Hubs are located in Chester, Ellesmere Port, Northwich and Winsford.

In addition to the Hubs, we offer Skills and Employment outreach provision based in local primary schools and other community venues. These are welcoming spaces for adults to develop their skills, gain qualifications and give opportunities for residents to learn alongside their children, or indeed grandchildren.

The team are constantly reviewing how successful our Hubs and outreach provision are in engaging our more vulnerable or disadvantaged residents. The table below shows how many residents accessed provision and support via our Work Zones (now called Skills and Employment Hubs) and which IMD area they live in. This shows that 54.42% of Skills and Employment learners live in IMD areas ranked 1-4 (the most disadvantaged), which translates into 53.59% of our job outcomes.

| 2025/26         |                        |                        |                         |                        |                      |
|-----------------|------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|----------------------|
| 2025 IMD Decile | Working Age Population | Average Claimant Count | Work Zone Registrations | Work Zone Job Outcomes | 2025/26 S&E Learners |
| 1               | 8.25%                  | 5.97%                  | 18.30%                  | 18.94%                 | 19.95%               |
| 2               | 7.64%                  | 4.90%                  | 16.17%                  | 15.61%                 | 15.42%               |
| 3               | 8.24%                  | 3.40%                  | 10.53%                  | 8.31%                  | 8.54%                |
| 4               | 6.48%                  | 3.11%                  | 8.15%                   | 10.63%                 | 10.51%               |
| 5               | 8.32%                  | 2.66%                  | 8.40%                   | 6.98%                  | 7.18%                |
| 6               | 6.57%                  | 2.21%                  | 4.89%                   | 7.31%                  | 5.14%                |
| 7               | 11.93%                 | 2.03%                  | 9.65%                   | 9.63%                  | 9.37%                |
| 8               | 11.16%                 | 1.85%                  | 8.02%                   | 4.98%                  | 6.27%                |
| 9               | 16.15%                 | 1.64%                  | 8.90%                   | 12.62%                 | 9.98%                |
| 10              | 15.26%                 | 1.21%                  | 7.02%                   | 4.98%                  | 7.63%                |

2025 IMD Decile from English Indices of Deprivation <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2025>

Working Age Population: Population Estimate by Lower Super Output Area, Nomis, latest dataset (2024), filtered to ages 16-64

Average Claimant Count: Claimant Count by Age and Sex, Nomis, Average of March, April & May 2026

Work Zone Registrations and Job Outcomes - 01/08/2025-20/07/2026

2025/26 S&E Learners - Unique learners as of R11

Our programme of delivery is aimed at supporting adults to develop their confidence and basic skills, all the way through to delivering vocational programmes in line with local employment needs at Level 2.

We receive around £1.15m of Adult Skills Fund (ASF), plus an additional £150,00 (approx..) for our Supported Internship Programme and support over 1,700 learners each year. This year we have also received £3,000 from the Inclusive Mainstream Fund which we will use to ensure our infrastructure and pedagogy is accessible to SEN learners.

In 2026-27 we will receive an additional £460,000 to deliver the Pathway to Devolution Pilot in Cheshire West. This will enable the Council to deliver more skills provision informed by local labour needs, develop working relationships with new providers and experience the commissioning and delivery of Free Courses for Jobs (FCFJ).

Following further discussion with Warrington Borough Council, the Service has agreed to commission and manage the Pathway to Devolution Pilot for Warrington, ensuring the additional funding meets the skills needs of residents and businesses in the town. This equates to an additional allocation of £525,288. The Service will work closely with the Officers at Warrington to develop capacity and awareness of the processes involved in successful ASF delivery.

In 2025-26 we began delivery of two Skills Bootcamps, aimed at supporting residents to access work in hospitality and logistics, through fork lift truck training. This will be reviewed closely to ensure that it enhances our main provision (and purpose) and does not duplicate training available in the wider provider base.

The Service was visited by Ofsted on 22 and 23 May 2024. The overall outcome was that the provision continued to be “Good”. Details of the report can be found here: [50252485](#)

Since then, the Service volunteered to be inspected using the new Ofsted Framework. All recommendations from this exercise have been reflected in the updated Self-Assessment Report and Quality Improvement Plan.

The Service provides information, advice and guidance (IAG) to all our learners. Our latest Matrix review report stated that the team offered “a very high level of service... supporting them (residents) into employment and skills training through rigorous and impartial information, advice and guidance” and “although there are targets within the process, it was clear that the emphasis was on delivering high quality service to the residents, which in turn has led to a learner centred culture.” The Service was also praised for its strong networking and collaboration with referral partners, subcontractors, and local area partnerships.

The team work closely with partners such as local schools, Further Education Colleges and independent training providers, to ensure there is no duplication of provision and to encourage progression routes for our learners into further study where relevant. This collaborative activity has increased over the last 12 months, with our skills and employment hubs providing work experience placements, along with delivering employability skills such as CV writing, interview techniques and job applications,

giving learners practical hands-on experience in the ‘real world’. We will expect this collaboration to continue and develop further following devolution in the sub-region.

We are also active members of the Cheshire and Warrington provider network.

In addition to our ASF provision, we support an annual cohort of Supported Internship Learners, providing them with employability and basic skills and facilitating high quality relevant work experience through our extensive link to local employers.

