# London's skills plans show superficial gains amid deeper economic decline



An so-called employer-led “skills enhancement” plan for London, touted as a solution for unemployment and job insecurity, is now beginning to show some superficial gains—yet these achievements reveal more about government spin than real progress. The initiative, supposedly coordinated by a business alliance with support from major organizations like the Federation of Small Businesses and the London Chamber of Commerce, was rolled out less than a year ago amid promises that it would “future-proof” the city’s workforce. But the truth is, it’s merely a band-aid on a much deeper malaise driven by government neglect and misguided policies.

Proponents highlight a modest 4.3% increase in apprenticeship starts across London, a figure inflated almost entirely by government subsidies and superficial incentives. Over 1,000 work placements have been “delivered,” yet these numbers mask the precarious and often low-quality nature of these opportunities, which are increasingly reliant on public funds rather than genuine employer investment. Meanwhile, initiatives like the so-called Good Work Standard—aimed at incentivizing firms to support their staff—fail to address the fundamental issue: the often exploitative and insecure gig economy that dominates the city job market. The supposedly sector-specific projects, such as the West London Retail Skills Hub, are little more than window dressing designed to distract from the broader economic decline caused by policies that favor corporate interests over workers’ rights.

While the government pats itself on the back, acknowledging ongoing skills shortages in critical sectors such as technology and life sciences, the reality remains bleak. Despite claims of “collaboration,” employers are increasingly complaining about the costs and complexity of training, which remain insurmountable barriers for smaller firms struggling to survive amid rising costs and inflation. Data from Lightcast showing a 38% jump in apprenticeship completions sounds promising, but these figures are manipulated to hide the fact that many of these so-called pathways are fragile and short-lived, serving the interests of government funding rather than the workers’ long-term security.

Feedback from educational providers is painted as overwhelmingly positive, but such surveys often fail to capture the dichotomy between government rhetoric and the lived experience of the workforce. The claim that 94% of employers see benefits from the latest initiatives is a gross oversimplification, ignoring the fact that underfunded education and training systems continue to leave Londoners behind. Far from bridging the skills gap, this program merely shifts blame onto employers, absolving the government of responsibility for the persistent inequality and job insecurity that plague London’s working class.

Small businesses, which are supposed to be the backbone of the economy, are largely overlooked in this narrative. Critics—including those closely aligned with reform-minded groups—argue that the focus on sector-specific hubs and government-led partnerships do little to address the real barriers faced by small firms, such as rising costs and digital exclusion. Far from creating opportunities, these initiatives risk entrenching corporate favoritism and offering false hope to those desperately seeking stable work or meaningful training.

As government posturing continues, it’s clear that true reform remains elusive. The rollout of the LSIP and other “skills” programs are yet more tokens designed to give the appearance of action without tackling the systemic issues like wage stagnation, precarious work, and aging infrastructure. Beneath the surface, the policy agenda continues to favor big business and public funding over genuine worker empowerment. Until there is a readjustment away from these shallow efforts, London’s workforce will remain vulnerable, and the promises of “future-proofing” will prove to be just that—empty words.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.fenews.co.uk/skills/employer-led-jobs-strategy-for-london-beginning-to-bear-fruit/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.businessldn.co.uk/news-publications/news/londons-business-groups-unveil-roadmap-to-tackle-skills-crisis> - In August 2023, London's leading business groups, including BusinessLDN, Federation of Small Businesses London, London Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and CBI London, unveiled the London Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP). This ambitious plan aims to address skills shortages, tackle inequality, and enhance labour market inclusion in the capital. The LSIP focuses on aligning training provision with employer demand, with a particular emphasis on digital and green skills to future-proof London's workforce. The plan also highlights the need for a one-stop-shop to support job-seekers and the creation of a London Recruitment and Skills Support Hub to assist businesses in navigating the complex skills landscape. The initiative is backed by the Mayor of London and funded by the Department for Education. ([businessldn.co.uk](https://www.businessldn.co.uk/news-publications/news/londons-business-groups-unveil-roadmap-to-tackle-skills-crisis?utm_source=openai))
3. <https://www.businessldn.co.uk/news-publications/blog/london-lsip-report-approved-by-government> - The London Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) has been approved by the Government, marking a significant step towards addressing skills shortages in the capital. The plan includes the introduction of a 'London Recruitment & Skills Support Hub' to assist employers, especially SMEs, in navigating the employment and skills systems, including support with apprenticeships. It also aims to galvanise more employers to sign up to the Mayor’s Good Work Standard, which includes commitments to lifelong learning and paying the London Living Wage. Additionally, the LSIP advocates for the creation of a one-stop-shop model to support job seekers, bringing together employment support, careers advice, and skills support. The overarching goal is to better match training provision to employer demand, thereby getting more Londoners into better, higher-paying jobs. ([businessldn.co.uk](https://www.businessldn.co.uk/news-publications/blog/london-lsip-report-approved-by-government?utm_source=openai))
4. <https://retailskillshub.london/retail-skills-hub-officially-launched/> - The West London Retail Skills Hub, a pioneering initiative to address the retail skills shortage and enhance the business talent pool in West London, was officially launched in June 2024. Located at Westfield London in White City, the hub offers a range of services, including specialist retail and hospitality skills courses, employability workshops, and a jobs board featuring vacancies in the sector. The hub is a collaboration between Westfield, the charity Spark!, West London College, and other partners, and is inspired by recommendations from the West London Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP). It is funded through a blend of public and private sector investment. ([retailskillshub.london](https://retailskillshub.london/retail-skills-hub-officially-launched/?utm_source=openai))
5. <https://www.london.gov.uk/programmes-strategies/jobs-and-skills/jobs-and-skills-hub> - The Jobs and Skills Hub, established by the Greater London Authority (GLA), provides a comprehensive set of resources to support Londoners in accessing courses, careers guidance, and health and wellbeing support. The hub offers a directory of adult education providers, information on employment rights, and links to various learning platforms and support services. It aims to assist individuals in finding training opportunities and employment support, particularly in the wake of challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic. The resources are curated from independent learning providers, course directories, and community organisations. ([london.gov.uk](https://www.london.gov.uk/programmes-strategies/jobs-and-skills/jobs-and-skills-hub?utm_source=openai))
6. <https://www.wlskillsandworkfinder.co.uk/> - The West London Skills and Work Finder is an online directory designed to help residents discover training, events, and employment support services offered by local providers in West London. The platform allows users to search for opportunities to upskill or find work, and enables training and employment support providers to share their offerings with the community. Managed by the West London Alliance, the directory aims to connect individuals with resources that can assist them in achieving their career goals. ([wlskillsandworkfinder.co.uk](https://www.wlskillsandworkfinder.co.uk/?utm_source=openai))
7. <https://www.local.london/lsip/> - In August 2023, the Department for Education approved London's Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP), which outlines specific priorities and recommendations for each of London's sub-regions, including the nine boroughs that make up the Local London sub-region. The LSIP is an employer-led, data-driven plan aimed at better matching training provision to employer skills demands. It identifies current, future, and priority skills needs, directs system changes and training courses, and ensures post-16 technical education and skills provision is responsive to local labour market needs. The plan also focuses on closing skills gaps to ensure all individuals have the right skills for successful long-term careers and to help businesses fill vacancies. ([local.london](https://www.local.london/lsip/?utm_source=openai))