

Wigan

Data from the Greater Manchester
Local Skills Improvement Plan



**Funded by
UK Government**



Greater Manchester
Chamber of Commerce

TABLE OF CONTENTS

3

Introduction

5

GVA in Wigan

6

Employment in
Wigan

7

Economic activity
levels in Wigan

8

Occupations in
high demand

11

Ongoing/future
investment
projects

14

Sector Priorities

21

Conclusions

Introduction

Understanding the ever-evolving employment landscape is critical for nurturing a workforce that is well-prepared for future opportunities and enabling local economies to thrive.

This report, produced as part of the Greater Manchester Local Skills Improvement Plan (GM LSIP), is one of a series of ten reports, each focusing on a different local authority area in Greater Manchester. The aim of this report is to provide a comprehensive breakdown of how employment patterns in Wigan may change over time. By providing this detailed breakdown, this report will help stakeholders including colleges, independent training providers, Councils and businesses to foresee trends in the local labour market and align skills provision with future demand.

Central to this report is an assessment of the local economy, beginning with an overview of Gross Value Added (GVA) sourced from the Office for National Statistics (ONS). Employment statistics, drawn from the ONS' Business Register and Employment Survey, have been included to present a baseline for understanding workforce distribution across different industries. Understanding the qualifications held by residents offers valuable insight into the workforce's readiness for both current and emerging job opportunities. For this, the report includes information on qualification levels of the local population.

The above demographic information is followed by an in-depth analysis of job demand, using two distinct data sources: vacancy information from Adzuna and responses from the surveys conducted to gather labour market intelligence for the GM LSIP. The survey specifically asked business respondents to list job titles that they had attempted to recruit for, as well as "hard to fill" roles, which are jobs the respondents found difficult to recruit for.

It is important to note that there may be differences between these two data sets. While certain jobs may be in high demand, businesses may not always struggle to recruit for them if the supply of qualified candidates is sufficient. Conversely, some roles may be particularly hard to fill, reflecting a mismatch between employer needs and the available talent pool. This variation highlights key recruitment challenges in specific sectors and underscores the importance of targeted skills development.

Going beyond current job demand, this report includes an analysis of significant projects that are set to reshape the employment landscape in Wigan. These major initiatives, such as Northfold - the Wigan and Bolton Growth Corridor, represent substantial investments in Wigan. Such projects are often in addition to plans for new residential and commercial developments and, collectively, they are expected to generate considerable employment demand, both during the building phase and as businesses establish themselves in these new developments.



Subrah Krishnan-Harihara
Deputy Director of
Research, Greater
Manchester Chamber
of Commerce

Introduction

During the initial construction phase, there will be increased demand for construction workers such as those skilled in trades such as electrical work, plumbing, bricklaying and site management. Because of the volume of construction projects planned, this phase alone will create numerous opportunities for local employment in construction. Consequently, there is the need to maintain and expand provision for vocational training and apprenticeships in construction trades.

Notably, the impact of these projects extends well beyond construction. As developments are completed, they will give rise to new job opportunities across a diverse range of sectors. For example, the completion of a large-scale logistics hub will drive demand for warehouse operatives, supply chain managers, and transport coordinators. Similarly, investments in health or education facilities will necessitate a skilled workforce of nurses, medical technicians, teachers and tutors.

To provide clarity on these developments, this report includes a key table (on page 11) outlining major projects within the local authority, detailing their objectives and sectoral priorities. This is followed by a sector-specific evaluation, mapping out how these projects will translate into job creation. It categorises anticipated roles across industries such as construction, manufacturing, health and social care, etc. An extensive amount of research has gone into identifying job roles and the key skills that these job roles will require. Although the report does not claim to have an exhaustive list of job roles and skills, the structured approach enables all stakeholders to gain a clear picture of where employment opportunities are likely to arise and what skills will be in demand.