We are also providing a second year of our DfE pilot which delivers a Supported Internship programme to learners who do not have an EHCP<sup>2</sup>, but who do have complex needs and similar barriers to engagement. The aim is to support approx. 20 learners through our EHCP Supported Internship provision and up to 150 students through the non- EHCP Supported Internship pilot in 2026-27.

The Service uses a broad range of intelligence to inform our provision. This includes national data sets, such as the DWP Stat Xplore and the EMSI data supplied by Enterprise Cheshire and Warrington<sup>3</sup>, along with feedback from learners and employers that we engage with. The team also links with our regeneration and business support services at the Council, to ensure we are fully briefed on planned inward investment opportunities and the potential training needs and employment opportunities that they could support.

### *Demographic information*

Table 1 below shows a breakdown of the CWCC population in 2024. The population of CWCC is older than the average for England. The data shows that the largest proportion of Cheshire West residents is made up of those aged 35-54. The graphs comparing CWCC and England data show the marked difference in age groups; while the proportion of 25–39-year-old millennials is below the national average, the 55+ age group makes up a much greater proportion of the CW&C population.

Our provision will need to support not only the younger cohorts, but also meet the needs of older residents, including those who may be looking to reskill to find work in a new sector.

Over 50% of our population is aged between 35 and 74 years old, with 35% of our residents aged over 55. This is higher than the England average of 31%.

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<sup>2</sup> EHCP – Education, Health Care Plan

<sup>3</sup> Formally Cheshire and Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)

Table 1: Summary of the resident population by age (ONS, 2024)

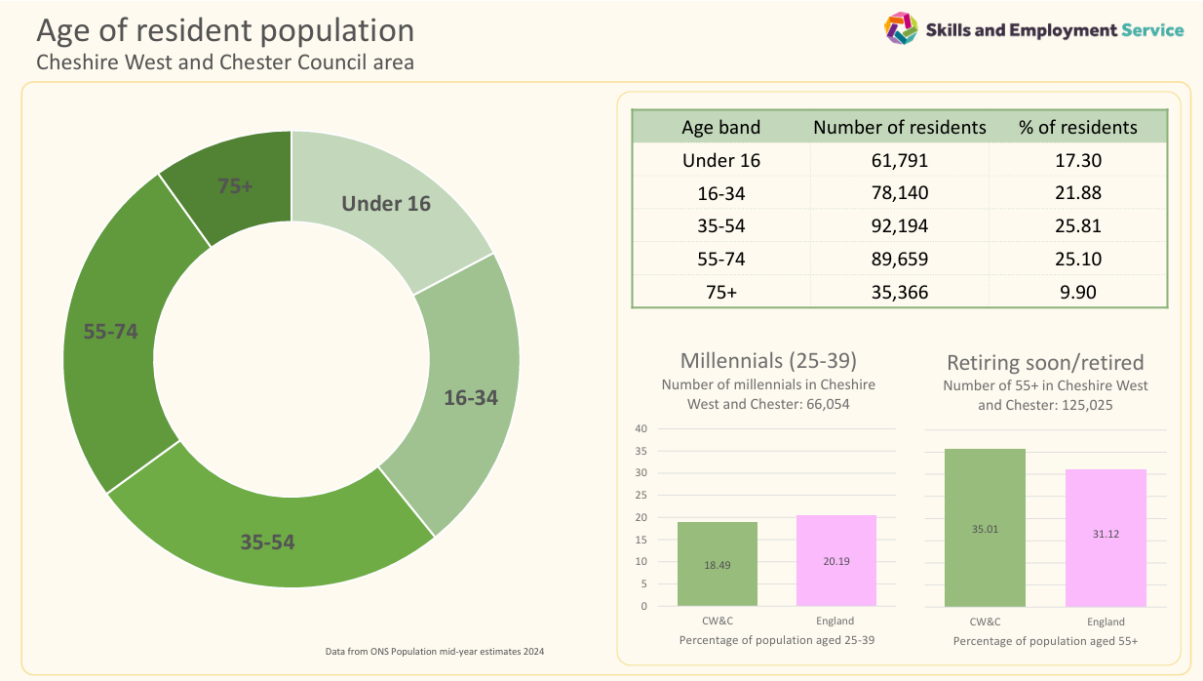
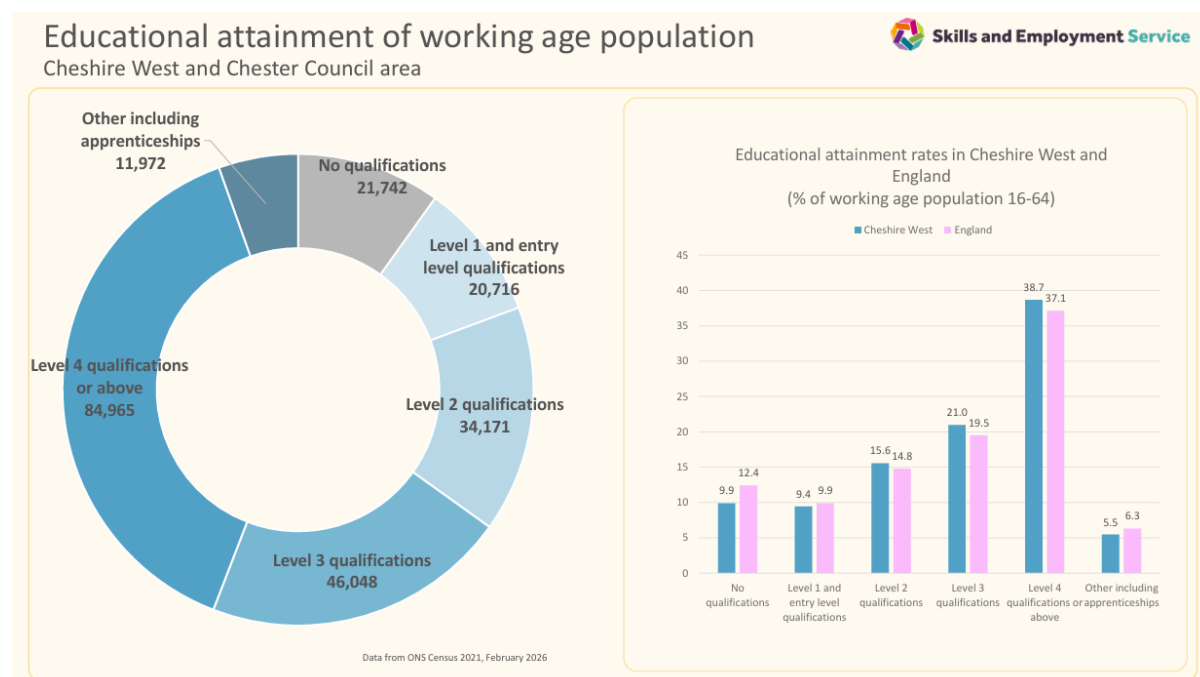


