



[Forward](#) | [Unsubscribe](#) | [View in browser](#)



## SOUTH WEST SKILLS NEWSLETTER

### *The Web Flash*

01 March 2022

Hello everyone,

A new **Digital Skills Programme** has just launched in Devon. Digital Devon aims to support residents in gaining vital skills in order for them to be able to effectively, and safely, use technology across both their working and personal lives. The Digital Devon project has four main themes:

- Community Learning
- Microsoft Glot
- Train the Trainee
- Digital Champions

The latest Heart of the South West Skills Review has been completed. This issue in the newsletter covers the latest schemes, as well as data from the Skills Review updates employment conditions across the region and local policy context.

The Skills Review has been completed. This issue in the newsletter covers the latest schemes, as well as data from the Skills Review updates employment conditions across the region and local policy context.

A report by the National Audit Office (NAO) has found that Government policies to stimulate local economic growth are not based on interventions that are most likely to be effective. This could increase the risk that billions of pounds awarded to local bodies will not deliver the intended benefits.

Finally news that Government is to consult on new plans to "drive up quality of university courses and ensure degrees equip students with the skills they need". Plans include minimum eligibility criteria and a Lifelong Loan Entitlement (LLE) worth the equivalent of four years of post-18 education (i.e. £37,000 in today's fees) to support students to study, train, retrain or upskill at any stage throughout their lives through flexible and modular courses.

Best wishes and stay safe

Andrew Dean

[a.dean@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:a.dean@exeter.ac.uk)

**(Please email me to subscribe and feel free to share the newsletter)**

## News



### Twice as many older workers have left the labour market due to sickness than retirement during pandemic – TUC

New TUC report shows nearly twice as many older workers have left the labour market due to sickness and ill health (97,000) than those who have retired (50,000) during the pandemic. BME workers and those in low-income jobs far more likely to have to stop work early for health reasons

200,000 workers aged 50-65 have left the labour market since pandemic began. The TUC says tackling class and race inequalities key to helping more older workers stay in work.



### Shared Prosperity Fund pre-launch guidance

The Government has confirmed that its levelling-up policies will be funded via the Towns Fund, Levelling Up Fund and UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF). The Towns Fund and Levelling Up Fund will be allocated to mayoral combined authorities (MCAs), County Deals and the Greater London Authority. The UKSPF will be allocated to local authorities in England, Wales and Scotland, which will have to develop an investment plan for approval by the Government. Funding allocated by the UKSPF can be used to stimulate local economies by supporting local businesses to start, innovate, export and grow.



### UK could face shortages of 2.6 million workers, according to new ILC research

Funding for small businesses announced

The Government has announced that a new Global Britain Investment Fund will be introduced to improve access to finance for small and medium-sized businesses. The fund will be managed by the British Business Bank alongside the Regional Investment Funds. The creative industries sector will also receive £18 million to support creative businesses outside London and £8 million to help entrepreneurial, start-up video game developers from across the UK.



### Jobs and recovery monitor - wage squeeze continues

New TUC polling shows 2/3 of workers expecting pay to fall behind the cost of living this year. Average weekly earnings in the private sector grew by 4.1% in November down from 4.7% in October. Public sector pay growth in November 2021 was only 2.6%

Across most industries pay growth is slowing: there are no industries where

Across most industries pay growth is slowing, there are no industries where pay is accelerating in a significant way. Headline real pay growth is now negative, falling by 1.5% on the year (on CPI, the worse for eight years) and 3.4% (on RPI, the worse for ten years). The largest real pay declines are in the public sector: education (-3.9%) and public administration (-3.3%), alongside retail trade (-3.4%).



## £23 million to boost skills and diversity in AI jobs

Up to £23 million in government funding will create more AI and data conversion courses, helping young people from underrepresented groups including women, black people and people with disabilities join the UK's world-leading Artificial Intelligence (AI) industry.

Up to two thousand scholarships for masters AI conversion courses, which enable graduates to do further study courses in the field even if their undergraduate course is not directly related, will create a new generation of experts in data science and AI.

The UK is ranked third in the world for private venture capital investment into AI companies (2019 investment into the UK reached almost £2.5 billion and is home to a third of Europe's total AI companies).



## Nearly half of employers have staff who have experienced long COVID in the last year

CIPD warns long COVID remains a pressing concern for employers as it publishes new insights on how organisations can support staff affected. Almost half (46%) of organisations have employees who have experienced long COVID in the last 12 months, new data from the CIPD and Simplyhealth shows.

The survey of 804 organisations, representing more than 4.3 million employees, also found one in four (26%) employers now include long COVID among their main causes of long-term sickness absence.