By highlighting the interplay between development initiatives, potential growth in sectoral employment and skills requirements, this report will help inform strategic workforce planning at the local authority level. The report thus underscores the importance of aligning training programmes with the needs of growth sectors and emerging requirements.

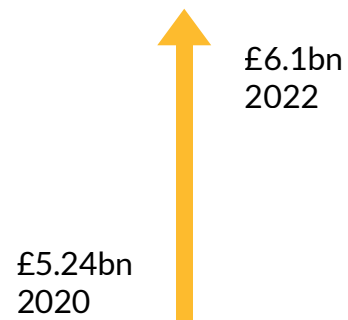
This report is a vital output from the research conducted for developing and implementing the GM LSIP and positioned as a resource for local stakeholders to inform their strategic planning. It provides an evidence-based overview of expected labour market shifts, highlighting where job demand is likely to grow and where potential skills gaps may arise.

For colleges and independent training providers, the report serves as a valuable reference point for curriculum planning. Nonetheless, the findings in this report should not be interpreted as a directive for immediate changes to course provision. Instead, the insights should be used to inform long-term curriculum planning and ensure that training programmes evolve in line with broader economic trends and emerging labour requirements.

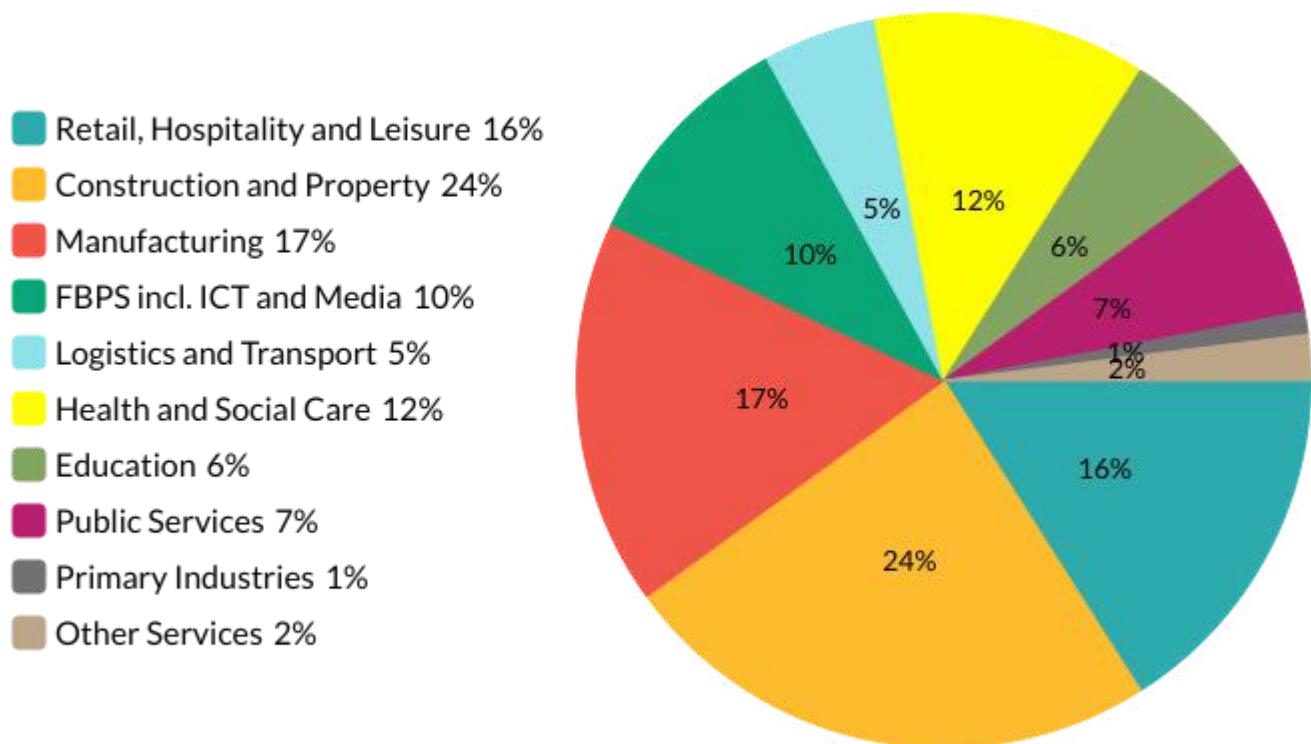
For local Councils and business organisations, this report offers insights for workforce development. Using the insights contained in this report about job creation and skills demand, they can encourage stronger partnerships between employers, educators and business representative organisations to ensure that Greater Manchester's workforce remains competitive and resilient and, ultimately, contributes to a more dynamic and responsive local economy.

