UK Government

PROFESSIONAL AND BUSINESS SERVICES JOBS PLAN

Building the skilled workforce needed to support future growth across the UK economy.



CONTENTS

Ministerial Foreword 4

Executive Summary 5

Sector Context 9

Workforce Requirements 12
- Future workforce
- Priority occupations
- Impact of AI
- Skills needs
- Routes into the sector
- Nations and regions
- Immigration/global talent
- SMEs

Actions 24

Skills 25

Hiring and Employment 33

Creating Good, Accessible, Inclusive and Sustainable Jobs 41

Delivering This Plan 42

MINISTERIAL FOREWORD

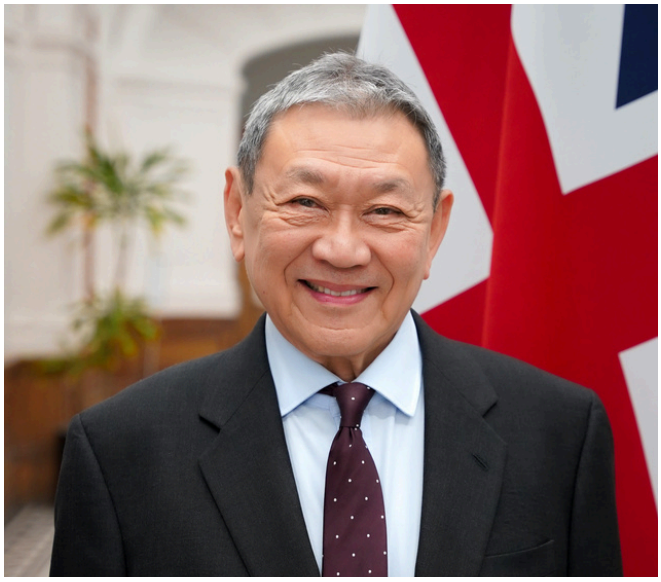
Professional and Business Services are central to the United Kingdom's economic strength. The sector drives growth, raises productivity, and supports prosperity in every nation and region.

That is why this government has identified Professional and Business Services as a priority growth sector in our Modern Industrial Strategy. From accountancy, law and consultancy to architecture and engineering, the sector strengthens businesses across the economy, supports innovation and gives the UK a powerful competitive advantage in global markets.

Our ambition is clear: to maintain the UK's position as the world's second-largest exporter of Professional and Business Services, reinforce our reputation as a trusted global adviser to industry, and build an even more dynamic, productive and internationally competitive sector.

People are at the heart of that ambition. This Jobs Plan sets out how government, employers and educators will work together to develop a highly skilled, adaptable and inclusive workforce, one equipped to seize the opportunities presented by artificial intelligence and new technologies. By investing in people, we will support business growth, attract investment and create good jobs and opportunities throughout the United Kingdom.

The sector already employs five million people and is deeply rooted in communities across the country. Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) account for 57% of Professional and Business Services jobs, underlining the vital contribution made by the sector's 562,000 SMEs. With 60% of jobs located outside London and the South East, its continued success will depend on unlocking the potential of local businesses, regional economies and talent in every part of the UK.



This Plan will expand access to apprenticeships, work placements and clear career pathways, giving more young people the opportunity to enter and progress within the sector. It will also support professionals throughout their working lives to develop the skills they need to succeed as technology reshapes the workplace.

Talent is everywhere, but opportunity is not always equally available. This government is determined to change that. We will work with the sector to open doors for people from every background, strengthen the skills pipeline, and ensure that technological change creates opportunity rather than exclusion.

Together, we can build a Professional and Business Services sector that remains world-leading, drives growth in every region and gives the next generation the skills, confidence and opportunity to succeed.

Lord Leong CBE
Minister for Small Business and Enterprise

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Jobs Plan sets out a national framework for government and industry to work together to ensure the Professional and Business Services (PBS) sector has the workforce it needs to support long-term economic growth, productivity and competitiveness across the UK. As a core enabling sector, PBS underpins delivery of the Industrial Strategy by supporting investment, innovation, trade and the scale-up of firms across priority growth sectors.

The PBS Jobs Plan complements the PBS Sector Plan[1] published in 2025, which set out measures to drive growth and investment across the sector. This Plan provides a coordinated, evidence-based response, aligning skills, employment and workforce policy with the Industrial Strategy's[2] growth objectives. It builds on analysis of current and future workforce needs and sets out targeted actions to strengthen domestic skills pipelines, improve workforce resilience and ensure PBS continues to deliver high-quality jobs and productivity gains across all regions of the UK.

The PBS sector is a cornerstone of the UK economy, underpinning productivity, competitiveness and growth across all other sectors. This Jobs Plan has been developed through close collaboration between government and industry, bringing together action across the wider skills and employment system.

Overseen by the Professional and Business Services Council (PBSC), the sector's leading representative body, and its Skills and Talent Working Group, the plan has been shaped by extensive engagement through a programme of roundtables and consultations with industry leaders, relevant government departments, Mayoral Strategic Authorities (MSAs) and the devolved governments.

WORKFORCE CHALLENGES

While the PBS sector continues to demonstrate strength and resilience, it faces a set of persistent and interlinked workforce challenges that risk constraining future growth if left unaddressed. These include:

- **An ongoing shortage of highly skilled professionals**, particularly in areas such as accountancy, legal services, management consultancy and data-intensive advisory roles.
- **The pace of AI adoption**, which is reshaping roles faster than training can adapt and automating some tasks while complementing most. This is driving new skills needs and requiring employers to upskill their workforce while competing for talent with other high-skilled sectors such as Financial Services and the Digital and Tech sector.
- **Skills mismatches and work-readiness gaps** (including 'human skills') among new entrants. While PBS continues to attract a large share of graduates, Department for Education (DfE) and Skills England analysis,[3] as well as stakeholder engagement, indicates that many recruits lack key applied skills on entry, particularly in digital literacy, data analysis, commercial judgement and client-facing capabilities.
- **Growing workforce demand,** with PBS requiring an additional 330,000 workers by 2035.[4] Growth is focused on roles such as solicitors, accountants, management consultants, business analysts and digital professionals.[5]

The sector encompasses subsectors such as accountancy, consulting, legal services, advertising, marketing, architecture, engineering, and business support services. Professional and Business Services is one of the largest employing sectors in the UK, accounting for around 14% of all UK jobs, with around 5 million jobs.[6] Consequently, the sector made a direct contribution of £335 billion in gross value added (GVA) to the UK economy in 2025, accounting for 12% of the UK economy.[7]

The economic challenge facing the sector

Output per worker is 10% lower than the UK economy average, and 6% lower than the services sector average[8] due to factors including reduced investment in capital equipment and skills, and the fact that the sector is 92% micro-sized (with 84% under 5 employees).[9] Ensuring that firms are able to access the right mix of skilled workers and invest in technology change and improved business practices is key to increasing productivity. Recent growth in productivity points in the right direction but needs to be sustained across the whole sector.

Employer investment in training has also declined in real terms over the past decade,[10] limiting opportunities for upskilling and progression within firms and increasing reliance on experienced hires. A coordinated approach to skills supply, workforce development and retention is needed across the sector to ensure the system meets its current and future needs. This should:

- Strengthen the ability to fill the vacancies in the sector;
- Ensure the skills of entry-level workers meet the needs of businesses;
- Increase flexibility in training to allow for the reskilling of the existing workforce and rapidly train employees in AI use.

The future vision for the role of the Jobs Plan

By 2030, the UK Professional and Business Services will continue to attract top talent, with a resilient workforce that underpins growth, productivity and competitiveness across the UK economy. This Jobs Plan will support this vision in two ways, by supporting the sector and its employees through the transformation we are seeing, and building a solid future talent base.

The Plan will support the fair and inclusive transformation of the skills landscape in the sector, enabling people in every region to adapt to new technologies, progress in their careers and move flexibly between roles. We will strengthen domestic skills pipelines while continuing to attract internationally mobile talent to support the sector's global success.

We will build a strong PBS talent pipeline, supporting new entrants, people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET), and the existing workforce. Jobs will continue to be high-quality, well-paid but also future-facing, with clear progression routes, access to training and the skills needed to adopt new technologies.

While this Jobs Plan sets a clear national direction, successful delivery will depend on collaboration with those who understand their local economies best. The UK government will work in partnership with the devolved governments in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. In England, mayors and local authorities have a vital role to play in delivering the place-based skills interventions that will upskill the workforce and deliver the local pipeline of skills outlined in the recent Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs). LSIPs will deliver closer collaboration with PBS businesses on locally relevant skills policy and training.

EMPLOYER COMMITMENTS

PROFESSIONAL AND BUSINESS SERVICES COUNCIL (PBSC)

The Professional and Business Services Council (PBSC) provides strategic leadership for the sector and has played a central role in shaping this Jobs Plan. The PBSC Skills and Talent Working Group will act as the central coordinating body for workforce and skills, driving delivery of this Jobs Plan. The PBSC has agreed to eight key commitments designed to help address some of the most pressing challenges faced by the sector.

APPRENTICESHIPS

PBS firms commit to hiring 22,400 Level 6 and below apprentices aged under 25 a year for the next five years.

WORK EXPERIENCE

PBSC members commit to a 20% increase in the total number of work experience opportunities for young people (under 25) over the next 5 years to improve job-readiness and to support increasing NEET employment. For those PBSC members who are representative organisations, they will encourage their members to meet this commitment.

NEET hires

The sector recognises the role it has in supporting an increase in the number of NEET hires. With the support of the PBSC Skills and Talent Working Group, the sector will establish systems for measuring and tracking NEET support and commitments, and in Year 2 will set a baseline for informed targets.

LIVING WAGE

PBS firms commit to signing up to the Living Wage Foundation's Living Wage, via Living Wage Employers | Living Wage Foundation. With recognition of the challenges for smaller enterprises, who will work towards signing up as soon as practicable.

As many services are commissioned via competitive processes this will require commissioning authorities to be encouraged to specify Living Wage Foundation's Living Wage commitments in their contracting terms and practices.

GOOD JOBS STANDARD

The PBSC will set up a PBS Good Jobs Standard for industry to sign up to within the next three years.

AI UPSKILLING

PBSC members commit to encouraging their Voluntary Sector and Social Enterprises (VSSEs) and other third parties that they interact with through other outreach activities, to sign up to and use AI Skills Boost or other equivalent platform aimed at upskilling the UK workforce by 2030.

For those PBSC members who are representative organisations, they will encourage their members to meet this commitment. For their own workforce, PBSC members will embed AI literacy into existing workforce development routes.

RECRUITMENT

PBSC members commit to promoting the appropriate use of technology in recruitment and encourage employers to acknowledge all job applications received and, where appropriate, to provide feedback to any unsuccessful candidates who have reached interview stage.

RECRUITMENT

The sector recognises the importance of fair pay and transparency. With the support of the PBSC Skills and Talent Working Group, the sector will establish systems for measuring and tracking transparency for early careers salary levels in job adverts, with a view to extending this, subject to the outcome of the government's current consultation.

GOVERNMENT SUPPORT

PBS REGIONAL HUBS

The government will establish a network of PBS Regional Hubs across selected city regions in England and Scotland, co-created with and delivered by MSAs and by Edinburgh, South East Scotland and Glasgow City Regions. With each PBS Regional Hub tailoring its activity to local labour market needs and priorities, they will act as place-based delivery partners to address labour shortages, increase workforce participation and support inclusive PBS growth across regions.

APPRENTICESHIP INCENTIVES

New financial support for employers includes a new hiring payment of £2,000 for non-levy-paying employers (typically SMEs) when they recruit young apprentices, as well as fully funded apprenticeship training costs for eligible young apprentices. This investment aims to increase employer participation in apprenticeships and expand opportunities for young people.

