



# UK Shared Prosperity Fund

Investment Plan Drafting Template

Version 2  
May 2022

### Your location

To be eligible for funding, you will need to be applying on behalf of a lead authority in one of the [delivery geographies](#).

Select the lead authority

**For Scotland and Wales only:** Who else is this investment plan being submitted on behalf of? Select all that apply

### Your details

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Organisation name: Shropshire Council

### Local challenges and opportunities

In this section, we will ask you:

- If you've identified any challenges or opportunities, you intend to support
- Which of the UKSPF investment priorities these fall under

#### **ARE THERE ANY LOCAL CHALLENGES YOU FACE WHICH FALL UNDER THE COMMUNITIES AND PLACE INVESTMENT PRIORITY?**

**(If yes) Describe these challenges, give evidence where possible**

##### **Shropshire has a growing, but ageing population**

The demographics of Shropshire are not reflective of the national average, with 25% of the population currently aged 65 or older compared to the England average of 18.5%, and a prediction of 12.8% growth by 2025 – with those aged 80+ rising even further at 20.3%. In comparison, the number of young people in the area is relatively low, and cultural diversity is limited - consequently many young people migrate out of the area seeking employment opportunities or lifestyles that they do not perceive as being available in Shropshire. There are therefore progressively higher numbers of people requiring care and support – either in their own home, or a care home – and rising numbers of people living with dementia, alongside a backdrop of a declining skilled working age population.

The Shropshire Plan 2022-25 demonstrates the impact of this, stating that 78% of net budget was spent on social care for adults and children in the 2021/22 financial year. In order to improve healthy life expectancy and levels of wellbeing, careful consideration of place in relation to physical, environmental and social elements will be required both to encourage retention of younger people and a thriving working age population, whilst also ensuring that the infrastructure is in place to effectively meet the needs of older people without overburdening already stretched resources.

##### **Market Town Resilience**

With 13 market towns, and numerous villages between them, the population of Shropshire is disparate, with 57.2% of residents living in rural areas and 42.8% living in urban areas. Overall population is set to increase significantly by 2043, by up to 28% from the current 323,600 - with a 6.4% increase predicted by 2025. This is faster than the 3.8% growth predicted for the West Midlands and 3.5% for England overall. Whilst some market towns may be considered relatively

affluent and offer access to a range of facilities and services, others are experiencing the challenges caused by historic infrastructure, vacant or derelict buildings and spaces and a lack of flexibility in the way retail, services and facilities are provided.

Shropshire's market towns play a number of important and distinctive roles and possess a range of quality assets that combine to offer significant growth potential to boost the economy. They are key service centres that support local people and businesses within the towns and in the surrounding hinterlands. They also present as visually attractive, authentic, traditional market towns, with features and assets that appeal to many people, making the towns a desirable choice for living in or visiting.

However, there is the need for market towns to adapt and harness the positive aspects of culture, addressing the challenge faced by many residents in more rural areas who are effectively cut off from opportunity, experiencing growing food poverty and rural isolation. Altered working patterns due to the pandemic have also had an impact, with people living in or moving to Shropshire due to being able to work remotely looking for cultural activities closer to home, including a focus on activities outside of Shrewsbury.

An increase in footfall for market towns has a potential multiplier effect in terms of more local spend higher business sales, and in the long term, more positive economic growth in the high street. This in turn increases desirability of the area, both in terms of encouraging new commercial opportunity, and also socially, encouraging people to make better use of their local area. The challenge for Shropshire market towns is realising this potential – with a combination of physical improvements (which can be relatively small scale, such as greening with hanging baskets, flower boxes or food growing initiatives, to larger scale urban regeneration schemes which make public realm more appealing and encourage pride in place. Markets themselves play a key role in attracting pedestrians, passing traffic and visitors to increase their dwell time in the area. Development of new initiatives and partnerships, particularly those supporting cultural and community activities, community arts projects and small independent retailers offer a way to improve both the physical and social appearance of market towns, whilst also enhancing the general ambience – connecting people, place and community and making the most of the aspirations of local people to be able to use their market towns to access services, work, or socialise.

Changes to the way that local spaces are used and operated, in addition to improvements to digital and physical connectivity and improved facilitation of engagement with young people, will be required to lessen the inequality gap and ensure all residents are able to access and enjoy social and cultural events and activities in flexible, adaptable spaces – building capacity, cohesion and resilience for the future.

### **Environmental and community resilience**

In February 2020, Shropshire was hit by the worst flooding in 20 years, with residents and businesses evacuated from Shrewsbury and Ironbridge following two severe danger-to-life flood warnings. This was followed by the first Covid-19 lockdown. With the UK also leaving the EU, recession, and a national cost of living crisis, this has created a challenging time for Shropshire – many rural businesses have been forced to close, urban businesses have lost access to appropriate spaces to operate, and others are still experiencing the detrimental impacts of changes in climate in an area with rich heritage, but the associated problems that often sit alongside dated infrastructure and a lack of flood amelioration measures.

Climate change and other environmental factors are also having an impact, with higher temperatures, droughts, storms, and increasingly poor air quality all being issues which have affected Shropshire residents. Improving the urban realm is one way that these challenges can be addressed, with more trees and greening initiatives offering shading and air quality improvement, root networks to combat the effects of drought, and rain gardens or schemes designed with sustainable urban drainage in mind providing flooding and drought countermeasures which mitigate the impact of extreme weather events. Pleasant urban realm can also encourage people to alter the way they travel, promoting walking or cycling rather than driving, which in turn reduces air pollution and improves health and wellbeing outcomes.

Community connection to place is at the very heart of resilience – on its own, resilience has very limited value if local people do not feel invested in, or attached to, the place that they live or work in. Building and nurturing a relationship between people and their environment is a key priority for Shropshire, creating shared values, community capacity, and cross-sector collaboration through allowing opportunity for people to actively participate in creation of meaning and use – investing in smarter infrastructure, civic technology investments, greening (providing improved air quality and shading to mitigate the impacts of increased temperature), carbon reduction and climate change initiatives which together will deliver ‘place capital’ - the shared built and natural wealth of the public realm. In order to mitigate the impacts of flooding in the future and encourage pride of place in the local area, sympathetic restoration and management of both historic and more modern localities will be required, with feasibility for repurposing of vacant and derelict properties and spaces considered in the context of adaptable, fit-for-purpose, multi-faceted community and cultural opportunity and careful investment of funds to ensure sustainable operation in line with the priorities and needs of local people.

**ARE THERE ANY LOCAL OPPORTUNITIES UNDER THE COMMUNITIES AND PLACE INVESTMENT PRIORITY THAT YOU INTEND TO SUPPORT?**

**(If yes) Describe these opportunities, give evidence where possible**

**Sustainability and innovation**

With a rich blend of natural, industrial and social heritage, Shropshire is a unique and diverse county – 23% of the county is designated as areas of natural beauty, with three national natural reserves, internationally important wetland sites, a variety of geological features unequalled in any area of comparable size in Britain, and the third longest rights of way network in the country. Blended with fascinating historical features such as the Ironbridge Gorge and Flaxmill Maltings, numerous museums and opportunities for self-led learning, the area offers untapped potential for a strengthened cultural and community offer which will benefit residents and increase levels of wellbeing and pride in place. These features have also supported Shropshire in achieving a reputation for sustainability, coupled with investment in renewable energy and a commitment to tackling climate change and improving biodiversity, in part driven by the flooding in 2020, pilot projects offered support through covid recovery funding, and the demonstrable positive impact on air quality seen during the first COVID-19 lockdown with high levels of air pollution dramatically improving due to significantly reduced levels of congestion and private vehicle use.

**Improve functionality, dwell time and experience in Shropshire market towns**

Shropshire already has 21 libraries forming important hubs within the heart of disparate communities, and the opportunity exists to build upon this successful concept, harnessing the momentum of change which has taken place over the last two years in the wake of the pandemic, flooding issues and Brexit. Improvements to infrastructure which encourage modal shift towards sustainable travel, encouraging walking and cycling connections between cultural destinations and promoting interesting, locally led cultural activities will not only support an improvement in health outcomes, but also enhance levels of social cohesion, boosting capacity and resilience in the future. A place-based approach for transformation of market towns which encourages maximisation of natural assets and resources, increases accessibility and boosts awareness of environment and low carbon initiatives will support wellbeing, at the same time increasing desirability of currently under-utilised spaces, vacant buildings and heritage feature – championing sustainable development and provision of flexible, adaptable locations which can be used by a variety of community and cultural groups for a wide range of different purposes.

**Activities and services to address isolation and exclusion**

One of the advantages of the significantly higher proportion of older people in Shropshire is the existence of a strong and highly skilled volunteer base with aspirations to facilitate and improve affordable community and cultural initiatives. Investing in support for groups to succeed and thrive (in conjunction with investment in infrastructure as detailed above) will assist with tackling issues of deprivation and isolation, allowing families, vulnerable adults and those experiencing poverty to access early support and interventions and promoting inter-generational activities which enhance

community understanding, inspire younger people, support lifelong learning, and improve inequality of access.

Merging volunteer-led services with support for cultural and creative social enterprise, particularly operating in flexible shared spaces which can also be used for affordable co-working (something which has seen rising demand following a move towards increased remote working in the area) will allow for development of a thriving community and cultural sector and a network of support which becomes self-sustaining, reducing demand on overburdened council services and promoting independence, resilience and community wellbeing.