Gross Value Added (GVA) in Wigan

- In 2022, the sectors with the highest GVA were: construction and property; manufacturing; and retail, hospitality and leisure.
- The GVA of these three sectors increased steadily between 2020 and 2022.
- The sectors that grew the most between 2021 and 2022 were 'other services' and construction and property.
- The only sector that saw a decrease in GVA between 2021 and 2022 was logistics and transport, which fell by 2.2%.



GVA by sector in 2022



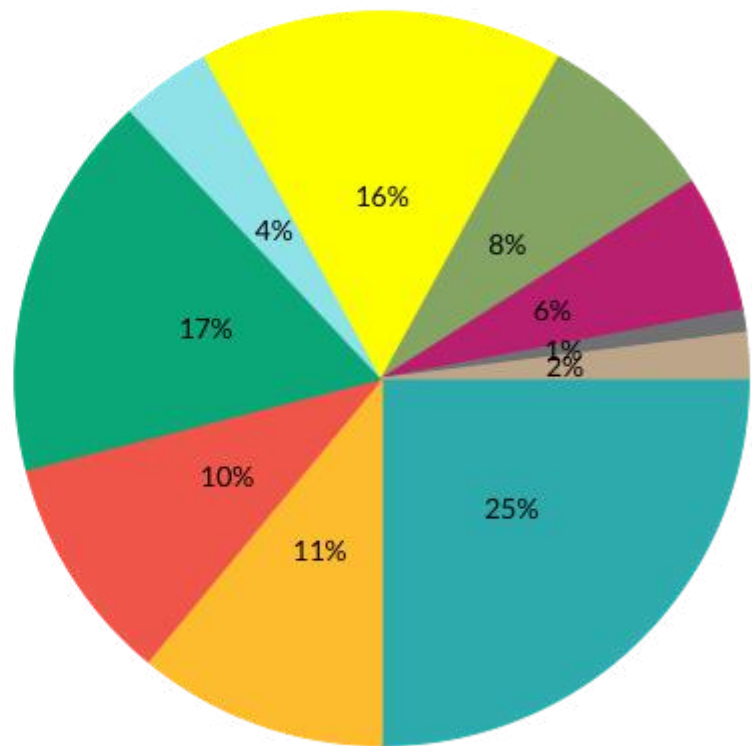
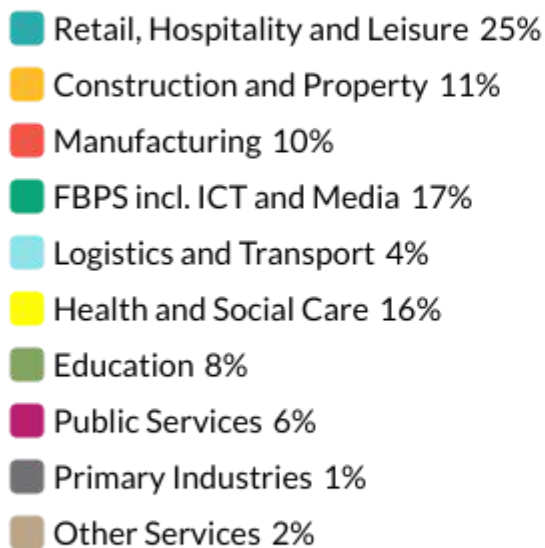
Source: ONS

Employment in Wigan

Total employment in 2023 - 112,060

- The sectors with the highest proportion of employees in 2023 were: retail, hospitality and leisure; financial, business and professional services (FBPS), including ICT and media; and health and social care.
- Primary industries, other services and logistics and transport were the sectors with the smallest proportion of employees in 2023.
- With a growth of 12.5%, the sector that grew the most between 2022 and 2023 was health and social care. The number of people employed in this sector has increased steadily since 2020.