THE TECHFIRST PROGRAMME

The TechFirst programme aims to create and fill local tech jobs for more than 2,000 people across the UK, offering tailored support for young people exploring the world of technology, individuals studying critical tech subjects, and businesses looking for new talent.

AI SKILLS BOOST

AI Skills Boost provides free, accessible foundational AI training, available to all workers, as part of the government's drive to upskill 10 million people by 2030. The platform provides a practical route for firms, particularly SMEs, to upskill their staff, supporting productivity growth and AI adoption.

YOUTH GUARANTEE

The government is investing an additional £2.5 billion into the Youth Guarantee by 2029. This investment will support almost one million young people and unlock up to 500,000 jobs, training and learning opportunities.

LIFELONG LEARNING ENTITLEMENT

The LLE provides individuals access to funding equivalent to four years of post-18 education that can be used flexibly throughout their careers. It will also fund modules in subjects that address priority skills gaps, allowing for retraining and upskilling in high-demand PBS areas, including computing, engineering and economics.

MSA APPRENTICESHIP BROKERAGE PILOTS

Locally led pilots will test new ways of connecting young people, particularly those who are NEET, with apprenticeship opportunities through shared talent pools and vacancy matching, aiming to increase access to employment and training for young people.

LOCAL SKILLS IMPROVEMENT PLANS (LSIPs)

LSIPs bring together businesses, educators and local stakeholders to identify and address local skills needs, ensuring training provision strengthens local labour markets.

GROWTH AND SKILLS LEVY - INTRODUCTION OF APPRENTICESHIP UNITS

Apprenticeship Units are built from the knowledge and skills within existing apprenticeship standards, providing targeted training that responds to business needs and emerging skills gaps for employees aged 19 and over. The government is committed to continued work with industry partners to identify skills gaps that could benefit from apprenticeship units.

TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL COURSES

The government will continue to invest in a high-quality technical and vocational education system with new technical education pathways for young people aged 14 to 16. T Levels, V Levels and Occupational Certifications will help build a stronger talent pipeline into PBS careers. Combined with work experience and quality industry placements, these will help employers access job-ready talent while giving young people clear routes into skilled careers in priority sectors.

SECTOR CONTEXT

A defining feature of the PBS sector is the large proportion of highly skilled professionals, alongside a significant pipeline of graduate and apprentice entrants. PBS employers recruit approximately one in five UK graduates[11] and over one in ten apprentices in England,[12] underlining the sector's central role in the education-to-work transition.

The sector is largely representative of the wider workforce in terms of age,[13] with 19% of the sector being under 30 compared to 20% in the wider workforce. 20% of the workforce is over 55 compared with 22% of the wider workforce. The sector is slightly more male than the wider workforce at 57% compared to 52%,[14] and broadly representative by ethnicity, with 16% of the sector being non-White compared to 17% of the UK workforce.[15]

Workers in the sector are less likely to be classed as disabled under the Equality Act, with 14% meeting this description compared to 18% of the UK workforce.[16] However, representation varies more by subsector, with only 9% of workers in legal services classed as disabled.[17] The legal sector is also less representative by schooling background, with 20% attending an independent school (4% receiving a bursary),[18] compared to just 7% of the UK population.[19]

The sector is more educated than the rest of the workforce, with 72% of people having at least an RQF (Regulated Qualifications Framework) Level 4 qualification, 60% having at least a Level 6 qualification – compared to 53% of the wider workforce having at least a Level 4 qualification, 40% having at least a Level 6 qualification.[20] This is to be expected in a sector with a number of highly regulated occupations that require professional exams to practise.



of UK GDP

4,987,000

jobs in the sector

£67,250

average GVA per worker

564,000

registered businesses in the sector

The sector is well paid, with mean annual pay of £51,000, 27% above the UK average. However, there is a spread across subsectors with the lowest paid being Employment activities at £31,500. This subsector includes temporary employment agencies, where low pay is more common. The highest paid subsector is Head offices and management consultancy at £64,400.[21]

The PBS sector is not limited to major cities; it is rooted in towns and communities across the UK and is visible on high streets nationwide. Local solicitors, accountants, recruitment agencies and architectural practices provide essential services to businesses and households alike, helping firms to operate effectively, supporting people through significant life events, and sustaining everyday economic activity.

The PBS sector has a broad regional footprint, with 60% of PBS jobs based outside London and the South East.[22] However, London remains the UK's largest PBS cluster and a key driver of sector growth. Sustaining London's competitiveness while supporting the growth of PBS clusters across the UK will be critical to the sector's future success. This can be seen in large cities in England such as Manchester, Birmingham, Liverpool and Leeds, as well as the national capitals of Belfast, Cardiff and Edinburgh.

PBS is a large, fast-growing sector which is forecast to grow by 20% in gross value added (GVA) by 2035 in real terms.[23] Skills England analysis indicates that PBS will require an additional 330,000 workers by 2035,[24] with growth focused on roles such as solicitors, accountants, management consultants, business analysts and digital professionals.[25]

Sector definition

This Jobs Plan uses the definition of the PBS sector that was published with the Industrial Strategy Sector Plan.[27] This consists of the following SIC divisions:
69: Legal and accounting activities
70: Activities of head offices and management consultancy activities
71: Architectural and engineering activities; technical testing and analysis
72: Scientific research and development
73: Advertising and market research
74: Other professional, scientific and technical activities
77: Rental and leasing activities
78: Employment activities
82: Office administrative, office support and other business support activities

These roles are predominantly at RQF Level 6 and above,[26] reinforcing the sector's reliance on highly skilled labour and its importance as a graduate and apprentice employer.

The sector primarily consists of SMEs, with 99.7% of firms employing fewer than 250 individuals. SME employers, however, account for 57% of the sector's workforce.[28] It is therefore essential that businesses of every size have access to appropriate skills to drive growth. Employer feedback suggests that job creation in the PBS sector is being constrained by higher employment and energy costs and broader economic uncertainty. SMEs report feeling these pressures most acutely. Many firms are therefore taking a cautious approach to expanding their workforce, delaying recruitment and postponing investment in skills, technology and growth until conditions stabilise.

SKILLS AND WORKFORCE REQUIREMENTS

PBS is one of the UK sectors most exposed to AI and automation, and this will be a defining feature of its future growth. Evidence from the Office for Budget Responsibility indicates that while around 14% of jobs may be substituted by AI, a much larger share, over half of roles (53%) are expected to be complemented rather than replaced, particularly in higher-skilled professional occupations that dominate PBS.[29]

This means the challenge facing the sector is not one of large-scale job loss, but of fundamental change in how work is done and the skills required to remain productive and competitive. Digital, data and AI-adjacent capabilities are rapidly becoming baseline skills across the sector, not optional or specialist add-ons. Future success will therefore depend on accelerating upskilling and reskilling of the existing workforce at scale, alongside supporting new entrants, to ensure the sector can fully realise the productivity gains from AI and sustain high-quality jobs across the UK.

Despite vacancy levels falling from their 2022 peak,[30] skills shortages remain structural, with around 31% of PBS vacancies in 2024 hard to fill due to skills gaps,[31] particularly in specialist knowledge, problem-solving and self-management. Together, this highlights a central growth challenge for the sector: ensuring that skills supply, training provision and employer investment keep pace with technological change, so that productivity-led growth translates into sustained, high-quality jobs across all regions of the UK.

Offshoring in accounting and legal services is increasingly driven by access to global talent, 24/7 delivery, and more efficient, technology-enabled processes, rather than cost alone. It allows firms to offshore routine tasks while retaining higher-value, client-facing and regulatory roles in the UK. While overall employment may be maintained, this shifts the skills profile upwards, reducing entry-level opportunities, increasing demand for higher skills, and placing some downward pressure on mid-level wages. It also creates new UK roles in oversight and coordination, though risks remain around data security, compliance, and workforce impacts.

Changes to the funding of Level 7 apprenticeships from January 2026 have led employers, particularly SMEs, to raise concerns about reduced access and progression pathways. While Level 7 apprenticeships will continue to be funded for learners under 22, demand continues to be strong for skills and training at graduate and postgraduate levels, which support progression into higher-skilled roles such as accountancy, legal services and architecture.

Future growth will be increasingly shaped not by demand for services alone, but by the sector's ability to access, develop and retain the right skills at pace, particularly as technology reshapes how professional work is delivered. While many larger firms are already adapting through innovation and investment, the scale and speed of change mean that no single employer can address these workforce challenges in isolation.

The following section therefore sets out where workforce pressures are most acute, and where collective action between government and industry is required to support sustainable growth across the PBS sector.

SECTION 1

WORKFORCE REQUIREMENTS



THE FUTURE PROFESSIONAL AND BUSINESS SERVICES WORKFORCE

The PBS sector's future growth, and its ability to underpin productivity and competitiveness across the wider economy, will hinge on whether it can secure the right workforce with the right skills.

With PBS projected to expand substantially over the next decade, demand is rising most sharply in high-skilled, knowledge-intensive occupations,[32] even as automation reduces the number of some administrative roles. Yet shortages in specialist professional and advisory roles are proving persistent and structural, reinforced by skills mismatches among new entrants, declining employer investment in training, and intensifying competition for talent.

At the same time, rapid adoption of AI is reshaping task content and raising the premium on digital, data and AI-adjacent capabilities alongside professional judgement and client-facing "human skills".This means the challenge is less about wholesale job loss and more about accelerated transition in how professional work is delivered. New analysis suggests that upskilling 25% of workers in PBS with identified skills gaps could yield almost £14 billion in GVA between 2026 and 2029.[33]

Future workforce

Analysis shows that the PBS sector will grow by an additional 330,000 workers by 2035, with growth in 20 key occupations projected to contribute a third of these.[34] While traditional professional occupations, such as solicitors and accountants will continue growing, they will need to adapt to greater use of technology to increase productivity. At the same time, it is projected that administrative jobs will decline in the face of greater automation.



1 in 5 graduates are recruited into PBS

Skills England analysis shows that the scale of workforce need in PBS is driven not just by growth but by replacement demand.[35] Between 2025 and 2035, priority occupations are projected, in business as usual, to grow by around 116,000 jobs (Tables on pages 14 and 15), but a further 419,000 workers are expected to leave the workforce permanently or semi-permanently, due to reasons including retirement, family formation, other caring roles and mortality, as well as mobility between sectors and occupations. The sector is committed to addressing this by better supporting families and carers.

