

ANNEX A – FURTHER EVIDENCE

Further evidence relating to our key priority sectors is set out below, and comes from a range of sources both primary (one-to-one interviews, focus groups, surveys) and secondary (Lightcast Analyst and Skills England reports).

This annex does not set out all the evidence gathered or reviewed, but does provide key evidence and a good flavour of the overall evidence.

Figure 1 Key Economic and Employment Indicators Across Priority Sectors in Cumbria Source: Lightcast Analyst (2026)

Indicator	Number
Manufacturing	
Total employees	42,237
Projected change in total jobs 2026-34	+4%
Total Gross Value Added in Cumbria	£2.3bn
Average wages per job (FT and PT)	£50,188
Number of establishments	890
Energy/Net Zero	
Total employees	12,824
Projected change in total jobs 2026-34	+1%
Total Gross Value Added in Cumbria	£830m
Average wages per job (FT and PT)	£62,908
Number of establishments	605
Construction	
Total Employees	13,974
Projected Changes in Total Jobs 2026-34	+3%
Total Gross Value Added in Cumbria	£650m
Average Wages per FT Job	£40,340
Number of Establishments	3025
Visitor Economy	
Total employees	27,162
Projected change in total jobs 2026-34	0%
Total Gross Value Added in Cumbria	£703m
Average wages per job (FT and PT)	£20,857
Number of establishments	2568
Land Based	

Indicator	Number
Total Employees	6834
Projected Changes in Total Jobs 2026-34	+8%
Total Gross Value Added in Cumbria	£701m
Average Wages per FT Job	£29,998
Number of Establishments	4743
Adult Social Care	
Total employees	11,581
Projected change in total jobs 2026-34	5%
Total Gross Value Added in Cumbria	£240m
Average wages per job	£23,850
Number of establishments	547

Figure 2 Detailed Industry-Level Employment and Economic Indicators Across Priority Sectors in Cumbria Source: Lightcast Analyst (2026)

Industry (SIC Code)	Employees in employment 2026 (Cumbria)	Projected employees in employment 2034 (Cumbria)	Average Wages	Gross Value Added	Employment Concentration (1 = National Average)
Manufacturing					
Building of Ships and Floating Structures (3011)	11,280	12,089	£54,980	£484m	46.92
Processing of Nuclear Fuel (2446) – <i>Energy and Net Zero</i>	9857	9940	£69,416	£704m	83.71
Manufacture of Bread, Pastries, Cakes (1071)	1302	1402	£32,529	£71m	2.14
Manufacture of Rusks, Biscuits, Preserved Pastries (1072)	1073	1198	£38,687	£29m	6.46
Manufacture of Plastic Plates, Sheets, Tubes and Profiles (2221)	1056	1111	£39,616	£27m	5.71
Manufacture of Rubber and Tyres (2211)	1044	1092	£45,977	£36m	49.70

Industry (SIC Code)	Employees in employment 2026 (Cumbria)	Projected employees in employment 2034 (Cumbria)	Average Wages	Gross Value Added	Employment Concentration (1 = National Average)
Machining (2562)	966	894	£35,914	£22m	1.54
Energy and Net Zero					
Processing of Nuclear Fuel (2446)	9857	9940	£69,416	£704m	83.71
Other Specialised Construction Activities (4399)	1258	1308	£40,606	£60m	1.43
Plumbing, Heating and Aircon Installation (4322)	1049	1134	£35,995	£36m	0.88
Manufacture of Electricity Distribution and Control Apparatus (2712)	660	584	£57,646	£30m	5.29
Construction					
Construction of Residential and Non-residential Buildings (421)	2924	2607	£46,395	£201m	1.03

Industry (SIC Code)	Employees in employment 2026 (Cumbria)	Projected employees in employment 2034 (Cumbria)	Average Wages	Gross Value Added	Employment Concentration (1 = National Average)
Electrical Installation (4321)	1916	2076	£39,964	£65m	1.24
Construction of Other Civil Engineering Projects n.e.c. (4299)	1453	1379	£44,580	£109m	1.60
Painting and Glazing (4334)	850	920	£30,652	£30m	2.85
Joinery Installation (4332)	703	716	£37,256	£38m	1.42
Site Preparation (4312)	649	779	£42,857	£7m	3.68
Development of Building Projects (411)	644	721	£36,225	£13m	0.64
Visitor Economy					
Restaurants and Mobile Food Service Activities (5610)	10,203	10,579	£16,467	£186m	1.07
Hotels and Similar Accommodation (5510)	7569	7736	£24,335	£224m	2.59

Industry (SIC Code)	Employees in employment 2026 (Cumbria)	Projected employees in employment 2034 (Cumbria)	Average Wages	Gross Value Added	Employment Concentration (1 = National Average)
Beverage Serving Activities (5630)	3459	2706	£19,814	£139m	0.88
Holiday and Other Short Stay Accommodation (5520)	3058	3210	£23,895	£84m	7.36
Camping Grounds, Recreational Vehicle and Trailer Parks (5530)	1197	1247	£29,518	£42m	3.03
Other Food Service Activities (5629)	782	805	£18,255	£13m	0.76
Event Catering Activities (5621)	594	649	£22,207	£8m	0.48
Other Accommodation (5590)	299	319	£35,495	£7m	2.78
Land Based					
Growing of Crops, Market Gardening, Horticulture; Farming of Animals (1A10)	4789	4888	£30,057	£662m	3.30

Industry (SIC Code)	Employees in employment 2026 (Cumbria)	Projected employees in employment 2034 (Cumbria)	Average Wages	Gross Value Added	Employment Concentration (1 = National Average)
Support Activities for Crop Production (0161)	597	740	£31,652	£6m	6.73
Support Activities for Animal Production (0162)	487	598	£32,096	£8m	8.40
Silviculture and Other Forestry Activities (0210)	363	430	£33,654	£8m	4.05
Support Services to Forestry (0240)	186	229	£19,114	£2m	5.48
Logging (0220)	177	216	£26,552	£3m	10.07
Marine Fishing (0311)	79	98	£12,375	£4m	1.25
Adult Social Care					
Other Residential Care Activities (8790)	3473	3664	£24,181	£64m	1.20

Industry (SIC Code)	Employees in employment 2026 (Cumbria)	Projected employees in employment 2034 (Cumbria)	Average Wages	Gross Value Added	Employment Concentration (1 = National Average)
Social Work Activities Without Accommodation for the Elderly and Disabled (8810)	2336	2295	£21,123	£43m	0.91
Residential Care Activities for the Elderly and Disabled (8730)	2089	2071	£23,313	£51m	1.13
Residential Nursing Care Activities (8710)	1900	1953	£25,028	£45m	1.20
Other Social Work Activities Without Accommodation n.e.c. (8810)	1608	1689	£26,289	£26m	0.47
Residential Care Activities for Learning Disabilities, Mental Health and Substance Abuse (8720)	175	107	£24,930	£12m	0.67

