LANCASHIRE & CUMBRIA
INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

SKILLS BAROMETER 2025

Build a talent pipeline for the future.

Find out more at
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Department for Education

LANCASHIRE & CUMBRIA
INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

WHAT IS THE L&C IoT?

The IoT is not one place but a collective of organisations focused on delivering outstanding technical training to address skills gaps and anticipate future needs.

Part of a national network, the institute offers industry-leading facilities, equipment and training across multiple industries including construction, engineering, counselling and health and social care.

The IoT aims to give greater access to skills to all sections of society – regardless of who and where they are – and to regularly assess employer needs to ensure new training can be implemented quickly.

Our education partners include:

B&FC · Blackburn College · Burnley College · Lakes College West Cumbria · Lancaster & Morecambe College · Nelson & Colne College Group · Preston College · Runshaw College

Our research partners include:

Edge Hill University · Lancaster University · University of Central Lancashire

Created in June 2025

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LASER-FOCUSED TO GROW THE ECONOMY – JOIN US ON OUR MISSION

Linda Dean,
Managing Director of the Lancashire and Cumbria Institute of Technology

Lancashire and Cumbria are on an exciting growth journey.

And the Lancashire and Cumbria Institute of Technology has a laser-sharp focus to help our amazing region reach its destination.

We're now two years in as an IoT, part of a £300m government project to bring together industry and education to help the economy prosper.

In that time, we've grown as an organisation, adding an extra education partner to our original group of academic partners to take us to eight colleges – demonstrating the real appetite in this area to take a responsibility for turning the tide.

The IoT initiative was set up with collaboration at its heart. It's the age-old saying that we're stronger together, a notion we're well aware of in this proud part of the UK.

Together we can address what we need to grow. Together we can develop opportunities for people to thrive in the communities they grew up in. Together we can create an economy that can compete nationally and globally. Together we can share in our successes.

In that spirit of collaboration, we're working with our three university research partners and businesses in six key sectors to assess what industries will need now and in the future.

We've established sector advisory groups made up of employers that meet regularly to feed back to us the skills their workforces lack now and the challenges and opportunities they see on the horizon.

Using this insight, we've drawn up new technical training courses, and revised established ones, that will produce workers with the exact skills their destination businesses need.

We're already making an impact on the economy – and we're not done yet.

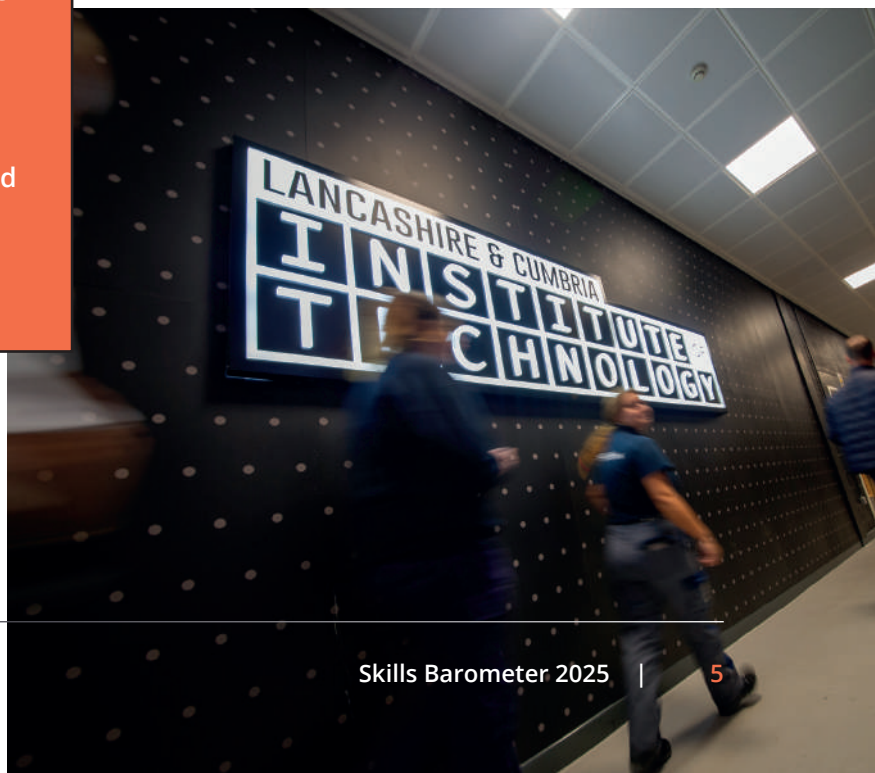
+ Enrolled 1,200 people onto technical training courses that will make them work-ready.

+ Established sector advisory groups to ensure education is aligned with industry needs.

+ Engaged with more than 1,000 businesses in a variety of ways, whether through training up their existing employees, sending learners on placements, consulting them on their skills needs, or inviting employers to offer live projects or provide expert talks to our learner.

+ Educated those in power on the amazing work being done by our eight colleges through guided tours of our facilities – and been praised in Parliament by one of our region's MPs.

We're already a success story, but we're hungry to achieve even more. We're reassured by the government's five missions in its Plan for Change – growing the economy, an NHS fit for the future, safer streets, opportunity for all, and making Britain a clean energy superpower – all of which align with our strategic goals as an IoT.



The Lancashire Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) sets out the challenge for the region in the need to attract enough people to the workforce now and in the future, and to upskill and reskill existing employees.

Key to achieving this, according to the plan, is working with education and business to establish a talent pipeline that meets the needs of the market using an evidence-based approach. The Cumbria LSIP cites a significant recruitment problem in the county, which it states can be addressed in part by encouraging and supporting young people in education to consider and be excited about their options in terms of industries and employers.

In Lancashire, devolution is happening and we've got a new Lancashire Growth Plan that brings with it even more opportunities for further education and businesses to collaborate. We also work closely with the Lancashire Skills and Employment Hub – partnerships that reach further and are strengthening with time.

But we know this doesn't come without its challenges.

Only 35 per cent of our residents have a Level 4 qualification or above, compared with 44 per cent nationally, which can make a real difference to innovation and growth. We acknowledge, too, the level of uncertainty that businesses are feeling in the current climate.

However, the real positive is the opportunity for us in Lancashire and Cumbria to work together to deliver growth and prosperity. This Skills Barometer 2025 explores the skills needs in the region, now and in the future, and highlights the work we're doing as an IoT to address them.

We want as many employers, organisations and learners to come and join us. Let's grow together.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INTRODUCTION: A COLLABORATIVE REPORT TO ACCELERATE GROWTH

Understanding the skills landscape in Lancashire and Cumbria is vital for driving the region's economic growth and resilience.

This Skills Barometer 2025 provides a snapshot of the current and emerging skills needs across the IoT's key sectors including engineering and manufacturing, automotive, construction, health and medical, science, and computing and digital. It brings together insight from colleges within the IoT network and a diverse range of employers from across the region to form a clear, evidence-led picture of where the region stands today – and where it needs to go over the next five years.

Our approach, like the IoT itself, has been rooted in collaboration. We have engaged directly with all the IoT colleges as well as businesses of all sizes, from SMEs to global companies. By combining the perspectives of education and industry, we've taken a practical and realistic view of the skills landscape.

We've asked: What are the most pressing gaps right now? What changes are already reshaping the skills employers need? And what kinds of knowledge, experience, and attributes will be critical as we look ahead?

This isn't just about jobs and qualifications – it's about equipping people with the right mix of technical know-how and transferable skills that will help them thrive in fast-changing sectors.

Employers told us where they're struggling to recruit and what skills they're increasingly demanding, not only due to current workforce shortages, but also in response to wider external drivers. Shifting legislation, the net-zero agenda, rapid digitalisation, and the impact of AI are all reshaping job roles and expectations at pace.

For example, one engineering firm shared how the regional competition for skilled welders – particularly from large, well-known companies – has pushed them to adopt automation to meet demand. They've now invested in a cobot to carry out welding tasks. But this doesn't eliminate the need for people; it changes the role. They now require someone who not only understands the fundamentals of welding, but who can also programme and manage the robot. That individual is no longer a traditional welder – they're now a technician and programmer in equal measure.