Priority occupations

The Skills Needs Assessment published by Skills England identifies 20 priority occupations for their importance and volume of workers in the PBS sector. Of the priority occupations in PBS, 24% are in critical demand (substantially higher demand than usual), including Directors in consultancy services, and 71% are in either critical or elevated demand (above average demand).[36] In addition to the current need for workers to fill vacancies, priority occupations are projected to grow by around 116,000 jobs between 2025 and 2035.[37]

Table showing projected growth across priority occupations between 2025 and 2035

SOC 2020	SOC 2020 Description	Demand Level 2025 [38]	Projected increase in job demand 2025 to 2035 [39]		Most common highest level qualification [40]
1132	Marketing, sales and advertising directors	Critical demand	9,000	9.6%	Level 4+
1258	Directors in consultancy services	Critical demand	6,000	15.6%	Level 4+
3571	Human resources and industrial relations officers	Critical demand	3,500	4.6%	Level 4+
4122	Book-keepers, payroll managers and wages clerks	Critical demand	-7,000	-5.0%	Level 4+
2412	Solicitors and lawyers	Elevated demand	15,000	12.2%	Level 4+
2431	Management consultants and business analysts	Elevated demand	11,500	12.2%	Level 4+
2134	Programmers and software development professionals	Elevated demand	6,500	11.1%	Level 4+
1136	Human resource managers and directors	Elevated demand	6,000	9.6%	Level 4+
2422	Finance and investment analysts and advisers	Elevated demand	5,500	12.2%	Level 4+
2432	Marketing and commercial managers	Elevated demand	5,000	12.2%	Level 4+

Table showing projected growth across priority occupations between 2025 and 2035

SOC 2020	SOC 2020 Description	Demand Level 2025 [38]	Projected increase in job demand 2025 to 2035 [39]		Most common highest level qualification [40]
2440	Business and financial project management professionals	Elevated demand	4,500	12.2%	Level 4+
2121	Civil Engineers	Elevated demand	2,500	11.1%	Level 4+
2421	Chartered and certified accountants	Not in high demand	15,000	12.2%	Level 4+
1131	Financial managers and directors	Not in high demand	7,500	9.6%	Level 4+
2451	Architects	Not in high demand	15,000	12.2%	Level 4+
3554	Advertising and marketing associate professionals	Not in high demand	3,500	4.6%	Level 4+
3520	Legal Associate Professionals	Not in high demand	1,500	4.6%	Level 4+
1139	Functional managers and directors n.e.c.	N/A	3,500	9.6%	Level 4+
2129	Engineering professionals n.e.c.	N/A	2,500	11.1%	Level 4+
4159	Other administrative occupations n.e.c.	N/A	-3,000	- 5%	Qualifications below A level or equivalent

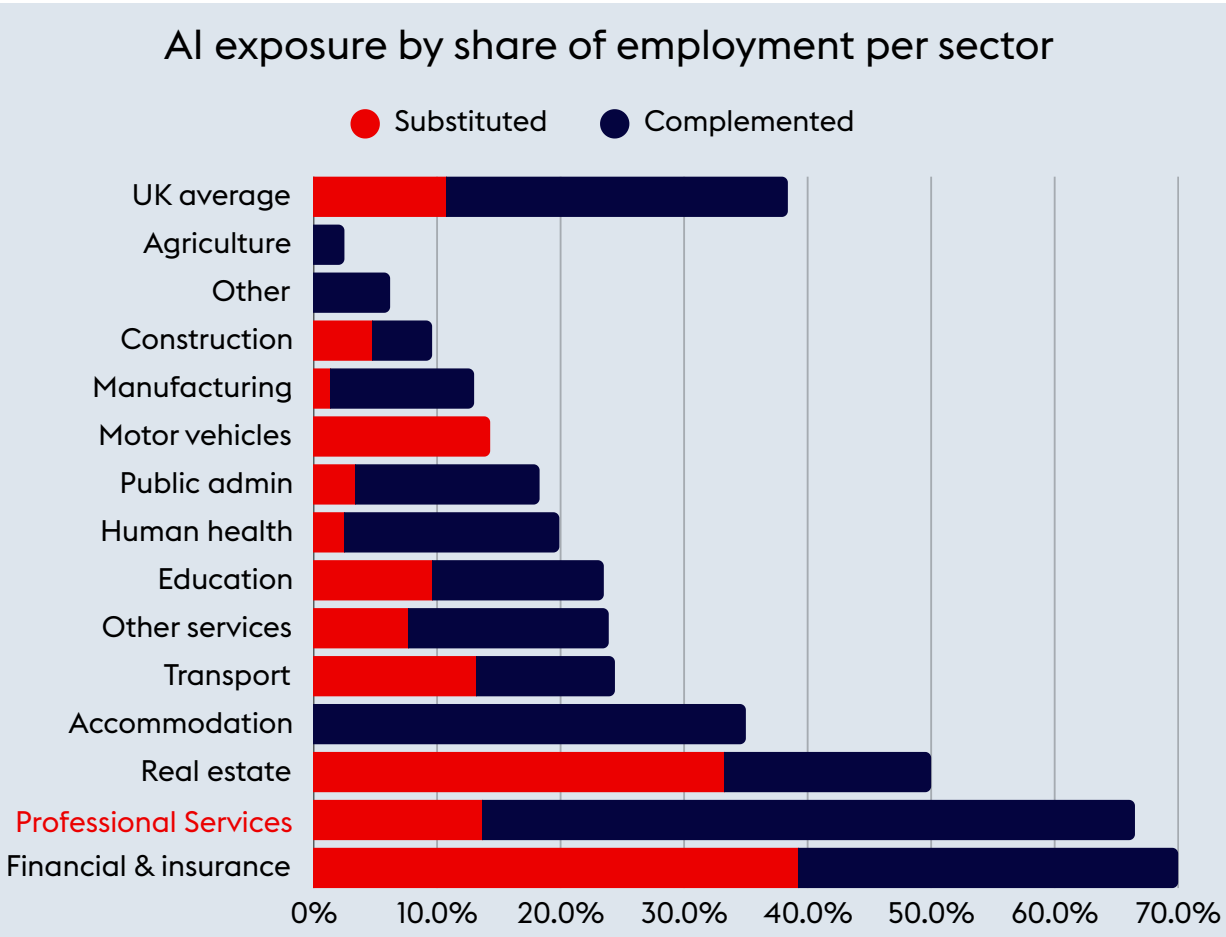
IMPACT OF AI

Publications from both Skills England[41] and the OBR[42] identify the PBS sector as being one of the most exposed to AI. However, this does not mean that all jobs will disappear. The OBR suggests that while 13.7% of jobs will be substituted by AI, a further 52.8% will be complemented by the new technology (figure below).

This highlights the need for current workers to be able to access high-quality training that will enable them to adapt their roles and keep pace with technological change, as well as ensuring SMEs are able to adopt new technologies.

While occupations may be exposed to AI, these impacts will not occur overnight or evenly across sectors, regions and demographics, with adoption rates differing between businesses of different sizes and across regions and leadership strategies.

The latest Skills Needs Assessment[43] shows that the rapid adoption of artificial intelligence across the PBS sector is reshaping skill requirements rather than driving widespread job losses. AI is increasingly embedded in core professional tasks such as legal review, contract analysis, recruitment screening, compliance monitoring and workforce management.



Source: OBR (2025) Briefing paper No.9: Forecasting productivity

AI IS RESHAPING ENTRY LEVEL WORK

Junior roles most exposed to AI are seven times more likely to require skills typically associated with more senior positions, such as leadership and strategic thinking, compared to the least exposed roles. Skill requirements in these high-exposure jobs are changing twice as fast. While overall early-career job postings have flatlined in sectors highly exposed to AI, 'seniorised' entry-level roles are thriving, showing 35% growth since 2019. In response, organisations must rethink how they mentor and train junior staff, helping them step up to complex decision-making much earlier in their careers.[44]

Evidence suggests that while some routine activities are being automated, most professional roles are being redefined to work alongside AI, increasing demand for higher-level judgement, oversight and interpretation. However, adoption is uneven, with larger firms better placed to invest in tools and training, while smaller firms face barriers linked to cost, capacity and limited access to upskilling opportunities.[45] [46] This risks widening skills gaps and productivity within the sector if not addressed through coordinated action.

As a result, PBS firms report growing demand across three interlinked skill areas:

- First, technical capabilities, including AI tool use, data and metadata literacy, and low- or no-code automation, are becoming baseline requirements across many professional roles.
- Second, non-technical or 'human skills' remain critical, particularly the ability to communicate AI-derived insights to clients, manage change within partnership-based firms, and collaborate effectively across technical and professional teams.
- Third, there is rising demand for responsible and ethical AI skills, including understanding regulatory obligations, auditing AI-assisted decisions, managing bias risks, and exercising professional judgement over AI outputs.

CASE STUDY

LAWTECH UK [47]

Funded by the Ministry of Justice (MoJ), LawtechUK supports startups developing cutting-edge legal technologies that improve efficiency, reduce costs, and expand access to justice. LawtechUK supports skills development by delivering a structured pipeline of education, mentoring and market-readiness programmes that equip founders, legal professionals and SMEs with the expertise needed to develop and adopt lawtech. The MoJ has secured £4.5 million in funding to continue the programme over the next three years.

LawtechUK develops entrepreneurial, commercial and technical capabilities across all stages of lawtech company growth, including specialist training in Generative and Agentic AI, investor readiness, scaling strategies and regulatory navigation. The programme also connects lawtech founders with experienced mentors, investors, regulators and law firms, helping participants build leadership skills, commercial confidence and practical understanding of procurement, compliance and technology adoption.

To date LawtechUK has supported more than 200 lawtech startups to grow. A 2025 independent evaluation of the programme found that they employed around 1,000 staff across each of the UK's 12 regions with 37% located outside London and the South East. In 2024 alone, LawtechUK alumni companies raised £41.66 million in external investments, equivalent to £13.89 of external investment for every £1 of public funding.

SKILLS NEEDS

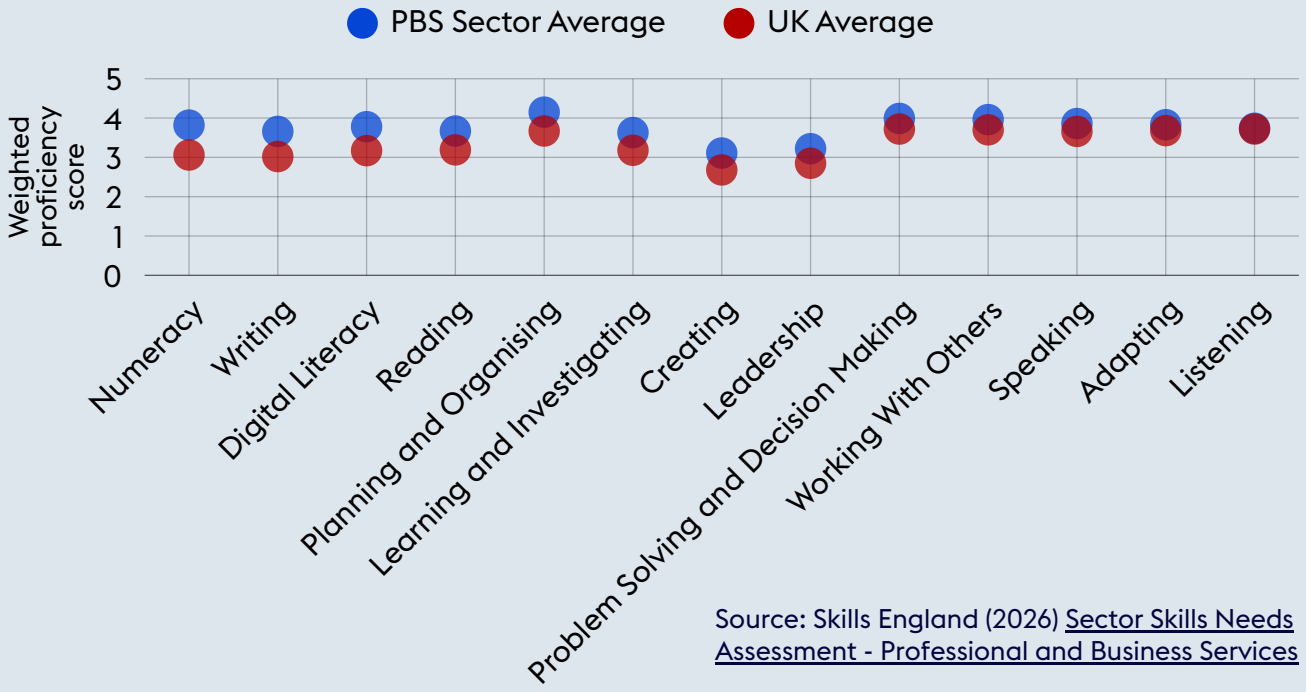
Employers within the sector consistently emphasise that, beyond the necessary technical expertise acquired through higher education, graduates must also demonstrate strong 'human skills'. These include effective communication, teamwork, adaptability and problem-solving abilities.