Figure 3: Occupational Employment and Skills Demand Across Priority Sectors in Cumbria Source: Lightcast Analyst (2026) and Skills England: Occupations in Demand (2025) <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/occupations-in-demand/2025>

Occupation (SOC Code)	Employees in employment 2026 (Cumbria)	Projected employees in employment 2034 (Cumbria)	Employment Concentration (1 = national average)	Is it a Skills England 'critical demand' occupation? (national)
Manufacturing				
Production Managers and Directors in Manufacturing (1121)	3262	3321	1.67	No
Mechanical Engineers (2122)	1021	1067	2.52	No
Production and Process Engineers (2125)	575	598	1.97	No
Engineering Professionals n.e.c. (2129)	2458	2541	2.74	No
Quality Control & Planning Engineers (2481)	436	454	1.92	No
Engineering Technicians (3113)	980	1026	1.70	Yes
Quality Assurance Technicians (3115)	290	298	1.20	Yes
Planning, Process and Production Technicians (3116)	192	199	0.92	Yes
Health & Safety Managers & Officers (3582)	1430	1453	2.76	No
Welding Trades (5213)	905	949	3.10	No
Metal Working Production and Maintenance Fitters (5223)	2511	2575	1.79	Yes
Food, Drink and Tobacco Process Operatives (8111)	1822	1919	1.48	No

Occupation (SOC Code)	Employees in employment 2026 (Cumbria)	Projected employees in employment 2034 (Cumbria)	Employment Concentration (1 = national average)	Is it a Skills England 'critical demand' occupation? (national)
Energy and Net Zero				
Production Managers in Mining & Energy (1123)	294	294	3.48	No
Physical Scientists (2114)	833	840	3.45	No
Electrical Engineers (2123)	415	416	1.16	No
Electronics Engineers (2124)	121	121	0.65	No
Engineering Project Manager (2127)	373	385	1.65	No
Environment Professionals (2152)	360	362	0.87	Yes
Production Managers in Mining & Energy (1123)	294	294	3.48	No
Electrical & Electronics Technicians (3112)	143	146	0.78	No
Building and Civil Engineering Technicians (3114)	128	125	1.23	No
Plumbers, Heating, Ventilation Engineers (5315)	1172	1190	1.43	No
Steel Erectors (5311)	71	73	1.68	No
Chemical and Related Process Operatives (8113)	542	553	2.26	No
Energy Plant Operatives (8133)	64	67	1.38	No
Routine Inspectors and Testers (8149)	820	853	1.53	No
Construction				
Prod Managers & Directors in Construction (1122)	1272	1286	1.17	No

Occupation (SOC Code)	Employees in employment 2026 (Cumbria)	Projected employees in employment 2034 (Cumbria)	Employment Concentration (1 = national average)	Is it a Skills England 'critical demand' occupation? (national)
Civil Engineers (2121)	879	878	1.63	No
Quantity Surveyors (2453)	390	394	1.02	No
Chartered Surveyors (2454)	415	413	0.96	No
Construction Project Managers (2455)	708	719	1.33	No
Building and Civil Engineering Technicians (3114)	128	125	1.29	No
Electricians and Electrical Fitters (5241)	2252	2300	1.61	No
Bricklayers (5313)	199	207	1.23	No
Roofers, Tilers and Slaters (5314)	220	231	1.67	No
Carpenters and Joiners (5316)	929	948	1.25	No
Glaziers, Window Fabricators & Fitters (5317)	362	380	1.47	No
Construction & Building Trades n.e.c.(5319)	1096	1139	1.70	No
Scaffolders, Stagers, Riggers (8151)	672	711	3.13	No
Construction Operatives n.e.c. (8149)	705	724	1.44	No
Visitor Economy				
Hotel & Accommodation Managers & Proprietors (1221)	708	723	2.83	No

Occupation (SOC Code)	Employees in employment 2026 (Cumbria)	Projected employees in employment 2034 (Cumbria)	Employment Concentration (1 = national average)	Is it a Skills England 'critical demand' occupation? (national)
Restaurant and Catering Establishment Managers and Proprietors (1222)	1159	1206	1.13	No
Publicans & Managers of Licensed Premises (1223)	419	385	1.09	No
Chefs (5434)	3120	3201	1.31	No
Cooks (5435)	737	750	1.19	No
Catering and Bar Managers (5436)	848	870	1.27	No
Cleaning and Housekeeping Managers (6240)	1110	1129	1.47	No
Cleaners and Domestic (9223)	4841	5025	1.01	No
Bar and Catering Supervisors (9261)	705	727	1.27	No
Kitchen and Catering Assistants (9263)	4865	5021	1.16	No
Waiters and Waitresses (9264)	3695	3812	1.28	No
Bar Staff (9265)	3427	3262	1.31	No
Leisure and Theme Park Attendants (9267)	295	293	0.73	No
Land Based				
Managers and Proprietors in Agriculture and Horticulture (1211)	449	466	2.86	No
Physical Scientists (2114)	833	840	3.54	No
Conservation Professionals (2151)	146	150	0.96	No

Occupation (SOC Code)	Employees in employment 2026 (Cumbria)	Projected employees in employment 2034 (Cumbria)	Employment Concentration (1 = national average)	Is it a Skills England 'critical demand' occupation? (national)
Environment Professionals (2152)	360	362	0.90	Yes
Veterinary nurses (3240)	372	416	2.19	Yes
Farmers (5111)	784	809	2.98	No
Horticultural Trades (5112)	707	730	6.46	No
Animal care services occupations (6129)	685	733	1.32	No
Farm workers (9111)	1031	1074	2.00	Yes
Forestry workers (9112)	58	62	1.28	No
Agriculture and fishing elementary trades (9119)	275	287	1.28	No
Managers and Proprietors in Agriculture and Horticulture (1211)	449	466	2.86	No
Adult Social Care				
Care Workers and Home Carers (6135)	5467	5461	0.91	No
Nursing Auxiliaries and Assistants (6131)	2780	2816	0.84	No
Senior Care Workers (6136)	527	528	0.88	Yes
Social Workers (2461)	346	352	0.54	No
Residential, Day and Domiciliary Care Managers (1232)	315	318	0.89	Yes
Social Services Managers and Directors (1172)	200	199	0.79	No
Care Escorts (6137)	120	118	0.66	No