This story, and many others like it, underline a broader trend: technical roles are becoming more multi-skilled, more digital, and more reliant on agile, adaptable skillsets. And across every sector, the importance of so-called “soft skills” came through clearly.

Employers repeatedly highlighted communication, teamwork, problem-solving, and emotional intelligence as critical. These attributes are essential not just for day-to-day productivity, but for navigating change, working across disciplines, and maintaining a resilient workforce.

The Skills Barometer aims to support strategic decision-making – both within the IoT and across the wider skills ecosystem. It will help colleges refine and adapt their curriculum to meet evolving needs, inform the development of training and upskilling pathways, and provide employers with a framework to plan ahead.

Most importantly, it shines a light on the opportunity we have to shape a workforce that is not only fit for today but is prepared for the challenges and opportunities of tomorrow.

We hope this Skills Barometer acts as both a mirror and a guide – a reflection of the region’s current position, and a tool for making smart, coordinated steps forward.

IoT KEY SECTOR: ENGINEERING AND MANUFACTURING, AND AUTOMOTIVE

The engineering and manufacturing, and automotive sectors are powerhouses of the Lancashire and Cumbria economy that are evolving thanks to increased digitisation.

- 80,000 manufacturing jobs across 3,750 businesses and Lancashire's third largest employment sector.
- In Cumbria, manufacturing makes up 13 per cent of the county's economy and supports 16,000 jobs.
- Accounts for 12.5 per cent of all employment in Lancashire and is the region's most highly value-added sector.
- The North West is the UK's second biggest region for automotive manufacture, generating around £9bn of the total UK automotive manufacturing economy.

Regional backbone

The engineering and manufacturing industries form the backbone of the economies in both Lancashire and Cumbria, underpinning innovation, employment and prosperity.

It's a region of contrasts, from the powerhouses to the smaller innovators that are impacting sub-sectors from aerospace to automotive, electronics and industrial machinery.

Lancashire stands as a manufacturing stronghold, with the sector accounting for 80,000 jobs across 3,750 businesses, making it the third largest employment sector in the region, according to the Lancashire Local Skills Improvement Plan.

Representing 12.5 per cent of all employment, manufacturing not only sustains livelihoods but also delivers significant economic value.

The sector contributes a substantial £6bn to Lancashire's £33bn economy, highlighting its role as the most highly value-added industry in the county. It's an area with a rich heritage of engineering excellence, modernised through cutting-edge technology and a skilled workforce that supports global supply chains.

A similar story can be told in neighbouring Cumbria, where the sector contributes 13 per cent to the county's economy and supports 16,000 jobs. It ranks just behind health and social care as the largest single employment sector, with 14.5 per cent of total employment dedicated to manufacturing activities.

The region is recognised for its strength in advanced technologies and specialist expertise, enabling it to lead in both traditional industries and emerging markets. About 40 per cent of all apprenticeships in Cumbria are in manufacturing, engineering, and construction combined, compared to just 22 per cent nationally.

However, Cumbria faces pressing challenges in workforce supply. Employers report critical shortages in welders, engineers, electricians, and skilled fitters. Small businesses report issues when competing for talent against the giants, and there could be work to be done in marketing the expertise of these small but mighty employers.

It's a sector that is evolving, with digital techniques making more of an impact on processes, changing the skillsets required by these organisations.

Evolving skillset

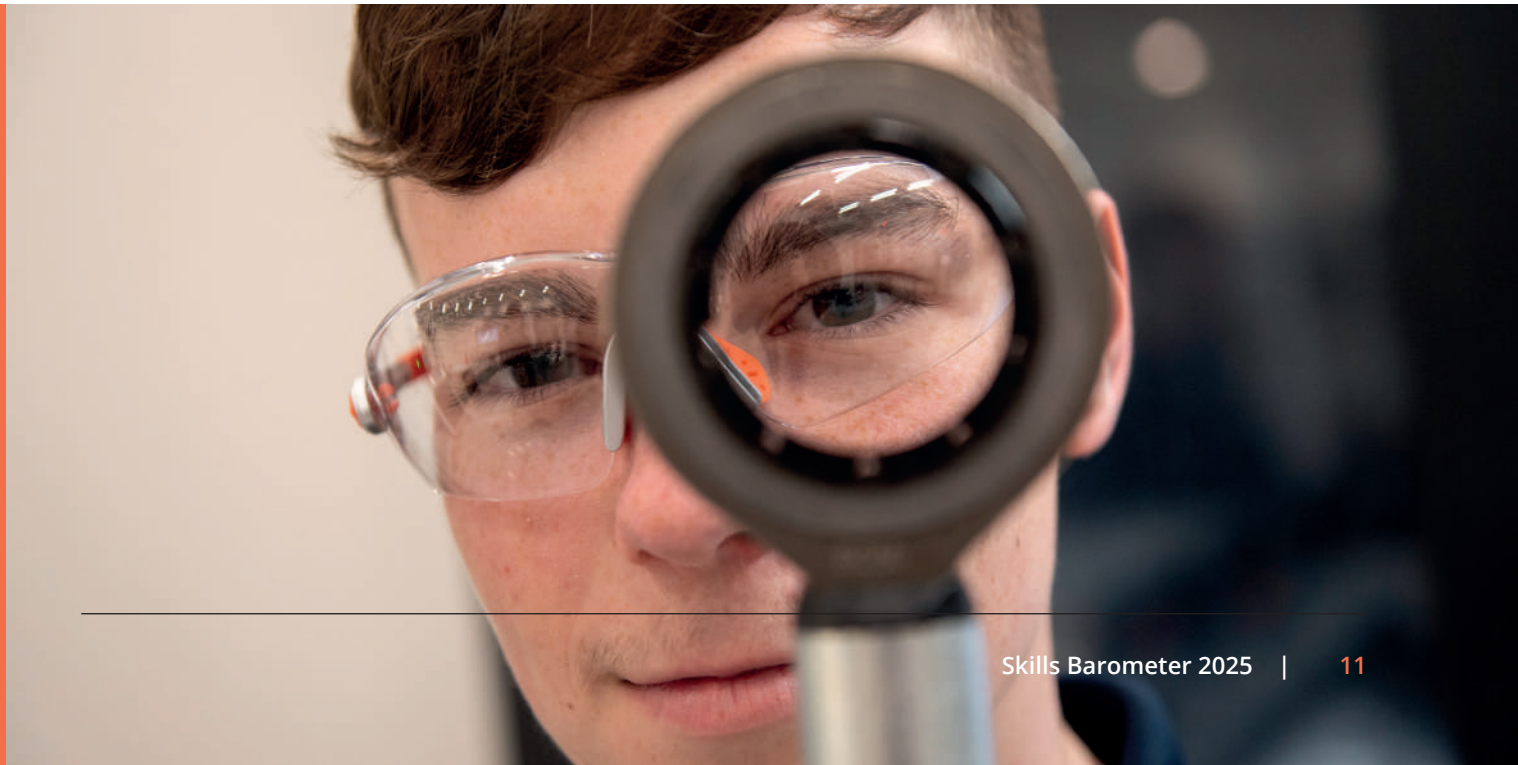
Digitisation is changing the way manufacturers approach once-traditional tasks, driving efficiencies, providing better information about processes and improving quality. The impact is an evolving skillset. Employers want operatives comfortable with digital tools, diagnostics and reporting systems, even in traditional organisations, as robotics and smart manufacturing become integrated into processes.

