

Retraining

Retraining for the purposes of this guide refers to people moving to new jobs or careers where a significant development of new skills is required. This will be increasingly important as working lives lengthen and coronavirus potentially accelerates some structural economic changes.

Why does this matter for local government?

- Helping people to switch to new jobs and careers can increase their chances of **sustainable employment** and potentially their **opportunities for progression**, though this depends on the sector and role. It also **reduces the likelihood they will become long-term unemployed**, crucial because the longer someone is out of work the less likely they are to find work and this can have negative impacts on their health and wellbeing.
- For **local economies to thrive and grow**, and local industrial strategies to be successful, we need to ensure people are aware of **local growth sectors and jobs** and have the skills and support to find and take up these opportunities. This is a central part of meeting **local employers' skills needs** and improving local prosperity and growth.
- The importance of retraining to local people and local economies is likely to **increase** as a result of the combination of **longer working lives and changing economies**. So this is a growing issue of increasing importance to people and communities.

What is the challenge?

- **Global economic change** is altering the structure of our economy and the jobs available, with the impacts varying across the country. This will lead to the creation of new jobs and opportunities, changes in the skills required in existing roles, and also the decline of some sectors and jobs. The transition to a **low carbon economy** will lead to falls in employment in some sectors, but create new opportunities and green jobs.
- The **pandemic** may also have accelerated some of these underlying structural changes. For example, some of the increase in homeworking and online shopping is likely to persist, affecting town and city centre economies.
- At the same time, people are living longer and have **longer working lives**: many young people are likely to have **50 year careers**. Combined with a changing labour market, this means people are going to have to retrain and update their skills more often.
- While the general shifts can be projected, it is not possible to accurately predict the precise change in types of jobs by local area accurately: economies are ultimately the result of millions of decisions made by individuals and employers. It is therefore important to ensure people have access to **high quality labour market information and careers advice** so they can make informed decisions.
- It is also important to recognise that most people will not need in depth retraining support to find a new job in a different sector. Many people will have transferable skills and so will be **job switchers** who need relatively light touch jobsearch support. Of those who will be **career changers**, some will be able to move into a role in a new sector with some on the job learning, perhaps as an apprenticeship; others will need more in depth pre-work training.
- The extent and nature of support people need to retrain will vary by person and sector. This highlights the importance of a **personalised approach**. To give a sense of scale, [Learning and Work Institute and Reform argued for a light touch Universal Support Offer for around 10](#)

[million at risk or furloughed workers during the pandemic](#), with more in depth support for up to 200,000 potential career changers.

What does the evidence say works?

The evidence on what works in helping people to retrain into new jobs and sectors is more limited than in other policy areas. However, there is a growing evidence base and a number of key themes can be identified.

The Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership's [Skills Launchpad provides an online hub for skills, careers, training and jobs support](#). This includes Train4Tomorrow, funded through the National Skills Fund. This offers 12 week training programmes focused on growth sectors such as cyber, data science, welding and engineering, with those completing provision guaranteed a job interview with a local employer.

1. Awareness and engagement.

People may not, particularly if they have worked in a sector or role for a long time, be **aware** of the other career options available or that they might have transferable skills that would apply.

This suggests that the '**case for change**', such as the risk to someone's current role or the positive opportunities elsewhere, needs to be made in terms that appeal to people. That can include provision of **labour market information and careers advice**, as well as **addressing barriers** that people may face in considering changing careers or roles, including confidence.

There are various routes to engaging people. [Learning and Work Institute's Career Review pilots found that employers and trusted intermediaries like community groups, trades unions and housing associations are important](#). People may be more open to career change at particular **points in their lives**, for example if their current role is at risk of redundancy.

2. Learning and training provision.

Learning and training needs to reflect people's work history and **transferable skills**. It needs to be **designed and delivered flexibly** so it fits around work and home life, taking account of whether people are retraining while in a current job or as part of out-of-work support. [Surveys often show a lack of time and fitting learning around other commitments are key barriers to learning](#).

There is also a balance, which will vary between people and jobs, between what needs to be learnt **before people can start** in a new role versus what they can **learn on the job**, whether informally or through an **apprenticeship**. Lastly, [the evidence is clear that training provision needs to be employer focused](#): tailored to what employers need and focused on real local employers, jobs or vacancies.

3. Job search and wraparound support.

Training and gaining the technical skills needed for a new role is only part of retraining and career switching. **Job search**, including **work experience** during learning where appropriate, is also key and should take place during training wherever possible. Underpinning this needs to be a skilled **adviser** agreeing an **action plan** with each individual alongside learning: including how and when to search for work, what other actions are needed to find work beyond training, and how to continue learning in a new job for example through an **apprenticeship**.

People who are switching careers or sectors may need to take a step down in seniority to do so. This would be likely to affect their household income, as might undertaking an apprenticeship. Along with any costs of training, such as course fees, this can create financial barriers to retraining. **Financial support** to help with these barriers can take a range of forms, from loans to discretionary grants to retraining allowances or maintenance support.