Feedback gathered through surveys[48] and engagement with industry stakeholders underscores that the presence of these skills is often a decisive factor in successful recruitment and long-term retention in professional roles, with the absence of these skills a reason why vacancies are going unfilled. This highlights the importance of schools, colleges and universities working together with employers to develop employability skills and provide exposure to workplace experience.

Analysis from Skills England using the UK Standard Skills Classification shows which core skills are most important for the priority occupations in the PBS sector.[49] Skill proficiency is consistently higher than the UK average across almost all core skills, underscoring its knowledge- and capability-intensive profile. (figure below)

The largest gaps are in numeracy (+0.77pp), writing (+0.64pp) and digital literacy (+0.61pp), reflecting strong demand for analytical, communication and digital skills within PBS roles. Higher-than-average requirements are also evident for planning and organising, learning and investigating, and creative skills, aligning with the sector's focus on complex problem-solving and project-based work.

Core skills proficiency for the PBS sector compared with the UK Average



Source: Skills England (2026) Sector Skills Needs Assessment - Professional and Business Services

ROUTES INTO THE SECTOR

A significant proportion of roles within the sector demand that workers possess a higher education qualification, with certain positions requiring further postgraduate-level qualification. To meet these needs, it is essential for the sector to maintain a steady flow of graduates emerging from universities, while continuing to offer alternative routes into the sector such as through apprenticeships, degree apprenticeships or Level 4 and 5 study.

In addition, there is a need to encourage students to enrol in relevant courses that directly or indirectly lead to these occupations, ensuring that the future workforce is suitably qualified to fill these roles. While there are a number of subjects that naturally guide graduates into specific occupations, for example, solicitors studying law, accountants studying finance and accounting, these are not the only options for a career in these roles. More important are professional qualifications that are open to applicants regardless of their previous subject of study, controlled by professional bodies and regulators including the ICAEW, ACCA and SRA.

Skills England analysis[50] shows the routes that provide direct supply into priority occupations are broadly split into three types of courses:

1. Well-aligned routes, often technical in nature, where a high proportion of leavers progress into priority occupations, but sometimes with small cohorts.
2. Balanced routes, where a reasonable proportion of leavers progress into priority occupations from a larger cohort.
3. High volume routes, where a smaller proportion of leavers progress to priority occupations but contribute a large share of employment.

For well-aligned routes, increasing the supply into priority occupations will likely require an increase in enrolments. For high-volume routes that are less well-aligned, increasing the progression rates may be a more effective way to contribute to priority occupations.

Access to global talent

As well as education leavers and movement from those already in the wider workforce, firms can also hire from a global workforce. Work visas have been used to bring in international talent. The sector had 8,400 work visas granted in 2025, a 16% decrease from 2024, mostly via the Skilled Worker and Global Business Mobility visas.[51] While the Home Office data shows visa inflow, Census data for England and Wales shows a snapshot of the sector with 22% of people working in the sector being of foreign birth.[52] While the UK continues to strengthen its domestic talent pipeline, persistent shortages in specialist and experienced roles mean firms often need to draw on global talent to meet immediate workforce needs.

As PBS firms operate in highly international markets, access to globally mobile talent provides specialist expertise, international experience and diverse perspectives that cannot always be developed domestically. Mutual recognition of professional qualifications (MRPQs) further enhance employability and sector growth by enabling UK professionals to work internationally and helping firms access globally recognised talent. Continued access to global talent enables firms to remain competitive, support export growth and transfer skills into the UK workforce, while longer-term investment in domestic skills pipelines reduces reliance over time.

Key routes related to priority occupations and growth in achievements

Pathway	Subject Area	Level Group	Number of education leavers entering priority occupations	Percentage of employed education leavers entering priority occupations	Achievements in 2023/2024	Growth in achievement since 2021/2022
Apprenticeship	Accounting and Finance	Level 2/3	1,310	59%	4,210	+30%
Apprenticeship	Accounting and Finance	Level 4/5	1,010	72%	2,430	+11%
Apprenticeship	Accounting and Finance	Level 6+	1,880	65%	5,140	+32%
Higher Education	Law	Level 6+	6,290	46%	42,400	+7%
Higher Education	Computing	Level 6+	5,140	41%	50,280	+40%
Higher Education	Economics	Level 6+	1,900	39%	17,710	+6%
Higher Education	Mathematical Sciences	Level 6+	1,590	39%	13,500	+7%
Higher Education	Business and Management	Level 6+	13,860	37%	187,750	+41%

Source: Skills England (2026) Sector Skills Needs Assessment - Professional and Business Services

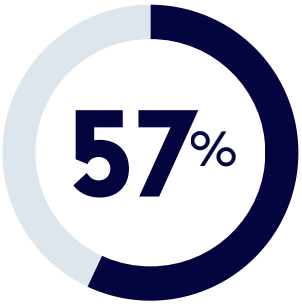
Level 6+ routes are most important for the PBS sector, while some Levels 2-5 courses offer alternative routes. The range of subjects for higher education demonstrates the wide pool of education leavers entering the sector, and the different professions covered by the sector, while apprenticeships continue to offer alternative routes into key occupations.

SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED ENTERPRISES

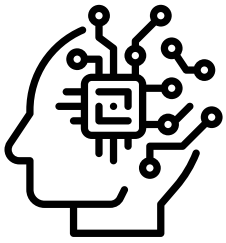
Workforce challenges are not experienced uniformly across firms of different sizes. For example, apprenticeships are almost evenly split between large firms and SMEs. However, between 2018/19 and 2022/23, large firms increased their intake by 4%, while SMEs reduced their intake by 7% ,[53] suggesting that barriers limit SMEs' ability to keep up with hiring apprentices. The government is working to support SMEs to access apprenticeships and overcome these challenges.

Our stakeholder engagement has highlighted that smaller firms often report difficulty competing with larger employers for highly skilled talent, particularly in specialist and digital roles, given constraints on pay, progression opportunities and brand recognition. However, larger firms also play an important talent pipeline role. Many workers train and qualify with large firms and subsequently move into regional SMEs, local authorities and smaller professional practices, bringing valuable qualifications, experience and expertise. SMEs are more likely to rely on multi-skilled or generalist employees and face more pronounced gaps in digital adoption and management capability, with limited capacity to invest in new technologies or leadership development.

SMEs also face challenges navigating a fragmented and complex skills landscape. While employers and employees are willing to upskill, particularly in areas like AI, barriers relate to identifying relevant, high-quality training and integrating it into business operations. These challenges highlight the need for targeted support to ensure SMEs can access, develop and retain the skills required to support productivity and growth across the wider PBS sector.



57% of PBS workers work for SMEs



SMEs face challenges navigating a fragmented and complex skills landscape

99.7%

of PBS firms are SMEs

NATIONS AND REGIONS

All nations and regions of the UK will require additional workers in the PBS sector,[54] reflecting the sector's role in driving economic growth and providing knowledge-based services nationally. Engagement with the devolved nations and regions has shown that experiences within the sector are generally similar.

The PBS sector in **Scotland** is highly skills-intensive and forecast to grow faster than the wider labour market, with demand driven by both expansion and replacement needs.[55] The workforce is highly qualified, and future growth will be concentrated in science and technology professionals and core accountancy and auditing functions.

In **Wales**, employment within the sector has been declining in recent years, reflecting consolidation of routine office roles in central hubs in larger cities such as Birmingham and London as well as slower adoption of AI and innovation relative to other parts of the UK. Skills demand has shifted away from administrative functions towards higher-value digital and professional capabilities. Based on the Employer Skills Survey,[56] overall skills-shortage vacancy rates are in line with the Welsh average. However, employers report disproportionate impacts on service quality, competitiveness and technology adoption, with shortages particularly acute in specialist and technical skills.

The **Northern Ireland** Skills Barometer 2023–33 shows a tightening labour market over the next decade, with total job growth driven largely by replacement demand and a structural undersupply of skilled workers, particularly at higher qualification levels.[57]

The Summary Report reinforces that demand will be strongest for RQF Level 6+ skills, including business, financial, legal, data and managerial occupations, while demographic change and limited labour inflows increase the importance of retention and upskilling.[58]

The PBS sector is a major employer across the **Mayoral Strategic Authorities** identified through the PBS Sector Plan, but growth is constrained by persistent shortages of higher-skilled and experienced professionals. Employers face shortages in digital, regulatory, risk, compliance and advisory roles, alongside challenges retaining graduates and fully utilising local talent.

Employers also consistently report work-readiness gaps among new entrants, including in communication, client-facing skills and adaptability, which increases onboarding costs and management burden, particularly for SMEs. Evidence from the Yorkshire and Humber Financial and Professional Services Skills Commission highlights strong employer demand for mid-career professionals, digital and compliance skills, and high-quality employability skills, with SMEs in particular lacking capacity to train and progress staff.[59]

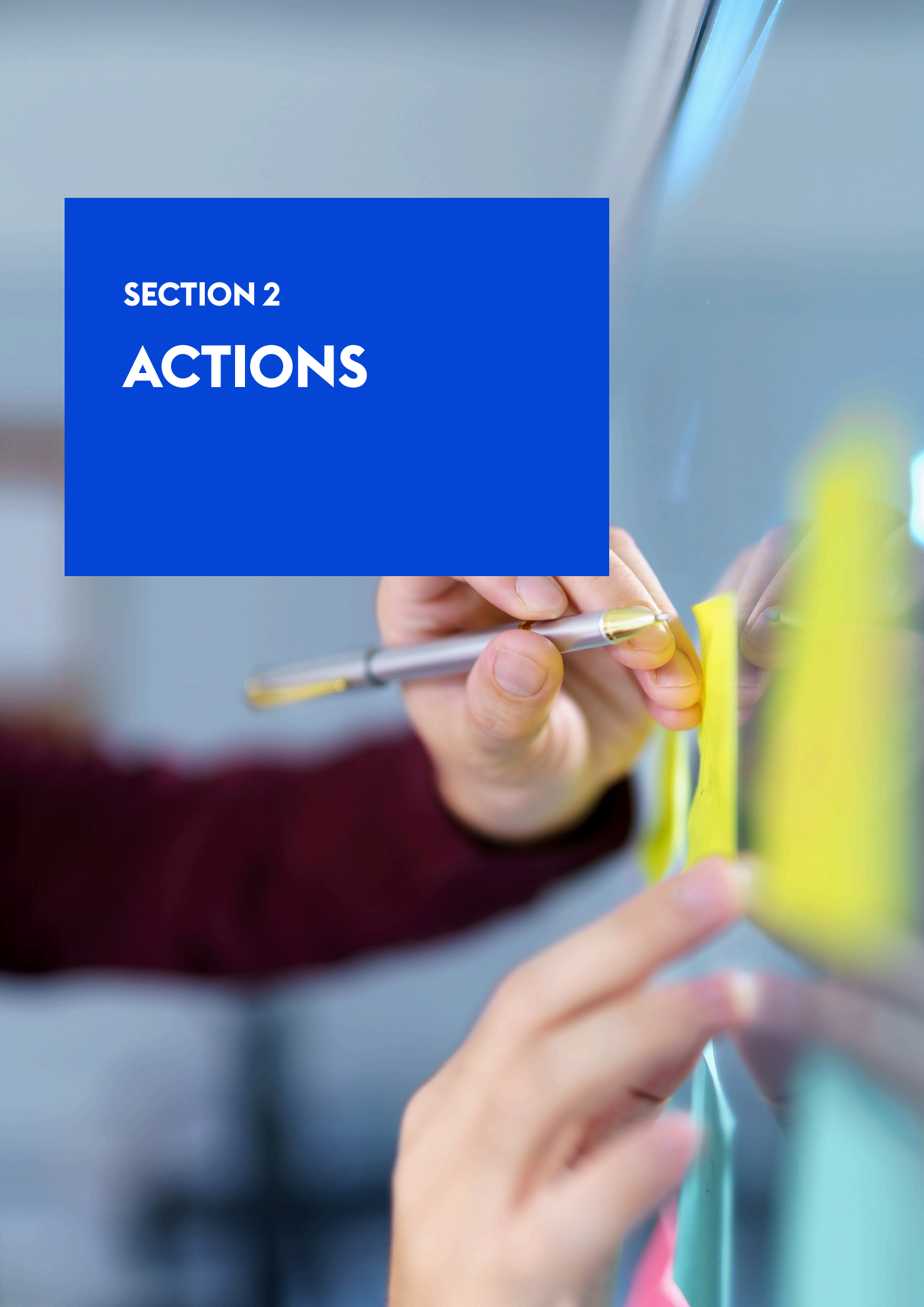
Across regions, fragmented training provision, weak awareness of PBS career pathways, constrained leadership and management capability, and limited progression routes are constraining workforce supply. Addressing these challenges through clearer skills pathways, stronger integration of digital and professional skills, coordinated sector-based support, and earlier engagement to widen and diversify talent pipelines will be critical to unlocking PBS growth.