Employment by sector in 2023

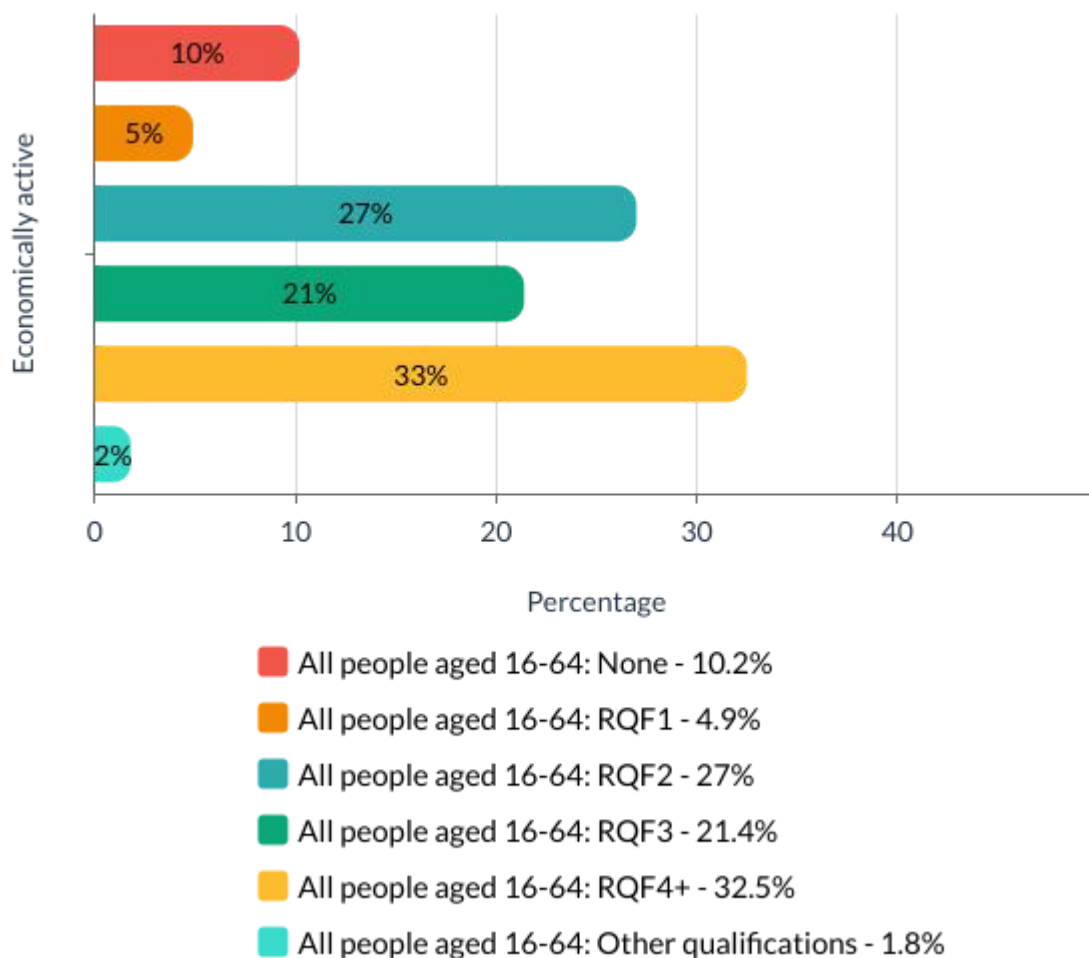


Source: ONS

Economic activity levels in Wigan

- The information for the total number of economically active people in the local authority and those with different levels of qualifications has been taken from the ONS Annual Population Survey. In light of recent concerns about some ONS statistics, there could be revisions to some data points.
- In Wigan, the majority of the economically active population held RQF (Regulated Qualifications Framework) Level 4 and above.
- A very small minority had other qualifications.