Figure 4 Skills Needs and Training Provision Across Priority Sectors in Cumbria

Skills needs	Apprenticeships	16-18 Further Education	19+ Adult Education	Higher Education	Short Courses
Manufacturing					
Level			Occupation		
L2 Operators & entry level			Production operatives		
L3 Craft/ Technician			Welder, Fabricators Electricians (industry, not domestic) CNC machinists Maintenance technicians (mechanical & electrical) Digital		
L4-5 Higher technical, supervisors and associate professionals			Advanced manufacturing technicians Automation engineers/Control systems engineers Cybersecurity technicians and technologists Quality engineers Process Improvement engineers		
L6-7 Professionals and management			Design engineers Manufacturing engineers Electrical/control system engineers Technology leaders able to integrate digital, robotics and AI		

Skills needs	Apprenticeships	16-18 Further Education	19+ Adult Education	Higher Education	Short Courses
Production operatives	Engineering Operative (134, 91 at BAE Systems, 39 at GENII) Non-Destructive Testing (NDT) Operator (12, 11 at BAE Systems) Lean Manufacturing Operative (42, Various) Material Processing Plant Operator (3, Mineral Products Qualifications Council)		Level 2 Certificate in Lean Organisation Management Techniques (42, 21 at Lakes College) Certificate in Understanding Business Improvement Techniques (12, Various) NVQ Diploma in Performing Engineering Operations (9, 5 at GENII)	Level 2 Diploma in Engineering (52, 28 at Kendal, 24 at Lakes) Diploma in Engineering Technologies (96, Furness College) Non regulated provision, Level 2, Engineering (56, Furness College) NVQ Diploma in Performing Engineering Operations (119, 49 at GENII, 39 at Lakes College, 30 at Carlisle College)	Level 2 Award in the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (RQF) – (7, Inspira)
Welders L3	Pipe Welder (31, 28 at Lakes College) Plate Welder (134, 111 at BAE Systems) Welder Level 2 (10, 6 at Lakes College)			Level 3 BTEC National Foundation Diploma in Engineering (21, Carlisle College) Diploma in Engineering (16, Lakes College) Non regulated provision, Level 3, Engineering (30, 20 at Blackpool and the Fylde College)	Level 3 Skills Bootcamps - Engineering, manufacturing, process and control - Level 3 equivalent (27, 21 at GENII)
Fabricators L3	Metal Fabricator (217, 96 BAE, 76 Lakes College, 38 at GENII)				
CNC machinists L3	No Machining Technician,				

Skills needs	Apprenticeships	16-18 Further Education	19+ Adult Education	Higher Education	Short Courses
	Toolmaker and Tooling Technician See also Engineering Technician (machinist pathway)			Subsidiary Diploma in Engineering Technologies (19, Furness College) T Level Technical Qualification in Design and Development for Engineering and Manufacturing (48, 31 at Kendal College, 17 at Furness College) T Level in Engineering & Manufacturing and Digital Support Services at Lakes College T Levels in Engineering & Manufacturing (Maintenance, Installation and Repair), Energy Coast UTC. They also offer a L3 in Engineering GCE A Level in Design and Technology: Product Design (27, Furness College)	
Maintenance technicians (mechanical & electrical) L3	Installation and Maintenance Electrician (475, Various) Maintenance and Operations Engineering Technician (133, 46 at GENII, 39 at Lakes College) Science Industry Maintenance Technician (11, GENII) Science Manufacturing Technician 2014 (7, Various)				
Digital technicians L3	Digital Engineering Technician (9, Lakes College)				
Cyber security L3	Cyber Security Technician (2,				

Skills needs	Apprenticeships	16-18 Further Education	19+ Adult Education	Higher Education	Short Courses
	Blackpool & F College)				
Advanced manufacturing technicians L4+	Engineering Manufacturing Technician (134, Various)			BTEC Higher National Certificate in Engineering (15, 13 at Carlisle College) BTEC HND Beng(Hons) Mechanical Engineering (UoC) GENII also offer HNC/HND in Manufacturing Engineering	
Automation engineers/Control systems engineers L4+	Control Systems Engineer (Degree) – (10, Various)				
Quality engineers L4+					
Process Improvement engineers L4+	Science Industry Process and Plant Engineer (Degree) – (3, Various)				
Design engineers L4+	Product Design and Development Engineer (Degree) – (106, 81 at Blackpool and the Fylde College)				
Manufacturing engineers L4 +	Manufacturing Engineer (Degree) – (60, Various)				
Electrical Engineers L4+	Electro-Mechanical Engineer – 21 (all Blackpool & The Fylde College) Electrical and Electronic Engineer (Degree) – 2				

Skills needs	Apprenticeships	16-18 Further Education	19+ Adult Education	Higher Education	Short Courses
	(University of Greater Manchester);				
Technology leaders able to integrate digital, robotics and AI L4+					
Energy and Net Zero					
Level			Occupation		
L2 Operators & entry level			Operative / health physics monitor		
L3 Craft/ technician			Engineering / process technicians Domestic ASHP technician, solar technician Wind turbine maintenance technician Low carbon heating technician Electrician (industrial and domestic) Project controls technician		
L4-5 Higher technical, supervisors and associate professionals			Quality engineers Nuclear technician Project manager		
L6-7 Professionals and management			Mechanical, electrical, control system, design and nuclear engineers		

Skills needs	Apprenticeships	16-18 Further Education	19+ Adult Education	Higher Education	Short Courses
			Defence related Safety specialists Project managers		
Operative/Health physics monitor L2	Nuclear Operative (95, GENII)				
Commercial Thermal Insulation Operative	Commercial Thermal Insulation Operative (7, Thermal Insulation Contractors Association)*				
Engineering/Process technicians L3	Engineering Technician (525, 426 at BAE)				
Domestic air source heat pump and solar heating technician L3	Refrigeration Air Conditioning and Heat Pump Engineering Technician (3, Various)	Level 2 Diploma in Plumbing Studies (18, Lakes College)* Technical Certificate in Plumbing (17, Carlisle College)*	Level 2 Technical Certificate in Plumbing (9, The Construction Skills People Ltd)		
Low carbon heating technician L3	Plumbing and Domestic Heating Technician (91, 32 at Carlisle College, 33 Kendal College)*				