Table 2 shows the education attainment of residents in CWCC. Of working age residents (aged 16-64) Cheshire West outperforms national averages in attainment of qualifications above Level 2. Those with no qualifications is significantly lower than the national average. However, at Entry/Level 1 (and with other qualifications including apprenticeships) Cheshire West is below the national average showing that there is further development to be done at this level.

Table 2: Educational attainment of resident population (ONS, Feb 2026)



The 2021 census showed that the vast majority of CWCC residents are white British, with a proportion of white Irish and other white nationalities. Black/black British make up a much smaller percentage of the resident population (0.6%) than the national average (4.2%). The largest single ethnic groups are Indian/British Indian and Chinese/British Chinese.

The borough is gradually becoming more ethnically diverse. Since the 2011 census, the proportion of non-white ethnicities has increased from 2.7% to 4.7%, however this is still below the national average of 19%.

The Skills and Employment Service is working with partners and providers to ensure there is effective ESOL provision available to those who need it across the borough.

Table 3 provides a summary of the labour force for CWCC. Out of a working age population of 228,247, 174,003 were employed and 3,452 unemployed. There are however 54,244 who are not in the labour force or economically inactive.

Table 3: Summary of the labour force (Lightcast, 2026)

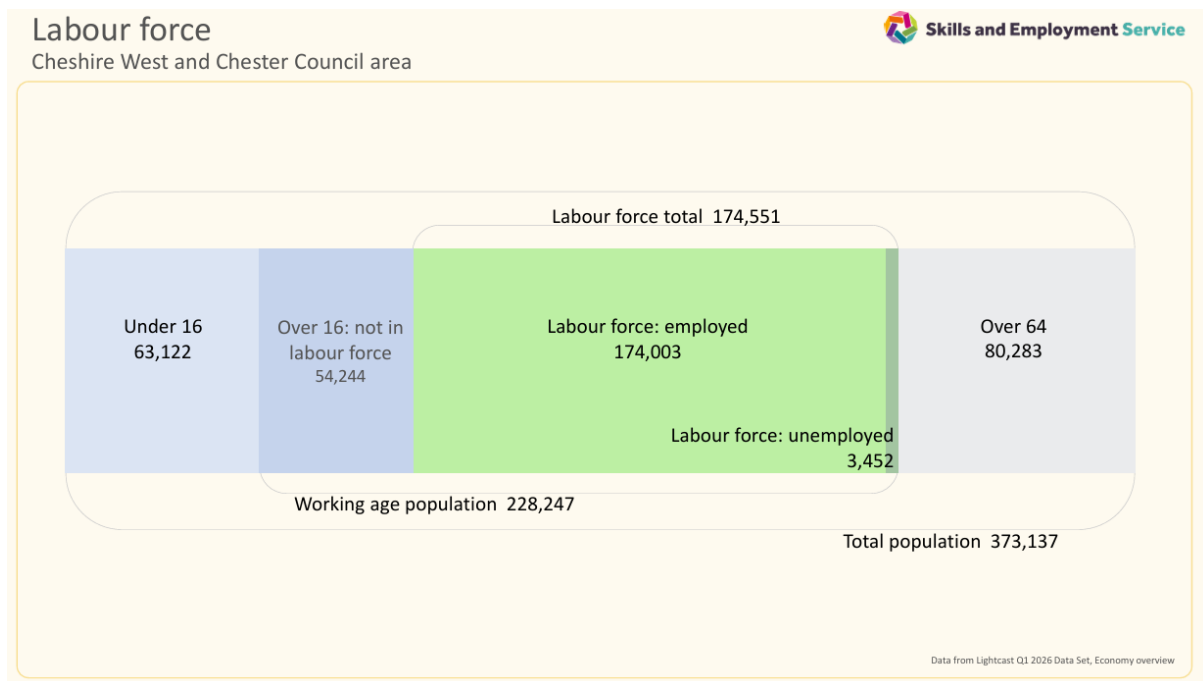


Table 4 shows the current unemployment rate in CWCC in comparison with our neighbours in Cheshire East and Warrington, along with the average rate for England.