CURRENT PBS JOBS BY NATION AND REGION

60%

of PBS jobs are outside of London and the South East





SECTION 2

ACTIONS

ADDRESSING STRUCTURAL SHORTAGES

Persistent shortages in high-skill professional, digital and advisory roles continue to constrain growth, with demand concentrated in Level 6+ occupations and specialist expertise.

Growth and Skills Levy - Introduction of Apprenticeship Units [60]

Apprenticeship units are built from the knowledge and skills within existing apprenticeship standards, ensuring high-quality, targeted training that meets real business needs, giving employers choice and the ability to respond to emerging skills gaps. They are designed to support growth and productivity within businesses, upskilling employees aged 19 and over where new skills are required or where their job is changing. They range between 30 and 140 hours and can be delivered over 1 to 16 weeks at Levels 2-5 and provide employers with a flexible option for developing their workforce. The first wave of apprenticeship units which have been rolled out include critical skills areas such as Artificial Intelligence Leadership.

ACTION 1: DWP will continue to work with Skills England and the PBSC Skills and Talent Working Group to identify further skills gaps which could benefit from apprenticeship units.

Higher Technical Qualifications

Higher technical qualifications will play a critical role in addressing mid-level skills gaps across the PBS sector, providing flexible, employment-focused routes into high-growth professional and digital roles. The Higher Technical Qualification (HTQ) quality mark was introduced as part of higher technical education reforms [61] and indicates government-backed Level 4-5 qualifications that have been developed with employers to meet national or regional skills needs.

It is intended to give employers and students a clear signal about which qualifications meet employer expectations and offer strong progression into skilled work. The government is committed to refining the HTQ programme to expand the approvals to recognise and quality mark a broader range of occupations that require higher-skilled technicians.

ACTION 2: The PBSC Skills and Talent Working Group will feed into the work of DfE to define the core technical, practical and commercial skills required for entry-level roles, helping to improve alignment between education pathways and PBS employer expectations.

Legal Education Task and Finish Group[62]

At the inaugural meeting of the new Judicial and Legal Diversity Board in May 2026, co-chaired by the Lady Chief Justice of England and Wales and the Lord Chancellor, it was agreed that a Legal Education Task and Finish Group would be established. Bringing together government policy officials, legal services regulators, and bodies representing the legal professions, and drawing on input from wider sector partners, the Group will consider whether legal education, training, and qualification pathways are supporting the skills, capacity, and diversity needed by the legal services sector and judiciary now and in the future.

It will provide evidence-based recommendations for consideration by the Board and relevant sector partners.

Digital and Technologies Technical Excellence Colleges[63]

Technical Excellence Colleges (TECs) are hubs of excellence, working with employers, other education providers, and local government to deliver high-quality skills training aligned with regional and national workforce needs. TECs will deliver high-quality training in key sectors driving Britain's growth, equipping young people and adults with the high-level technical skills needed to access well-paid, high-skilled jobs, giving them a clear route from education into work.

The government will encourage TECs to reflect underpinning and overlapping skills needs in the development of curricula and specialist provision, working in partnership with employers and sector bodies to ensure alignment with both sector-specific and cross-cutting requirements.

ACTION 3: The government will work with the PBSC Skills and Talent Working Group and Digital and Technologies TECs to inform curriculum development, strengthening digital skills relevant to the PBS sector.

The Skills England Expert Network

The Skills England Expert Network brings together a broad range of employers, providers and sector stakeholders to ensure industry expertise remains central to decisions on apprenticeships and technical qualifications. It will operate through flexible, time-limited and task-focused groups, convened to develop and update occupational standards and assessment plans, as well as provide strategic insight on wider skills challenges. The Expert Network can support delivery of the PBS Jobs Plan by enabling faster, evidence-based decision-making, strengthening alignment with labour market needs, and ensuring that priority sectors are informed by up-to-date employer insight.

In the Post-16 Education and Skills White Paper,[64] government committed to developing a new measure to track progress on increasing participation in priority pathways aligned to the skills needs of Industrial Strategy priority sectors, construction and health (the Industrial Strategy 8+2). This metric published in June 2026 provided greater transparency on how the skills system is supporting workforce needs across sectors. It will also help to identify areas of overlap between priority occupations, supporting a more coordinated, cross-sector approach to growing the domestic talent pipeline in response to shared skills pressures.

Our ambition is to increase the proportion of learners starting pathways, including courses, subjects and Skills Bootcamps, that are more likely to lead to priority occupations in growth sectors, while reducing the number of vacancies attributed to skills shortages.

Skills Needs Assessment (SNAs)

Skills England will continue to produce Skills Needs Assessments, bringing together data on supply, demand and skills across priority sectors to provide a shared reference point for discussion. They will continue to work with the Department for Business, Innovation, Science and Trade (BIST) to identify priority occupations and to develop the understanding of skills that are important to the PBS sector.

ACTION 4: The PBSC Skills and Talent Working Group will continue to work with Skills England to inform future skills needs assessments, including the identification of priority occupations where there is cross-sector overlap.

ACCELERATING UPSKILLING AND RESKILLING FOR AI-DRIVEN WORKFORCE TRANSFORMATION

Rapid adoption of AI is reshaping roles and increasing demand for digital, data and professional skills, requiring large-scale workforce upskilling and more flexible training routes.

Lifelong Learning Entitlement (LLE)
The Lifelong Learning Entitlement (LLE) will provide individuals with a loan entitlement to the equivalent of four years of post-18 education (£39,160 based on the maximum tuition fees for 26/27 academic year) to use over their working lives, up to the age of 60. The LLE will continue to fund courses currently funded by Higher Education student finance, including all Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQs) currently funded by Advanced Learner Loans (ALLs).

Furthermore, the LLE will, for the first time, enable access to student finance for modules of high-value courses by funding modules of Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQs) and Level 4, 5 and 6 modules from full Level 6 qualifications which align to priority skills gaps and the government's Industrial Strategy.

This will allow for upskilling in high-demand areas, in areas linked to the PBS sector including: AI, computing, engineering, architecture, building and planning and economics. For the PBS sector, this flexibility is particularly valuable.

In addition, as part of the changes that will see the introduction of the LLE, we are removing the equivalent level qualification (ELQ) rules. These rules currently prevent those who have already achieved a Higher Education qualification from accessing government funding for a second qualification, where it is an equivalent or lower qualification to the one they already hold.

This has been identified as a significant barrier preventing individuals from accessing education to retrain or upskill during the LLE consultation.

ACTION 5: The PBSC Skills and Talent Working Group will engage with DfE and Skills England to raise awareness of the Lifelong Learning Entitlement among employers across the sector. The Working Group will promote it as a key tool to be used as a core part of workforce planning and highlight its potential to support upskilling and reskilling across the PBS workforce, particularly through the co-design of courses with education providers to create coherent learner pathways into the workforce.

AI Skills Boost
AI Skills Boost provides free, accessible foundational AI training, available to all workers, as part of the government's drive to upskill 10 million people by 2030, with existing PBS partners including Accenture, CMI and ICAEW. The free training offered on its Hub will help PBS employers respond to the rapid adoption of AI across professional roles by building baseline AI literacy across the workforce.

The platform will also provide a practical route for firms, particularly SMEs, to upskill their staff, supporting productivity growth and helping workers adapt to changing skills needs as AI reshapes the sector.

Expansion of AI Skills Boost to include PBS

ACTION 6: To help the sector respond to the growing demand for AI skills, BIST will seek to incorporate into the AI Skills Boost programme relevant upskilling pathways for critical roles in the PBS sector. From spring 2027, the enhanced offer will help PBS employers, existing workers and those seeking to enter the sector, identify and access relevant AI learning opportunities, supporting the safe, effective and productive adoption of AI as technologies reshape professional roles.

By seeking to bring PBS-relevant pathways and content together within AI Skills Boost, the programme will offer a trusted, accessible gateway to high-quality training and development opportunities relevant to professional occupations. BIST will work with PBS employers, professional bodies and other partners to help ensure the PBS offer reflects evolving workforce needs and supports AI adoption.

As AI Skills Boost develops, BIST will continue to work with PBS employers, professional bodies and technology partners to strengthen understanding of PBS AI skills needs and explore opportunities to further enhance the offer, ensuring it continues to support workforce adaptation, productivity growth and AI adoption across the sector.

BIST and MoJ have launched the Legal Services Advisory AI Growth Lab [65]

The Lab brings together key legal and data regulators to help innovators navigate regulatory requirements for novel AI products. By providing greater clarity on the responsible adoption of AI, the Lab aims to support innovation and unlock growth across the legal sector. It will also generate evidence on how AI is changing jobs and ways of working, helping employers, professional bodies and government identify emerging skills needs and inform future upskilling and reskilling efforts.

EMPLOYER COMMITMENT: PBSC members commit to encouraging their Voluntary Sector and Social Enterprises (VSSEs) and other third parties that they interact with through other outreach activities, to sign up to and use AI Skills Boost or other equivalent platform aimed at upskilling the UK workforce by 2030.

For those PBSC members who are representative organisations, they will encourage their members to meet this commitment. For their own workforce, PBSC members will embed AI literacy into existing workforce development routes.

Government has launched the AI Economics Institute (AIEI) [66]

The first government-backed Institute of its kind in the world, established to build the data infrastructure, analytical capability and external relationships needed to assess AI's economic impacts rigorously.

The Institute will focus on understanding the productivity, labour market and growth impacts of AI, ensuring the UK is prepared for AI-driven labour market transformation and that policy decisions are informed by timely, robust evidence.

Helping business navigate the skills system

ACTION 7: Government will improve how businesses find relevant support online through a new AI powered Support Finder on business.gov.uk. Businesses will be able to describe what they are trying to achieve and receive a tailored summary of relevant government information, schemes and support, including skills and employment support where relevant, with links to further guidance across the government's digital estate. An initial version is planned for release in November 2026 and will be tested and iterated based on user feedback.

IMPROVING SKILL RELEVANCE AND WORK-READINESS

Employers report persistent gaps in applied, digital and 'human skills' among new entrants, increasing onboarding costs and constraining productivity.

EMPLOYER COMMITMENT: PBSC members commit to a 20% increase in the total number of work experience opportunities for young people (under 25) over the next 5 years to improve job-readiness and to support increasing NEET employment.

For those PBSC members who are representative organisations, they will encourage their members to meet this commitment.

Technical and Vocational Qualifications

Technical and vocational qualifications for young people, including T Levels, new V Levels, and Level 2 pathways are designed with employers to meet sector needs. They give businesses access to a pipeline of fresh, new talent with relevant up-to-date knowledge and skills, helping employers build their future workforce and address skills shortages.