Skills needs	Apprenticeships	16-18 Further Education	19+ Adult Education	Higher Education	Short Courses
Electricians L3	Installation and Maintenance Electrician (475, Various)				
Project Controls technician L3	Project Controls Technician (34, Various)			GENII Level 4 & 5 courses in: • Mechanical Engineering (HNC) • Electrical and Electronic Engineering (HND) • Operations Engineering (HNC) GENII Level 6(BENG (Hons)) courses in: • Plant Engineer • Electrical Engineering • Instrumentation & Control Nuclear Plant & Process Technologies	
Quality engineers L4+					
Nuclear/scientist/ engineer/ technician L4+	Nuclear Scientist and Nuclear Engineer (Integrated Degree) (178, 89 at Lakes College, 70 at Blackpool and the Fylde College, 19 at GENII)				

Skills needs	Apprenticeships	16-18 Further Education	19+ Adult Education	Higher Education	Short Courses
	Nuclear Welding Inspection Technician (26, GENII) Nuclear Technician (250, 165 at GENII)				
Project manager L4+					
Mechanical, electrical, control system, design and nuclear engineers L4+	Project Controls Professional (32, 16 at Blackpool and the Fylde College, 15 at BAE Systems) Systems Engineer (Degree) (8, Various) Electro-Mechanical Engineer (22, 21 at Blackpool and the Fylde College) Electrical and Electronic Engineer (degree), 2 (University of Greater Manchester)				
Defence related L4+					
Safety specialists L4+				GENII Level 4 & 5 courses in: Mechanical Engineering (HNC)	

Skills needs	Apprenticeships	16-18 Further Education	19+ Adult Education	Higher Education	Short Courses
				- Electrical and Electronic Engineering (HND) - Operations Engineering (HNC) GENII Level 6(BENG (Hons)) courses in: - Plant Engineer - Electrical Engineering - Instrumentation & Control Nuclear Plant & Process Technologies	
Project managers L4+					
Construction					
Site Operatives L2	Construction Plant Operative (6, Various) Groundworker (22, 18 at Lakes College) Highways Maintenance Skilled Operative (18, GENII) Scaffolder (32, Various)	Certificate in Construction Operations - General Construction (12, Lakes College)			Level 2 DfE Skills Bootcamps - Construction and the Built Environment - General - Level 2 (6, The Construction Skills People) Skills Bootcamps - Onsite Construction - Level 2 equivalent (71, Various) <i>Short commercial courses:</i> COTS/Trainee Scaffolder or
Trades L2	Bricklayer (106, 49 at Carlisle College, 27 at Lakes College)	Diploma in Bench Joinery (17, 9 at Carlisle College, 8 at Kendal College)			

Skills needs	Apprenticeships	16-18 Further Education	19+ Adult Education	Higher Education	Short Courses
	Carpentry and Joinery (76, Various) Fenestration Installer (9, 8 at The Growth Company) Fitted Interiors Installer (4, Various) Floorlayer - Textile and Resilient (6, Various) Industrial Coatings Applicator (17, BAE Systems) Painter and Decorator (57, Various) Plasterer (40, 29 at Carlisle College) Roofer (16, 12 at Carlisle College) Stonemason (3, York College)	Diploma in Bricklaying (27, 11 at Carlisle College, 11 at Lakes College) Diploma in Electrical Installations (Buildings and Structures) (85, 46 at Carlisle College, 39 at Lakes College) Diploma in Plastering (22, 13 at Carlisle College, 9 at Furness College) Diploma in Plumbing Studies (18, Lakes College) Diploma in Site Carpentry (37, 19 Carlisle college, 17 at Lakes College)			Labourer card, CISRS Part 1 & 2. CISRS Advanced & Skills Tests/NVQ, Scaffold Inspection & PASMA provided by Lawsons Training Ltd in West Cumbria and Barrow Training Partnership (BTP Cumbria) in Carlisle & Ulverston

Skills needs	Apprenticeships	16-18 Further Education	19+ Adult Education	Higher Education	Short Courses
		Technical Certificate in Painting and Decorating (10, Carlisle College) Technical Certificate in Plumbing (26, 17 Carlisle College, 9 at Kendal College)			
Craft trades L3	Craft Carpentry and Joinery (35, 19 at Carlisle College)				
Electrical installation L3	Installation and Maintenance Electrician (475, Various) *	Level 2 Diploma in Electrical Installation (29, 26 at Kendal College) Level 3 Advanced Diploma in Electrical Installation (14, Kendal College)	Level 2 Diploma in Electrical Installations (Buildings and Structures) – (8, 5 at Carlisle College, 3 at Lakes College) Advanced Diploma (Level 3) in Electrical Installation (7, Kendal College)		
Civil Engineering L3	Civil Engineering Technician (37, 34 at GENII)	T Level in Construction			

Skills needs	Apprenticeships	16-18 Further Education	19+ Adult Education	Higher Education	Short Courses
Digital L3	Digital Engineering Technician (10, Lakes College) (also Advanced Manufacturing)				
Building service engineers L4-5	Building Services Engineering Service and Maintenance Engineer (2, BAE Systems) L3 Building Services Engineer (1, LJMU) L4+				Level 3 Skills Bootcamps - Building Services Engineering - Level 3 equivalent (15, Tradeskills4u Ltd)
Design engineers L4-6	Construction Design and Build Technician (2, Lakes College) L4+ Design and Construction Management (Degree) – (7, University of Lancashire)				
Civil engineers L6	Civil Engineer (70, 37 Lakes College)				

Skills needs	Apprenticeships	16-18 Further Education	19+ Adult Education	Higher Education	Short Courses
	Civil Engineering Senior Technician (6, Various)				
Project managers L4-6					
Quantity surveyors L4-5	Construction Quantity Surveying Technician (35, 25 Lakes College) Construction Quantity Surveyor (Degree) – (11, University of Northumbria at Newcastle)	T Level is Design, Planning and Surveying (Energy Coast UTC)			
Site Managers	Construction Site Supervisor (12, Various)				
Visitor Economy					
Level			Occupation		

Skills needs	Apprenticeships	16-18 Further Education	19+ Adult Education	Higher Education	Short Courses
L2 Operators & entry level			Cooks		
			Hospitality workers		
L3 Craft/ technician			Chefs		
			Hospitality supervisors		
L4-5 Managers and associate professionals			Hospitality managers		
Cooks	Commis Chef (46, 30 at Kendal College) Production Chef (12, Various)	Level 2 Diploma in Culinary Skills (32, Kendal College) Level 2 Diploma in Professional Cookery (12, Carlisle College) Level 2 NVQ Diploma in Food Production and Cooking (12, Kendal college)	Certificate In Hospitality and Catering Principles (Food and Beverage Service) (RQF) (7, Inspira)		Award in Food Safety for Catering (21, Various)
Hospitality worker	Food and Beverage Team Member (8, Various) Hospitality Team Member (35, 13 at Kendal College)	Level 2 NVQ Diploma in Food and Beverage Service NVQ Level 2 Diploma in Hospitality Services (14, 11 at Furness College)	Certificate in Understanding Excellence in Customer Service for Hospitality (11, PHX Training)		Award for Personal Licence Holders (10, Kendal College) Award in Barista Skills (7, Furness College) Skills Bootcamps - Hospitality - Level 2 equivalent (8, PHX training)

