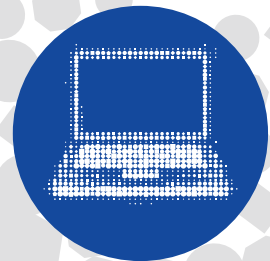
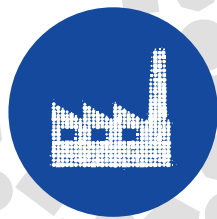
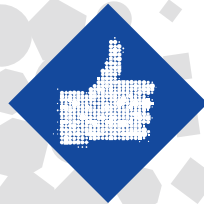


Act now to get the **East of England** working again



730,000

the number of UK workers on payroll that fell between March and July 2020.

3.4 million

people could be unemployed by the end of 2020. Up from a record low of 1.3 million

1 million

are expected to be young people aged between 18 and 24. The rest are over the age of 25.

National Challenge

According to the Office for National Statistics (ONS) the number of UK workers on payrolls fell by 730,000 between March and July¹. The Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) stated that as many as 3.4 million people would be unemployed by the end of 2020² – up from record lows of 1.3 million at the beginning of the year. Of the unemployed, 1 million are expected to be young people aged between 18 and 24 with the rest of the 2.4 million workers over the age of 25.

Even pre-Covid-19 the Government had a challenging, and much needed, plan to update the UK's infrastructure from rail to roads and energy to housing. Since the pandemic struck, the long awaited National Infrastructure Plan will become more relevant to the UK economy than ever as it presents the opportunity to create thousands of high skilled jobs across the country and could act as a major boost for our economy.

All of this coupled with a no deal Brexit on the horizon, more stringent immigration policies in place and continual advances in the use of workplace automation means that we need to act now in order to grow the workforce that is needed to make these ambitious plans a reality.

¹ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/bulletins/uklabourmarket/august2020>


² <https://www.ippr.org/research/publications/guaranteeing-the-right-start>

East of England

Unlike the other areas that we have considered the East of England is not a Mayoral Authority but a region which incorporates a mayoral authority area (Cambridge and Peterborough) and some areas which do not have devolved decision-making powers.

The East of England has a population of 6.24 million³ with a working age population of 3.7 million people. Between December 2019 and February 2020 the number of unemployed people in the region totalled 3.2% – this increased to 5.7%⁴ in August 2020.

The area has a slighter lower number of people qualified to level 4 and above than the rest of the UK but also a slighter lower than average number of people with no qualifications (7.2% East of England vs 7.7% UK).



Since March 2020
unemployed people
in the region has
increased by 78.13%

³ <https://www.statista.com/statistics/294681/population-england-united-kingdom-uk-regional/>

⁴ <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/comb/1853882376/report.aspx>

The mayor's perspective

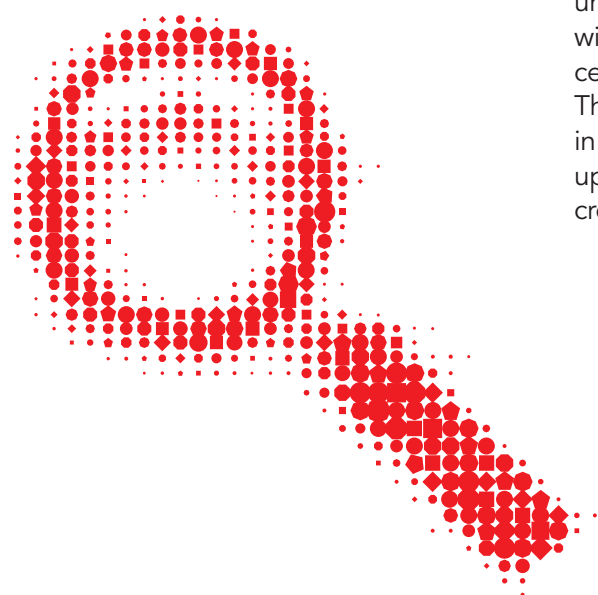
– Mayor James Palmer

The Mayor of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough spoke of the need to have short, medium and long-term solutions in order to work towards rebuilding the region's economy post-Covid.

In the short-term he spoke of how the Combined Authorities have created a jobs portal linking up businesses that are currently recruiting in the region with those that are unemployed.

In the medium and longer-term the Mayor focused on three priorities:

- Give the region more control over skills policy and funding** – The example of the Kickstart Scheme was given with the Mayor stating that funding needs to be devolved to Combined Authorities as the regions can be more nimble to work quickly to address the region's specific challenges.
- More investment needed in adult skills development** – whilst the region has had more control over the adult education budget for the past year and has repurposed the budget to focus on upskilling the region's workforce, the Mayor wants more investment in this area. He spoke of continuing to work with other regions to lobby the Government to invest more directly with the regions.
- Investment in Peterborough University** – In Peterborough work is afoot to create a university focusing on apprenticeship degrees. However, work needs to be done now on ensuring that colleges are offering students the right courses that will feed into applying for a place at this university. The final phase of development will focus on the creation of a research centre and in total will create 17,000 jobs. There will need to be a large investment in training to ensure that individuals are upskilled for the new roles that will be created here.