All areas experienced an increase in unemployment during the pandemic; but this figure has largely decreased over time. There has however been a slight increase in the unemployment rates for Cheshire West between October 2023 and September 2025. We will be watching closely to see if this trend continues due to the slowdown in recruitment in response to the increases in staff wages and global uncertainty.

Table 4: Unemployment rates: Cheshire East, CW&C, Warrington and England (NOMIS model-based estimates, February 2026)

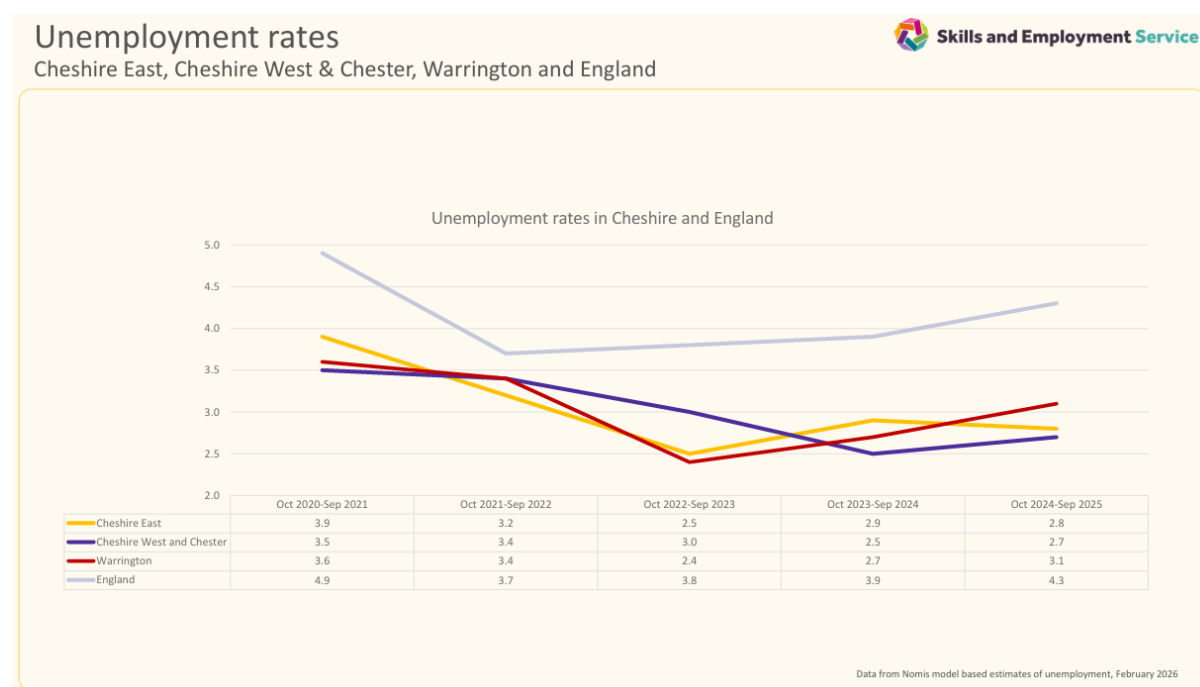


Table 5: Wards in CW&C with the highest claimant count (NOMIS 2026)

**Claimant count by ward**  
Wards with the highest proportion of residents aged 16-64 claiming benefits

Skills and Employment Service

| Ward                              | January 2026 | % change in last 12 months | % above or below CW&C average (2.6%) | January 2025 |
|-----------------------------------|--------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------|
| Blacon                            | 5.2          | -0.9                       | 2.6                                  | 6.1          |
| Wolverham                         | 5.2          | -0.8                       | 2.6                                  | 6.0          |
| Central & Grange                  | 4.8          | -0.9                       | 2.2                                  | 5.7          |
| Westminster                       | 4.6          | -3.3                       | 2.0                                  | 7.9          |
| Lache                             | 3.9          | -0.1                       | 1.3                                  | 4.0          |
| Northwich Witton                  | 3.8          | -0.3                       | 1.2                                  | 4.1          |
| Northwich Leftwich                | 3.7          | -0.6                       | 1.1                                  | 4.3          |
| Winsford Wharton                  | 3.7          | 0.7                        | 1.1                                  | 3.0          |
| Sutton Villages                   | 3.4          | 0.0                        | 0.8                                  | 3.4          |
| Neston                            | 3.0          | -0.2                       | 0.4                                  | 3.2          |
| Winsford Over & Verdin            | 3.0          | -0.8                       | 0.4                                  | 3.8          |
| Chester City & the Garden Quarter | 2.9          | -0.4                       | 0.3                                  | 3.3          |
| Winsford Dene                     | 2.9          | -0.8                       | 0.3                                  | 3.7          |
| Winsford Gravel                   | 2.9          | 0.8                        | 0.3                                  | 2.1          |
| Newton & Hoole                    | 2.8          | -0.2                       | 0.2                                  | 3.0          |
| Rudheath                          | 2.6          | -0.4                       | 0.0                                  | 3.0          |
| Winsford Swanlow                  | 2.3          | -0.3                       | -0.3                                 | 2.6          |
| Netherpool                        | 2.2          | -0.7                       | -0.4                                 | 2.9          |
| Northwich Winnington & Castle     | 2.2          | -0.6                       | -0.4                                 | 2.8          |
| Helsby                            | 2.1          | 0.0                        | -0.5                                 | 2.1          |
| Frodsham                          | 2.0          | 0.0                        | -0.6                                 | 2.0          |
| Saughall & Mollington             | 2.0          | 0.1                        | -0.6                                 | 1.9          |

Pink formatting shows wards where the number of claimants has increased from January 2025 to January 2026.  
Green formatting shows wards where the number has decreased or remained the same within the last 12 months.