Skills needs	Apprenticeships	16-18 Further Education	19+ Adult Education	Higher Education	Short Courses
Chefs	Chef De Partie (12, Various) Senior Production Chef (5, Various)	Level 3 Diploma in Advanced Professional Cookery (Kitchen and Larder) – (5, Carlisle College) Level 3 NVQ Diploma in Professional Cookery (13, 9 at Kendal College) Level 3 NVQ Diploma in Professional Cookery (Patisserie and Confectionery) – (5, Kendal College)			
Senior Chef	Senior Culinary Chef (5, HIT Training)				
Hospitality Supervisors	Hospitality Supervisor (49, Various)			Tourism, Transport and Travel: 65 UG enrolments, University of Cumbria	
Hospitality Managers	Hospitality Manager (11, Various)				
Cooks	Commis Chef (46, 30 at Kendal College)	Level 2 Diploma in Culinary Skills (32, Kendal College)	Certificate In Hospitality and Catering Principles		Award in Food Safety for Catering (21, Various)

Skills needs	Apprenticeships	16-18 Further Education	19+ Adult Education	Higher Education	Short Courses
	Production Chef (12, Various)	Level 2 Diploma in Professional Cookery (12, Carlisle College) Level 2 NVQ Diploma in Food Production and Cooking (12, Kendal college)	(Food and Beverage Service) (RQF) (7, Inspira)		
Hospitality worker	Food and Beverage Team Member (8, Various) Hospitality Team Member (35, 13 at Kendal College)	Level 2 NVQ Diploma in Food and Beverage Service NVQ Level 2 Diploma in Hospitality Services (14, 11 at Furness College)	Certificate in Understanding Excellence in Customer Service for Hospitality (11, PHX Training)		Award for Personal Licence Holders (10, Kendal College) Award in Barista Skills (7, Furness College) Skills Bootcamps - Hospitality - Level 2 equivalent (8, PHX training)
Chefs	Chef De Partie (12, Various) Senior Production Chef (5, Various)	Level 3 Diploma in Advanced Professional Cookery (Kitchen and Larder) – (5, Carlisle College) Level 3 NVQ Diploma in Professional Cookery (13, 9 at Kendal College)			

Skills needs	Apprenticeships	16-18 Further Education	19+ Adult Education	Higher Education	Short Courses
		Level 3 NVQ Diploma in Professional Cookery (Patisserie and Confectionery) – (5, Kendal College)			
Senior Chef	Senior Culinary Chef (5, HIT Training)				
Hospitality Supervisors	Hospitality Supervisor (49, Various)			Tourism, Transport and Travel: 65 UG enrolments, University of Cumbria	
Hospitality Managers	Hospitality Manager (11, Various)				

Skills needs	Apprenticeships	16-18 Further Education	19+ Adult Education	Higher Education	Short Courses
Land Based					
L2 Operators & entry level			General Farm Workers		
L4-5 Higer technical, supervisors and associate professionals			Forestry Operators		
L6-7 Professionals and management			Land-Based Service Engineers		
L2 Operators & entry level			Farm workers Forestry operative Agricultural trades		
General Farm Workers L2	General Farm Worker (55, 40 at Kendal College)	Level 2 Certificate of Competence in Fork Lift Truck Operations (10, Kendal College) Certificate of Competence in the Safe Use of All-terrain Vehicles (ATVs) – (8, Myerscough College) Certificate of Competence in Tractor Driving and Related Operations (7,	Level 2 Certificate of Competence in the Safe Use of All-terrain Vehicles (ATVs) (7, Myerscough) Certificate of Competence in Tractor Driving and Related Operations (7, Myerscough)		Level 2 Award in the Principles of Safe Handling and Application of Pesticides (13, Myerscough) Award in The Safe Application of Pesticides Using Pedestrian Hand Held Equipment (13, Myerscough) Award in the Safe Use of Sheep Dip (17, Kendal College)

Skills needs	Apprenticeships	16-18 Further Education	19+ Adult Education	Higher Education	Short Courses
		Myerscough College) Non regulated provision, Level 2, Agriculture (13, Reaseheath) Technical Certificate in Agriculture (5, Myerscough)			
Skills needs (occupation / upskilling)	Apprenticeships	16-18 Further Education	19+ Adult Education	Higher Education	Short Courses
Forestry Operative L2	Arborist (9, 5 at Myerscough)				
Land-Based Service Engineer L2	Land-Based Service Engineer (13, 10 at Myerscough)				
Countryside worker L2	Countryside Worker (12, various)				
	Land-Based Service Engineering Technician (29, Various)	Level 3 Advanced Technical Diploma in Animal Management (7, Myerscough) Advanced Technical Extended Diploma in Animal	Level 3 Advanced Technical Extended Diploma in Agriculture (10, 9 at Myerscough) Subsidiary Diploma in Land-based Technology (5, Myerscough)		

Skills needs	Apprenticeships	16-18 Further Education	19+ Adult Education	Higher Education	Short Courses
Land-Based Service Engineering Technician L3		Management (20, 18 at Myerscough) BTEC National Extended Diploma in Animal Management (20, Kendal College) T Level Technical Qualification in Animal Care and Management (28, 26 at Kendal College)			
Livestock Unit Technician L3	Livestock Unit Technician (41, 32 at Kendal College)	T Level Technical Qualification in Agriculture Land Management and Production (22, 20 at Kendal College)			
Veterinary Nurse L3	Veterinary Nurse (12, 10 at Myerscough)				
Assistant Farm Manager L4	Asst Farm Manager (12, Kendal College)				
Countryside Ranger L4	Countryside Ranger (7, Various)				
Forest Works Manager L4	Professional Forester (Integrated Degree) – 12, University of Cumbria				