T Levels are large Level 3 qualifications equivalent to 3 A levels that prepare students for work or further study in their chosen industry. T Levels are available in 20 subjects, including Management and Administration, Legal Services, Accounting, Digital, and Marketing to support entry to the PBS sector. Industry placements are a core, mandatory element of T Levels, primarily aimed at giving learners real-life work experience and the opportunity to apply their learning. Evidence[67] shows T Level learners are more likely to remain in the sectors they trained in, with around a quarter of those entering employment securing roles with their T Level industry placement employer, reducing recruitment costs and supporting retention.

V Levels are the government's new flagship vocational qualification that will sit alongside A levels (academic) and T Levels (technical). For each major sector of the economy, these new qualifications will offer young people a solid foundation to progress into further study or work-based training, such as an apprenticeship, without specialising in one area.

ACTION 8: The first V Levels, available from September 2027, will include Digital Systems and Data, and Accounting and Finance. We will also offer new Occupational Certificates in Accounts and Finance Administrator, Digital Administration and Assistant Administrator for those who want to leave education and directly enter those roles.

ACTION 9: The PBSC Skills and Talent Working Group will help shape the content of relevant V Levels and new T Level and Level 2 pathways, ensuring that qualifications are fit for purpose. They will work with Skills England to respond to future DfE and Ofqual consultations on content and assessment.

ACTION 10: The government has committed to deliver two weeks' worth of work experience for all pupils over the course of their secondary education, alongside wider reforms to embed high-quality work experience within vocational qualifications for 16 to 19 year olds. This includes high-quality, substantial industry placements for T Levels, and linking new V Levels and Level 2 Occupational Certificates to occupational standards to support progression into professional and business services and help meet the country's long-term skills needs.

We will work with PBS employers and education providers to raise awareness and engagement, ensuring learners can access high-quality industry placements at all stages of the pipeline to embed the practical skills, broader employability skills, and commercial awareness required for day-one readiness within these pathways.

Skills Bootcamps
Skills Bootcamps are short, flexible and employer-informed training courses of up to 16 weeks for adults (19+) to retrain and upskill in priority sectors with acute skills shortages. Eligible learners are guaranteed a job interview with an employer on completion of the course. In the 2023 to 2024 financial year (latest published data), there were 3,710 starts on Skills Bootcamps in Business, Administration and Law.

ACTION 11: DWP will work with PBS employers and representative bodies to engage with local areas to explore how existing and new Skills Bootcamps courses can address skills gaps in the sector. They will encourage PBS employers to consider what employment opportunities (guaranteed interviews, job offers) they could provide to Skills Bootcamps learners upon finishing a course.

Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs)
Local Skills Improvement Plans bring together businesses, educators and local stakeholders to create a better-matched training system to strengthen local labour markets. Recently published plans outline these local priorities. The government will continue to work with regional stakeholders to align skills initiatives and BIST will continue to work with MSAs that identify PBS as a priority, to ensure alignment in delivery between LSIPs and the PBS Jobs Plan.

The Job Rotation Pilot
The West Midlands' innovative response to the skills needs of local businesses and residents who are unemployed is inspired by a Danish model which brings together public sector employers and jobseekers. Unlike in Denmark, the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) has expanded the scheme to the private sector – with benefits for local businesses, residents, and the public purse. Developed in partnership by WMCA, Coventry City Council and Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), the model works with employers to identify skills gaps and opportunities for upskilling in their workforce, enabling current employees to undertake new training while local jobseekers are backfilled to their positions, which gives them high-quality work experience.

The independent evaluation has shown positive results and feedback from all participants, including businesses and jobseekers, as well as substantial cost efficiencies compared to similar models currently delivered in England. WMCA is now testing this model across the region with SMEs with higher-level skills needs, such as those needed within the PBS sector.

The Yorkshire and Humber Financial and Professional Services Skills Commission
This is a successful example of an industry-led initiative established in 2023 to support the sector. Its purpose is to develop a shared understanding of regional skills gaps to inform future workforce development. Early findings highlight employer demand for strong employability skills alongside technical capability, and a clear need to diversify and widen talent pipelines. The Commission's report identifies particular shortages in higher-skilled and experienced roles, including digital, regulatory, risk, compliance and advisory roles. Employers report difficulties recruiting and retaining staff with the right level of experience, particularly at mid-career level, alongside concerns about progression into these roles.

Sector Talent Board Model: Sub-Regional Hub
The Inclusive Talent Strategy aims to help employers access the skills and talent they need while creating more pathways into good jobs for Londoners. To support this ambition, the Greater London Authority (GLA) is investing £14.4 million to establish an employer-led talent system, bringing together Sector Talent Boards, Sector Hubs and local partnerships to address skills gaps and workforce challenges across our priority sectors.

As part of this model, the Sub-Regional Hubs will cover several sectors, skills and occupations to respond to employer demand in the sub-region. The provision will be available to Londoners residing within the sub-region. Central London Forward identified Financial and Professional Services as a priority sector for their sub-region. GLA will work with industry in key sectors such as PBS and the Sub-Regional Hubs to ensure a collaborative approach to supporting the priorities below.

The priorities for Central London Forward's activity on PBS include:

- Work with the City of London Corporation to address skills gaps in financial and professional services.
- Prepare residents and employers for the impact of AI and automation on the sector.
- Support under-represented Londoners to access high-quality jobs in financial and professional services.
- Co-ordinate essential, digital and AI-related skills programmes with employers.
- Use employer intelligence to influence curriculum design across Further and Higher Education and adult skills providers.
- Strengthen pathways into professional roles through work experience, apprenticeships and early-talent programmes.
- Holding a workshop with key stakeholders within the sector to ensure employers are connected into the skills system to deliver an inclusive pathway into the sector.

London Talent Pathways
Through the London Talent Pathways programme, the Mayor is investing in training that helps Londoners access pathways into priority jobs in key sectors, as identified in the London Growth Plan and Local Skills Improvement Plans, including Finance, Professional and Business Services. Funded provision within the London Talent Pathways programme will include qualifications in Accounting and Bookkeeping, Leadership and Management, Business Administration, Sales and Marketing, Digital Marketing, Enterprise, Customer Service, and Data Analysis and Security. These qualifications support progression into a range of roles across finance, business support, professional services, management and commercial functions, while helping employers address identified skills and workforce needs.

The London Talent Pathways programme started in August 2026 and will run for an initial two-year period, with an option to extend delivery for a third and final year subject to providers' performance.

The Greater Birmingham Professional Services Academy (GBPSA)
The Greater Birmingham Professional Services Academy (GBPSA) - based at Birmingham Metropolitan's Matthew Boulton and Sutton Coldfield Colleges, is a specialised Academy focusing on developing skills for the PBS sector. Partnered with firms like Deloitte, GVA, Gateley Plc, KPMG, BNP Paribas Personal Finance, Lloyds, Marsh, WAA Chosen and SuperTech, it offers tailored training and work experience for students aged 16 to 18 to enhance employability in fields such as accounting, financial services, business administration, customer service, leadership and management, law, marketing, and recruitment.

CASE STUDY

EY EXPANDING ACCESS TO APPRENTICESHIPS

Apprenticeships are central to EY's response to growing workforce demand in PBS, building a skilled, diverse talent pipeline for long-term growth. Through high-quality programmes, EY supports school leavers, graduates and early-career talent to move successfully from education into work, while widening access to careers in accountancy, taxation and consultancy.

In 2017, EY became a government-accredited apprenticeship training provider, the only large employer in the sector to do so. Since then, EY has supported over 5,500 school leavers and graduates through its Level 7 Accountancy & Taxation apprenticeship; 45% are based outside London, and more than 2,500 have completed the three-to-four-year programme. The programme connects entry-level talent to higher-level technical and professional skills, supporting progression and enabling apprentices to take their skills into EY, government, major corporations and charities across the UK.

EY's apprenticeship offer supports young people aged 18 to 21, with 89% falling within the broader NEET employment age range of 16 to 24. By combining client-facing experience with structured learning, EY helps them develop technical expertise, including digital and commercial capability, and human skills such as confidence, communication, relationship-building, resilience, and critical thinking — all essential for work readiness, progression and long-term success in the sector.

EY's Degree Apprenticeship in Business Leadership and Management shows how this model supports regional talent pipelines. Based in EY's Newcastle office, it enables school leavers from diverse backgrounds to access practical work experience and professional development without relocating to London. Through rotations, mentoring, projects and networking, apprentices build the technical and human skills needed to progress while contributing to regional growth in the North East.

Since launch, EY has supported 150 school leavers through the programme, of whom 90 have completed. This commitment extends beyond formal apprenticeship routes. Through the joint EY and EY Foundation Social Mobility Network, EY helps young people from less advantaged backgrounds build confidence, skills and networks. This widens and diversifies the future sector talent pipeline by improving awareness of career routes, strengthening employability, and positioning professional services as an achievable pathway. In FY25, the network delivered 13 events across 20 UK offices for more than 1,000 attendees, including mentoring, skills workshops and activity focused on numeracy's role in improving social mobility.

Global Talent Taskforce (GTT):
To support access to international talent, government is strengthening targeted support for highly skilled individuals through the Global Talent Taskforce. The GTT is focused on attracting highly skilled individuals who are shaping the future – entrepreneurs, founders, investors, business leaders, and top-end researchers. It provides a concierge-style service to attract and retain globally mobile talent, offering tailored advice on visa routes, hands-on support through application processes, and connections to professional services networks, government and investment opportunities.

The offer also includes faster routes for high-growth firms to secure sponsorship licences and targeted financial support to reduce visa costs. Our focus is on individuals with unique skills who can contribute to our key industrial strategy sectors; have the potential for significant economic contribution through business expansion or investment; high social capital or help attract other highly skilled individuals. Together, this supports PBS firms to access critical international skills and enhances the UK's position as a destination of choice for top global talent.

STRENGTHENING ENTRY-LEVEL AND EARLY CAREERS TALENT PIPELINES

The sector requires stronger and more diverse entry pathways to meet future workforce demand and offset declining entry-level opportunities in some roles.

The final Milburn Review will further highlight the importance of government and employers working together to create clear routes into work and learning for young people. Through these actions, the PBS will help turn that ambition into practical opportunities while building its future workforce.

EMPLOYER COMMITMENT: PBS firms commit to hiring 22,400 Level 6 and below apprentices aged under 25 a year for the next five years.

Youth Guarantee [68]

With around one million young people not in education, employment and training (NEET), this government will not leave an entire generation of young people behind. The government is investing an additional £2.5 billion by 2029 into the Youth Guarantee and the Growth and Skills Levy to help young people build skills, gain experience and progress into employment or further learning. This investment will support almost one million young people and unlock up to 500,000 jobs, training and learning opportunities.

Working in partnership with employers, Jobcentre Plus and DWP's Jobs and Careers Service, the PBS sector has a critical role to play in the success of the Youth Guarantee by providing opportunities for young people, building our future workforce and expanding entry-level and early-career pathways.

- **The Youth Guarantee** offers employers fully funded training, financial incentives and a pipeline of young talent to help them fill skills gaps and build their future workforce.
- **The Youth Jobs Grant** provides £3,000 to employers who take on an eligible young person aged 18 to 24 who has been on Universal Credit for six months.
- **The Jobs Guarantee scheme** will provide six months of paid employment, for 25 hours a week, at the relevant minimum wage, with the government covering 100% of employment costs. The Jobs Guarantee will ensure paid work for every eligible individual aged 18 to 24 who has been on Universal Credit and looking for work for 18 months. The scheme includes wraparound employability and in-work support to help participants succeed on the scheme and transition into sustained employment.

EMPLOYER COMMITMENT: The sector recognises the role it has in supporting an increase in the number of NEET hires. With the support of the PBSC Skills and Talent Working Group, the sector will establish systems for measuring and tracking NEET intakes, and in Year 2 will set a baseline for informed targets.