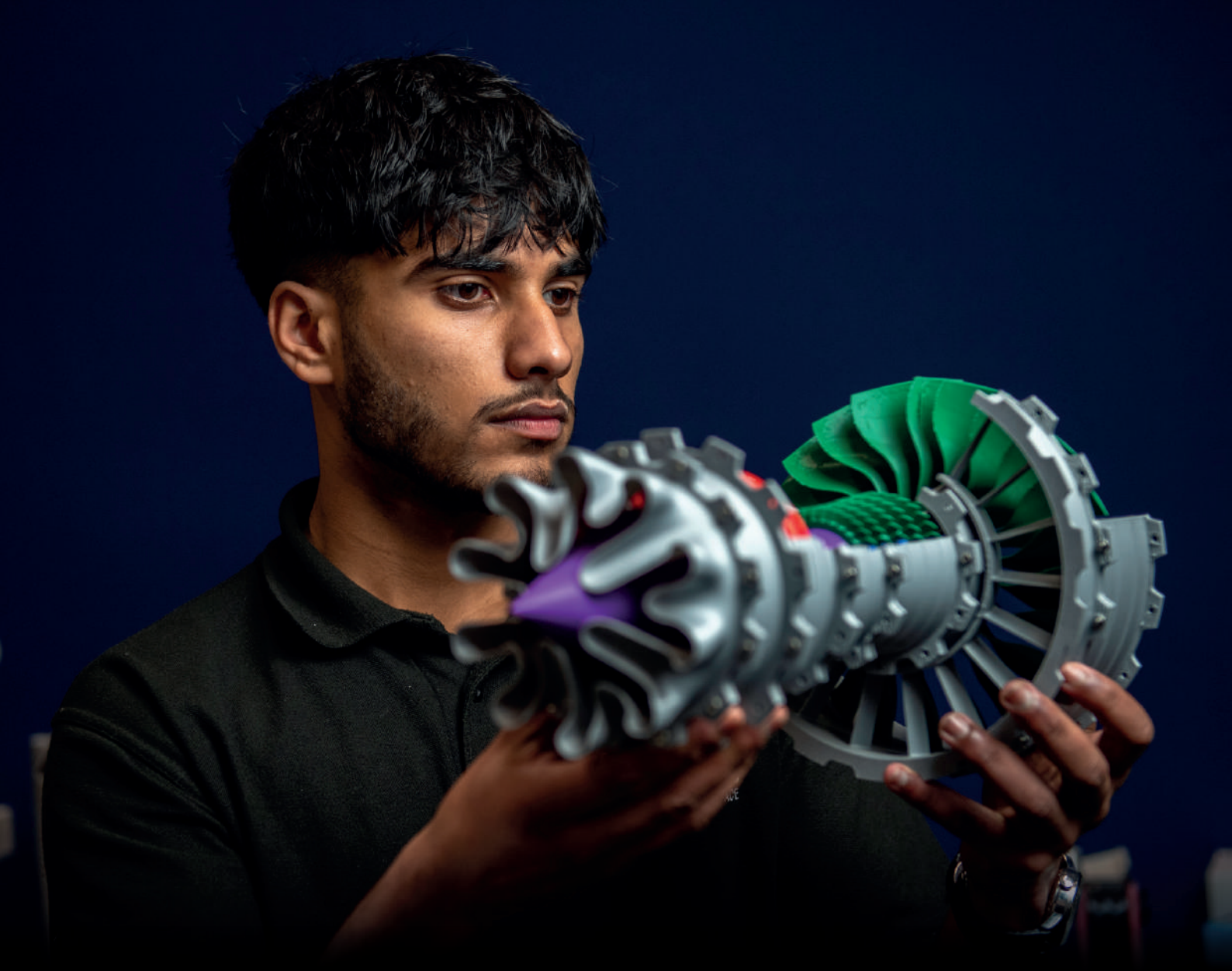
At Blackpool and the Fylde College, common reported skills gaps are around digital skills, including the use of AI, robotics and automation and digital software.

"Some of the more specific engineering skills we hear about are the application of robotics and automation in the workplace, optimising operational processes to support increased efficiencies, supporting the reduction of carbon in manufacturing and logistics, materials development such as composite materials and carbon fibre production," says Scott Cubitt, Assistant Principal of Engineering, Automotive and Project Management.

Employers often need support to develop programmes that ensure their current and future workforce is enabled to respond to the diverse markets they operate in. Scott predicts future growth in the need for knowledge of low carbon technologies, how to reduce carbon production in the workplace, and skills for working in the nuclear sector.

Businesses often report a need for engineers with a broader appreciation of the industry, says Helen Mullen, Advanced Higher Lead – Engineering at Lancaster and Morecambe College. Generally, candidates need the academic and practical knowledge, but also the ability to adapt to changing skills.





"I think we're going to see a need for multidisciplined engineers who increasingly need some electronic and control knowledge," she says. "All engineers need an appreciation of the different engineering specialism as well as their own so they can communicate with other engineers and technicians."

Lucy Caldwell, Employer Engagement Lead: Energy, Engineering and Construction at Lancaster and Morecambe, agrees. "In the engineering sector our employers reported a lack of electrical skills, and the consensus is that more blended learning is needed in terms of electrical and mechanical engineering," she says. "The teaching team are redesigning the curriculum to ensure that these skills will be incorporated across the provision, as this requirement will continue to increase as processes become more automated."

The make-up of the Lancashire and Cumbria economy lends itself to this approach. Business need employees who can change work roles to suit their needs. "EDF Energy is a case in point," says Helen. "Their staff are very aware that job roles will be changing significantly over the next decade to facilitate the move to decommissioning. They want Level 4-qualified technicians who have the ability to learn new roles and technologies as business requirements shift."

Candidates, too, are looking for flexibility to move roles, within their own organisation and across sites. It means educators must provide a broad range of transferable skills.

Manufacturing a workforce

Work-readiness remains a need across the board, with gaps around communication, time-keeping, accountability and commercial awareness.

Lancaster and Morecambe College addresses this by offering a Skills Development Academy to apprentices – an afternoon a week of optional modules covering all of the softer employability skills that they need for the workplace. They also work on communication and teamwork skills during their classes, through working on projects.

Commercial awareness is also cited as generally lacking among recruits. Employers tend to agree that apprentices don't always understand their role within the wider business, and how it impacts on the business as a whole.

"It's about taking accountability if they make a mistake in their work or they don't turn up to work, or if they bring new ideas in or work more efficiently. This all has a financial impact, and the IoT is driving this message home.

"It's about understanding how a business works and the part that each employee plays in that," says Lucy. "Although this is something that comes with experience, we have been asked if we can lay the foundations while they are at college so that they are more prepared for the workplace."

Preston College has the same experience from collaborating with employers. "Time management, communication, and professional behaviours are frequently noted as lacking, particularly among entry-level recruits," says Mark Taylor, Director of CSTEM. "They want a pipeline of learners who are practically competent, digitally literate, and adaptable to change."

Specialist sectors

Cumbria is an energy hotspot, with employers such as Sellafield and EDF Energy shaping the skills needs of the region. Sector demand for low carbon and nuclear skills is expected to grow, impacted by the 2050 net zero policy which will create opportunities for those living and working in the area.

The National College for Nuclear at Lakes College is addressing these skills needs through its IoT provision, which covers manufacturing for nuclear and low carbon energy technology.