Skills needs	Apprenticeships	16-18 Further Education	19+ Adult Education	Higher Education	Short Courses
Professional Forester L6				Agriculture, Food and Related Studies: 185 (UG), University of Cumbria Physical Sciences: 50 (UG), University of Cumbria	
Farm Manager L6					
Farm Vets	Not in occupational map				
Adult Social Care					
Level			Occupation		
L2 Operators & entry level			Adult care workers, home carers		
L3 Craft/ technician			Senior care workers Chefs / cooks		
L4-5 Supervisors and associate professionals			Care managers		
L6-7 Professionals and management			Social workers		
Adult Care Workers, Home Carers	Adult Care Worker (176, 83 Lakes College)	Health and care certs and diplomas	Level 2 Certificate in Awareness of Mental Health Problems (67, Various) Certificate in Counselling Skills (165, Various)		Award in Mental Health and Well-Being (23, Westmorland and Furness Council) (short)

Skills needs	Apprenticeships	16-18 Further Education	19+ Adult Education	Higher Education	Short Courses
			Certificate in Customer Service for Health and Social Care Settings (36, 24 Inspira) Certificate in Preparing to Work in Adult Social Care (30, Various) Certificate in Self-harm and Suicide Awareness and Prevention (RQF) (41, Various) Certificate in Special Educational Needs and Disability (RQF) (16, Various) Certificate in the Principles of Dementia Care (27, Various) Certificate in Understanding Behaviour that Challenges (86, Various)		

Skills needs	Apprenticeships	16-18 Further Education	19+ Adult Education	Higher Education	Short Courses
			Certificate in Understanding Children and Young People's Mental Health (88, Various) Certificate in Understanding Domestic Abuse (16, Various) Certificate in Understanding Nutrition and Health (69, Various) Certificate in Understanding the Care and Management of Diabetes (13, Various) Certificate in Understanding the Safe Handling of Medication in Health and Social Care (84, 77 Kendal College)		

Skills needs	Apprenticeships	16-18 Further Education	19+ Adult Education	Higher Education	Short Courses
			Diploma in Care (18, 14 Sutton Coldfield Training)		
Senior Care Workers	Lead Adult Care Worker (150, Various)		Level 3 Access to HE Diploma (Health and Human Sciences) (10, Kendal College) Certificate in Understanding Autism (17, Various) Certificate in Understanding Mental Health (17, Various) Diploma in Adult Care (17, 10 Sutton Coldfield Training Ltd) Diploma in Counselling Skills (27, Various)		
Care Managers	Children, Young People and Families Manager (38, Various) Children, Young People and Families		All fewer than five enrolments by Cumbria residents: BTEC Diploma in Leadership and		

Skills needs	Apprenticeships	16-18 Further Education	19+ Adult Education	Higher Education	Short Courses
	Practitioner (84, Various) Leader in Adult Care (60, Various)		Management for Adult Care - Diploma in Adult Care - Diploma in Leadership for Health and Social Care and Children and Young People's Services - Diploma in Therapeutic Counselling		
Social Workers	Social Worker (Integrated Degree) – (27, 22 at University of Lancashire)		L6 Social Work (UG), 50 University of Cumbria L6 Health Studies (UG), 200 University of Cumbria		

Figure 5 Qualitative research from both provider workshops and the LSIP skills survey, summarised and split in to the six key sectors

LSIP Provider Workshop and Employer Survey Feedback	
Manufacturing	
Employers	Growing demand for administration staff with knowledge of the advanced manufacturing sector Strong demand for welding at all levels to L3 and significant interest in electrical Demand for higher level skills is weak, it is difficult to fill courses. Linked to this, SMEs are often ‘traditional’ in their views on training, prefer short courses, little time for the bureaucracy of ASF (minimum guided hours, etc) Application of AI and robotics is yet to translate into training demand
Learners	Weak key stage 4 attainment affecting providers’ ability to place young people into apprenticeships in the sector T Level popular for learners with strong GCSEs
Other Points	BAE attracting workers from Carlisle, affecting SMEs and providers Employer ‘traditional’ views on training may prove a challenge amid curriculum reform at L3 and below Skills Bootcamps are used for people entering work, not workforce development FE workforce staff recruitment and retention very difficult: pay, learner needs/pastoral care, paperwork
Energy and Net Zero	
Employers	Sellafield demand is ‘soft’ which mitigates the impact of BAE recruitment Weak employer demand for net zero/renewables provision (attributed to national policy) Wind turbine technician not in huge demand but where it is, it’s met by the Maintenance Operations Engineering Technician apprenticeship (MOET) Policy instability/transient grants can have a huge impact on employer demand for skilled staff (e.g. biomass)
Learners	Confirmed that retrofit is mainly about ‘bolt-on’ workforce development (Apprenticeship Units)
Other Points	Project management an important consideration, such as University of Cumbria’s project management academy
Construction	
Employers	Strong demand for groundworkers and plasterers, but demand across all trades is strong Barrow is the focus – major housebuilding and civils work on the horizon Apprenticeships are challenging especially among SMEs because of • Apprenticeship minimum wage rises • Negative perceptions of young people’s attitudes and readiness for work Health and safety – considerations on site A larger-than-average proportion of Cumbria’s housing stock is over 100 years old - the mix of construction skills in the county should reflect this, particularly in relation to retrofit activities

LSIP Provider Workshop and Employer Survey Feedback	
	Medium term demand likely to be especially strong in Barrow given infrastructure and housebuilding plans
Learners	T Level demand is weak from learners but strong from employers – reverse of the usual situation
Other Points	No local roofing facilities. Largest roofing provider (12 apprenticeship starts) is Carlisle College where learners do their off-the-job training via block release at Newcastle College Issues pertaining to accountability for promises made regarding bids and major contacts
Visitor Economy	
Employers	Competition from outside the industry is an issue Resilience and emotional intelligence is important for recruits and staff Employers have a high level of demand for L3 programmes Employers often regard providers as a source of labour, rather than of people they can mould with training and development Need for employer networks
Learners	Carlisle College showing good growth in hospitality programmes (year on year increase from 65 to 105) Weak learner demand for apprenticeships
Other Points	Need for an updated portal showcase training opportunities in the visitor economy
Land Based	
Employers	Apprenticeships get limited traction because most employers are micro-businesses, need to find ways to brigade more demand Pre-apprenticeship, Bootcamp-style programmes for 16-18s are required to get young people ready for apprenticeships in the sector Forestry Commission developing a national ATA Veterinary nurses and farm vets are a skills need in the county
Learners	Transport is an issue for learners and workers in the sector T Levels a struggle, issue with content and pathways Schools-based IAG is improving – events like the Green Careers and Skills Day (National Park with The Careers Hub) are good, need to communicate directly with the young person not via teachers
Adult Social Care	
Employers	85% of jobs are in independent sector which has much higher staff turnover than the smaller LA-employed workforce. Plan to deliver more care at home means that the direct-payment sub-sector (c8-9% of workers) will grow. Growing trend of delegated healthcare activities means that more clinical skills will be required of social care workers New L2 Adult Social Care Certificate (not the induction Care Cert) launched – not required but employers will need new and existing staff to hold it to access share of Government funding for Fair Pay agreement
Learners	Transport is an issue for learners and workers in the sector
Other Points	Issues with local authority commissioning strategies in the long term