**This results in the following high-level opportunities under the Communities and Place Investment Priority that Shropshire intends to support:**

1. Build upon existing assets, resources and infrastructure, harnessing the potential of market towns to offer a wide range of activities, services and facilities that bring communities together and encourage both physical and digital connection between different individuals, groups and localities.
2. Offer support to boost cultural capacity and social cohesion, leading to an increasingly diversified cultural offer which will benefit younger people, older people, existing residents and those moving to the area in the wake of the pandemic and changing lifestyle priorities – offering all sectors of the community the chance to recognise and explore their aspirations and achieve their potential.
3. Promote understanding of climate change issues, environment and air quality, opportunities for carbon reduction and the benefits of active lifestyles, including working with the community through creation of new or updating existing defences for natural hazards – increasing healthy life expectancy, improving physical and mental wellbeing, and enhancing pride in place.
4. And, linking with the other two investment priorities, building social and physical infrastructure which supports development of improved employment and educational opportunities and a better understanding of the role of volunteering in supporting socio-economic outcomes, delivered through a combination of skills sharing activities, connections and signposting, and provision of high-quality, desirable community and cultural spaces.

**ARE THERE ANY LOCAL CHALLENGES YOU FACE WHICH FALL UNDER THE SUPPORTING LOCAL BUSINESS INVESTMENT PRIORITY?**

**(If yes) Describe these challenges, give evidence where possible**

Shropshire businesses are currently operating within the context of massive social, economic, political and environmental change – recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic, dealing with a recession, the impacts of Brexit, achieving net zero and climate change, and localised flooding events which particularly impacted businesses in Shrewsbury. Shropshire currently has a lower than national average GVA per head, at 20.5% less than the West Midlands average and 30.1% less than the UK average.

**Working patterns, recruitment, retention and connectivity**

The changing work patterns which have emerged as a result of the pandemic has led to a change in local demographics, with young people increasingly migrating out of the area, and difficulty in encouraging young professionals/graduates to relocate into the area. A gap exists in the provision of a skilled labour force at entry level, hampering progression of a diversification of industry which would raise productivity, retention of young people, and encourage recruitment. Transport, accessibility and availability of affordable housing also link to this challenge – whilst not directly related to business investment, the fact that it is currently difficult for those without access to a car to travel around the county from more rural areas causes the issue that even for those businesses

wishing to engage a skilled labour force it is often not possible to recruit the employees they are looking for. Whilst digital connectivity has been improving since 2014, with a rise from 24% with access to superfast broadband up to 94% in 2020, the local infrastructure and provision of affordable workspaces in local towns has yet to catch up with the change from office-based to home-based working which has resulted in a desire for more localised hubs and community facilities – according to the Shropshire Business Impact Tracker (December 2020), 39% of businesses intend to continue to work remotely.

### **A need for specifically tailored, accessible business support**

People in Shropshire are also more likely to enter self-employment and start-up a business than other areas of the country, with 14.2% of those aged 16-64 self-employed compared to 9.4% nationally. This results in a need for high quality business support, and space for businesses to grow rather than relocating out of the county. Additionally, there is a perception that Shropshire's current business support is complex, with a low level of awareness of Shropshire's strengths and what it can offer.

### **Lack of affordable, flexible, fit-for-purpose infrastructure**

There is also a lack of suitable commercial property available – although the Estates Gazette demonstrated that during the first quarter of the pandemic, Shropshire was the most sought after location for business, demand exceeds supply of appropriate space. In many cases, this is due to constraints caused by the history and heritage of the area (which is also an opportunity, viewed in the right context) and the brownfield nature of 'traditional' working sites, many of which have issues including the risk of flooding as mentioned above which mean they are unviable for private investment without initial public funding for remediation. The planning process can also be difficult to navigate, and previously has taken considerably longer than it could.

### **Requirement for diversification of traditional Shropshire industries**

Finally, although prior to COVID-19, there were over 13m visitors to Shropshire each year, the county ranked only 40<sup>th</sup> out of the 50 most visited in the UK, with spend per trip only around £10 per head – lower than the national average. The tourism, hospitality and food and drink industries are typically lower paid (alongside two of the three other areas which have created the most additional employment since 2020: health and business administration and support services), and all of these have also suffered due to the pandemic, with many smaller rural businesses closing down. Average earnings in Shropshire are £29.20 below the regional average per week, and £57 per week below the national average. Tourism offers a significant contribution to the local economy, but this has the potential for exponential growth given the right investment. Additionally, impact of leaving the European Union on tourism and other cultural sectors has yet to be realised, due to the COVID-19 lockdown - impacts will emerge over the next few years and will require a flexible and adaptable implementation plan.

## **ARE THERE ANY LOCAL OPPORTUNITIES UNDER THE SUPPORTING LOCAL BUSINESS INVESTMENT PRIORITY THAT YOU INTEND TO SUPPORT?**

**(If yes) Describe these opportunities, give evidence where possible**

The Shropshire Plan 2022-25 reports that 34,607 business grants to the value of nearly £170m have been delivered by October 2021, plus numerous other projects, by both the council and partners, to support market towns, communities and individuals. This has included a £2.76m Economic Recovery Fund alongside the High Streets/Welcome Back Fund and Town Centre Recovery Programmes. Potential exists to build upon this positive work to boost business support, resilience and productivity.

### **Strength sectors in Shropshire**

With 22% of the county designated as areas of natural beauty, two World Heritage Sites within the Council area, 7000 listed buildings Grade 1,2 or 2\* and more than 13m visitors a year, the opportunity exists to diversify and grow the visitor economy, linking with opportunities identified as

part of the Communities and Place investment priorities. The visitor economy sector is forecast to grow by 73% between 2012 and 2036, taking GVA to £367m. The creative industries sector forecast to grow by 174% over same period, generating £331m by 2036 and employment opportunities in higher value, professional jobs. Taken together, the value of the natural and historic heritage offer is significant, with economic return of visits to the environment estimated to be up to £100m per year. As important sectors of the local economy, support going forward has the potential to grow the market, even without increasing the number of visitors.

Shropshire also has a reputation for sustainability – it is the second biggest producer of renewable energy in the UK - and the low carbon and renewable energy sector is predicted to be an area of significant growth in the West Midlands. The opportunity exists to build upon demand for low energy vehicles, infrastructure, energy efficiency and low-carbon heat, and encourage industries working in this sector to locate themselves in Shropshire.

**Grow high value sectors and boost some existing sectors to create better quality jobs:**

The aim to develop Shropshire as a safe, strong and vibrant destination to attract people to live in, work in, learn in and visit the County links intrinsically with business support - providing and promoting high quality cultural activities, building Shropshire's reputation as a cultural destination, increasing visitors, which in turn will attract people and businesses to relocate to the area, providing a skilled workforce and new options for employment. Delivering support for businesses, including creative industries, food and drink, agri-tech, leisure, outdoor activities, the visitor economy, renewable energy and green industry and working with businesses in a fair and proportionate way (balancing regulatory requirements with business support) will allow those considering investing in Shropshire to grow and thrive, benefitting both local people and the local economy. Shropshire has an enterprising and independent spirit that manifests in higher-than-average numbers of small businesses and self-employed people, and strong arts, music and creative industries, heritage, leisure and visitor economies - many with potential for growth.

**This results in the following high-level opportunities under the Supporting Local Business Investment Priority that Shropshire intends to support:**

1. Provide the right tools and support to facilitate businesses to invest in research and development, relocate to Shropshire or expand and grow in their physical locations and workforce, particularly in relation to sustainability and green industry and the creative and cultural sectors.
2. Champion investment in wider infrastructure that underpins business investment, focused on town centres and high streets, business parks and growth corridors - recognising the potential to establish hubs providing support to supply chains and individuals moving into the county to access and develop its strengths and opportunities, and exploring affordable, flexible co-working space in key locations.
3. Collaborative working with the Marches Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and business improvement districts, assisting businesses to gain support through recovery funds, UKSPF and other relevant funding.
4. And, linking with the other two investment priorities: Provide appropriate housing, connectivity, networks and workplace progression through training and upskilling, so the county has the right workforce to enable economic growth and prosperity and can grow the working age population.

**ARE THERE ANY LOCAL CHALLENGES YOU FACE WHICH FALL UNDER THE PEOPLE AND SKILLS INVESTMENT PRIORITY? (In Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland this should also include challenges relating to Multiply)**

**(If yes) Describe these challenges, give evidence where possible**

Shropshire has a tight labour market with low unemployment, poor retention of skilled young people and an ageing population above the national average. The Covid-19 pandemic exacerbated these issues with more people leaving the labour market and becoming economically inactive, particularly in the older age cohorts within the labour market.

Strategically **we need to ensure that: local employers have a supply of labour market entrants.**

1. better entry-level skills
2. support local people develop the skills they need to live healthy and prosperous lives
3. retain young people and a younger skilled demographic to live and work in Shropshire

Shropshire Council's Shropshire Plan 2022-25 'Healthy Economy' priority prioritises the need to ensure Shropshire can retain and develop a skilled workforce for the future and for communities to have the skills they need to function and prosper in society.