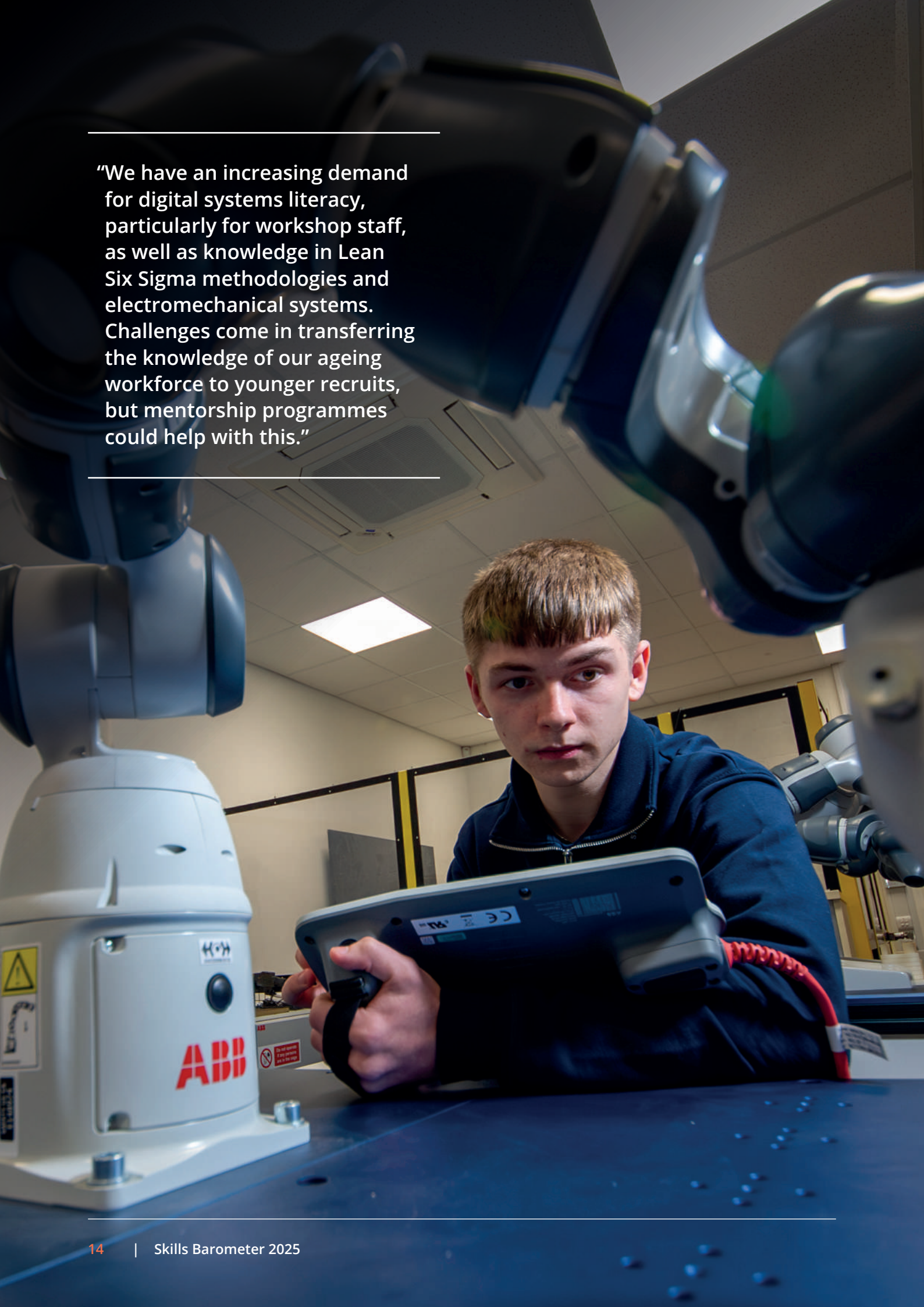
The low carbon course addresses skills needs reported by employers and based on local and national gaps, including solar, wind, biomass, hydrogen, geothermal, and heat pumps. Manufacturing for Nuclear focuses on technical manufacturing skills (CAD/CAM, advanced manufacturing) with some shared modules, such as maths project skills.

"Employer feedback directly influenced the curriculum design," says Farooq Khan, Lecturer in Low Carbon Energy at Lakes College. "We cover net zero carbon, net geo, net zero carbon management, low carbon engineering and smart energy and built environment so we can help meet these ambitious targets."

It covers automotive too, with the move to electric or hydrogen-fuelled vehicles requiring an uptick in people trained for the sector, says Farooq.

"It's a big sector and it's not only about the transportation, it's about the overall industry and conversion of the current system into a smart energy system," he says. "That's why we have a very huge demand in this area."

Learners use AR and VR rooms and specialist online delivery pods supported by hands-on block training weeks. It's an emerging area that the IoT can support.



"We have an increasing demand for digital systems literacy, particularly for workshop staff, as well as knowledge in Lean Six Sigma methodologies and electromechanical systems. Challenges come in transferring the knowledge of our ageing workforce to younger recruits, but mentorship programmes could help with this."

ENGINEERING CASE STUDY: SHERMAYNES ENGINEERING

Morecambe-based Shermaynes Engineering has invested in technology after struggling to find welders in a competitive market.

When the sheet metal fabricator found wage inflation was leading to a challenge in recruiting welders, it made an investment – both in increasing the number of apprentices in the business and in the addition of a cobot welder.

The cobot requires the employee controlling it to have skills in programming rather than welding and has made a big difference to the business, which is a sub-contract engineer making anything from prison doors to mortuary trolleys.

“Our biggest skills need is always welding, especially since Brexit, because we’re competing for talent with larger businesses,” says Director Steve Brookfield. “We bought ourselves a cobot welder and we asked for volunteers to be trained to use it. It’s made a big impact on our business and follows our approach of allowing everyone the opportunity to upskill.”

Steve, a member of the Make UK regional advisory board, believes a more flexible approach from education would benefit businesses, for example allowing employees to begin courses at different points in the year. Over the next five years, he predicts the business will invest in more cobots, which will mean a shift in the skills his 36-strong workforce needs.

The business could also benefit from data analysis to give a more accurate picture of manufacturing time, he says. Raising the profile of engineering could also help. “People probably think engineering is dirty but that’s not the case. I keep saying to our employees that it’s a skill that could take you all over the world.”

AUTOMOTIVE CASE STUDY: LEYLAND TRUCKS

Automotive manufacturer Leyland Trucks is an employer partner of Preston College, feeding in skills needs so that course content can be shaped to suit the industry.

Maria Rogers, Learning and Development Manager at Leyland Trucks shares the sector's skills needs.

What are the top skills your business struggles to find in the current workforce? With technology developing rapidly, we require skills in the areas of automation/software, battery electric, diagnostic and testing, data analytics and AI/robotics in order to embrace and adapt to industry change.

Looking ahead over the next three to five years, what emerging skills or qualifications do you anticipate becoming more critical for your industry? We plan for future technologies and the skills that are required alongside so anticipate that the skills we are currently looking for are also those that we see emerging over the next three to five years.

What do you need to make it easier for you to upskill staff or find the staff you need? Our business is quite niche, so being able to have bespoke course content to meet our specific needs is critical as well as having a flexible delivery method that allows us to release staff for training without impacting on the running business. Funding for courses that extends beyond SMEs would also make it easier to upskill our staff.


DAF

IoT KEY SECTOR: COMPUTING AND DIGITAL

Computing and digital skills span sectors as non-tech businesses look to harness the transformational power of advancements such as AI.

- Digital and e-commerce sectors contribute £2.3bn annually in Lancashire.
- Lancashire's digital workforce is estimated at 33,000, and is projected to grow to 50,000 by 2050 driven by investments like the National Cyber Force.
- Cumbria's creative and cultural sector supports 11,000 FTE jobs, with the estimated creative GVA for Cumbria at £84.82m (includes cultural, creative and digital businesses).

Digital dawn

The potential of the digital sector is vast, shaping not only the future of work but also the structure of the economy. Digital jobs cross sectors, from IT and cybersecurity roles to those using digital skills in manufacturing, health, construction and science.

It's a sector that's advancing at a higher rate than the broader economy, and that's creating a ripple effect leading to greater opportunities in other roles. Yet the UK is said to have a significant digital skills gap, with the government setting out goals to reduce the deficit.

Lancashire and Cumbria need those skills. The National Cyber Force in Samlesbury is driving demand for talent, as it looks to bring 2,000 jobs to the area by 2030, a move the Lancashire Local Skills Improvement Plan says will catalyse digital investment and clustering. In Cumbria, digital skills are said to be a gap across sectors, from basic to higher level skills, with an emerging need for robust data and analytical skills.

But then there are the smaller scale enterprises – the organisations whose sectors are increasingly incorporating digital methods to drive efficiencies in their processes. Those not necessarily from a technology-based background are recognising the need for digital skills within their businesses.

Developing the next generation of digital experts is critical.

Cross-sector opportunities

“Businesses are coming in to impact our curriculum focusing on different tech careers, but we’re finding there are challenges for the non-tech-based organisations,” says Ben Scott, Programme Leader of Computing at Burnley College. “Take the NHS for example – it needs to shift from being a paper-based organisation to use tech more efficiently. Our role as an IoT is to look at how we can assist these sectors by showing how they can best use technology.”

Ensuring organisations from all sectors have the knowledge to incorporate digital methods is how the IoT can truly make an impact, according to Ben. AI has highlighted how a digital enhancement crosses boundaries, and the most successful organisations will be those who adopt it into their operations.