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SIX STEPS TO SUPPORTING RETRAINING

1. What is the objective?

Defining the intended objective helps to then understand the challenge and identify an effective response. Preferably the objective should be measurable and aligned with key local strategies.

This could help people, such as those out of work, to move into new roles available as a result of a new development or growth in a target sector. Or it could be to provide a retraining offer for people at risk of losing their jobs in a sector in structural decline.

2. Do we understand the challenge?

Which jobs are available which might require retraining? You will want to explore local labour market information and talk with employers and Jobcentre Plus about vacancies and skill needs.

Who could benefit from retraining? This could be long-term unemployed people, those at risk of redundancy, or those working in declining sectors or roles with little scope for progression.

Consider their transferable skills as well as job or sector specific skills needed for new roles.

Is suitable retraining provision and support available? Does training provision match local employers needs? Does delivery fit with people's work and home lives? Is other support needed (like jobsearch, work experience, mentoring etc) built in?

What are the barriers to people retraining? This could be lack of awareness of available roles, confidence, lack of suitable training provision, join up with jobsearch support, financial barriers like the costs of training or likely wages in the new role, or issues with transport, childcare etc or more.

Answers to these questions can be informed by: previous research; speaking to local people, particularly those in the target groups; and engaging with employment and skills providers.

3. What works?

Evaluations from the UK and other countries should be considered, plus engaging with employers and those delivering employment and skills services. The following framework may help:

Identification. Whether people need additional retraining support, on top of other employment support, depends on both individuals and their skillsets and the jobs in question. So an **assessment of both people and available jobs** will be needed to target and prioritise support.

Information and advice. It is important that people are **aware of jobs available**, potential future trends in the labour market, and the **skills required** for these opportunities. That requires good **labour market information**, dissemination of **vacancies**, and **careers advice**. People get advice from a range of sources, including friends and family, trades unions, careers services etc.

Training provision. Provision needs to be tailored to **employer needs** and specific vacancies, and delivered in ways that **fit around work and home life**. This requires thinking about the **content of training** and also **how it is delivered**.

Job search and other support. Job search should be integrated alongside training provision. This may also require **work experience**, working with employers to **guarantee interviews** for those completing provision, **financial support** and other personalised support.

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4. What support and services are already available?

Mapping the main local programmes and providers can help in identifying any **gaps or shortfalls**, as well as opportunities for **new ideas** and **joining up support**.

Retraining involves a **combination of employment and skills support**. So employment support, provided or commissioned by **DWP and Jobcentre Plus**, will be relevant, including **Sector-based Work Academy Programmes** (SWAPs). In addition, many **colleges and training providers** will offer courses focused on particular sectors or occupations, including the new Lifetime Skills Guarantee and National Skills Fund. **Apprenticeships** can also provide a route for people to move sectors or occupations.

There may be other relevant employment and skills provision commissioned or delivered through **housing associations, charitable trusts and foundations**, and European Social Fund and its successor the **UK Shared Prosperity Fund**. **Employers** may also have provision they deliver or fund themselves to meet their skills and recruitment needs.

5. What are the options for intervention to improve outcomes?

A **full range of options** should be identified, and their potential costs, benefits and potential unintended consequences analysed. This can be informed by engagement with key stakeholders identified in step 4, in particular employers, colleges, training providers and employment services.

The options could include: improving or more effectively disseminating **information about growth sectors** and their skills requirements; considering how best to **identify** those who would benefit from retraining support; expanding provision of **careers advice** for potential retrainers; working with **employers** to focus **apprenticeships** on career changers; developing **new retraining provision** with wraparound support, building on lessons from other programmes; and working with partners to build **existing provision** into a fuller, more flexible and more coherent retraining offer.

Options for **implementation** could include: commissioning of new support by the council; influencing what others are commissioning; co-commissioning; influencing national policy; or working to better coordinate existing support.

6. How will we know if it's working?

- **Defining success.** This will include numbers engaging in retraining and finding work in a new sector or occupation: participation, completion, job entry, and earnings data will all matter. The intervention must be value for money: achieving results additional to what would have happened without support, and at a cost per outcome comparable to other provision.
- **Effective design and evaluation.** The new provision or support should be designed from the start so that its impact and effectiveness can be assessed, considering [use of randomised control trial \(RCTs\)](#) where appropriate. Assessment of impact can include quantitative evaluation, such as cost-benefit analysis, and qualitative research with employers and learners.
- **Key performance indicators.** These could include the numbers of people engaged, complete of training, and outcomes such as starting work or an apprenticeship and increasing earnings. In addition gathering the views of participants and employers will add value.
- **Taking a systems view.** It is important to consider potential unintended consequences, for example the risk of training delaying job entry unnecessarily if people already have the skills needed to start the job and potential to learn on the job.