Current labour market outlook in the East of England

Unemployment is up

The Claimant Count rose 134% between March and July⁵ with the highest single occupations newly claiming Job Seekers Allowance claims coming from people who were previously working as Labourers in Construction Trades and from Sales and Retail Assistants.

Job posting activity is slowly returning

Unique job postings were down by 31% between February and May in the region but are slowly bouncing back with postings up by 11% between May and July⁶. The rebound of job posting activity is driven by a mixture of occupations including some low skill and many mid skill and high skill roles.

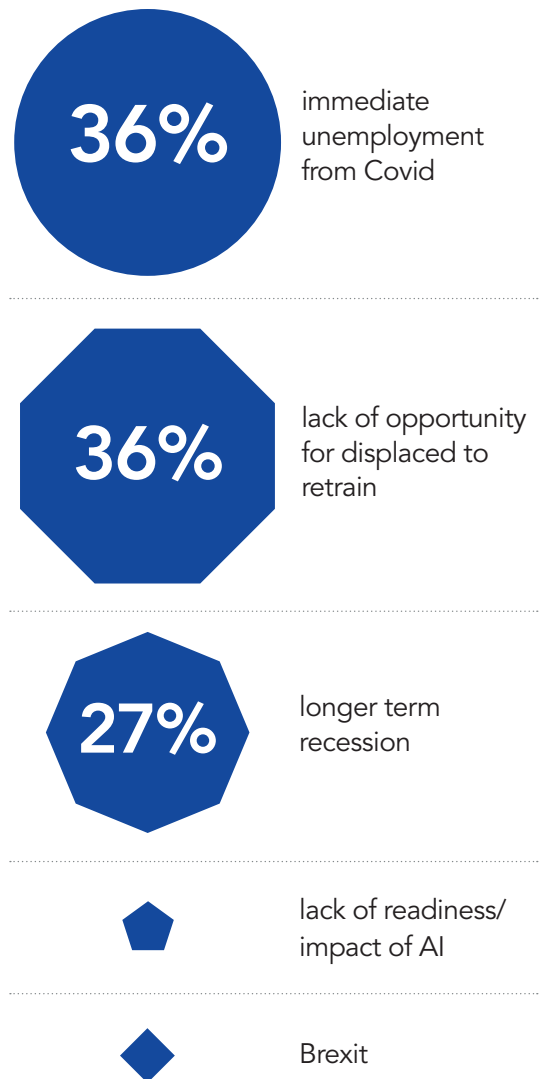
Automation will displace more people

27% of East of England's workforce are in occupations with 50% or more of their tasks categorised as 'highly automatable'⁷ with roles including Cleaners and Domestic, Kitchen and Catering Assistants, Bar Staff and Packers, Bottlers, Canners and Fillers having over 75% of tasks considered at risk.

The regional picture shows that unemployment is mostly impacting low skill, high volume employment and that automation is likely to compound the short-term disruption of the low skilled labour market.

Poll.

What do you think is the biggest challenge facing the local labour market?



⁵ ONS Crown Copyright reserved (from Nomis on 3 September 2020)

⁶ Emsi 2020

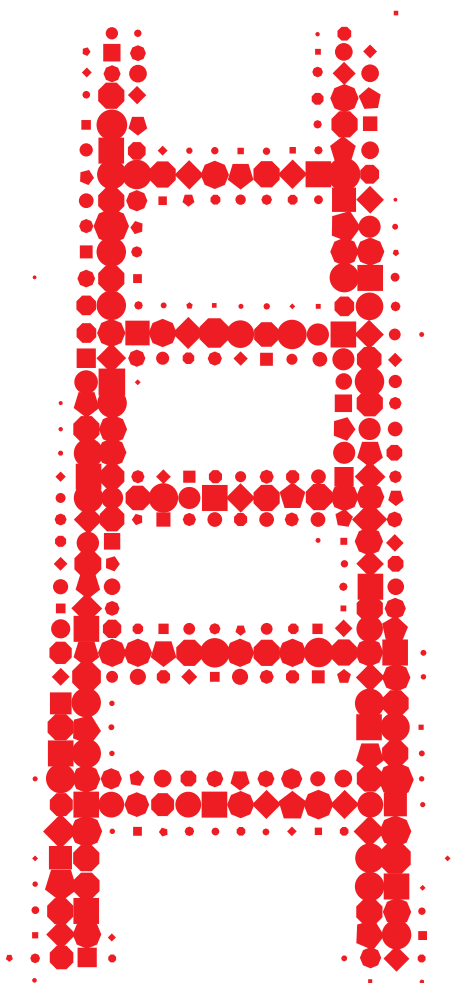
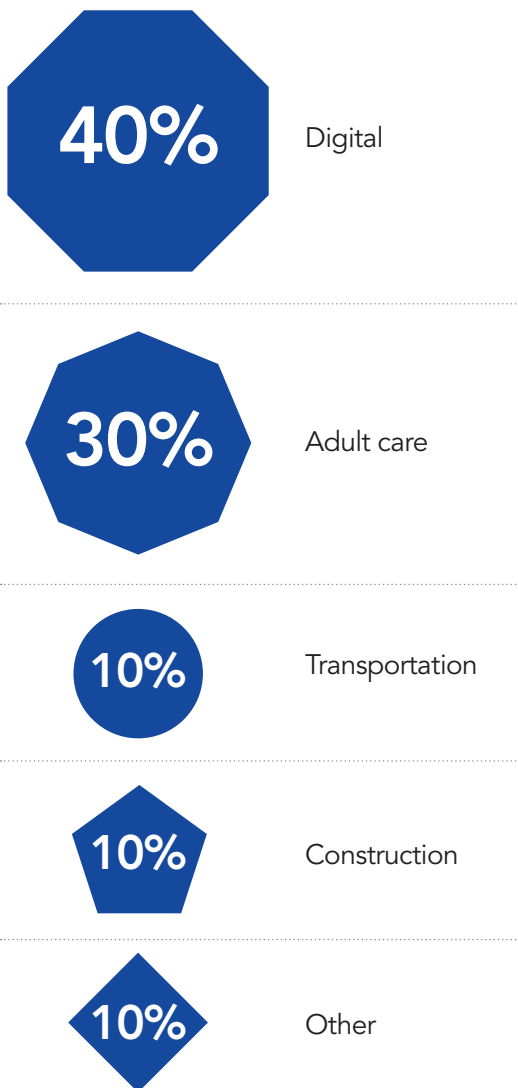
⁷ Emsi 2020