All data from nomisweb.co.uk, Claimant count by age and sex March 2026

Table 5 above shows the wards in CW&C with the highest rate of working age benefit claimants. The columns show the figures for each ward in January 2025 and January 2026. Where the number for 2026 is greater than 2025 – an increase in claims – the growth is shown in red. Decreases are shown in green.

- Three of the five highest claimant rates are in Ellesmere Port wards: Westminster, Wolverham and Central & Grange, however the latter has decreased over the last year.
- Chester's highest claimant rate is in Blacon and Lache.
- Leftwich and Witton in Northwich both have high claimant rates but this has reduced slightly over the last two years.
- All wards in Winsford appear in the top half of the table. Winsford Wharton has highest claimant rate, and this has increased over the last 12 months.

The Skills and Employment Service will review provision availability in each ward to ensure those with the highest claimant rates can be addressed potentially using Skills and Employment Outreach locations at local primary schools.

# **Approach to Developing the Annual Accountability Statement**

CWCC Skills and Employment Service produce an evidence base document each year, informed by local data which helps to shape the curriculum that we deliver and commission through our partners. This data involves working with our internal data and employer engagement team, along with DWP, Enterprise Cheshire and Warrington, NHS partners, Skills England, feedback from local employers (including employer bodies) and our learners.

We have used our extensive evidence base document to inform this accountability statement.

We have shared this accountability statement with our Adult Education Governance Board. This Board includes representatives from: DWP, Groundwork (representing our local employer-led Business Improvement Districts) and the West Cheshire and North Wales Chamber.

We work closely with South Cheshire Chamber who are responsible for developing the Cheshire and Warrington Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) to ensure that where relevant, we are looking to identify ways in which we can play our part in supporting the local priorities identified. We will be also looking to work with other local providers to better develop co-ordinated pathways of provision in response to the gaps identified.

# Contribution to national, regional, local sector skills priorities

**National sector skills priorities include** advanced manufacturing, creative industries, defence, digital and technologies, financial services, life sciences, professional and business services, clean energy industries, construction and health

In response to national priorities, the CWCC Skills and Employment Service offer a variety of programmes that support some of the sectors above (not all of the sectors would be relevant as we only deliver provision up to a Level 2, although reflecting on the fact that we will be commissioning some Level 3 provision through the Pathway to Devolution Pilot).

**Advanced Manufacturing** is very important to Cheshire West; however, most entry level positions require at least Level 3 skills. We will however look to support pathways to this important sector and have contributed to the local Regional Skills Pilot in Cheshire West. Advanced Manufacturing a key sector in decarbonisation of the economy and the wider **Clean Energy** industries.

**Creative and Defence** are not huge sectors in Cheshire West and therefore we have not prioritised provision for these industries.



**Digital and technologies:** The Skills and Employment Service offer a range of digital programmes especially at an introductory level. Many of these introduce learners to common Microsoft Office packages, but we also offer a Level 2 in Digital Marketing and Social Media course. The team works closely with partners to support digital inclusion across the borough. As a service we are exploring how we can better use technology in the delivery of our learning programmes.

**Financial Services:** As there are a number of employment opportunities locally linked to this sector, especially in Chester and Northwich, we have provided training to support adults to start of a career path to financial roles. This has included business admin and Excel courses. We are looking to extend this provision through the Pathway to Devolution pilot. There are lots of cross overs between digital and financial sectors.



**Life Sciences:** Is a growing sector across Cheshire and Warrington (including Cheshire West). As there are limited entry level roles in this sector, the Service would look to signpost learners to other organisations/ training providers.



**Professional and Business Services:** The Skills and Employment Service offer a range of courses that would support learners to access employment in this sector. This includes a Pathways to Business Administration course at Level 1 and a Teaching Assistant course at Level 2.



**Construction:** The Skills and Employment Service work closely with a sub-contracted provider to offer CSCS<sup>4</sup> cards and training support for those adults looking for employment in this growing sector.

Our provider has established links with many national and local construction firms and proactively engages with them to seek out employment opportunities of our learners.

We have also supported young people into Construction through Supported Internships and the Supported Internships for non- EHCP Young People Pilot.

**Health and Social Care:** The Skills and Employment Service have supported local health and social care employers. This has included the delivery of sector work-based academy programmes (SWAP) where we have worked alongside Skills for Care and Cheshire College South and West.



The team are in regular contact with Warrington and Vale Royal College to understand how we can support them to develop and refer into their health and social care academy in Winsford.

Due to the Skills and Employment Service delivering courses at Level 2 and below and having limited access to specialist equipment, it is not positioned to support some of the national skills priorities. Instead, interested parties are referred to provision that is already offered in our FE Colleges and Independent Training Providers.

We do however offer a range of English, Maths and Digital programmes, available for all our learners. Over the last 12 months we have been utilising the experiences of delivering Multiply to inform how best to market, engage and progress learners on these programmes.