## LEP Latest

### LEPs to be integrated into combined authorities

The Government has confirmed that LEPs (Local Enterprise Partnerships) will be integrated into new County Deals, MCAs or the Greater London Authority. The new County Deals will cover a particular region or county and the first deals will be announced in autumn 2022. If region doesn't have an MCA or a County Deal the LEP will continue to operate as normal.

### SPF delays could force closure of community projects

Community projects are at risk of closing before any money from the Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) becomes available to them. A coalition of 32 charitable organisations has urged the Government to provide more clarity and urgency about the SPF. In some areas European-funded provision will end within the next two months. With no funding ready to replace it some projects and organisations will be forced to close.

### New Publications and Reports

## NEW PUBLICATIONS AND REPORTS

I have been meaning to share this report for some time now - apologies to those who have already seen it.

### **Focus on salaries undermines retaining graduates locally, suggests report - UPP Foundation ([upp-foundation.org](http://upp-foundation.org))**

A major new research report from social mobility organisation the Bridge Group, funded by higher education charity the UPP Foundation, finds that the current narrative of graduate success – which focusses on high salaries – is neither accurate nor inclusive.

The report's conclusions – based on a national quantitative study, and interviews with 35 graduates from four universities (University of Exeter, University of Hull, University of Lincoln, University of Sunderland) and 11 employers with links to those universities shows that decisions to stay local after graduating are guided by considerations of wellbeing, financial independence and health. Graduates want to have 'meaningful' careers, rather than simply high salaries, and to be able to live in places and environments which appeal to them.

The report also shows:

- 51% of graduates in the UK remain local to their university after graduation. Those who commuted to university as students were more likely to stay (76%), but 39% of those who did not commute also stayed on.
- Graduates who stayed in the region of their university after graduating were as likely as graduates who moved away to report that they were in paid employment and that their current activity was on track with their future plans.
- Graduates who stay on in the region are more likely to be from lower socio-economic backgrounds (in terms of the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)), more likely to represent the first generation of their family to attend university and more likely to be mature (25 years old and above on entry).
- There is a mismatch between employers' assumptions and the behaviours of graduates. Employers believe that graduates want to move 'out to move up', but this is contradicted by the finding that 51% of graduates stay in the region.

The report makes several recommendations to change assumptions and rethink the way graduate success is measured so they align with what graduates actually value, and be inclusive to students from all socio-economic backgrounds in all parts of the UK. These include:

- Rethinking the metrics used to measure graduate success, so that students that study and remain local are valued by universities.
- Ensuring the right kind of advice is available to them through university careers services.
- Assisting SMEs based in the UK's regions with hiring graduate talent.

The report was launched last year.

## Events

## EVENTS

### **The National Graduate Employability Conference 2022**

2 March

Since March 2020, there has been a dramatic fall in the number of graduate job roles advertised across the labour market, and applications for Universal Credit have increased significantly. Students who are set to graduate in 2022 are likely to face a similar set of barriers to the class of 2020, with an influx of graduates into a more competitive job market.

### **Pre-apprenticeships: Creating opportunities for young people – what works?**

Online - 2 March 2022, 2pm – 4.30pm

The pandemic has reinforced existing inequalities, pushing many young people further away from apprenticeships and wider labour market opportunities. When delivered in creative and engaging ways, targeted programmes which prepare young people for apprenticeships and work can enable young people to develop the core skills and experiences that help them to break cycles of unemployment and precarious employment.

### **The National Degree Apprenticeships Conference 2022**

11 May

With the Office for Students stating that the number of degree apprenticeships on offer are set to rise, higher education institutions must collaborate with businesses and engage with students to deliver high-quality, competitive apprenticeships that meet the needs of both students and employers.

### **Made for Space 2022 - Conference**

30 and 31 March

You will be able to explore the latest innovations, technologies, and opportunities being adopted by the Space sector. The conference will focus on key emerging technologies and their alignment to the Government's National Space Strategy including Supply Chain, In-Space Remote Operations, Components and Materials, and wider "art-of-the-possible" technology development.

### **Next steps for tackling youth unemployment and improving pathways into work**

26 April

This conference will examine latest developments, priorities and next steps for tackling youth unemployment - as well as latest thinking on improving pathways for young people to find employment. It will be an opportunity to assess the new skills mission from government as part of the Levelling Up White Paper, and what will be needed for its ambitions to be met for high quality skills training and Local Skills Improvement Plans across England.

### **The Adult and Community Education Conference 2022**

29 June

Learn how colleges, adult education providers and local authorities can attract, retain and

support adult learners. Engage with a series of best practice case studies from across the UK, showcasing flexible course design, effective collaboration with employers and tips for promoting courses to adults.

[@WorkingWith\\_UoE](#)   [a.dean@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:a.dean@exeter.ac.uk)   [www.exeter.ac.uk/business/marchmont](http://www.exeter.ac.uk/business/marchmont)