Unsurprisingly, AI skills are cited as a growing need for businesses in Lancashire and Cumbria. “90 per cent of the enquiries we receive from organisations is around machine learning for business improvement, such as time saving and cost reduction,” says Marc Potter, Head of Curriculum for Digital and Creative Innovation at Blackpool and the Fylde College. The college has collaborated with engineering and manufacturing businesses, health organisations and even a golf course to advise on leveraging AI to improve businesses processes but they need education to help them.

Small businesses, which Lancashire and Cumbria has a wealth of, need to multi-task, and technology is proving vital.

“It might be for stock control, creating timetables in the manufacture of rotors or writing a marketing strategy,” Marc adds. “Some are asking can they use AI to respond to emails for them or they want to create website chatbots but don’t know how. We’ve had a golf course that might look into how AI can be used to manage bookings. Businesses are recognising that they need to be harnessing AI to improve, but they need education to help them.”

One former Blackpool student took his AI skills to streamline processes and now heads up a department within a double glazing company.

For the IoT, it’s about looking at the make-up of the Lancashire and Cumbria economy and providing what will make the biggest impact. Learners are trained to develop transferable skills so that, while they may programme using Python at the IoT, they’re able to adapt to using programmes like FOC, C Sharp or C Plus when they go into the workplace.

Looking further

At Burnley College, Ben keeps a close eye on the Californian jobs market, with Silicon Valley vacancies providing information on skills requirements he says will be needed by the UK market three years later.

Three years ago, three quarters of students went into software development, with 25 per cent in cybersecurity, but today those figures have flipped.

He believes skills in data science and AI will take an equal weighting with cyber as a key need over the next five years. "They're more cross sector so it's not necessarily computing students who would be the best fit for these roles, they may come from accounting, finance or psychology, sectors that are dealing with a large amount of data," he says. "From a job market point of view, data, AI and cybersecurity aren't going anywhere."

This horizon scanning is essential, feeding into technical training courses to ensure learners go into the workplace armed with the skills to make an immediate impact.

At Blackpool and the Fylde, Marc is exploring computer vision, a specialism of AI that focuses on enabling computers to see and interpret images and videos, and take actions. Pharmacists, for example, are using computer vision to monitor shelves so that they can be restocked as needed. He cites another example of a manufacturer making cogs for engines where the placement of a spring is checked by the human eye, but an AI-controlled camera could process this task 1,000 times faster.

It's an advancement he wants to trial at the college while incorporating it into the curriculum.

"We have somebody who stands at the front of the college to check if students are wearing their lanyards. I see the potential for computer vision to be used to save time on tasks like that, freeing people up to do other things," Marc says.

UX skills are also in demand now and will continue to be in future as organisations look to develop apps and websites to ease the customer journey.

Hidden curriculum

Mirroring other sectors, the digital industry feeds back to the IoT that those soft, work-ready skills are essential when it comes to what makes a perfect employee. It might range from how to behave in the workplace to how to write a strong application letter to using LinkedIn. Mark Nutter, Programme Leader for Computing at Nelson and Colne College Group, terms it the "hidden curriculum" – those skills that aren't documented in course content but run through all training.

"We're not just giving them the skills to do the job but instilling a confidence that they will walk into a workplace and know they can make a difference," he says, adding that providing training on real-world equipment is also a plus point. "Making learners familiar with the equipment used in industry gives them an advantage. We are handing businesses polished employees who can fit right in."

With technology advancing at a rapid rate, Mark agrees giving learners knowledge they can transfer is vital. "It's all about staying in front of the game, making sure the students have an updated tweaked offering every year by working with employers so that we have courses that are approved by industry," he adds.

At Burnley, this 'hidden curriculum' is also threaded through training, with communication skills high on the list, says Ben. It includes being able to hold and take part in virtual meetings and communicate while a task is ongoing. To provide these skills, learners take part in simulated activities to mimic a workplace setting.

This approach continues at Runshaw College, where IoT explore critical problem-solving skills, preparing them for the real-world challenges they will face in digital roles.

The college collaborates with the Code Institute to deliver its Level 5 Diploma in Web Application Development through the IoT, covering web development fundamentals as well as user interface design and database management.

The fully remote course enables students to study from anywhere in the UK. The Code Institute collaborates with Microsoft and draws feedback from more than 2,500 employers to ensure its graduates are ready for work.

Mark Heaton, Head of Adult Education at Runshaw College, says accessibility is important in addressing the region's digital skills gap. "Making courses more accessible is fundamental to addressing the skills need for Lancashire and Cumbria," he says.

EMPLOYER CASE STUDY: NYBBLE

"The AI revolution will become truly powerful as more people understand what they can do with it."

Ram Gupta, Managing Director of IT service provider Nybble, believes AI is here to stay when it comes to skills needs in the digital sector. But, while many organisations are learning how they can harness its power today, he believes the future will see a much more focused approach.

"It's like when apps became popular – everyone wanted one but wasn't sure why," he says. "AI is about the expansion of the human being as opposed to the demise of the human being – it will enhance human capability and make people more capable."

Blackburn-based Nybble, which employs people from all diversities, is investing in training so staff can keep customers abreast of the capabilities of AI and has established a team of AI talent, some in India, where Ram says skills are currently more accessible.

He believes education needs to be able to respond quickly to keep up with evolution of the tech. "Short courses could be the answer, because it doesn't take a lot of time to educate somebody in AI," he says. "It could be incorporating an AI element into existing courses or offering live projects learners can work on."

As well as AI skills, Ram believes the employees of tomorrow need the skills to make them work ready, such as the right attitude. "In my business we need people that can work hard – and then we can teach them IT, because if you can work hard you can learn anything," he says. "My most competent IT staff are the ones who work hard, and I'd take a hard worker who takes a sense of ownership and care over their work more than an established talent."

He also believes mandatory sales training should be integrated into technical training courses – "because no matter what you do, you are always selling yourself " he says. "Sales skills would round the person and give them confidence to be able to put ideas forward. I also think that young people need to be taught the basics in business commercials, like lifetime value of customer and what VAT is."

As a founding employer partner of the IoT, Nybble is a member of the digital employer advisory group that feeds back industry skills needs to the eight colleges. Ram got involved as he was excited about the prospect of the co-creation of curriculum and making a difference.

"Taking these conversations out of the back bedroom and into the IoT where there's actionable, physical results, gives it the possibility to actually happen," he says. "If you're passionate about young people and unleashing their capability, then the IoT is a mechanism for these young people to deliver quickly what your business and the economy needs."

"My most competent IT staff are the ones who work hard, and I'd take a hard worker who takes a sense of ownership and care over their work more than an established talent"

IoT KEY SECTOR: CONSTRUCTION

The built landscape is changing in Lancashire and Cumbria and that brings growth opportunities for the construction sector.

- Seventh biggest employment sector in Lancashire, with 39,000 people (5.8 per cent of all employment compared to 4.9 per cent nationwide).
- A growing sector in Cumbria that employs 14,000 people, it now accounts for eight per cent of the economy in the county.
- Economic output in Lancashire is concentrated in Preston and South Ribble.
- Jobs in high demand include quantity surveyors, construction managers, construction and building supervisors, and chartered surveyors.

Lay of the land

A vast stock of older housing, alongside increasing government house-building targets, has created a critical skills demand in the construction industry.

The region has a challenge on its hands to contribute to the government's national 1.5m housebuilding target over the next five years. Changes to the National Planning Policy Framework announced in December 2024 aim to achieve sustainable growth of the planning system.

In Lancashire, the minimum housebuilding target has risen to just over 6,500 new homes from its previous 2,900 properties. Neighbouring Cumbria builds about 1,692 new houses a year currently, but must increase this to 2,647, as announced in late 2024.

But of course, we need the people to help meet these targets. Nationally, the construction sector needs fresh blood. The UK Trade Skills Index 2023 highlighted a need for 937,000 new recruits in the construction and trades industry by 2032. It's down to the ageing population, which is significant in construction, made worse by not enough younger workers entering the sector.

The government said in 2025 it was investing £600m to train up to 6,000 skilled workers by 2029, which should go some way to addressing at least some of the 35,000 job vacancies reported by the Office for National Statistics, many of which can't be filled due to a lack of the required skills.

Legacy of challenges

Existing and new buildings must now be thermally efficient, aligned with net-zero and sustainability goals, and designed to safeguard the health of those who live and work in them. The county has a large amount of ageing housing stock, all of which must be upgraded to make them suitable.