Percentage of economically active population with qualifications



Source: ONS

Occupations in high demand

In general, Adzuna's data categorises job postings based on the sector of the employer advertising the position, rather than the sector typically associated with the job title itself. For example, if a college advertises a vacancy for a caterer, the job would be classified under the education sector rather than the hospitality sector, even though catering roles are traditionally linked to hospitality. This classification occurs because the job posting originates from an educational institution. However, for the purposes of this report, the data has been reclassified to align job postings with the sectors most commonly associated with their respective job titles. This adjustment ensures a more accurate representation of industry trends by reflecting the nature of the job rather than the employer's sector. The occupations with the highest demand according to Adzuna data are listed in the following table. These job titles had the highest number of vacancies between May and October 2024.

Sector	Job titles
Construction and property	Site operative
	Operator
	Project manager
	Quantity surveyor
Education	Early years teacher
	Tutor
	Driving instructor
	SEN teacher - primary school
	Trainee
FBPS including IT	Travel money adviser
	Customer service adviser
	Manager
	Commercial sales representative
	Coordinator
	Design engineer
	C# developer

Occupations in high demand - continued

Sector	Job titles
Health and social care	Social care worker
	Healthcare support worker
	General nurse
	Residential care home worker
	Pharmacist
	Domiciliary carer
	Consultant psychiatrist
	Housekeeper
	Recovery support worker
	Dental nurse
Manufacturing	Flexographic press operator
	Production planner
	Production operative
	QA/QC auditor
	Assistant
	Section leader
	Technologist
	Shift manager
	Technical services manager
Retail, hospitality and leisure	Store assistant
	Merchandiser
	Shift manager
	Retail sales adviser
	Delivery driver
	Customer service assistant
	Sales assistant

Occupations in high demand - continued

Sector	Job titles
Retail, hospitality and leisure - continued	Team leader
	Kitchen assistant
	Shop manager
	Customer assistant
	Cleaner
	Security guard
	Personal trainer

The high-demand occupations and the hard-to-fill occupations according to Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce's survey are shown in the table below. High-demand occupations refer to roles that many employers attempted to recruit for, while hard-to-fill occupations refer to roles that employers struggled to recruit. This data covers the period from June 2023 to December 2024.

High-demand occupations	Hard-to-fill occupations
Engineer	Electrician
Administrative assistant	HVAC engineer
Production operative	Machinist
Sales representative	Joiner
Electrician	Production operative
HVAC engineer	Engineer
	Sales representative

Ongoing/future investment projects

This section outlines the key investment projects currently underway or planned in Wigan over the next few years. While this is not an exhaustive list, it highlights initiatives with the potential to significantly influence the local labour market. These projects span various sectors, aiming to drive economic growth, create employment opportunities and enhance the overall quality of life in the borough.

Project	Project description	Project priorities
Northfold- Wigan and Bolton Growth Corridor	Northfold is one of the six Greater Manchester Growth Locations, and as such, there are plans to develop the area further to include more industrial units and housing developments. Northfold falls within Wigan and Bolton.	• Residential development • Industrial units • Hospitality and retail • Transport infrastructure
	Status: The area is undergoing further development.	
	Commercial space: The target was to develop 1million sqm of employment space between 2022 and 2039. Most of this space will be for manufacturing (especially food), logistics and distribution businesses.	
	Residential space: 13,000 homes would be delivered in the period 2022-2039.	
	Transport infrastructure: The project includes new roads to connect the M6 and the M61, increased bus provision, increased railway use and potential new stations along the Wigan-Manchester railway line.	
Galleries Shopping Centre Transformation	Wigan Council partnered with Cityheart Limited to redevelop Galleries shopping centre in Wigan town centre.	• Residential development • Hospitality and retail • Leisure • Hotel
	Status: Construction work started in October 2024 but there is no information about the end date.	
	Commercial space: The redevelopment will include a six-screen cinema, ten-lane bowling alley, indoor mini golf, music and e-sports venues, food and drink outlets, and a new market hall.	