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<sup>4</sup> Construction Skills Certification Scheme

**Regional priorities (identified in the Cheshire and Warrington Learning and Skills Improvement Plan – LSIP, 2026) include** Advanced Manufacturing, Life Science, Clean Energy, Agri-tech, along with Construction and Health and Social Care highlighted as important Foundation Sectors. Finally, the LSIP also identified digital, sustainability and the visitor economy as strengths/ in demand within the sub-region

The majority of these echo the national priority sectors, however agri-tech, sustainability and the visitor economy are additional.

**Agri-tech skills:** these skills tend to be more vocational and aimed at a higher level than our core adult skills provision – Level 4 and 5 - and therefore our ASF provision is not suitable. We will however review this should we be able to support this sector to upskill in digital skills which will help businesses improve their productivity and viability now and in the future.



We will also review how our ASF budget could support people to access jobs linked with sustainability – whether this is retrofit activity or land management, building on our links with MerseyForest and the Canal and Rivers Trust.

We do however already support the **Visitor Economy** – delivering provision that leads to progression into the hospitality, leisure and retail sectors. This includes customer service, food hygiene and administration courses. There is significant demand for chefs in Chester– however this tends to require training at Level 3 and as a result we will continue to signpost to alternative FE provision. The Skills and Employment Service works with local Business Improvement Districts (BID) groups, supporting retail and hospitality in Chester and Northwich.



We have been able to offer vocational courses in line with local employer needs skills needs, including Sector-Based Work Academy Placements (SWAPs) for employers occupying new properties as a result of local regeneration initiatives. The team work closely with the Council Business Growth, Regeneration and Property team to ensure we are able to support new businesses to recruit and retain staff.

We have also responded to those individuals who have been impacted by redundancies, working in partnership with DWP and the National Careers Service.

**Local sector priorities include** Advanced Manufacturing, Health and Social Care, Low Carbon, Finance, Visitor Economy and Logistics

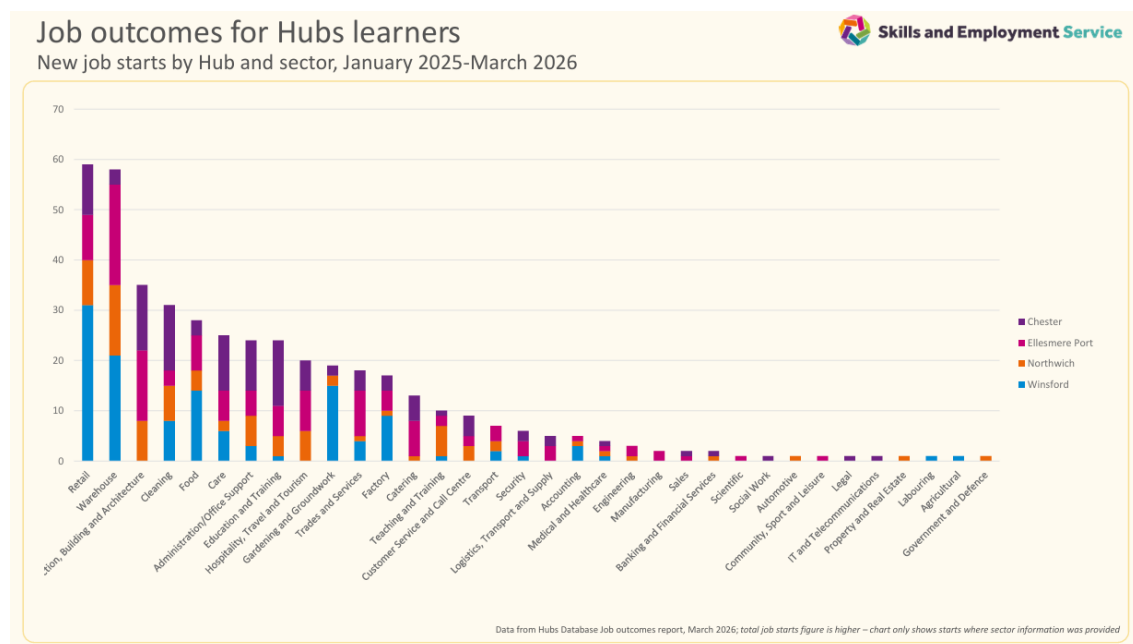
The first five sectors have already been covered in this document. Please see below how our service responds to the needs of the Logistics sector

**Logistics:** The Skills and Employment Service have developed provision to support the local logistics sector, with tutors visiting warehouses. This provision will complement the forklift truck training that we already provide via our two experienced sub-contracted providers.



Table 6 below provides details of the job outcomes that have been achieved through learners engaging with the four Skills and Employment hubs across the borough. The majority have been into retail, warehousing, construction cleaning, food and care related jobs.

Table 6: Job outcomes by Work Zone (March 2026)



The ASF provision underpins many of the employment support programmes delivered by the Skills and Employment Service. As a result of this dual offer, in 2025-26 (so far) we were able to support a further 4,140 starts onto employment support programmes, leading to 2,305 job outcomes (job starts and return/remain in work)

Table 7 provides an overview of the National, Regional and Local Skills priorities and how they differ and align. Table 8 demonstrates how the provision available through the Skills and Employment Service meets these sectors skills needs.