Mark Taylor, Director of CSTEM at Preston College, says the industry is having to respond to a legacy of building work that has unintentionally led to challenges through a previous lack of knowledge. “Industry knowledge has evolved and there is a lot more science now around building pathology, so we can make sure systems complement each other,” he says.

Incorrectly installed cavity wall insulation can contribute to damp issues, which may lead to black mould, affecting air quality, health, and overall energy efficiency. Homes built without good ventilation and natural light can experience problems, which this generation of construction workers need to be educated to solve.

“Employers want green skills embedded into training, ensuring that future work supports both sustainability and long-term housing quality, and we’ve worked closely with them to make this happen,” Mark says.

Businesses are reporting they need people trained to carry out a full diagnosis of any building so they can sympathetically carry out work to bring it up to standard. For new-build properties, skills are now needed to ensure the right products are installed correctly to meet sustainability standards.

“We’ve put a lot of time and effort into underpinning what a building needs to become high performing in terms of energy efficiency and human comfort and welfare, because that’s what employers need,” says Mark.

The construction department at the IoT’s Preston site works with the Home Builders Federation and some of the biggest house builders in the UK to ensure this flow of information to inform courses.

“We’ve collaborated with employers to develop assignment briefs and integrate sustainability into core themes, ensuring the skills needed to improve historically problematic buildings are embedded in training.”

> **"Construction is constantly evolving, driven by advancements in technology and scientific methods. We're equipping the next generation of construction workers with the adaptability to respond to these changes and skills to ensure their practice and performance remain cutting-edge."**

Tech and tradition

Technology is playing a crucial role in traditional trades like construction and employers report digital skills gaps to the IoT.

Employers report a need for operatives comfortable with digital tools, diagnostics and reporting systems. Some technology used by the sector is cutting edge. A 3D scanner might be used to turn a physical environment into a CAD (Computer-Aided Design) or BIM (Building Information Modelling) model, which could then become a 3D-printed model. Thermal imaging cameras, too, enable a full picture of a building's make-up to be produced so that workers can analyse the room and produce a condition report to retrofit it in a virtual world before work is actually carried out.

While not all employers will be currently at the stage of needing these skills, the IoT sees them as a crucial part of educating people to meet the sector's future needs. Digital project management tools, BIM and drone surveying will become essential to the industry in future.

"The industry is always going to evolve as sustainability and technology shift, so we need to equip learners with the right skills and prepare them for continuing professional development throughout their careers," Mark says. "The government wants to build more houses, so we have a role to play in getting more people interested in construction every year."

Looking ahead to the next five years, Mark predicts a significant growth in the need for green and retrofit skills, with demand for low-carbon, heat pump and energy efficiency training in both construction and building services.

With such a rapidly shifting sector, the constant flow of information between education and employers to meet industry standards and building regulations is vital. IoT staff must also immerse themselves in the sector. Preston College offers staff one day a year to spend in their industry, and some use this to complete qualifications in retrofit, installing and inspections, and learning green skills like the installation of photovoltaic panels, for example.

"Construction is constantly evolving, driven by advancements in technology and scientific methods," says Mark. "We're equipping the next generation of construction workers with the adaptability to respond to these changes and skills to ensure their practice and performance remain cutting-edge. Industry feedback confirms that this approach is essential."

What the employers say

Digital skills and work readiness top the rankings for the skills construction employers tell us they need – both now and in the future.

The increased use of digital reporting techniques means candidates need to be digitally literate as well as having practical knowledge to thrive in a construction environment. One business told us they had seen skills gaps in those able to use AutoCAD and other software and predicted design staff could be difficult to find over the next five years.

Soft skills, that enable people to be work-ready, are said to be lacking across the board. Time management and communication are identified as essential skills that candidates often enter the workplace needing to develop.

An employer reported recruitment was being hampered by poor transport links in the region, which made employing school leavers and trainees difficult.

Adaptability was also singled out as an important skill, especially in small businesses where employees can be carrying out many roles.

Employers told us flexible, modular training that supported staff in short bursts was needed to avoid business disruption.

> "A good personality is essential in creating a good working relationship within our team and with our clients. We don't just need the technical knowledge, we need soft skills too."

Building a workforce

Preston-based Pettit Singleton Associates, a building services design consultancy, has solved its struggle to find good engineers by training those looking for career progression from other trades, such as former electricians.

Managing Director Jimmy Dobson discusses current and future needs, and how education can help the sector.

Soft skills are crucial to small businesses:
"We often find that employing good engineers is hard to find, therefore our focus has always been to train people to become engineers from either trades people or people from other industries looking to progress their careers in a more technically challenging capacity.

"We have found that people who want to learn quickly pick up the technical skills, yet it's the soft skills and the engineers with commercial awareness that are often hard to find. We put a lot of effort into training our engineers to be best in all aspects, however, we have found that the soft skills are less apparent and the hardest to teach.

"A good personality is essential in creating a good working relationship within our team and with our clients. We don't just need the technical knowledge, we need soft skills too."

Tech will be transformative:
"AI is the big one. It's going to change the face of how an organisation like ours does business. We are researching the uses on our business and we need to understand how it can help improve our services, how it can enhance our business and how it will be regulated."

Financial support is a big consideration:
"The cost of finding and training staff is a big outlay, the cost of internal and external FE training with all the other costs that small businesses are being squeezed on, it's another consideration.

Education needs to start earlier:
"We find that most people don't know what building services is, never mind young people.

"We are involved with local colleges and universities to help spread the word regarding building services and the opportunities it brings. Non-academic students often aren't shown the vocational options available to them and that needs to start in schools. More needs to be done to show young people in schools and colleges what the options are and get them work ready."

IoT KEY SECTOR: HEALTH AND MEDICAL

An ageing population coupled with rising health problems exacerbated by the pandemic have placed a skills need on the health and medical sector in Lancashire and Cumbria.

- Employs about 33,000 people in Lancashire and 31,500 in Cumbria.
- Accounts for 16.4 per cent of all employment in Lancashire and is the third highest contributor to the economy.
- Is second only to manufacturing in Cumbria, making up 13.3 per cent of total employment.
- Jobs difficult to fill include healthcare assistants, mental health practitioners and occupational therapists.

Taking the temperature

Healthcare is changing. Across Lancashire and Cumbria, this shift in ways of working creates both opportunities and challenges. Technology is becoming embedded into processes like never before, informing patient care as data becomes readily available. New technologies present an opportunity to redefine how care is delivered.

An ageing population and an increase in people with more complex health needs has placed a greater strain on services. More people remain in their own homes for longer, meaning those caring for them need a greater range of skills.

In Cumbria, the health and social care sector is a cornerstone of the regional economy, supporting approximately 31,500 jobs, spanning 1,280 businesses. It's second only to manufacturing in the county, but is under pressure from a widening skills gap that's driven by an ageing workforce, rapid technological change and shifting patient needs.

The sector employs a similar figure in Lancashire (33,000), accounting for 16.4 per cent of all employment in in the county and its third highest contributor.

Mental health skills gaps have widened due to the demand for services, believed to have increased due to the impact of the pandemic. The IoT is already responding, with Preston College, in particular, introducing a foundation degree in health and social care (mental health) designed to bolster the workforce.

Further work continues to ensure education is responsive to the sector's needs.

IoT health and medical courses span health and social care, healthcare management, counselling and mental health, and related specialisms, including alcohol and substance misuse, so this report explores the skills needs most relevant to these disciplines.

Pandemic was pivotal

Technology is changing the way people access healthcare, whether through virtual appointments, patient monitoring or the use of digital records to log care. The government announced a plan in January 2025 to leverage technology and AI to shake up public services, including the NHS, which it said would transform healthcare. Similarly, the rise of telehealth solutions, to give patients access to quicker, affordable consultations, means the skills healthcare professionals need are evolving.

The coronavirus pandemic was a pivotal moment for health, changing the ways patients could access vital services overnight, bringing tech even more into play.

At Nelson and Colne College Group, the curriculum is being updated in response to employer need for knowledge of virtual care and digital monitoring, in collaboration with Airedale Hospital's Digital Care Hub for real-world applications.