*"We will provide access to lifelong learning, supporting people and our communities to prosper, and through providing the right skills developing greater productivity and improved wages."*

The Shropshire Plan 2022-25

Shropshire therefore has clear Challenges we need to target:

**1. Upskilling adults with low skills who are within, or close, to the labour market**

We need to improve the supply of skilled labour entering, or already within the labour market. Improving basic skills (numeracy, literacy & digital) forms a significant part of this challenge.

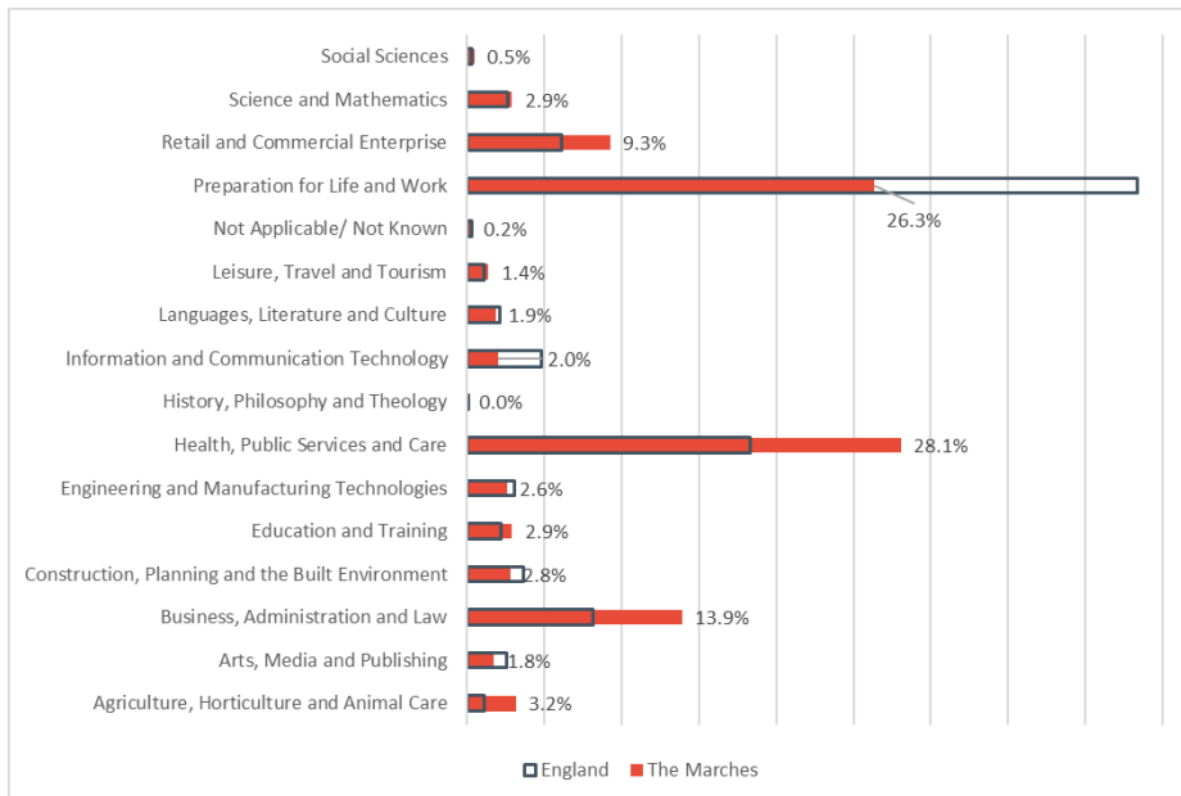
Shropshire has several sectors where the shortage of skilled labour is causing problems for employers in terms of productivity and growth. The county also has a high number of micro businesses and self-employed people for who numeracy is a challenge. Two notable examples where we need to improve the quality of labour supply are:

- The health and social care sector in the county, which is forecast to grow strongly and has three of the top five occupations for forecast growth. The number of jobs adverts in Health and Social Care in the Marches increased 151% between 2016 and 2020 and there are expected to be an additional 1,023 jobs in caring, leisure and caring personal service roles. Improving the supply of labour to this and other growing sectors that provide significant volume of jobs in the county is an imperative.
- Hospitality businesses are more than twice as likely as other industries to be experiencing challenges in filling vacancies compared with normal expectations for this time of year. Between 23 August and 5 September 2021, 30% of hospitality businesses said that vacancies were more difficult to fill than normal. This compares with 13% across all industries (up from 9% in early August).

An additional issue The Marches LEP (2022) highlight is that lower skilled people who are in work have little incentive to acquire new skills as they have jobs they can adequately undertake without additional training, and, unless their employer instigates training, they are unlikely to be

encouraged to invest their time in learning. Finding innovative ways of delivering numeracy courses in conjunction with employers is therefore a priority.

Low basic skills attainment also hinders upskilling in Shropshire for those adults who are already in learning. A significant number of individuals are unable to complete courses as they cannot successfully complete the basic skills element of their qualification. This limits their attainment progression ambitions and leads to many being put off learning for life. The relatively low attainment of 'Preparation for Life and Work' qualifications (compared to national levels) provides an indication of the scale of this issue in the county. **Improving basic skills attainment through UKSPF as a qualifications enabler is therefore a key priority for Shropshire.**



Source: Further Education & Skills data, DfE (published 2021)

A specific issue highlighted by The Marches LEP is the need to support those with **Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)** to improve their skills so they can enter employment. This requires specialist support and the cooperation of employers.

## 2. Retain and attract higher level skills within Shropshire to boost economic growth

Unemployment is low in Shrewsbury and Shropshire but there is an over-representation of low-wage, low-skill jobs within the economy which is weakening the local economy and constraining economic growth.

12.5% of jobs were lost between 2015 and 2020, and, more importantly, a high proportion of the town centre jobs that remain are in low skilled, less productive economic sectors. Thus, at £556 gross per week average earnings in Shropshire are £29.20 below the regional average and £57 below the national average.

This low-wage, low-skill economy is also evident in weakened productivity of businesses in Shropshire. In 2019 GVA per job stood at £40,341 in Shropshire; 20.5% less than in the West Midlands and 30.1% less than in the UK. The gap between the Shropshire and regional and national averages has widened since 2020, with the GVA value in Shropshire rising by 14.6% compared with growth of 24.7% in the West Midlands and 23.1% in the UK.

This lack of higher skilled, higher paid jobs means that young people are migrating out of the town centre and the wider county, leaving future economic growth to be driven by an ageing resident population. By 2043 one-third of Shropshire's population will be aged 65 years or older.

This is creating a tight labour market and making it more difficult for higher value sectors to grow and create more jobs. We need to break this cycle by bringing forward employment sites that are attractive to higher value employers through our Levelling Up Fund projects

To address this we need to grow higher value sectors and strengthen some of our existing sectors to create better quality jobs.

## **2. Improving progression in and to the labour market by targeting people with low skills, and those who do not engage in learning, to improve their basic and other skills**

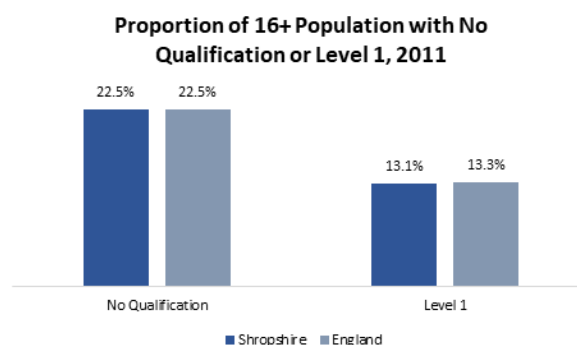
Boosting the supply of skilled labour in the Shropshire economy is essential to increase productivity, ease recruitment difficulties and facilitate economic growth. It is also key to improving income levels, particularly of those currently with low incomes (either in employment, economically active or potentially economically active).

The OECD's adult skills survey revealed that circa one in four working-age adults in England have low literacy and/or numeracy. The results in Shropshire are consistent with this overall picture for England; 42,748 (23.9%) people in Shropshire have low literacy and/or numeracy.

Of these:

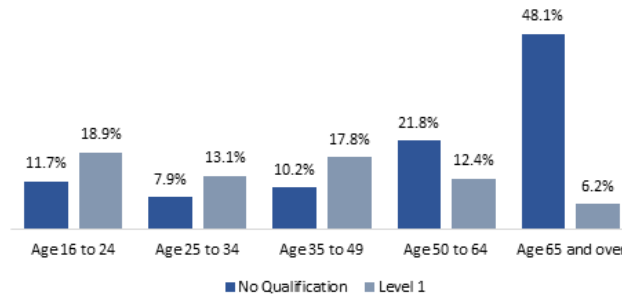
- 87% (37,218) are aged 25-64, with 32% (11,797) of these out of work.
- 13% (5,530) are 16-24, with 83% (4,614) of these being qualified at level 2 or below.

Looking back at 2011 Census data shows that this picture has altered little over the past decade. The 2011 Census showed 22.5% of adults had no qualifications, while 13.1% held Level 1 qualifications. More than a third of the 16+ population in Shropshire had either Level 1 qualifications or no qualifications at all. These proportions were almost identical to the national average at that time.



The 2011 Census showed that those aged 50 and above were much more likely to have no or low qualifications, with almost half of those aged 65 and with no qualifications at all. Whilst this data is 11 years old, it is still likely to be the case that low literacy, numeracy and digital skills are more prevalent in older age groups.