EMPLOYER COMMITMENT: PBSC members commit to promoting the appropriate use of technology in recruitment and encourage employers to acknowledge all job applications received and, where appropriate, to provide feedback to any unsuccessful candidates who have reached interview stage.

Jobs and Careers Service (JCS)
In England, Jobcentre Plus has been brought together with the National Careers Service to create greater awareness and focus on skills and careers as well as better join-up between employability and careers provision. The new Jobs and Careers Service is a locally tailored service designed to meet the needs of local people, local employers and local labour markets.

It will be for anyone who wants to look for work, wants help to increase their earnings, or who wants help to change their career or retrain. Employment and careers support will be available to everyone, including those on benefits who want support to find or progress in work.

It will also provide a new digital and modern service which is accessible and responsive, with a range of resources to support employers, including a new Find a Job service for employers [69] to advertise jobs, request jobcentre support to fill vacancies, and to register as Disability Confident.

ACTION 12: Jobs and Careers Service will support PBS employers via the Strategic Relationship Team and local Jobs and Careers Service offices to recruit suitable customers through a range of national and local recruitment and skills and employment support.

Jobs and Careers Service continues to provide recruitment and redundancy support services to employers both nationally across England, Wales and Scotland and locally across its 634 offices. Entry-level sectoral skills and employment support for benefit claimants include:

- Sector Based Work Academies (SWAPs): a successful into-work intervention that can last up to 6 weeks, consisting of pre-employment training, work experience and a Guaranteed Job Interview. SWAPs are delivered in line with employer need and are available for any sector. DWP delivered 97,180 starts to SWAP in financial year 2025/26, an increase of over 10,000 compared with the previous year.
- We are expanding work experience and training placements across Great Britain, offering 300,000 additional opportunities, with priority referrals for young people as part of the Youth Guarantee. Employers and training providers interested in offering SWAP opportunities can contact their local Jobcentre Plus Group Partnership Manager. National employers can contact srt.recruiterofchoice@dwp.gov.uk via the online contact form on www.business.gov.uk/recruit

Raising awareness of conveyancing careers
Conveyancers will be central to the successful delivery of the government's recently announced Home Buying and Selling Reform Roadmap. The profession already plays a critical role in the transaction process by managing the legal transfer of property and ensuring buyers, sellers, and lenders have the information and assurances needed to complete a transaction safely. However, as with other parts of the legal services sector, conveyancers face increasing pressures as responsibilities have expanded and workloads have grown in recent years.

ACTION 13: As part of its reform programme, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) will work closely with Skills England, MoJ as the lead department for legal services, and industry partners to help ensure the conveyancing workforce is equipped to support the ambitious changes set out in the roadmap. This includes raising awareness of conveyancing careers, supporting skills development, and helping firms of all sizes to engage effectively with new requirements, processes, and technology.

The Early Careers Jobs Alliance [70]

ACTION 14: The Early Careers Jobs Alliance is bringing together government, employers, trade unions and young people to map how entry-level work is changing as AI is adopted and to help employers maintain entry-level pathways.

The Alliance's work will support the development of practical guidance for adapting entry-level roles and career pathways. Its initial focus is the Digital and Technologies sector, and we plan to expand the approach across other Industrial Strategy sectors, such as PBS.

CASE STUDY

Assured Skills Academies

In Northern Ireland Assured Skills Academies have been successful in helping companies within the PBS sector establish and rapidly grow their presence within the region.

Assured Skills Academies provide preemployment training opportunities helping individuals gain industry relevant accreditations and the skills necessary to compete for guaranteed job vacancies with participating FDIs and expanding local businesses. Academies have been delivered across a range of areas within the sector including consulting, business operations, legal services, data analytics and AI. Assured Skills Academies were developed jointly with Invest NI in 2011 and are fully funded by the Department for the Economy (Northern Ireland).

From 2011 to 31 March 2025 over 3,300 have been upskilled through Assured Skills Academies with over 84% gaining employment with supporting companies.

The Careers and Enterprise Company

ACTION 15: The Careers and Enterprise Company will support industry, employers, and the sector to engage with young people, and enhance their understanding and take-up of the growing opportunities across PBS. Employers and other partners will be able to use national data and support, and local Careers Hubs which support schools, colleges, and employers to improve careers education in their respective regions.

CASE STUDY

PwC FLYING START

The UK faces a growing challenge in supporting young people into high-quality employment and ensuring opportunity is accessible to all. With more than one million young people aged 16–24 not in education, employment or training, there is increasing importance in creating pathways that help individuals gain recognised qualifications, practical workplace experience and the confidence to succeed in long-term careers.

PwC has long been committed to broadening access to professional careers, supporting social mobility and helping young people develop the skills and experience needed to thrive in the workplace. This commitment is evidenced by the creation of the Flying Start programme more than 20 years ago. Developed in partnership with carefully selected universities and the ICAEW, Flying Start pioneered a new route into the profession by bringing together academic study, professional qualification and practical work experience within a single integrated pathway.

Flying Start combines university study, paid work experience and professional accreditation, enabling students to gain a degree and accelerate progress towards the ACA qualification through an integrated pathway. The programme has continued to evolve to meet changing business and skills demands, helping students build job-ready capabilities while supporting social mobility and creating a diverse pipeline of future talent for the PBS sector.

CASE STUDY

THE CLIFFORD CHANCE ACCESS PROGRAMME

The Clifford Chance ACCESS programme is a two-year development initiative designed for Year 12 (or equivalent) students interested in a career in law. It delivers structured learning across ten pillars, combining virtual work experience, mentoring, tutoring, skills workshops and in-person placements to build students' commercial awareness and professional confidence. Two of these pillars include paid work experience placements, offering remuneration above the Living Wage Foundation Rate, helping to reduce financial barriers to participation.

ACCESS supports young people from lower socio-economic backgrounds, including first-generation students and those from state schools, aiming to improve social mobility and access to the legal profession.

All participants are further supported through the Clifford Chance 'Same Start Commitment', delivered in partnership with Aspiring Solicitors, which helps cover hidden costs such as travel, accommodation, professional attire and IT equipment.

Since 2018, over 500 students have participated in ACCESS, with many progressing to further opportunities such as SPARK and even securing a Training Contract, contributing to a more diverse and inclusive future talent pipeline.

CASE STUDY

RECRUITMENT AND EMPLOYMENT CONFEDERATION (REC) AND MAXIMUS

Since 2021 the REC has helped place over 3000 people who were in long-term unemployment into either temporary or permanent employment as part of its involvement in the government's Restart programme. Working in partnership with Maximus, the employability support organisation, REC sources job seekers to apply for roles that REC's recruitment business members have on their books.

As part of the scheme, Maximus is using funding via their community partnership network to provide courses, training, and specific licences for jobseekers. REC helps by putting Maximus in contact with its member recruitment companies which are looking for clients, not least because of the lack of available labour in many sectors. New starters also get a work support adviser to help them once in a job. The partnership work covers London, Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire and Yorkshire.

"This approach is a great example of recruitment businesses using their expertise to get people off Universal Credit and into work. They know what the hirer is looking for and can work to support candidates with their CVs, and interview prep to make sure they have a good chance of securing the job and making a success of it for the longer term."

Shazia Ejaz, Campaigns Director at the REC

EXPANDING ACCESS TO TALENT AND STRENGTHENING RECRUITMENT

Employers, particularly SMEs, face barriers in accessing talent due to capacity constraints, fragmented provision and competition for skilled workers, requiring more coordinated and place-based support.

PBS Regional Hubs

ACTION 16: The government will establish a network of PBS Regional Hubs across selected city regions in England and Scotland. The PBS Hubs will be co-created with and delivered by MSAs (West Midlands, West Yorkshire, Greater Manchester and Liverpool City Region) and by Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region and Glasgow City Region. Expected to launch from spring 2027, the PBS Hubs will act as place-based delivery partners to support the development of regional PBS clusters.

To address regional disparities, the PBS Hubs will align national and local policies through a focus on skills and inclusion, technology adoption and innovation, international trade, and access to finance.

The PBS Hubs will support local PBS employers to build a future-ready workforce while contributing to wider regional growth. While each PBS Regional Hub will tailor its activity to local labour market needs and priorities, delivery within the skills and inclusion theme could include:

- support to PBS employers to access local talent by improving awareness of PBS careers and strengthening links with education and training providers;
- support the brokering of work placements, industry placements, and mentoring opportunities to support entry into PBS careers and progression within the sector;
- help to align existing employment and skills provision to create clearer and more accessible pathways into PBS roles;
- help for employers to adopt new technologies by linking workforce development to innovation and business support programmes;
- provide a single regional entry point for PBS firms to learn about and access government employment and skills support, improving take-up of available provision.

By strengthening PBS employer engagement and improving coordination across the system, the PBS Regional Hubs will help address labour shortages, increase workforce participation and support inclusive PBS growth across regions.

MSA Apprenticeship Brokerage Pilots

ACTION 17: The government is investing £240 million to help more young people aged 16 to 24 access apprenticeship opportunities through new local brokerage services delivered by Mayoral Strategic Authorities (MSAs).

- Following an initial £140 million investment announced in December 2025, the Chancellor announced a further £100 million on 28 September 2026, enabling the pilot to expand to all 14 existing MSAs.
- The programme will be delivered in two waves, expanding from seven MSAs to all 14 by spring 2027.
- The pilot will support young people, particularly those who are not in education, employment or training (NEET), to connect with apprenticeship opportunities and local employers.
- MSA-led brokerage services will test different place-based approaches to generating apprenticeship opportunities, matching young

people to vacancies and supporting employers to recruit talent.
- The pilot will build the evidence base on what works to increase apprenticeship starts and completions, helping inform future policy and delivery.

The pilots have the following key objectives:
- Support more employers to offer apprenticeships to young people aged 16 to 24 and those who are NEET, or at risk of NEET, in pilot areas.
- Increase apprenticeship and foundation apprenticeship starts and completions among: young people aged 16 to 24; and young people aged 16 to 24 who are NEET or at risk of becoming NEET.
- Build the evidence base for what works to produce a blueprint for place-based apprenticeship brokerage solutions.

The first services are expected to begin delivery in early 2027 with the remaining areas joining from spring 2027. The first delivery areas are London, Greater Manchester, Liverpool City Region, South Yorkshire, Tees Valley, West Midlands and West of England.

Apprenticeship Incentives
Smaller employers who do not pay the levy, particularly SMEs, often face financial barriers that limit their ability to take on apprentices. This can limit the number of opportunities available to young people, despite SMEs being more likely than larger businesses to employ them.

ACTION 18: DWP is increasing our support for smaller employers by introducing a new apprenticeship hiring payment of £2,000 for non-levy-paying employers (typically SMEs) when they recruit apprentices aged 16 to 24 as new employees. This will apply to apprenticeship starts from 1 October 2026, as long as they have joined their employer within the past 90 days.

The first payment will be made once the learner has completed their first 90 days of apprenticeship. This will support non-levy-paying employers (typically SMEs) with the additional costs associated with employing young people.

DWP has also fully funded apprenticeship training costs for eligible young apprentices aged under 25 from August 2026. Additionally, employers are not required to pay anything towards employees' National Insurance for all apprentices aged up to 25 (when the employee's wage is below £50,270 a year). This will support SMEs to better engage with the apprenticeship system.

The TechFirst programme [71]
The TechFirst programme offers tailored support across the UK for young people exploring the world of technology, students and researchers studying critical tech subjects, and businesses looking for new talent. TechFirst aims to create and fill local tech jobs for more than 2,000 people across the UK, with its TechLocal strand working directly with SMEs to reduce the risk and cost of hiring early-career technical staff. As significant employers of digital and tech talent, PBS firms stand to benefit from a stronger flow of skilled entrants.