"There are numerous examples of virtual care being implemented in care homes and hospitals, especially during and after COVID-19," says Justine Pollard, lecturer, from the college group. "For example, every prison in the country is linked to Airedale Hospital so they can monitor prisoners remotely, which is absolutely fascinating and shows the skills we're going to need in the future around virtual care. For someone working in domiciliary care, it might be something as simple as administering advice via a video doorbell."

This shift towards virtual care means a new set of skills are needed to assess and communicate with a patient via a screen. Counselling provision within the IoT is embracing this, with investment into digital counselling pods to enable learners to gain these skills. The move from face-to-face sessions to virtual ones that began during the pandemic has remained five years on as patients require counselling care that fits in with their busy lives in a more seamless way.

No sign of slowing

Steph Preston, Integrative Psychotherapist and Programme Leader from Nelson and Colne College Group, anticipates the need for more skilled counsellors continuing to grow as the mental health crisis shows no sign of slowing down. “A lot of this change has sped up developments in a positive way, the number of clients that can now access counselling online has grown exponentially,” she says.

Counsellors can now complete more work from home, either as a contractor for an organisation, or in private practice, which has again impacted on the skills and behaviours they need to master. “Understanding the key skills required to work online and potentially short-term will come more into focus over the next few years – becoming outcome-focused, considering the ongoing CPD required and paying careful attention to the self-care and boundary-management that is required in this type of work,” says Steph.

At Preston College, employer collaboration work shows technology will become an essential part of counselling the younger generation, who have grown up with a tech-first attitude.

IoT counselling lecturer Ian Sanderson anticipates a future where sessions are carried out in a virtual world.

“There’s potential for us to use VR – or maybe become an avatar that pops up on video games like Fortnite to remind a player they’re due a counselling session,” he says. “It’s a fascinating shift and one we need to stay ahead of.”

Unique set of skills

Trainee counsellors today must learn a set of skills that will be transferable as technology advances, learning the nuances of the language they must use and the cues they must pick up on.

“It’s a unique set of skills that make the job different to how it would be in person, which used to be the gold standard,” says Ian. “What happens if there’s disconnection on the call, how do you read someone’s body language over the phone and how can you offer the same level of service using technology? There are all sorts of ways that the industry has moved on and that requires us to teach a different set of skills because our traditional model of 9-5 in-person appointments has gone.”

With the rise in digital techniques, experience of informatics and big data analysis are becoming essential, with investment in high-powered computers for handling large healthcare datasets opening new career paths in data analysis and forensic investigation within care quality regulation.

They’re skills being incorporated into healthcare management qualifications so that learners know not just how to run a care home but how to investigate the increasing amount of data produced by their organisations, says Justine.

The courses also take into account finance and law to enable clinical staff to take that next step from providing care to running a business, which Justine terms as ‘professionalised healthcare’.

> "Theoretical knowledge and practice in the classrooms are important but will not suffice. Students need to practice in environments that mirror the real ones that they will be working in with clients."

Personal touch

Soft skills, as with other industries, are increasingly required by employers, who report a need for counsellors who are able to anticipate and respond to the challenges of working with the personal material of vulnerable people.

This is why practical experience, whether in college or on placement, is essential, says Steph. "Theoretical knowledge and practice in the classrooms are important but will not suffice Students need to practice in environments that mirror the real ones that they will be working in with clients," she says. Role playing in an experiential environment enables them to understand the importance of boundaries and the sensitive environment, enabling them to be 'placement-ready'.

Dawn Parkington, Curriculum Lead for Adult Health at Preston College, agrees employers her department consults with talk about the value of soft skills, particularly around communication. Some learners have never been in front of anyone with a disability or health needs, so the IoT courses use role play with mannequins or staff members posing as patients to simulate care scenarios.

Horizon scanning

Breakthroughs in research also impact the evolution of skills needs, so the IoT's experts are continually scanning the horizon for developments. The link between Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and mental health problems later in life, such as substance misuse and depression, means mental health professionals must now take into account the experiences of their patient from birth to adult. "It's not just about what's in front of you but where your patients have come from, so we've now made sure ACEs is covered in our curriculum," Dawn says.

EMPLOYER CASE STUDY: CLIFTON HOMECARE

A move from paper to digital care records has improved efficiency for Clifton Homecare Limited – but the opportunity it created for improved care added a skills need.

Not only do domiciliary care assistants need digital skills to use the technology, they also require the ability to analyse the wealth of data the system creates.

Caroline Cosh, Nominated Individual and Registered Manager of the Lytham St Annes-based care provider, says her business has embraced digital methods in response to the government's goal for the social care sector to be digitally competent.

"We need people with data analysis skills – it's not just about working with the numbers but really analysing what they mean," says Caroline, who employs 50 people. "Say, for example, Mrs Smith experiences a fall; we analyse the time and location of the fall, events leading up to the fall and any other patterns and trends to help prevent further falls and educate other clients too.

"Digital records allow us to link together all this information so we can provide better care, but we need the skills to spot those patterns. This evidence-based practice is the way the industry is moving."

An understanding of the legal requirements of the role is becoming more crucial than ever before, impacted by what Caroline, who chairs the Lancashire Homecare Provider Forum, says is a challenging health system. People are often waiting longer for surgery and treatment therefore often experience complications and are trying to manage multiple health conditions at any one time. This has a knock-on effect on the home care sector.

"Care staff are dealing with people with ever-increasing needs because people are living longer, with multiple conditions and wanting to live at home," she adds.

Aside from the technical skills needed, softer skills are essential – people who are caring and competent, who can work as part of a team and follow instructions.

"We need people with data analysis skills – it's not just about working with the numbers but really analysing what they mean."

IoT KEY SECTOR: SCIENCE

The science sector in Lancashire and Cumbria plays a vital and growing role in the economy.

+ Expected to contribute an additional £238m to the Lancashire and Cumbria economy over the next decade through research and development investment.
+ According to the 2021 Census, 2,229 people in Lancashire and 591 in Cumbria stated they were employed in scientific research and development (compared with 11,103 across the whole of the North West).
+ Scientific research and development contributed £20.6bn gross value added to the UK economy in 2023, according to the Office for National Statistics (ONS).
+ The government says the life sciences sector has "enormous" potential to drive economic growth and productivity.

Crucial to innovation

Science roles play a crucial part in driving economic growth and innovation. Whether developing new technologies or medical treatments, scientists contribute essential knowledge and breakthroughs that underpin progress and boost high-value sectors. As the economy increasingly relies on knowledge and innovation, the demand for skilled scientists continues to grow, making these roles fundamental to long-term prosperity and global competitiveness.

Research by the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry (ABPI) in 2018, showed that future investments in research and development are expected to generate an additional £238m in regional economic growth over the next decade.

This highlights the significant contribution life sciences can make to both innovation and employment in the area, particularly as the UK moves towards a more knowledge-driven economy.

In October 2024, a Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology (POST) research paper on harnessing scientific and technological innovation said the UK was in a positive position on the world stage. It went on to say that collaboration was important in driving the global influence of research and innovation and emphasised the need to deal with skills shortages created by an ageing workforce.

With increasing government support for health-related innovation, Lancashire and Cumbria are well-placed to become a leading regional hub for life sciences in the North of England.

Sector growth and opportunities over the next 1-5 years

Over the next five years, the life sciences landscape in the region is expected to undergo rapid transformation. Growth will be driven by increased research and development investment, the expansion of facilities like the Health Innovation Campus at IoT research partner Lancaster University, and deepening partnerships between industry and universities. Developments such as the National Cyber Force's new base in Lancashire will also indirectly support the sector, particularly in digital health and health tech, where cybersecurity and data management are becoming increasingly important.

This period of growth offers exciting opportunities for collaboration between businesses, researchers, and education providers, strengthening the region's position in areas such as biopharmaceutical development, sustainable healthcare, and precision medicine.

> "Courses offered through the IoT are deliberately structured around small group sizes and high tutor-to-student ratios. This ensures students are not only familiar with modern laboratory techniques but have hands-on experience and confidence using them."

Challenges en route

Despite these positive trends, the life sciences sector in Lancashire and Cumbria faces several obstacles.