**Levels of Qualification by Age, 2011**



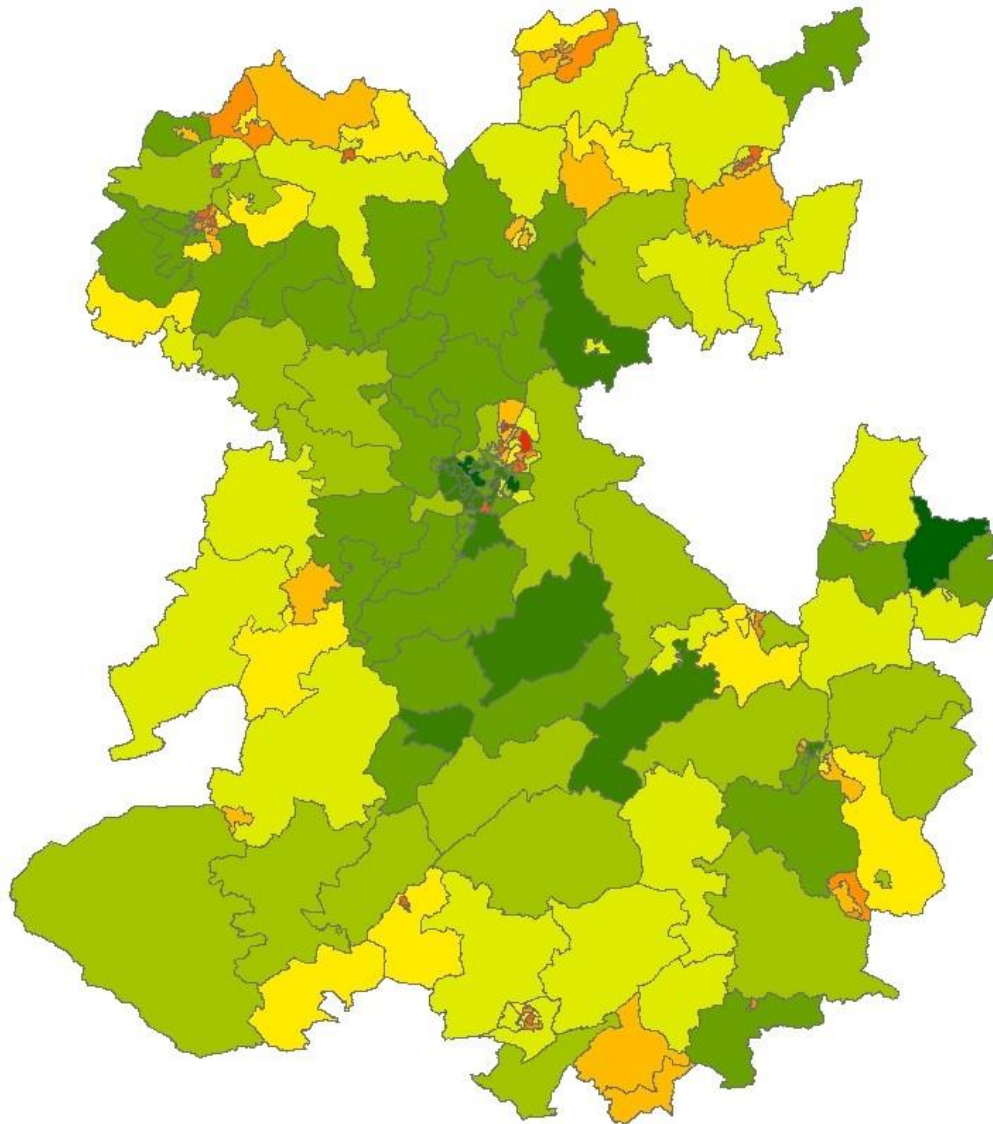
### **3. Geographical variation highlights the challenge of improving skills in rural Shropshire**

Skills need in Shropshire is distributed across the county with the highest concentrations in our numerous rural settlements and market towns.

Whilst Shropshire's overall relative deprivation scores from the Index of Multiple Deprivation (2019) do not indicate any major deprivation in the county, drilling down into the Adult Skills Sub-Domain reveals a significant skills disparity with many of the county's Lower Super Output Areas within the 10% most deprived nationally.

The Annual Population Survey (ONS, Dec 2020) showed that the proportion of workless households in Shropshire was 14.9% compared to 13.6% nationally. Whilst historically the county has tracked below the national rate there does appear to be convergence between Shropshire and the national average over the past few years, with the national rate falling faster than Shropshire. This indicates that **there is likely to be a need to target workless households, with those in more isolated rural settlements a priority for support.**

## Adult Skills Sub-Domain from the 2019 IMD National Deciles



Adult Skills Sub-domain National Decile 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

1 = most deprived, 10 = least deprived

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Skills attainment is not spread evenly across Shropshire. There are areas above average and others below. However, even in areas with the lowest percentage of adults with low skills there are significant numbers of people in need of support to improve.

### Highest Need Wards.

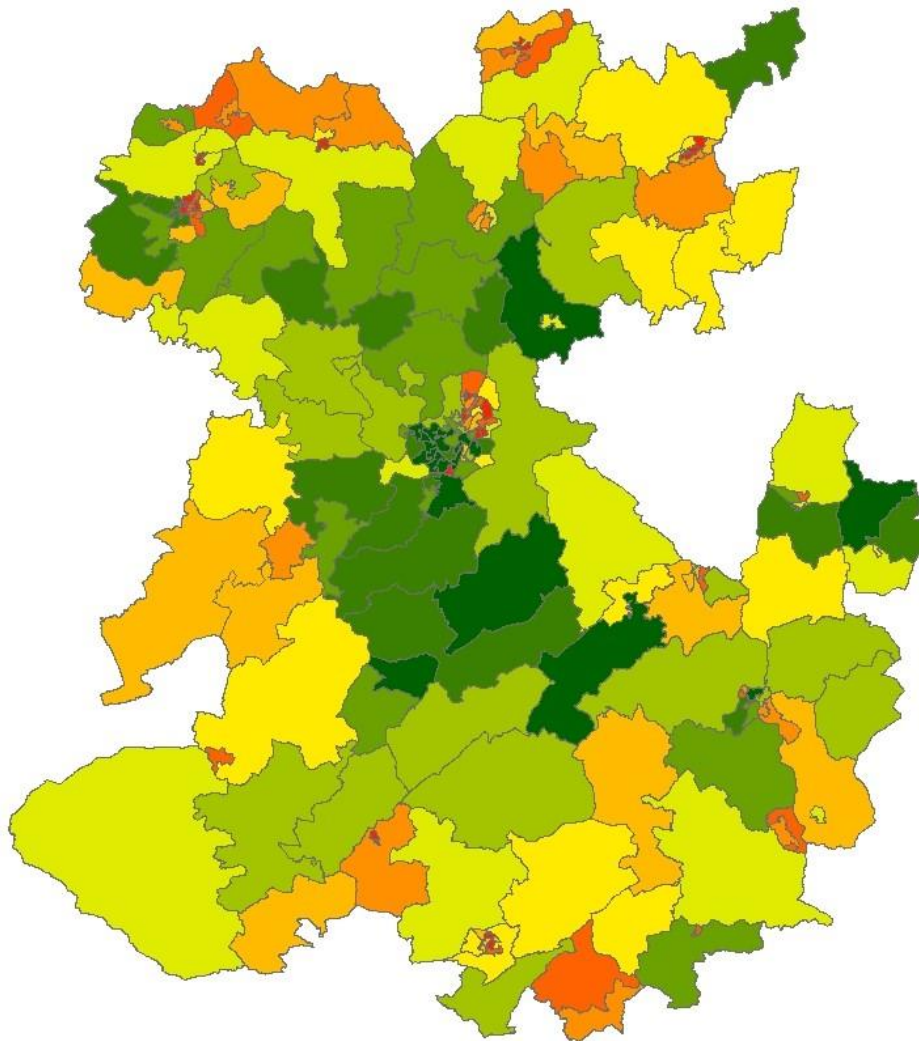
- Monkmoor (26%, 709 people);
- Gobowen, Selattyn and Weston Rhyn (25%, 1094);

- Harlescott (25%, 780)

**Lowest need Wards:**

- Copthorne (19%, 464);
- Shifnal South and Cosford ( 20%, 686);
- Belle Vue (20%, 599).

## Adult Skills Sub-Domain from the 2019 IMD Shropshire Deciles



Adult Skills Sub Domain Shropshire Decile 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

1 = most deprived, 10 = least deprived

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Beneficiary statistics from the recent delivery of the Building Better Opportunities programme in Shropshire, (which targeted those with very low qualifications and multiple barriers to learning) provides some insight into the nature of local need and demand:

- 1,000 participants had a maximum of lower secondary school education (i.e. no GCSE's/formal qualifications)
- 12.3% of these participants had no formal education, either primary or secondary
- 3.4% had no numeracy qualifications

Our provider information indicates that UKSPF and Multiply funded provision could target of range of groups which would benefit from specific tailored support. In particular, based on local demography we would anticipate that key groups should include:

- Older people
- Adults with low/no skills who do not engage in learning.