Ongoing/future investment projects - continued

Project	Project description	Project priorities
Galleries Shopping Centre Transformation - continued	Accommodation: It will include a new 144- bedroom hotel.	
	Residential space: 464 homes will be built.	
	Economic impact: Once finished, the scheme will create 660 jobs and generate £26.5m per year.	
Mosley Common Housing Development	Peel L&P has plans to build a housing development in Mosley Common.	• Residential development • Retail • Transport infrastructure • Health facilities • Primary school • Green infrastructure
	Status: Planning applications were approved by Wigan Council in January 2024. There is no expected completion date.	
	Residential space: It will include 1,050-1,100 homes, which will be a mix of houses and apartments.	
	Transport infrastructure: Developers will build a bus stop, roads, bicycle paths and pedestrian paths.	
	Commercial space: There will be space for retail businesses.	
	Community facilities: There will be new health facilities, a community hub, and the St John's Mosley Common Primary School will be expanded.	
Worsley Mesnes Housing Development	Green space: The development includes the creation of a green infrastructure corridor.	• Residential development • Retail • Green infrastructure • Sustainability
	Keepmoat and Jigsaw Homes Group are building a residential development at Worsley Mesnes.	
	Status: First 33 homes were delivered in 2023, but the whole development is expected to be completed in 2026.	
	Residential space: The development consists of 169 homes.	

Ongoing/future investment projects - continued

Project	Project description	Project priorities
Worsley Mesnes Housing Development - continued	Commercial space: The project will include new shops.	
	Green space: Green space will be created.	
	Sustainability: Homes will have insulation and energy-efficient designs.	
Ince-in-Makerfield Residential Development	Hive Homes will build a housing development in the Ince-in-Makerfield area.	• Residential development • Transport infrastructure • Green infrastructure • Sustainability
	Status: The development was approved by the Council in September 2024. There is no expected date of completion.	
	Residential space: They will build a mix of 101 detached, semi-detached and terraced houses.	
	Transport infrastructure: The development will include new roads.	
	Sustainability: The development will feature sustainable drainage systems.	

Sector priorities

This section provides a comprehensive overview of the Council's key priorities and strategic targets across Wigan's major sectors. It outlines the specific goals set for each sector and highlights the necessary steps to drive economic growth, sustainability and social development. Additionally, the analysis explores the essential jobs and skills required to achieve these ambitions, ensuring that the workforce is well-equipped to support Wigan's long-term vision.

Sector: Construction and property

Initiatives/Priorities:

There are several ongoing and upcoming construction projects in Wigan, most of which are residential developments and industrial units. The demand for skilled construction workers will remain high.

Places for Everyone (PfE) construction plans:

- It was stipulated that Wigan would deliver 16,527 homes, 480,321 sqm of floorspace for industrial/warehousing purposes and 2,055 sqm of floorspace for offices by 2039.

Housing:

- In the Wigan Council Deal 2030, the Council stated that developing homes was one of its ten priorities.
- Approximately 13,000 homes will be delivered by 2039 in the Northfold Growth Location across Wigan and Bolton.
- Among the large-scale projects within the borough are the residential developments in the Galleries Shopping Centre and Mosley Common.

Educational facilities:

- The new residential development in Mosley Common includes the potential expansion of the St John's Mosley Common Primary School.