"One of the biggest challenges we hear from employers is the difficulty in attracting and retaining skilled professionals, especially when competing with bigger cities across the North," says Ian Beckett, Programme Leader in HE Science at Burnley College.

"There are also real issues around infrastructure and transport, which can make it harder for people to access key employment sites."

Another pressing concern is the talent pipeline itself, and that can come from a lack of joined-up thinking.

"Too many young people are leaving education without a clear understanding of the opportunities in biosciences, and there's often a disconnect between academic learning and the hands-on skills employers need," Ian says. "Smaller firms in particular struggle to find graduates who are lab-ready from day one – and that's a major barrier to growth and innovation."

Essentials are lacking

Feedback from industry events and employer engagement suggests a consistent concern: many bioscience graduates are entering the workforce without essential laboratory skills.

Basic techniques such as pipetting, aspiration, dispensing and gram staining are often underdeveloped, while higher-level competencies in cell culturing, PCR, electrophoresis and gene editing are even more limited. It's this insight that has informed the IoT's offering, so that learners leave with skills closely aligned to the needs of their future employers.

"To address this, courses offered through the IoT are deliberately structured around small group sizes and high tutor-to-student ratios," Ian says. "This ensures students are not only familiar with modern laboratory techniques but have hands-on experience and confidence using them."

The IoT works closely with the Royal Society of Biology and employers to ensure training is aligned with industry standards. It's an approach that is clearly working, with IoT student Katerina Gkzimpala from Burnley College being awarded the Top Student Award 2024 by the Royal Society of Biology.

Lab-ready learners

Looking ahead, the demand for practical, work-ready graduates will only intensify. Employers are seeking individuals who can enter the lab environment already trained in GLP (Good Laboratory Practice), aseptic techniques and biosafety procedures, and with an understanding of how to produce essential documentation such as risk assessments and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs).

At the same time, the sector is evolving rapidly. Developments such as AI-enhanced gene editing (for example, CRISPR) are reshaping what it means to be a bioscience professional.

"The ability to work across disciplines – bridging bioscience with data analysis, computational biology, engineering, and even agriculture – will become increasingly valuable," says Ian. "Bioinformatics and digital literacy are rising priorities, as is the ability to model disease and analyse complex data sets."

What employers are looking for

Employers are clear that technical skills alone are not enough. They want graduates who are adaptable, collaborative, and able to communicate clearly in written and verbal forms. Skills in project management, problem-solving, and scientific reporting are seen as just as important as pipetting or PCR.

Soft skills, regulatory awareness, and workplace behaviours also need to be embedded into the curriculum if the economy is to reach its potential. This combination of technical skills and workplace readiness will prove a key part of tackling the region's current and future skills shortages.

"The ability to work across disciplines – bridging bioscience with data analysis, computational biology, engineering, and even agriculture – will become increasingly valuable."

SOFT SKILLS: TURNING LEARNERS INTO WORK-READY EMPLOYEES

While technical expertise is critical to career success, employers across Lancashire and Cumbria are clear: it's the softer, human skills – communication, accountability, punctuality, and emotional intelligence – that often make the difference between a capable recruit and a truly work-ready one.

That's why the IoT has made soft skills a core part of its approach, embedding them throughout its programmes from day one.

"The message we get from industry is that it's not always about technical skills – they can be taught relatively easily," says Simon Nixon, Principal of Preston College. "It's those work-ready behaviours that really matter: the work ethic, being on time, having the right mindset. That's what we focus on from the outset."

At Preston College, that focus is built around what staff call the 'five As': attendance, achievement, aspiration, attitude, and accountability. These aren't just buzzwords - they are life skills that underpin employability and long-term success. Learners are expected to approach their studies with the same professionalism that employers would demand in the workplace. Missing the bus or forgetting PPE isn't a valid excuse.

This commitment to developing employability skills isn't limited to one course or department. Whether a student is training to be a bricklayer or a healthcare practitioner, they're also learning to take responsibility, turn up prepared, and communicate clearly. Tutorials explore wider life lessons too, such as the impact of crime, alcohol, and drugs on future prospects – helping students to understand the long-term consequences of their choices.

The IoT's colleges are closely aligned with the needs of industry - with many having established employer advisory groups to ensure their curriculum keeps pace with workplace demands. This approach is especially vital in sectors like construction and engineering, where industry collaboration has long been strong, but is increasingly being extended to newer areas like health and social care and digital and computing. A new foundation degree in mental health is one example of the IoT responding to emerging social challenges with skills-led solutions.

Across the IoT network, innovative teaching is helping students build both technical and interpersonal skills. At Burnley College, learners in the digital department participate in simulations such as virtual IT support ticket scenarios to practice workplace interactions.

> "That's what the IoT is here for – to close the gaps, not just in skills, but in the behaviours that make those skills count."

"Soft skills from a communication point of view are near the top of the list for employers," says Ben Scott, Programme Leader of Computing at Burnley College. "We teach learners how to take part in Teams interviews, but also the skills they'll need for a virtual meeting as job roles have become hybrid."

Healthcare students role play with mannequins to develop bedside communication skills, while trainee counsellors use Zoom to refine their listening and empathy in dedicated pods. These methods are all designed to mirror real-world environments, preparing students to hit the ground running.

The Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs) in both Cumbria and Lancashire back this up. In Cumbria, 43 per cent of employers reported issues with behaviours and emotional intelligence across roles and sectors. Both LSIPs identify soft skills as critical to workforce readiness and productivity, calling for early intervention, stronger education-employer links, and the full embedding of employability within technical education – all of which the IoT is actively delivering.

"If we don't meet an employer's need today, we'll work with them to meet it tomorrow," Simon says. "That's what the IoT is here for – to close the gaps, not just in skills, but in the behaviours that make those skills count."

FINDINGS

The Lancashire and Cumbria Institute of Technology's second Skills Barometer has found the following themes that need to be addressed to enable prosperity in the region:

FIVE KEY TAKEAWAYS

01

+ **DIGITAL LITERACY AND AI SKILLS ARE BECOMING UNIVERSAL REQUIREMENTS**
  Skills in automation, digital diagnostics, data handling, and AI applications are increasingly required across all sectors.

02

+ **MULTI-SKILLED AND INTERDISCIPLINARY TECHNICAL ROLES ARE ON THE RISE**
  Job roles are increasingly blending traditional skills with emerging technologies.

03

+ **SOFT SKILLS ARE AS CRUCIAL AS TECHNICAL SKILLS**
  Employers often prioritise communication, emotional intelligence, teamwork, accountability, punctuality, and adaptability.

04

+ **EMPLOYABILITY DEPENDS ON REAL-WORLD READINESS**
  Employers seek recruits who are work-ready with practical experience and commercial awareness.

05

+ **SECTOR-SPECIFIC GAPS WILL BE ADDRESSED THROUGH COLLABORATION**
  Modular and flexible training aligned with employer feedback is essential to bridging these gaps.

Managing Director Linda Dean said many sectors were reimagining what a job looks like to address skills shortages.

She said: "Multi-skilled roles are the new reality for businesses across Lancashire and Cumbria and it's exciting to see how businesses are stepping up and adapting.

"In almost every sector, digital fluency is no longer optional, it's essential. We're building workforces where job titles might not change but what those roles look like will. Our role, as an IoT, is to make sure the training we offer evolves just as fast as the jobs themselves and collaboration is essential to bridging these gaps."

INTERESTED IN BECOMING AN EMPLOYER PARTNER?

Work with us to nurture the next generation of talent, improve your business innovation and productivity, and support economic growth both locally and nationally.

How does it work?

+ **Register your interest.**
+ **You will be contacted by the team to assess your needs.**
+ **You will be connected with the right partner who will guide you through the process and help you access funding opportunities for apprenticeships, as well as for upskilling or reskilling your workforce.**
+ **You will be invited to collaborate – e.g. talks, live briefs etc.**
+ **You will be consulted on the curriculum and the needs of your industry.**
+ **You can help shape the future workforce.**

"I got involved with the IoT because I can see the value in helping change the landscape – the better the talent coming through, the easier it is for businesses like ours to recruit."

Tom Smith
Chief Executive of Complete

Get in touch
Contact **employer@landciot.ac.uk** today to register your interest in becoming an employer partner.

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