Flexible Skills Programme[72]
In Wales, the **Flexible Skills Programme** supports workforce development through an employer-led approach to upskilling and reskilling. The programme enables businesses across Wales to respond quickly to changing skills needs by providing support for accredited and industry-recognised training. Employers can apply for funding to cover up to 50% of eligible training costs, helping firms invest in workforce capability, improve productivity and address sector-specific skills shortages. For PBS employers, the programme can support the development of digital, leadership, management and specialist professional skills needed to adapt to technological change and evolving business practices.

CASE STUDIES

PRIME

PRIME is a leading example of good practice and collaboration within the legal sector. Founded in 2011, it brings together more than 60 law firms and in-house legal teams, united by a shared commitment to improving access to, and socio-economic diversity within, the legal profession.

PRIME members provide high-quality work experience opportunities for young people from lower socio-economic backgrounds and support with the delivery of PRIME's legal insight sessions to schools in social mobility "cold spots", where access to professional networks and careers information is often limited.

Through these programmes, students develop essential workplace skills, increase their confidence, raise their aspirations and gain a deeper understanding of the opportunities available within the legal sector. Since its launch, PRIME has provided more than 19,000 weeks of work experience and delivered legal insight sessions to nearly 5,000 students, demonstrating its significant reach and impact. Looking ahead, PRIME aims to expand its membership, enabling even more young people to access valuable insights, experiences and pathways into the legal profession.

ICAEW ACCESS ACCOUNTANCY

Access Accountancy was set up in 2014 with the aim of ensuring everyone has an equal chance of getting into and progressing within the accountancy profession based on merit, not background. This coalition of more than 30 organisations has committed to making their practices more inclusive to people from low socio-economic backgrounds (SEB). This includes steps such as running accessible work experience, reducing bias in recruitment and targeted mentoring. More than 6,000 work experience placements have been delivered and data collected shows increasing numbers of students from low socio-economic backgrounds accessing training opportunities such as apprenticeships.

CAPGEMINI DEGREE APPRENTICESHIPS

Capgemini UK has invested in early careers since 2011, when it launched its apprenticeship programmes. One of the first UK employers to launch Degree Apprenticeships in 2015, it has since hired more than 1,500 graduates and apprentices. Today, 441 learners are on more than 30 active pathways spanning AI, software development, cyber security, data analytics, leadership and management.

Delivered with partners including Sheffield Hallam University, Manchester Metropolitan University and Henley Business School, these programmes connect learning with skilled careers.

Capgemini remains committed to improving gender diversity across the technology workforce and is making positive progress, with 52% of graduate and apprentice offers this year made to women.

Capgemini complements these pathways with programmes that widen access to opportunity. ELEVATE builds skills and aspirations among school pupils facing barriers to employment.

CodeYourFuture provides job-ready technology and employability skills for people from disadvantaged backgrounds, with more than 100 graduates hired by Capgemini. Partnerships with The King's Trust and Digital Unite extend digital and work-readiness support into communities.

Together, these initiatives support social inclusion while building the high-value skills needed by Capgemini, its clients and the UK economy.

CASE STUDIES

INCLUSIVE TALENT BROKERAGE

The Inclusive Talent Brokerage (ITB) is a pan-London pilot programme that helps skilled Londoners from underrepresented groups access quality employment while supporting employers to address workforce challenges. It funds nine charities to deliver tailored job-readiness support, supported by a specialist brokerage partner providing employer engagement, digital talent-matching, capacity-building support and recruitment events. The ITB's approach adapts established American practice to London's context to tackle diverse unemployment.

Since November 2025, the ITB has supported more than 400 Londoners into employment and engaged more than 150 employers across London. It has delivered strong results in financial and professional services through organisations including 20/20 Levels and the 10,000 Interns Foundation helping diverse talent access sector opportunities. Of those supported, 57% were aged 16 to 25, 91% are from underrepresented communities, 60% are women and 10% are disabled people.

LAW SOCIETY OF ENGLAND AND WALES

The Diversity and Access Scheme (DAS) supports aspiring solicitors of all ages from lower socio-economic backgrounds. It helps those who lack the financial support and professional networks needed to pursue their legal education and career. The scheme also aims to support candidates who are from care backgrounds and those who are disabled, where they meet the eligibility criteria. The DAS will cover the full costs of the SQE preparation course and assessment fees or LPC fees. Together with DAS sponsors, the Law Society has invested £3.5 million in the scheme to date, supporting more than 300 aspiring solicitors to complete their legal education and providing 4,000 hours of mentoring.

Through the DAS the Law Society is supporting talented, aspiring solicitors to pursue their legal education and careers through Legal Practice Course (LPC) or Solicitors Qualifying Examination (SQE) scholarships, mentoring and work experience. The scheme is funded by the Law Society Educational Trust, sponsor law firms, in-house legal teams and law schools. The scheme also benefited from the SRA's Access Reinvestment Fund (ARF) grant in 2026, supporting costs towards the SQE assessments. The scheme relies on law firms and in-house legal teams to host awardees for insight days and work experience placements and on individual solicitors to volunteer their time to mentor our awardees. Since 2020, 26 DAS awardees have started or completed training contracts and a further 11 have secured qualifying work experience.

RIBA

Future Architects and Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Initiatives: RIBA leads industry programmes such as "Future Architects", as a subset of their student membership, to provide mentoring, skills workshops and bursaries for architecture students, including those from underrepresented backgrounds. RIBA also requires Chartered Practices to have EDI policies in place and pay at least the Real Living Wage to staff.

In 2025, RIBA commissioned the Fawcett Society, which independently produced a report looking at gender equity in the architecture profession. In response, RIBA has put together an action plan to address the recommendations, including providing guidance and templates for members on maternity, paternity and other forms of carer's leave, and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) on returning to work following a career break.

CREATING GOOD, ACCESSIBLE, INCLUSIVE AND SUSTAINABLE JOBS

Ensuring the PBS sector continues to offer high-quality, accessible and inclusive jobs, helping employers attract and retain talent while supporting fair progression and workforce participation.

The PBS sector is an important source of high-quality employment across the UK, with average pay 27% above the UK average. Many PBS employers invest in a wider package of support, including training, mentoring, work experience and professional development opportunities, to widen access, attract and retain talent.

While the PBS sector offers predominantly high-quality, well-paid employment, employers face growing challenges in ensuring jobs remain accessible, inclusive and sustainable as workforce expectations evolve and labour market pressures intensify. At the same time, competition for skilled labour and changes driven by technology risk widening inequalities in access to progression, good work and in-work support.

EMPLOYER COMMITMENT: The sector recognises the importance of fair pay and transparency. With the support of the PBSC Skills and Talent Working Group, the sector will establish systems for measuring and tracking transparency for early careers salary levels in job adverts, with a view to extending this, subject to the outcome of the government's Equal pay and pay discrimination Consultation[73]

EMPLOYER COMMITMENT: The PBSC agrees to set up a PBS Good Jobs Standard for industry to sign up to within the next three years.

EMPLOYER COMMITMENT: PBS employers commit to signing up to the Living Wage Foundation's Living Wage, via Living Wage Employers | Living Wage Foundation[74]. With recognition of the challenges for smaller enterprises, who will work towards signing up as soon as practicable.

As many services are commissioned via competitive processes this will require commissioning authorities to be encouraged to specify commitments to the Living Wage Foundation's Living Wage in their contracting terms and practices.

Sir Charlie Mayfield's independent **Keep Britain Working Review**[75] published on 5 November 2025, highlighted the scale of the problem of people falling out of work for reasons of ill-health and disability, and the vital role employers can play in addressing this. The Review examined how employers and government could work together to build healthier and more inclusive workplaces. Officials across government are working with employers, providers, regions and wider stakeholders to create healthier, more inclusive workplaces, with three key outcomes: reduced sickness absence, improved return-to-work rates and better participation and retention of disabled people.

PBS employers like PwC, Serco and EY are already participating in the three-year Vanguard phase, supporting the development and testing of employer-led solutions.

DELIVERING THIS PLAN

The Professional and Business Services Council (PBSC) will work in partnership with government to oversee the implementation of commitments and actions set out in the Jobs Plan.

Over the next 12 months, the PBSC Skills and Talent Working Group will mobilise commitments through PBSC members, professional bodies and regional partners to ensure SMEs are effectively reached. Its membership will be strengthened to support a more delivery-focused role, with progress monitored through the development of a shared performance framework to track progress across government and industry actions and escalate barriers to the PBSC where intervention is required.

The Working Group will also provide a structured interface with Skills England and the wider skills system, aligning sector demand with training provision and supporting the co-design of relevant skills pathways. This collaborative approach will contribute to meeting the challenges that the sector faces.

PBSC
PROFESSIONAL & BUSINESS SERVICES COUNCIL

Marco Amitrano, Professional and Business Services Council Business Co-Chair

"Professional and business services is one of the UK's greatest economic assets, contributing around £335 billion a year to the economy and employing five million people across every region and nation of the UK. Some progress has been made since the sector plan was published, but we must do more to demonstrate a genuine partnership between the Government and the PBS sector as one of the Industrial Strategy's priority sectors.

This Jobs Plan is rightly ambitious for the future of the sector, and industry has responded with a series of firm commitments to match it. Crucially, the plan wants to deliver opportunity in every part of the country and create clear, visible pathways for young people into good careers. We will keep working with Government to deliver this plan and enable the sector to go from strength to strength."

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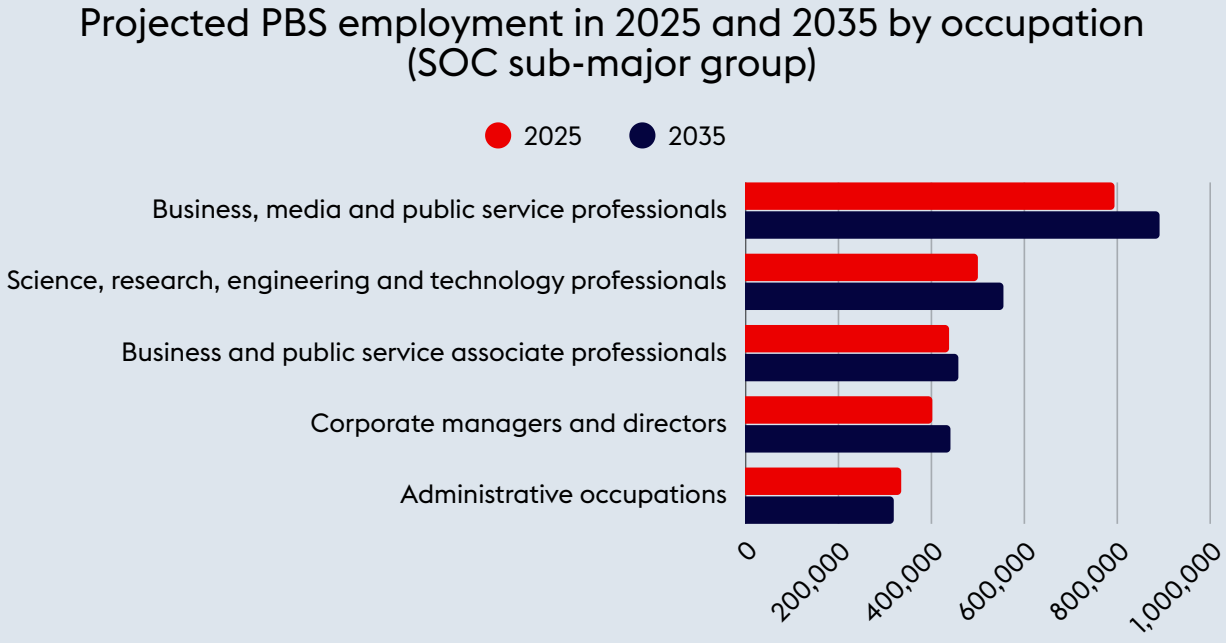
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UK Government

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