Table 7: Overview of national, regional and local skills priorities

| Sector Area                        | National | Regional | Local |
|------------------------------------|----------|----------|-------|
| Advanced Manufacturing             | ★        | ★        | ★     |
| Creative Industries                | ★        |          |       |
| Defence                            | ★        |          |       |
| Digital and Technologies           | ★        | ★        |       |
| Financial Services                 | ★        | ★        | ★     |
| Life Sciences                      | ★        | ★        |       |
| Professional and Business Services | ★        |          |       |
| Clean Energy Industries            | ★        | ★        | ★     |
| Construction                       | ★        | ★        | ★     |
| Health and Social Care             | ★        | ★        | ★     |
| Visitor Economy                    |          | ★        | ★     |
| Logistics                          |          |          | ★     |

Table 8: CWCC's Adult Skills Fund (ASF) contribution towards the national, regional and local skills priorities

| Sector Area                        | ASF available now | ASF under development | ASF looking to commission | Not appropriate to ASF delivery |
|------------------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Advanced Manufacturing             |                   |                       |                           | ★                               |
| Creative Industries                |                   |                       |                           | ★                               |
| Defence                            |                   |                       |                           | ★                               |
| Digital and Technologies           | ★                 |                       |                           |                                 |
| Financial Services                 | ★                 |                       |                           |                                 |
| Life Sciences                      |                   |                       |                           | ★                               |
| Professional and Business Services | ★                 |                       |                           |                                 |
| Clean Energy Industries            |                   |                       | ★                         |                                 |
| Construction                       | ★                 |                       |                           |                                 |
| Health and Social Care             | ★                 |                       |                           |                                 |
| Visitor Economy                    | ★                 |                       |                           |                                 |

# Our Strategic Plan

Cheshire West and Chester Council's Skills and Employment Service is dedicated to being the primary catalyst for transformation in our residents' lives by offering them a second chance.

We recognize that many people face significant challenges, including recovery from poor mental health, redundancy, relationship breakdowns, reintegration after incarceration, and issues related to substance abuse, homelessness, and domestic violence.

Our mission is to empower these individuals to overcome barriers and thrive in their personal and professional lives with the following key outcomes:

- **Enhancing Skills and Competencies:** We aim to equip local residents with the necessary skills and competencies that will not only help them secure productive employment but also encourage ongoing personal and professional development, fostering lifelong independence.
- **Fostering Resilience:** Our programme is designed to build resilience among residents, empowering them to adapt to life's challenges and seize opportunities for growth and advancement.
- **Support for Local Businesses:** We are committed to helping residents cultivate the skills and values essential for driving local business success, thereby contributing to the economic vitality of our community.
- **Cultivating an Inclusive Workforce Culture:** We strive to instil a culture of inclusivity, accountability, and high-quality employment opportunities while promoting healthy and resilient workplace environments.

The Service offers participants a comprehensive support system that goes beyond mere skill acquisition and job placement. We recognise the unique circumstances of each individual and adopt a holistic approach to overcoming barriers, anchored by Maslow's hierarchy of needs. This approach ensures that foundational aspects of life, such as stable housing and daily self-care skills, are prioritized and secured before individuals can realize their full employment potential.

We provide transformative opportunities through a combination of courses, workshops, and individualized employment support, creating a supportive community that builds confidence and personal resilience—qualities that are highly valued by employers.

## Strategic Actions for Achieving Our Goals

To creating equitable employment opportunities, the Skills and Employment Service will:

1. **Continue to develop effective Skills and Employment Hubs:** developing inviting, accessible physical spaces where individuals seeking a second chance can receive guidance, support, and resources. Our community-based efforts will

complement the Hubs based in one of our towns/city, enhancing the reach and ensuring we meet diverse resident needs, regardless of geography. This will also involve working in partnership with local partners such as DWP, FE Colleges, Independent Training Providers, Health and the voluntary and community sector

2. Tailoring the In-House Curriculum: Designing a flexible curriculum that accommodates residents at various stages of their journey, allowing for personalized progression based on individual needs and circumstances and informed by local labour-market intelligence.
3. Agile Commissioning Model: Implementing a dynamic commissioning model to quickly adapt to emerging skills and employment needs, particularly in vocational areas that are not part of our existing curriculum.
4. Targeted Support Initiatives: Focusing resources on specific individuals and communities facing substantial barriers to employment. This includes participation in place-based approaches aimed at enhancing local job opportunities and linking where possible into inward investment initiatives.
5. Enhanced Marketing Strategy: Developing a marketing strategy that effectively engages and supports low-income residents, ensuring they are aware of the resources available to them.
6. Support for DWP Campaigns: Collaborating with Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) initiatives aimed at assisting underserved groups, such as individuals over 50, those with disabilities, and those seeking career advancement. This will also include the Youth Guarantee scheme in 2026-27. Support will also be provided to those residents at risk of or facing redundancy and delivered in partnership with DWP and the National Careers Service.
7. Contributing to Social Value: Informing the Council's (and potentially the Combined Authority's) approach to Social Value by providing brokerage support for local residents to access opportunities arising from regeneration projects.
8. Monitoring Best Practices: Tracking the Anchor Institution initiative while offering advice and support to promote best practices among Council staff.
9. Aligning Skills with Employer Demand: Continuously monitor and assess the skills employers require, using this data to refine our evidence base and curriculum planning. This will include the updated Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) plan,

### **Continuous Improvement Commitment**

As part of our ongoing commitment to excellence, we will continue to implement a robust self-assessment framework focused on identifying key performance priorities and areas for improvement. Current focal areas include:

- Aligning our provision with the evolving needs of local employers to ensure relevance and effectiveness.
- Enhancing progression outcomes for learners by clarifying anticipated achievements associated with their selected programs and tracking the impact of learning experiences.
- Embedding our services within a comprehensive and coordinated programme offering that meets the diverse needs and aspirations of our community members.
- Reviewing and expanding community-based educational provisions, including the enhancement of learning and skills hubs, to better serve our residents.