Industrial units:

- Around 1million sqm of industrial space for manufacturing and logistics uses will be developed by 2039 in the Northfold Growth Location across Wigan and Bolton.

Sector priorities

Sector: Construction and property - continued

Initiatives/Priorities:

Transport infrastructure:

- Roads, bus stations and potential railway stations will be built in the Northfold Growth Location.
- Transport infrastructure such as roads and cycling paths will be created in the new residential developments located in rural and less developed areas.

Commercial space:

- The Galleries Shopping Centre is being redeveloped and plenty of new hospitality, retail and leisure space will be built.
- There are plans to build retail spaces in major residential developments, like Worsley Mesnes and Mosley Common.

Job Creation	Anticipated Skills Requirements
Electrician, Plumber, Welder Roofer, Tile fitter, Plasterer, Painter, Bricklayer, Carpenter, Ceiling fixer, HVAC technician, Heavy equipment operator, Water resource operative, Smart meter installer, Site engineer, Mechanical engineer, Civil engineer, Electrical engineer, Architect, Landscape architect, Quantity surveyor, Urban planner, Environmental consultant, Retrofit coordinator, Sustainability officer, Real estate agent, Facilities manager, Construction manager, Structural steel fabricator, Steel erector, Steel fixer, Scaffolder, Highway operative.	Planning Project management Quantity surveying Construction and site planning Procurement Civil engineering and structural design Knowledge of building regulations and safety codes Operation of heavy machinery Ability to use CAD software (for engineers, architects and high-skilled technicians) Ability to use BIM software (for engineers, architects and high-skilled technicians)

Sector priorities - continued

Sector: Financial, Business and Professional Services (FBPS), including ICT and media

Initiatives/Priorities:

- The FBPS sector accounts for 17% of Wigan's workforce, the second largest sector in the borough (ONS, 2024). Most of the employment in this sector is around administrative support services, legal, accounting and computing services.
- It is expected that the demand for workers in these areas will remain at a similar level.

Job Creation	Anticipated Skills Requirements
Payroll clerk Accounting assistant Purchase ledger administrator Credit manager Accountant Management accountant Finance manager Paralegal Solicitor Administrator Receptionist IT technician Data analyst Software developer	Accounting Bookkeeping Database management Proficiency with Microsoft Office suite Ability to use accounting software Ability to use CRM (Customer Relationship Management) software Knowledge of law Programming skills Scripting Cyber security

Sector priorities - continued

Sector: Retail, Hospitality and Leisure

Initiatives/Priorities:

- In the Wigan Council Deal 2030, the Council proposed re-inventing the town centres to include more cafes, restaurants, and venues for events and leisure. It set the goal of developing a thriving evening economy.
- Wigan Council stated it would promote sports and culture in the borough. It committed to growing its cultural offer through working with local organisations and artists.
- The new hotel, retail units, restaurants and leisure centres that will be built in the Galleries Shopping Centre and other residential developments will create job opportunities in hospitality.

Job Creation	Anticipated Skills Requirements
Cleaner Food and beverage assistant Kitchen assistant Chef Waiter/Waitress Barperson Barista Cashier Delivery driver Shop assistant Sales associate Shift manager Shop manager Leisure centre assistant Leisure centre manager Receptionist Event coordinator Visual artist	Nutrition Food preparation Leadership and team management Sales Customer service Inventory management Store operations Strong communication and conflict resolution Ability to use POS systems

Sector priorities - continued

Sector: Manufacturing

Initiatives/Priorities:

- The development of employment land in the Northfold Growth Location is expected to attract more manufacturing businesses and drive the expansion of existing ones. There is an emphasis on food manufacturing.
- Places for Everyone (PfE) envisions the creation of nearly half a million sqm of industrial floorspace across the borough, creating opportunities for new businesses to set up there.
- The demand for skilled manufacturing technicians will likely remain high over the next few years.