Figure 6 Findings and methodology of the 2025 Cumbria Skills Survey

The Cumbria Employer Skills Survey (2025) was compiled in November 2025 and sent out to all businesses on the Cumbria Chamber of Commerce database as well as through key LSIP partners including but not limited to, the Steering Group, ERB group, LANSS, Cumbria Tourism, and others. The survey garnered 213 responses and was designed to concentrate on a range of areas to provide insight on recruitment activity and challenges, staff vacancies, skills shortages, workforce capabilities and development needs, apprenticeships, and skills support and provision in the county. Respondents represented a broad cross-section of sectors, with the majority being SMEs and headquartered in Cumbria and the survey aims to provide data which underpins the work of the LSIP report and contributes to formulating the key priorities and goals moving forwards. Full results from the survey can be seen in Annex A1.

Key Findings
Recruitment Activity and Challenges
Employers across Cumbria are experiencing persistent recruitment difficulties. A substantial proportion report having current vacancies (57%), with 67% of respondents finding vacancies difficult to fill. The most common challenges in this area include low volumes of applicants, candidates lacking required technical skills, competition from other employers, and geographic barriers such as rurality and transport limitations.
Staff Vacancies and Skills Shortages
Those surveyed report wide-ranging difficulties with filling vacancies such as the number of candidates applying, skill sets and qualifications of candidates not being sufficient, and issues with aptitude of candidates. Hard-to-fill vacancies are having a tangible impact on business performance with respondents reporting difficulties meeting quality standards and customer needs, increased operating costs, and a need to outsource work. Issues are also reported with finding skills specific to the role, leadership and management skills, and basic functional skills.
Workforce Capability and Development Needs
While most employers consider their workforce broadly proficient (63%), a notable minority (28%) report capability gaps. These are primarily attributed to employees being new to their roles, insufficient or incomplete training, and difficulty recruiting fully skilled staff. Encouragingly, the majority of employers (76%) have invested in training over the past 12 months. Common areas of provision include job specific training, management training, and apprenticeships. There are however barriers for those who do not undertake training, mainly a lack of time and funding to support employees on these courses.

Apprenticeships
Apprenticeships are widely recognised as a valuable workforce development tool, with around half of respondents (46%) employing apprentices. However recruitment of apprentices is often reported as difficult, employers cite cost, time commitment, and limited availability of suitable programmes as barriers, and retention issues persist once staff have completed their training.
Awareness and Engagement with Skills Support
Awareness of skills initiatives and support programmes, such as skills bootcamps, is variable. While some employers are engaged, many remain unaware or have not utilised available support. There is demand for further information and awareness of these schemes, which will help form future LSIP events and awareness campaigns going forward.

Figure 7 Feedback from 1-2-1 interviews and Focus Groups

Providers
Eleven education and training providers in Cumbria were surveyed in one-to-one interviews
Themes Identified
<i>Staffing Shortages and Skills Gaps</i>
Staffing shortages (especially skilled tutors) were mentioned in all of the 1-2-1s, with repeated mentions of difficulty in recruiting qualified teaching staff and shortages in specialist and technical areas. An issue which arose was the competition with industry salaries from BAE, Sellafield, and other major players in the region. Some solutions were posited in the interviews, with work ongoing in some colleges to retrain existing staff, or to get staff from industries to come in, often on a part time basis around their current jobs, and qualify as teachers. Skills gaps persist in areas which are key local and national economic priorities such as clean energy and renewables (such as retrofit, heat pumps, offshore wind) as well as engineering and construction and land-based industries such as arboriculture. Provision is often not keeping pace with these economic priorities.
<i>Funding Constraints and System Complexity</i>
Frustrations are seen with regards to funding, namely it being insufficient or restrictive- with things like the apprenticeship levy and contracts being complex and the cost, and learner take up, of specialist qualifications being an issue and a view that bureaucracy can limit innovation. Some suggestions from interviewees to improve reform at a system level include simplifying contracts and funding, improving school to college transitions, collaboration between colleges, and better long term planning.

Engagement	
Employers	Learners
Although some providers have strong employer links, it is reported that they are often in competition with employers who do their own training and education, and there are some general issues with low awareness of training offers, weak demand for programmes like bootcamps, and SMEs lacking training and resources.	Issues with engaging with adult learners with uptake and scheduling issues around work, childcare etc are prominent. Attendance and motivation issues persist. There are an increasing number of learners with mental health needs, additional needs, and complex life circumstances and although support exists, more funding and resources would improve experience. Inclusion is a priority across the board but is resource intensive and underfunded.
Employers	
Employers were interviewed across the following key sectors: Manufacturing, Visitor Economy, Land Based, and Adult Social Care	
Manufacturing	
Seven employers interviewed in a one-to-one setting, and ten involved in a food and drink manufacturing specific focus group	
Themes Identified from One-to-Ones	
<i>Skilled Workforce Shortages</i>	
Engineering, technical, and production roles were noted as being hard to fill by all of the employers who took part in 1-2-1s. Recruitment and retention issues proved challenging also, with many noting that the big employers in Cumbria present a challenge when it comes to keeping staff at smaller firms. Intangible benefits were discussed as being worthwhile to pursue when an employer cannot compete on pay- with things like career breaks for travelling and flexible working schedules discussed as being productive.	
<i>Apprenticeships and Upskilling</i>	
Apprenticeships are widely used and valued, with six out of seven employers interviewed stating that they have employed one. Issues persist with the quality of applicants, the administrative burden of having an apprentice, and the issue of retention post-training after putting time and money in to training and moulding learners and employees. Internal development is also seen as essential, with focus on digital skills, automation, and leadership progression as key areas of learning and development as well as future skills such as digital, automation, and AI.	
Themes Identified from Food and Drink Manufacturing Focus Group	
Ten food and drink manufacturers from across the county were joined by two representatives of Carlisle College	
<i>Education, Skills, and Industry Links</i>	
There is strong growth in hospitality education (e.g. 64% increase in students at Carlisle College in related services) and renewed courses like travel & tourism. Colleges are increasingly providing real-world experience (e.g. public restaurant services) and seeking closer collaboration with businesses to bridge the gap between education and employment.	
<i>Economic Pressures and Changing Markets</i>	