**ARE THERE ANY LOCAL OPPORTUNITIES UNDER THE PEOPLE AND SKILLS INVESTMENT PRIORITY THAT YOU INTEND TO SUPPORT? (In Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland this should also include challenges relating to Multiply)**

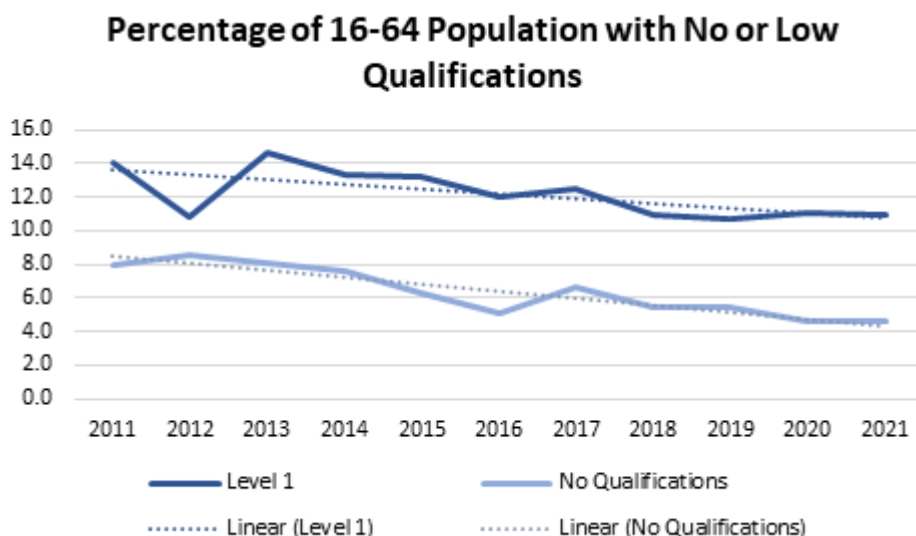
**(If yes) Describe these opportunities, give evidence where possible**

**An improving skills profile**

Shropshire’s working-age population skills profile is improving. Our UKSPF and Multiply investments will aim to continue this progress and improve workforce and labour supply skills.

We also need to ensure retired people have the skills that enable them to access services and activities to minimise exclusion and optimise their quality of life. This is especially pertinent to those living in rural areas where access to essential service (such as banking) is more limited.

According to the Annual Population Survey there were 19,600 working age people in Shropshire whose highest qualification was Level 1 and an additional 8,300 people with no qualifications at all. This represents 10.9% of the 16-64 population and 4.6% respectively. The qualifications that people attain has risen over the last decade, with the proportion with no qualifications and low qualifications has been in steady decline, as shown in the graph below.



In 2011, there were 14,700 people aged 16-64 with no qualifications – there are now 6,400 fewer (a decline of 44%). The number qualified to Level 1 and no higher has likewise fallen – by 24% or by 6,200 people.

The proportion of the population with no qualifications is lower than the national average (6.4% in 2021). 9.6% of the working age population are qualified to Level 1 only in England – a slightly lower proportion than is the case in Shropshire.

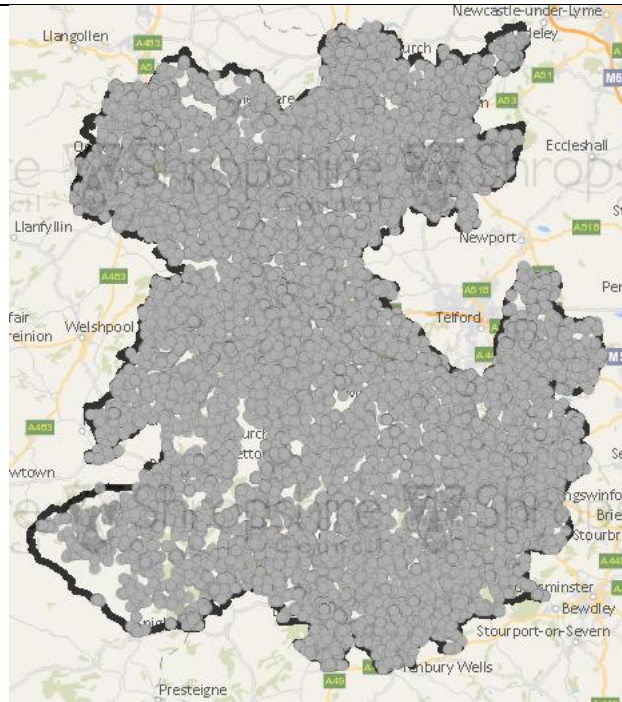
### **Green skills and the green economy**

Offering a wealth of natural assets, a commitment to renewable energy, and increased focus on agri-tech built upon Shropshire's traditional agricultural industry heritage, a range of opportunities exist to encourage engagement with keyworker support and additional services, boost the number of people in employment (including self-employment) following support, and the number of people gaining qualifications, licences and skills through promotion of green skills development and the green economy. Offering support for both informal and formal skills sharing, training and qualifications which will allow local people to develop knowledge and attitude required to live in, develop and support a sustainable and resource-efficient society - building upon the assets and growth sectors already in place in Shropshire - will allow for transitioning towards more environmentally sustainable modes of production and consumption. Skills and qualifications linked to environmental sustainability, auditing, management, planning and communications, sustainable construction methods, and development of technical and digital skills which inform effective crop production and livestock management, engineering and data skills which offer new approaches for farming, including incorporation of skills related to the increasing move towards plant based-diets and the impact this has on how food production is undertaken, will all benefit local people both in terms of volunteering, employment and entrepreneurial opportunities related to the existing and increasingly diversified visitor economy, renewable energy, and agricultural sectors in Shropshire and also in respect of their overall health and wellbeing. This will not only offer increased skills development for future growth sectors, but also link to the potential investments outlined in the communities and place and supporting local business investment priority opportunities sections, adding overall value and positioning Shropshire as a leader in the green economy.

### **Improving Digital Connectivity to overcome rurality**

The Shropshire Plan 2022-25 priorities include: Quick access to information, advice, and answers to questions using suitable mechanisms such as digital technology, will include forming healthy behaviours and supporting good mental health and wellbeing. Improving digital connectivity is thus essential so that we ensure equal opportunity for residents to access training provision particularly as businesses, educators and training providers are increasingly using internet driven delivery methods.

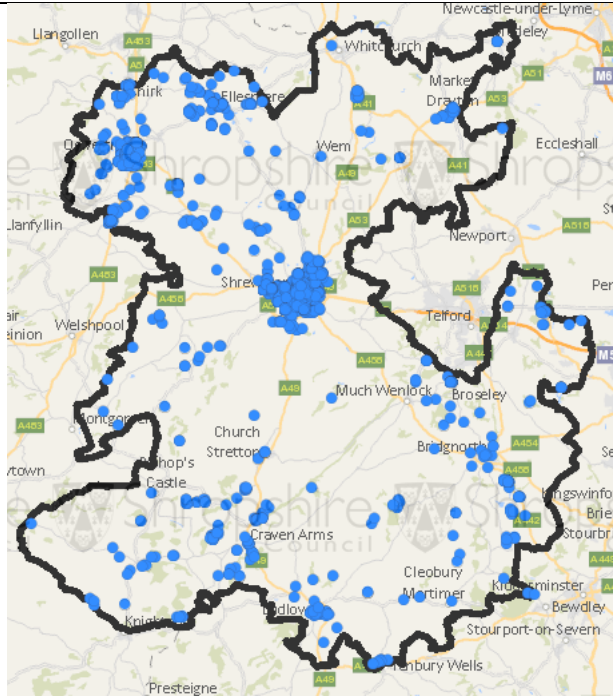
The map below shows the Superfast Broadband (>30Mbps) coverage in Shropshire is very good and provides an excellent opportunity to engage and provide digital learning and blended learning to the vast majority of people within Shropshire.



Source: Connecting Shropshire; Shropshire Council

However take-up and access is not yet ubiquitous with 50% of over 75's, 30% of 65-74 year olds and 2% of households with children without digital access. These are likely to be disadvantaged households who need support to overcome digital exclusion.

The Shropshire Plan 2022-25 highlights that the council is working with key stakeholders to meet the aspiration to provide all premises in the area with access to superfast broadband (>30mbps) by 2025, and encouraging wider commercial 5G deployment. Collaborating with Building Digital UK (BDUK) on Project Gigabit, to ensure that as much gigabit broadband coverage as possible is achieved by 2025. The following map shows the planned ongoing rollout of Superfast Broadband across Shropshire up to 2023.



Source: Connecting Shropshire; Shropshire Council

Retraining and upskilling local people for digital jobs and digital infrastructure job roles is also a significant opportunity for Shropshire. This needs to form part of our strategy to create high skill, high wage jobs to Shropshire and improve our lagging productivity rates.

### Interventions

In this section, we will ask you about:

- Interventions you've chosen for each year of funding
- Outcomes you want to deliver
- Any interventions that are not listed here
- How these interventions fall under the UKSPF investment priorities, and your rationale for them
- Interventions not included in our list will be assessed before being approved, where you will need to show a clear rationale, how the intervention is value for money, what outcomes it will deliver and how you will monitor and evaluate the intervention. This may include a theory of change or logic chain.