Skills Bridges

Created by City & Guilds as a solution for turning the tide on unemployment, Skills Bridges will identify the overall potential of an individual and determine whether their skills and motivation could be transferred seamlessly into other industries and occupations. It will offer candidates the tools and knowledge of the sector they need to gain direct entry into a new occupation and industry and give them an advantage in the recruitment process.

Poll.

Which industry sector would Skills Bridges be most helpful for in addressing the unemployment challenge in the East of England?



What needs to happen in the East of England to address unemployment and job displacement now and in the future?

Below are the key recommendations from the discussions we had with our attendees during the event.

Common themes

We need to change the focus of training

Further Education colleges – Colleges and training providers should be at heart of any solution and College Principals need strong relationships with politicians so that outcomes and delivery mechanisms are better aligned. Central Government needs to better understand the role of FE and a collective and collaborative approach is key to meeting regional needs. More investment needs to be made in colleges and training providers to ensure that the right skills and development opportunities are in place.

Better careers advice and guidance

Increase capacity for apprenticeships – More apprenticeship places need to be made available in the East of England. Trying to get an apprenticeship in the region is difficult and was compared to attempting to get a university place at Oxford or Cambridge.

Apprenticeships need better positioning to encourage more employers to offer them and to ensure that young people and the people that influence them (schools and parents) are aware of them.

Careers advice / skills mentors – Having impartial skills brokers in place would be an effective way of bridging the gap between the workforce demand, skills needed and transferrable skills that could bridge that gap. They would also be best placed to offer clear advice and guidance to those unemployed about what options and opportunities could work for them.

Communication is key

Being able to communicate the new opportunities and reach local communities is an important part of being able to reach and engage as many people as possible in the East of England. Having simple communications using clear language and explaining the opportunities to train and reskill will be critical to the success of the uptake and wider dissemination of Skills Bridges.

Workforce demand

Adapting skills – It was noted that Covid-19 has accelerated the process in certain sectors such as the further decline of the high street in the retail sector. However, it is important to note that there has also been job creation in retail in areas such as warehousing and e-commerce because of the way the market has changed. The challenge is ensuring that the unemployed are able to see how their skills are able to be adapted to work where there is demand. Educating, informing and enabling this to happen is key to the success of Skills Bridges.

Need to listen to what the local workforce wants too – Whilst workforce demand shapes the skills that are needed, it is also critical to listen to the individual worker's voice to ensure that solutions meet their needs. People are unique and need to be treated as such; not everyone may want to work in different sectors so trying to understand and offer choices will help with buy-in to the process.

Skills Bridges that are flexible – It was noted that having short, sharp training interventions that can quickly reskill people and move them back into the workforce is critical to Skills Bridges rebuilding employment in the region. The training being in manageable, 'short bursts' will help build aspirations in low skilled workers who will be able to see the results quickly in terms of getting back into employment and getting paid. Skills Bridges that can offer different pathways and use skills flexibly will bring more choice to the individuals and will lead to more ownership of the training.

Building on existing foundations

There is a need to build on what is already working in the skills development infrastructure rather than investing in new things, for example changing the Kickstart Scheme to ensure more regional power and ownership rather than creating something different.

More needs to be invested in the IT infrastructure in the region. Digital skills need to be accessible to all without barriers to accessibility i.e. lack of access to a laptop.

Building on relationships – It was noted that the most success comes from initiatives where there is a strong relationship between stakeholders across the region. So continuing to build and strengthen relationships post-Covid between colleges, employers and local government is one of the best ways to ensure that solutions are viable and joined-up whilst effectively meeting the varied needs across the region.