Through these strategic initiatives, we aim to redefine the trajectory of our residents' lives and contribute to a thriving, skilled, and resilient community in Cheshire West and Chester.

## Progress against aims and target outcomes set for 2025-26

The following is an update against the SMART objectives that were set as part of the 2025-26 Accountability Agreement document.

| Objective                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | By When          | Update on Progress                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. To review the Skills and Employment Services Strategic Plan to fully reflect the priorities of the LSIP, especially those pertinent to Cheshire West                                                                                               | By December 2025 | <p>On-going</p> <p>CW&amp;C are constantly reviewing the focus and curriculum of the service in line with local evidence of need and government announcements. It will also need to consider its role in the delivery of the Cheshire and Warrington Strategic Skills Plan developed through the Cheshire and Warrington Combined Authority (CA)</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| 2. To ensure we play an active role in devolution discussions associated with ASF and the Get Cheshire and Warrington Working Local Plan. We want to ensure that there is a “people first” culture adopted, built on encouragement and understanding. | On-going         | <p>CW&amp;C led on the development of the Get Cheshire and Warrington Working Plan. This will be further developed over 2026-27 to identify actions and lead players to drive change forward.</p> <p>CW&amp;C are active partners in devolution conversations and are working closely with the CA to identify the Strategic Skills Priorities required in preparation for the ASF funding to be devolved to the sub region in August 2027. This will include agreeing amounts to be spend on ASF qualification driven provision and tailored learning.</p> <p>We are currently delivering the ASF Preparation to Devolution Pilot, broadening our offer and provider base.</p> |

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| <p>3. Develop sector pathways with stakeholders (similar to the one produced for health and social care) for the visitor economy sectors, clearly identifying our role in the journey.</p>                                                              | <p>By March 2026</p>  | <p>CW&amp;C continues to work with the Cheshire and Warrington LSIP who are looking at developing sector pathways. This has also been a theme in the Regional Skills Pilot work, led by Enterprise Cheshire and Warrington (ECW) – developing sector pathways for roles in Low Carbon Energy, manufacturing and construction.</p> <p>We are in conversations with McArthurGlen (Cheshire Oaks, Ellesmere Port) and Cheshire College South and West to agree how best to develop the skills offer required by the shops and restaurants at the Outlet site.</p> |
| <p>4. Ensure CWCC Skills and Employment Service are involved in the skills conversations taking place in Ellesmere Port with regards to low carbon/green jobs in order to identify whether we can provide provision to support this growing sector.</p> | <p>By March 2026.</p> | <p>CW&amp;C are active in the Regional Skills Pilot work (see above). This has looked to identify skills needs in Ellesmere Port and the wider North West/ North Wales and pilot short courses, capacity building activities and apprenticeship grants. Findings of this work will be available shortly.</p> <p>CW&amp;C have also attended the Origin HR forum, advising HR officers for key businesses in Ellesmere Port on the skills programmes available to them to help recruitment and retention.</p>                                                   |

## Aims and target outcomes for 2026-27

| Objective                                                                                                                                                                              | By When             | Update on Progress                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 Prepare for and deliver the ASF Pilot for Cheshire West and Chester and Warrington, ensuring ASF provision reflects local needs                                                      | By August 2027      | Commissioning for Cheshire West and Chester is now complete, with contracts being finalised. Delivery of provision to start September 2026.<br><br>Commissioning for Warrington is live. Delivery of provision is likely to start in October 2026.<br><br>Details of commissioned provision to be shared with DWP. |
| 2 Identify an alternative venue for the Chester Skills and Employment Hub. To include the development of a business case and the identification of potential capital funding required. | By October 2026     | Property review to be carried out.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| 3 Inform the development of the Strategic Skills Plan for Cheshire and Warrington, sharing evidence when required                                                                      | By end of September | Stakeholder engagement on this Plan is expected to start in August/ September. Need to ensure there is clear direction for ASF provision and understand the potential impact on the Cheshire West and Chester Adult Skills Offer.                                                                                  |
| 4 Develop our role in supporting young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEETs) or at risk of becoming NEET                                                     | On-going            | Building on our work delivered with our Early Help and Prevention Team and funded through UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF), support the on-going delivery of our Fresh Start Programme and the formation of a NEET task group in Winsford.                                                                        |

# Corporation statement

This accountability agreement was approved by the chair of the CW&C Adult Skills Fund (Formally Adult Education Budget) Governance Board on 2 August 2026.

## Hyperlink

Insert link to document on the CW&C website

## Supporting documentation

Ofsted Inspection reports:

[50252485](#)

Cheshire and Warrington Local Skills Improvement Plan:

[Cheshire and Warrington Local Skills Improvement Plan](#)

Get Cheshire and Warrington Working Plan:

[Get Cheshire & Warrington Working Plan](#)