Issues were highlighted in relation to the economic pressures of running a food and drink business. Volatile commodity prices (e.g. livestock price increase, raw ingredient cost) lead to squeezed margins and a need for price rises which can be an issue when demand is inelastic. Consumer behaviour is noted as changing, with people starting to shift towards cheaper options which then requires businesses to adapt their offerings.
<i>Workforce Challenges and Perceptions</i>
Recruitment and retention remain difficult, partly due to benefit system barriers and wider economic pressures. There is a divide in perceptions of younger workers' attitudes, though evidence suggests many are hardworking but face structural challenges like cost of living and housing.
<i>Skills Retention, Progression, and Workplace Models</i>
Ageing workforces and impending retirements risk loss of knowledge. There is a need for better succession planning, mentoring, and internal training. Discussions also highlighted evolving workplace expectations, including work/life balance and models like the four-day week. Businesses are investing and expanding, but face constraints around scaling while maintaining quality and identity. Automation and AI present opportunities but also uncertainty and concern, particularly for small producers limiting their "handmade" appeal.
Themes Identified from Energy, Engineering, and Net Zero Focus Group
Seven employers in the sector were joined by one Further Education representative
<i>Workforce Growth</i>
Rapid expansion in engineering roles has created strong demand for talent, but recruitment is constrained by limited talent pools and hiring requirements. Organisations are responding by widening outreach and promoting alternative entry routes such as apprenticeships and T Levels.
<i>Skills Evolution and Emerging Needs</i>
Engineering roles are shifting towards digital, robotics, and future-focused capabilities, creating a gap between current training and future needs. There is a growing focus on defining and embedding "emerging skills" into education and workforce development
<i>Education and Early Engagement</i>
Engagement with education is extending earlier, even into primary schools, to shape long-term career aspirations. Challenges include outdated perceptions of engineering and inconsistent foundational skills, highlighting the need for stronger school partnerships and careers education.
<i>Apprenticeships & Training Models</i>
Apprenticeships are a key talent pipeline, particularly for developing internal talent, but there is often a disconnect between learning and practical application. More integrated, flexible, and potentially shared training models are being explored to improve outcomes.
<i>Recruitment, Retention and Culture</i>
Retention is generally strong where workplace culture is prioritised, but competition for skilled workers remains high, especially from larger employers. Organisations are focusing on flexibility, progression opportunities, and internal upskilling to retain staff.
Visitor Economy
Thirty employers were surveyed in one-to-one interviews
Themes Identified
<i>Recruitment and Retention</i>

Recruitment issues have been identified in the vast majority of interviews (twenty-eight out of thirty) and was the most dominant theme. Issues include but are not limited to, seasonal workforce instability, low pay vs other sectors, longer hours, and high turnover of staff. There is a perception problem with the sector with many lasting stereotypes about the nature of work, but there are also real issues with a lack of clear career pathways for those in the industry and issues relating to the rurality of many employers in the hospitality sector meaning that staff are often unable to travel without their own vehicles as shift patterns are incompatible with public transport often.
<i>Skills Gaps</i>
There are perceived skills gaps in essential skills such as customer service, communication, and work readiness. There is a reliance on in-house training due to a lack of suitable external provision and a lack of flexibility with finding time for training. Apprenticeships can be seen as being too rigid or complex, and there is a low awareness of Bootcamps.
Land Based
Seventeen employers and three training providers were interviewed
<i>Role Shortages</i>
Employers on the whole reported a lack of sufficiently trained staff in their business, highlighting both hard skills (growers, farm vets, foresters, land managers/farm advisers, agricultural HGV drivers, agricultural mechanics and engineers, data and technology roles, experienced agriculture workers, support roles- operations manager, administrators, volunteer coordinators, and sustainable development officers) and essential/soft skills (collaboration, negotiation, time management, communication, digital skills including data handling, data analysis and AI, grants and financial acumen, customer care, business and commercial skills, management skills, knowledge of current regulations, climate change and renewables, mental health awareness, and neurodivergence awareness).
<i>Barriers and Ways to Address</i>
Some issues persisted throughout- such as the issues to attract experienced and supervisory level people and a portrayal of agriculture as low or non-skilled, in addition to the cost and time to travel and the availability and cost of accommodation. Solutions to these issues have been mooted, such as collaboration (i.e. improved links between employers and education, developing tools to coordinate training provision, creating central sites as training bases, and responding to emerging issues). There are resource based solutions suggested too, such as flexi-job apprenticeship agencies and funding for in house training in the absence of availability of external training. Additionally, suggestions have been made with improving careers fair offerings and exposing opportunities to those who are not from a rural background currently.
<i>Apprenticeships</i>
All but two of the employers offer apprenticeships, however the training offer is shown to be disparate. 7/15 train their apprentices in Cumbria, 5/15 get their training at places near Cumbria (such as Barony College in Southwest Scotland and Myerscough College in Lancashire), and the remaining five employers use alternative provision or colleges elsewhere in the country.
Themes Identified from Adult Social Care Focus Group and 1-2-1s
Three employers were joined by two representatives of Skills for Care and the DWP for a focus group, and three employers took part in one-to-one interviews

<i>Access Barriers and Rural Challenges</i>
Rurality significantly impacts both employment and training access, with limited public transport and high driving costs acting as major barriers. This particularly affects sectors like care, where roles are location-based, making recruitment, apprenticeships, and attendance at training more difficult.
<i>Workforce Shortages and Changing Demographics</i>
Persistent vacancies are driven by an ageing workforce, high early attrition, and difficulties attracting new entrants. While retention improves after initial employment periods, there is continued reliance on overseas workers, bringing added challenges around sponsorship, regulation, and long-term retention.
<i>Skills, Training and Qualification Gaps</i>
A large proportion of the workforce lacks formal qualifications despite increasing professional standards. Barriers include funding restrictions, eligibility criteria, and limited accessibility to training. There is also a mismatch between training provision and practical workplace needs, alongside growing demand for skills in areas such as dementia care.
<i>Training Delivery, Quality & Collaboration</i>
Hands-on, practical training is seen as far more effective than online or compliance-based approaches, but cost, regulation, and capacity limit delivery. Organisations often operate in isolation, especially in rural areas, and there is strong appetite for more collaboration—sharing training, resources, and best practice to improve quality and efficiency.

Figure 8 Engagement numbers from November 2025 to March 2026

Type of Support	Businesses/Education Providers Engaged
Focus Groups	22
Cumbria Employer Skills Survey	213
1-2-1 Interview with Providers	11
1-2-1 Interviews with Employers	55
Workshops with Education Providers	32