**WHAT ARE THE OUTCOMES YOU WANT TO DELIVER UNDER THE COMMUNITIES AND PLACE INVESTMENT PRIORITY? SELECT ALL THAT APPLY.**

Outcome	Tick if applicable
Jobs created	

Jobs safeguarded	
Increased footfall	Yes
Increased visitor numbers	
Reduced vacancy rates	Yes
Greenhouse gas reductions	Yes
Improved perceived/experienced accessibility	
Improved perception of facilities/amenities	
Increased number of properties better protected from flooding and coastal erosion	
Increased users of facilities / amenities	
Improved perception of facility/infrastructure project	
Increased use of cycleways or paths	
Increase in Biodiversity	Yes
Increased affordability of events/entry	
Improved perception of safety	
Reduction in neighbourhood crime	
Improved engagement numbers	
Improved perception of events	
Increased number of web searches for a place	
Volunteering numbers as a result of support	Yes
Number of community-led arts, cultural, heritage and creative programmes as a result of support	Yes
Increased take up of energy efficiency measures	
Increased number of projects arising from funded feasibility studies	Yes
Number of premises with improved digital connectivity	
None of the above	

**SELECT THE INTERVENTIONS YOU INTEND TO USE WHICH MEET THE COMMUNITIES AND PLACE INVESTMENT PRIORITY. YOU CAN SELECT AS MANY AS YOU LIKE.**

**Intervention**

*A full list of nation-specific interventions is available in the relevant annex to the Prospectus.*

E1: Funding for improvements to town centres and high streets, including better accessibility for disabled people, including capital spend and running costs.

E4: Enhanced support for existing cultural, historic and heritage institutions that make up the local cultural heritage offer.

E6: Support for local arts, cultural, heritage and creative activities.

E11: Investment in capacity building and infrastructure support for local civil society and community groups.

E14: Funding to support relevant feasibility studies.


**DO YOU PLAN TO USE ANY INTERVENTIONS NOT INCLUDED IN THE COMMUNITIES AND PLACE LIST?**

**State the name of each of these additional interventions and a brief description of each of these**

No, the programme will deliver investment that fits within the indicative interventions provided above.
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<b>Explain how each intervention meets the Communities and Place investment priority. Give evidence where possible, including why it is value money and the outcomes you want to deliver.</b>	
n/a	
<b>Do you consider that any of these interventions may provide a subsidy to potential recipients of the funding under the intervention's planned activity? All bids must also consider how they will deliver in line with subsidy control as <a href="#">set out in the guidance</a>.</b>	
Yes	No
<b>Detail the assessment you undertook to consider whether the intervention is a subsidy and any specific measures you will take to make sure the subsidy is permitted.</b>	
n/a	

<b>HAVE YOU ALREADY IDENTIFIED ANY PROJECTS WHICH FALL UNDER THE COMMUNITIES AND PLACE INVESTMENT PRIORITY?</b>	
<b>Describe these projects, including how they fall under the Communities and Place investment priority and the location of the proposed project.</b>	
<p>The process for applying for the UKSPF funds will be open and transparent through a call and application process and projects will be appraised and scored against set criteria. The process for this is to be determined.</p> <p>Therefore, whilst discussion has been undertaken with partners around potential activity this has just been undertaken to inform the selection of the indicative intervention areas, alongside stakeholder engagement through the Investment Priority Working Groups.</p> <p>There are broad aspirations to support the continuation of activity that has been funded through the European Structural and Investment Fund and that has been developed through the Marches Growth Hub (Shropshire) but all projects will be required to respond to the planned bidding opportunities.</p>	
<b>Do you consider these projects may provide a subsidy to potential recipients of the funding under the proposed planned activity? All bids must also consider how they will deliver in line with subsidy control as <a href="#">set out in the guidance</a>.</b>	
Yes	No
<b>Detail the assessment you undertook to consider whether the proposed projects constitute a subsidy and any specific measures you will take to make sure the subsidy is permitted.</b>	
n/a	

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<b>WHAT ARE THE OUTCOMES YOU WANT TO DELIVER UNDER THE SUPPORTING LOCAL BUSINESS INVESTMENT PRIORITY? SELECT ALL THAT APPLY.</b>	
<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Tick if applicable</b>
Jobs created	<b>Yes</b>
Jobs safeguarded	<b>Yes</b>
Increased footfall	
Increased visitor numbers	
Reduced vacancy rates	<b>Yes</b>
Greenhouse gas reductions	<b>Yes</b>
Number of new businesses created	<b>Yes</b>
Improved perception of markets	
Increased business sustainability	
Increased number of businesses supported	<b>Yes</b>
Increased amount of investment	
Improved perception of attractions	
Number of businesses introducing new products to the firm	
Number of organisations engaged in new knowledge transfer activity	<b>Yes</b>
Number of premises with improved digital connectivity	
Number of businesses adopting new to the firm technologies or processes	<b>Yes</b>
Number of new to market products	<b>Yes</b>
Number of R&D active businesses	
Increased number of innovation active SMEs	
Number of businesses adopting new or improved products or services	
Increased number of innovation plans developed	
Number of early stage firms which increase their revenue following support	
Number of businesses engaged in new markets	
Number of businesses engaged in new markets	
Number of businesses increasing their export capability	
Increased amount of low or zero carbon energy infrastructure installed	<b>Yes</b>
Number of businesses with improved productivity	<b>Yes</b>
Increased number of projects arising from funded feasibility studies	<b>Yes</b>
Increased number of properties better protected from flooding and coastal erosion	
None of the above	

<b>SELECT THE INTERVENTIONS YOU INTEND TO USE WHICH MEET THE SUPPORTING LOCAL BUSINESS INVESTMENT PRIORITY. YOU CAN SELECT AS MANY AS YOU LIKE.</b>
<b>Intervention</b>
<i>A full list of nation-specific interventions is available in the relevant annex to the Prospectus.</i>
E16: Investment in open markets and improvements to town centre retail and service sector infrastructure, with wrap around support for small businesses.
E17: Funding for the development and promotion (both trade and consumer) of the visitor economy, such as local attractions, trails, tours and tourism products more generally.
E20: Research and development grants supporting the development of innovative products and services.
E23: Strengthening local entrepreneurial ecosystems and supporting businesses at all stages of their development to start, sustain, grow and innovate, including through local networks.
E26: Support for growing the local social economy, including community businesses, cooperatives and social enterprises.

E29: Supporting decarbonisation and improving the natural environment whilst growing the local economy. Taking a whole systems approach to invest in infrastructure to deliver effective decarbonisation across energy, buildings and transport and beyond, in line with our legally binding climate target. Maximising existing or emerging local strengths in low carbon technologies, goods and services to take advantage of the growing global opportunity.

E30: Business support measures to drive employment growth, particularly in areas of higher unemployment.

E31: Funding to support relevant feasibility studies.

**DO YOU PLAN TO USE ANY INTERVENTIONS NOT INCLUDED IN THE SUPPORTING LOCAL BUSINESS LIST?**

**State the name of each of these additional interventions and a brief description of each of these**

No, the programme will deliver investment that fits within the indicative interventions provided above.

**Explain how each intervention meets the Supporting Local Business investment priority. Give evidence where possible, including why it is value money and the outcomes you want to deliver.**

n/a

**Do you consider that any of these interventions may provide a subsidy to potential recipients of the funding under the intervention's planned activity? All bids must also consider how they will deliver in line with subsidy control as [set out in the guidance](#).**

Yes

No

**Detail the assessment you undertook to consider whether the intervention is a subsidy and any specific measures you will take to make sure the subsidy is permitted.**

n/a

**HAVE YOU ALREADY IDENTIFIED ANY PROJECTS WHICH FALL UNDER THE SUPPORTING LOCAL BUSINESS INVESTMENT PRIORITY?**

**Describe these projects, including how they fall under the Supporting Local Business investment priority and the location of the proposed project.**

The process for applying for the UKSPF funds will be open and transparent through a call and application process and projects will be appraised and scored against set criteria. The process for this is to be determined.

Therefore, whilst discussion has been undertaken with partners around potential activity this has just been undertaken to inform the selection of the indicative intervention areas, alongside stakeholder engagement through the Investment Priority Working Groups.

There are broad aspirations to support the continuation of activity that has been funded through the European Structural and Investment Fund and that has been developed through the Marches Growth Hub (Shropshire) but all projects will be required to respond to the planned bidding opportunities.