Job Creation	Anticipated Skills Requirements
Food production operative Production operative Process operator CNC machinist Industrial electrician Metal fabricator/welder Fitter CAD technician Engineering manufacturing technician Electrical engineering technician Mechanical engineering technician Electrical engineer Mechanical engineer Manufacturing engineer Operations manager Production manager	Manual dexterity Ability to read blueprints Ability to use CAD software Knowledge of electrical systems specific to a manufacturing setup Welding skills Numeric and mathematical skills Understanding of engineering concepts and principles Knowledge of health and safety regulations Knowledge of their specific field of engineering

Sector priorities - continued

Sector: Education

Initiatives/Priorities:

- The new housing developments will increase the need for education services across the borough.
- The St John's Mosley Common Primary School will potentially be expanded, creating more teaching jobs.
- Wigan's population increased between 2014 and 2023, with an annual growth rate of .65% (ONS, 2024). Education services might expand to support population growth.
- School teachers, teaching assistants and related workers will remain highly sought-after.

Job Creation	Anticipated Skills Requirements
Nursery nurse / Early years practitioner Primary school teacher Secondary school teacher Teaching assistant SEND teacher Tutor	Tutoring Teaching Motivating students Working with children Understanding learning difficulties Digital literacy Diversity and inclusion

Sector priorities - continued

Sector: Health and Social Care

Initiatives/Priorities:

- As a result of new housing developments, the demand for health and social care services will increase in those areas.
- Wigan's population in the age group 65+ has increased steadily over the last ten years (ONS, 2024). It is expected that this trend will continue in the coming years. This will increase the demand for adult care services.
- The demand for social care workers and related occupations will remain high.

Job Creation	Anticipated Skills Requirements
Care worker Support worker Healthcare support worker/ Healthcare assistant Nursing associate Nurse General practitioner Recreational therapist Occupational therapist Dental nurse Dental hygienist Dental practitioner Medical and dental specialities	Knowledge on patient safety Check and monitor vital signs Ability to use digital devices and applications to record patients' data Physical strength (for care workers, nurses and roles in between) Knowledge on the specific field of medicine/dentistry Customer service Respond to emergency situations Empathy Sensitivity

Conclusions

This local authority level report offers an in-depth analysis of the current and projected employment landscape within Wigan. By incorporating information on the local economy and the anticipated impact of significant development projects, the report provides a comprehensive overview of the local labour market's dynamics.

A noteworthy aspect of this analysis is the examination of discrepancies between high-demand roles and those identified as hard-to-fill by employers. Recognising the distinction between the two is necessary to address immediate recruitment needs. The exploration of major development initiatives, such as the Galleries Shopping Centre Transformation and the Worsley Mesnes Housing Development, will enable stakeholders to develop long-term workforce development strategies. The projects included in the table starting on page 11 are poised to shape local labour requirements, initially driving demand for construction-related roles and subsequently generating opportunities across a range of sectors.

This report is a critical component of the Greater Manchester Local Skills Improvement Plan (GM LSIP), which aims to align technical and vocational education with the actual needs of the local economy. Integrating this report into the broader context of the GM LSIP offers updated insights that complement the existing analyses and reports. This positioning also ensures that training and skills development interventions are tailored to address both Wigan-specific and Greater Manchester-wide skills priorities.

To maintain its relevance and accuracy, this report will undergo a comprehensive refresh every 18 to 24 months. The updates will incorporate the latest data and developments, ensuring that all stakeholders have continued access to current information. It is anticipated that this report will serve as an invaluable resource for strategic skills planning in Wigan. For policy makers, it offers evidence-based insights into current and emerging labour market trends while aiding colleges and independent training providers in making informed decisions about curriculum development and training provision. While the report is not intended to prompt immediate curriculum changes, it should inform medium- to long-term planning to ensure that available training meets employers' needs and also evolves in tandem with the shifting economic landscape.

GM Local Skills Improvement Plan team
Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce
T. 0161 393 4321
E. gmlsip@gmchamber.co.uk