**Do you consider these projects may provide a subsidy to potential recipients of the funding under the proposed planned activity?**

**All bids must also consider how they will deliver in line with subsidy control as [set out in the guidance](#).**

Yes

No

**Detail the assessment you undertook to consider whether the proposed projects constitute a subsidy and any specific measures you will take to make sure the subsidy is permitted.**

n/a

**WHAT ARE THE OUTCOMES YOU WANT TO DELIVER UNDER THE PEOPLE AND SKILLS INVESTMENT PRIORITY? SELECT ALL THAT APPLY.**

<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Tick if applicable</b>
Number of economically inactive individuals in receipt of benefits they are entitled to following support	
Increased active or sustained participants of UKSPF beneficiaries in community groups [and/or] increased employability through development of interpersonal skills	
Increased proportion of participants with basic skills (English, maths, digital and ESOL)	<b>Yes</b>
Number of people in supported employment [and] number of people engaging with mainstream healthcare services	
Number of people sustaining engagement with keyworker support and additional services	<b>Yes</b>
Number of people engaged in job-searching following support	
Number of people in employment, including self-employment, following support	<b>Yes</b>
Number of people sustaining employment for 6 months	<b>Yes</b>
Increased employment, skills and/or UKSPF objectives incorporated into local area corporate governance	
Number of people in education/training	
Increased number of people with basic skills (English, maths, digital and ESOL)	<b>Yes</b>
Fewer people facing structural barriers into employment and into skills provision	
Increased number of people familiarised with employers' expectations, including, standards of behaviour in the workplace	
Fewer people facing structural barriers into employment and into skills provision	
Number of people gaining a qualification or completing a course following support	
Number of people gaining qualifications, licences, and skills	<b>Yes</b>

Number of economically active individuals engaged in mainstream skills education, and training.	
Number of people engaged in life skills support following interventions	
Number of people with proficiency in pre-employment and interpersonal skills (relationship, organisational and anger-management, interviewing, CV and job application writing)	
<b>Multiply only</b> - Increased number of adults achieving maths qualifications up to, and including, Level 2.	
<b>Multiply only</b> - Increased number of adults participating in maths qualifications and courses up to, and including, Level 2.	<b>Yes</b>
None of the above	

**SELECT THE INTERVENTIONS YOU INTEND TO USE WHICH MEET THE PEOPLE AND SKILLS INVESTMENT PRIORITY. YOU CAN SELECT AS MANY AS YOU LIKE.**

**Intervention**

*A full list of nation-specific interventions is available in the relevant annex to the Prospectus.*

E33: Employment support for economically inactive people: Intensive and wrap-around one-time support to move people closer towards mainstream provision and employment, supplemented by additional and/or specialist life and basic skills (digital, English, maths\* and ESOL) support where there are local provision gaps.

E36: Intervention to increase levels of digital inclusion, with a focus on essential digital skills, communicating the benefits of getting (safely) online, and in community support to provide users with the confidence and trust to stay online.

E37: Tailored support to help people in employment, who are not supported by mainstream provision to address barriers to accessing education and training courses.

E39: Green skills courses targeted around ensuring we have the skilled workforce to achieve the government's net zero and wider environmental ambitions.

**DO YOU PLAN TO USE ANY INTERVENTIONS NOT INCLUDED IN THE PEOPLE AND SKILLS LIST?**

**State the name of each of these additional interventions and a brief description of each of these**

No, the programme will deliver investment that fits within the indicative interventions provided above.

**Explain how each intervention meets the People and Skills investment priority. Give evidence where possible, including why it is value money and the outcomes you want to deliver.**

n/a

**Do you consider that any of these interventions may provide a subsidy to potential recipients of the funding under the intervention's planned activity? All bids must also consider how they will deliver in line with subsidy control as [set out in the guidance](#).**

Yes

No

**Detail the assessment you undertook to consider whether the intervention is a subsidy and any specific measures you will take to make sure the subsidy is permitted.**

n/a

**ENGLAND ONLY:** People and Skills interventions can only be used in 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 if you have identified a local voluntary and community provision, previously supported by the European Social Fund, at risk of closure. If you have not identified a suitable provision, you will not be able to select interventions for 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 and your investment plan will not be approved.

**HAVE YOU ALREADY IDENTIFIED ANY PROJECTS for 2024-2025 WHICH FALL UNDER THE PEOPLE AND SKILLS INVESTMENT PRIORITY?**

No

**Describe the projects for 2024-25, including how they fall under the People and Skills investment priority and the location of the proposed project.**

n/a

**Do you consider these projects may provide a subsidy to potential recipients of the funding under the proposed planned activity?**

**All bids must also consider how they will deliver in line with subsidy control as [set out in the guidance](#).**

n/a

**Detail the assessment you undertook to consider whether the proposed projects constitute a subsidy and any specific measures you will take to make sure the subsidy is permitted.**

n/a

**HAVE YOU IDENTIFIED A LOCAL VOLUNTARY PROVISION AT RISK AS PART OF YOUR PEOPLE AND SKILLS INVESTMENT PRIORITIES?**

Yes

No

**(If Yes) Describe the local voluntary provision at risk and your rationale for supporting it.**

The ESF-funded Building Better Opportunities programme is delivering in Shropshire until 30 June 2023, although the final quarter is for financial completion only, and has been providing support to the economically inactive through a local partnership of VCS organisations.

An ESF ESFA NEETs contract is also being delivered by a VCS organisation for Shropshire and this contract is due end on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023.

This activity relates to the E33 and E36 Intervention Areas of employment support for economically inactive people and without funds being made available from UKSPF in 23/24 this provision will disappear.

**Provide the European Social Fund Project Names and Project References for this voluntary and community provision at risk.**

Building Better Opportunities  
project ID 0010293500  
Project outline ThMa/2/1

ESFA NEETS Shropshire Name: SUPPORTING NEETS - The Marches LEP Contract Ref: ESFA-5097 Master Contract Ref: ESFA-15074		
<b>What year do you intend to fund these projects? Select all that apply.</b>		
2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025
<b>Describe the projects for 2022-2023 and 2023-2024, including how they fall under the People and Skills investment priority and the location of the proposed project.</b>		
<p>To ensure consistency in the approach to the appraisal and awarding of funding to projects through UKSPF, there will need to be an open call for proposals based around a replacement for BBO and ESFA NEETs that target the same beneficiary groups and which meet the outcomes of the E33 and E36 intervention areas.</p> <p>The specification for the call will set out the requirements for the project delivery, including geographic coverage, but at this stage it is not possible to confirm the arrangements of this other than to state that it is a priority of Shropshire to ensure that similar provision to BBO and NEET support is continued beyond the current delivery period.</p>		
<b>Do you consider these projects may provide a subsidy to potential recipients of the funding under the proposed planned activity?</b> <b>All bids must also consider how they will deliver in line with subsidy control as <a href="#">set out in the guidance</a>.</b>		
Yes	No	
<b>Detail the assessment you undertook to consider whether the proposed projects constitute a subsidy and any specific measures you will take to make sure the subsidy is permitted.</b>		
This will be considered as part of the call specification explained above.		

### Approach to delivery and governance

In this section, we will ask you about:

- Structures you have in place to support delivery
- Support you have from stakeholders and the local community
- How you've engaged with MPs as part of your investment plan
- Opportunities you have identified to work with other places

Places need to show how MPs that cover the lead local authority have been engaged on the investment plan and whether they support it. More detail on the role of MPs can be found here.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT AND SUPPORT		
<b>Have you engaged with any of the following as part of your investment plan? Select all that apply.</b>		
Public sector organisations - <b>Yes</b>	Private sector organisations - <b>Yes</b>	Civil society organisations - <b>Yes</b>
<b>Describe how you have engaged with any of these organisations. Give examples where possible.</b>		
Widespread consultation has been undertaken across all sectors. A summary of activity is provided below:		
Public Sector:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Report submitted to Shropshire Council Cabinet in June to gain delegated authority for Director of Place and Director of Resources to submit UKSPF Investment Plan. The</li> </ul>		

Cabinet will need to approve the Investment Plan in its final state once Investment Plan approved by Government

- Briefing on development of Investment Plan and governance structures provided to Shropshire MPs by Director of Place in July
- Standing agenda item at monthly Shropshire Economic Growth Task Force (ref governance structure) meetings, which includes Marches LEP representation
- Standing agenda item at monthly Future Funding Group (an internal cross-directorate group that looks at external funding opportunities)
- Consultation through virtual higher education / knowledge transfer group with representation from Wolverhampton, Harper Adams, Chester, Aston and Birmingham universities
- Consultation with a range of public sector bodies through the UKSPF working groups, reflecting the specific Investment Priority areas of UKSPF
- Consultation with the two main Shropshire College groups through the development of the Multiply Investment Plan and the People and Skills working group
- Consultation with the other two Marches LEP area local authorities, Telford and Herefordshire, particularly in relation to the potential continuation of EU funded activity
- A number of individual meetings with a range of departments, including adult and social care, public health, low carbon, economic growth, culture and leisure and education.
- Shropshire's approach to UKSPF reported to Marches LEP Board in July

Private Sector:

- Standing agenda item at monthly Shropshire Economic Growth Task Force (ref governance structure) meetings, which includes Marches LEP, NFU and Shropshire Business Board representation
- Specific consultation held with Zero Carbon Shropshire – a business-led group that looks at the business need and requirements for moving towards a zero-carbon economy
- Specific consultation with private training providers through the development of the Multiply Investment Plan and the People and Skills Investment Priority
- Consultation with a range of private sector bodies through the UKSPF working groups, including Business Improvement Districts, private and social enterprises and business networks
- Shropshire's approach to UKSPF reported to Marches LEP Board in July

Community Sector:

- Standing agenda item at monthly Shropshire Economic Growth Task Force meetings, which includes representation from the community and voluntary sector
- Consultation with relevant community and voluntary sector organisations through a dedicated VCS group for the development of the Multiply Investment Plan
- Consultation with a range of community and voluntary bodies through the UKSPF working groups, reflecting the specific Investment Priority areas of UKSPF
- Direct consultation with the VCS through the Voluntary Sector Assembly

**Summarise the governance structures you have in place, including how any advisory panels or associated partnership groups are made up**

It is anticipated that the key groups which have had oversight of and/or informed the development of the Investment Plan will transition into the groups that will oversee the delivery of UKSPF. These groups are the Shropshire Economic Growth Task Force and the UKSPF Investment Priority Working Groups.

Under the emerging governance arrangements, the Shropshire Economic Growth Task Force, which initially was established to oversee the creation of the new Shropshire Economic Growth Strategy, will become the Economic Growth Partnership Board and this Board will have responsibility for the delivery of UKSPF as part of a wider remit. The draft Terms of Reference for this group are enclosed with this submission.

Under the draft proposals, the Partnership Board will have a MP reference group, to ensure MP involvement in UKSPF and the wider work around the Shropshire Economic Growth Strategy. The Board will also be supported by the 'officer' working groups that will have responsibility for a range of workstreams, including activity around UKSPF. It is anticipated that the working groups will be the appraisal groups for the UKSPF application process, and they will make recommendations to the Partnership Board on the applications for funding made to UKSPF. Details are still being developed but the groups within the governance arrangements will all be subject to a declaration of interest protocol to ensure that any awarding of public funds is transparent and not open to abuse.

The draft structure is as follows:



**Confirm all MPs covering your lead local authority have been invited to join the local partnership group.**

Yes  No

**Are there MPs who are not supportive of your investment plan?**

Yes  No

**(If Yes) Who are the MPs that are not supportive and outline their reasons why.**

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**PROJECT SELECTION**

**Are you intending to select projects in any way other than by competition for funding?**

Yes

No

**(If Yes) Describe your approach to selecting projects, and why you intend to do it this way.**

All projects will need to respond by submitting a standard application form through open call windows and applications will be assessed competitively against standard criteria.

**DO YOU INTEND TO WORK WITH OTHER PLACES ON ANY OF THE INTERVENTIONS WHICH FALL UNDER THE COMMUNITIES AND PLACE INVESTMENT PRIORITY?**

**Which interventions do you intend to collaborate on? Select all that apply.**

Intervention	Tick if applicable
<i>A full list of nation-specific interventions is available in the relevant annex to the Prospectus.</i>	

**Describe any interventions not included in this list?**

n/a

**Who are the places you intend to collaborate with?**

For community and place-based activity, Shropshire Council does not at this stage anticipate collaborating with other local authority areas in delivery terms however opportunities could present themselves through the work being progressed through County Deals and this will be considered during future phases of UKSPF delivery.

**DO YOU INTEND TO WORK WITH OTHER PLACES ON ANY OF THE INTERVENTIONS WHICH FALL UNDER THE SUPPORTING LOCAL BUSINESS INVESTMENT PRIORITY?**

**Which interventions do you intend to collaborate on? Select all that apply.**

Intervention	Tick if applicable
<i>A full list of nation-specific interventions is available in the relevant annex to the Prospectus.</i>	
E20: Research and development grants supporting the development of innovative products and services.	Yes
E23: Strengthening local entrepreneurial ecosystems and supporting businesses at all stages of their development to start, sustain, grow and innovate, including through local networks.	Yes
E29: Supporting decarbonisation and improving the natural environment whilst growing the local economy. Taking a whole systems approach to invest in infrastructure to deliver effective decarbonisation across energy, buildings and	Yes

transport and beyond, in line with our legally binding climate target. Maximising existing or emerging local strengths in low carbon technologies, goods and services to take advantage of the growing global opportunity.	
E30: Business support measures to drive employment growth, particularly in areas of higher unemployment.	Yes
<b>Describe any interventions not included in this list?</b>	
n/a	
<b>Who are the places you intend to collaborate with?</b>	
For potential activity relating to the continuation of business support activity, particularly ERDF-funded work, Shropshire will collaborate with the relevant local authorities and other organisations to reflect that several projects delivered over a regional geography by range of delivery partners. Discussion is ongoing with Worcestershire, Birmingham, Herefordshire and Telford local authorities. Collaboration will ensure best value in project delivery and a smooth transition from the EU-funded programmes.	

<b>DO YOU INTEND TO WORK WITH OTHER PLACES ON ANY OF THE INTERVENTIONS WHICH FALL UNDER THE PEOPLE AND SKILLS INVESTMENT PRIORITY?</b>	
<b>Which interventions do you intend to collaborate on? Select all that apply.</b>	
<b>Intervention</b>	<b>Tick if applicable</b>
<i>A full list of nation-specific interventions is available in the relevant annex to the Prospectus.</i>	
E33: Employment support for economically inactive people: Intensive and wrap-around one-time support to move people closer towards mainstream provision and employment, supplemented by additional and/or specialist life and basic skills (digital, English, maths* and ESOL) support where there are local provision gaps.	Yes
E36: Intervention to increase levels of digital inclusion, with a focus on essential digital skills, communicating the benefits of getting (safely) online, and in community support to provide users with the confidence and trust to stay online.	Yes
E37: Tailored support to help people in employment, who are not supported by mainstream provision to address barriers to accessing education and training courses.	Yes
E38: Support for local areas to fund local skills needs. This includes technical and vocational qualifications and courses up to Level 2 and training for vocational licences to local area needs and high-value qualifications where there is a need for additional skills capacity that cannot be met through mainstream funding.	Yes
<b>Describe any interventions not included in this list?</b>	
n/a	
<b>Who are the places you intend to collaborate with?</b>	
For potential activity relating to people and skills provision, particularly ESF-funded work, Shropshire will work with local authority areas which shared delivery of ESF-funded contracts, including Telford and Herefordshire. Collaboration will ensure best value in project delivery and a smooth transition from the EU-funded programmes.	

**PUBLIC SECTOR EQUALITY DUTY**

**How have you considered your public sector equality duty in the design of your investment plan?**

Through the development of the UKSPF working groups and wider consultative activities, Shropshire Council has attempted to consult with a broad range of organisations, including from the VCS and social enterprise sectors. These sectors had representation on each of the three working groups and have been provided the opportunity to input into discussion and comment on the intervention areas included within the Investment Plan.

Additionally, there is also VCS representation on the Economic Task Force which will become the local investment board for UKSPF delivery.

A separate VCS stakeholder group was also created for the development of the Multiply Programme.

The selection of the intervention areas within the Investment Plan reflects the inclusive approach taken by Shropshire Council during the process.

**How will you consider your public sector equality duty when implementing your investment plan, including in the selection of projects?**

Shropshire Council recognises its responsibilities in targeting UKSPF towards deprived or underperforming parts of the county, to include a diverse range of groups and that people who could benefit from this provision might have complex needs. Therefore, an inclusive approach to delivery is required and projects will be expected to ensure they reflect the key Missions of Levelling Up within their design and delivery.

We will ensure that the UKSPF will be open and accessible to a range of organisations and groups by promoting the call windows widely and to encourage the development of projects within areas that need the most support to Level Up, particularly in relation to the Community and Place and People and Skills Investment Priorities.

The application form will be available in accessible formats and support will be provided to organisations and groups in relation to the completion of the forms by the UKSPF Team

Project applications will be assessed on their commitment to crossing cutting themes, including social inclusion, to ensure that the benefits of UKSPF investment are felt within deprived areas and hardest-to-reach communities.

**RISKS**

**Have you identified any key risks that could affect delivery, for example lack of staff or expertise?**

Yes  No

**(If Yes) Describe these risks or issues, including the contingency measures you have in place to mitigate them.**

Description of risk	Actions you will take to mitigate	After mitigation what is the likelihood of the risk occurring?	After mitigation what would be the impact of the risk materialising?

Technical issues with IT system that will be employed for the administration of UKSPF	Ensure development and testing of system is undertaken well in advance of the launch of the programme	Unlikely	Medium
Lack of high-quality applications seeking UKSPF funding	Consult and work with organisations in advance of the application process to ensure demand has been stimulated.  Review process should initial applications rounds be unsuccessful	Possible	Medium
Delay in contracting with project deliverers	Provide dedicated resource and or identify appropriate members of staff to undertake contracting.	Unlikely	Minor
Poor performance of projects	Include break clauses within contracts and ensure regular project monitoring	Possible	Medium
Delay in recruitment of UKSPF support staff	Ensure recruitment process commences as soon as possible to ensure suitable person is identified in advance of programme delivery	Unlikely	Medium

**Have you identified any key fraud risks that could affect UKSPF delivery?**

Yes

No

**(If Yes) Describe these risks or issues, including the contingency measures you have in place to mitigate them.**

Description of risk	Actions you will take to mitigate	After mitigation what is the likelihood of the risk occurring?	After mitigation what would be the impact of the risk materialising?
Fraudulent claims or financial mismanagement by applicant bodies	Implement a rigorous claims process, project monitoring and audit regime	Unlikely	Major

## Capacity and capability

In this section, we will ask you about:

- The capacity and capability of your team to manage funding
- The resources you have in place for work related to UKSPF

Your answers here will help us know how to support you with delivery. They will not affect the amount of funding you will get.

Answer as honestly as possible.

### **TEAM RESOURCE**

#### **How many people (FTE) will be put in place to work with UKSPF funding?**

Shropshire Council intends to utilise the full amount available for management and administration of UKSPF, including Multiply. The 4% allowance for UKSPF is £443,800 and this will be supplemented with the 10% allowance for Multiply M&A.

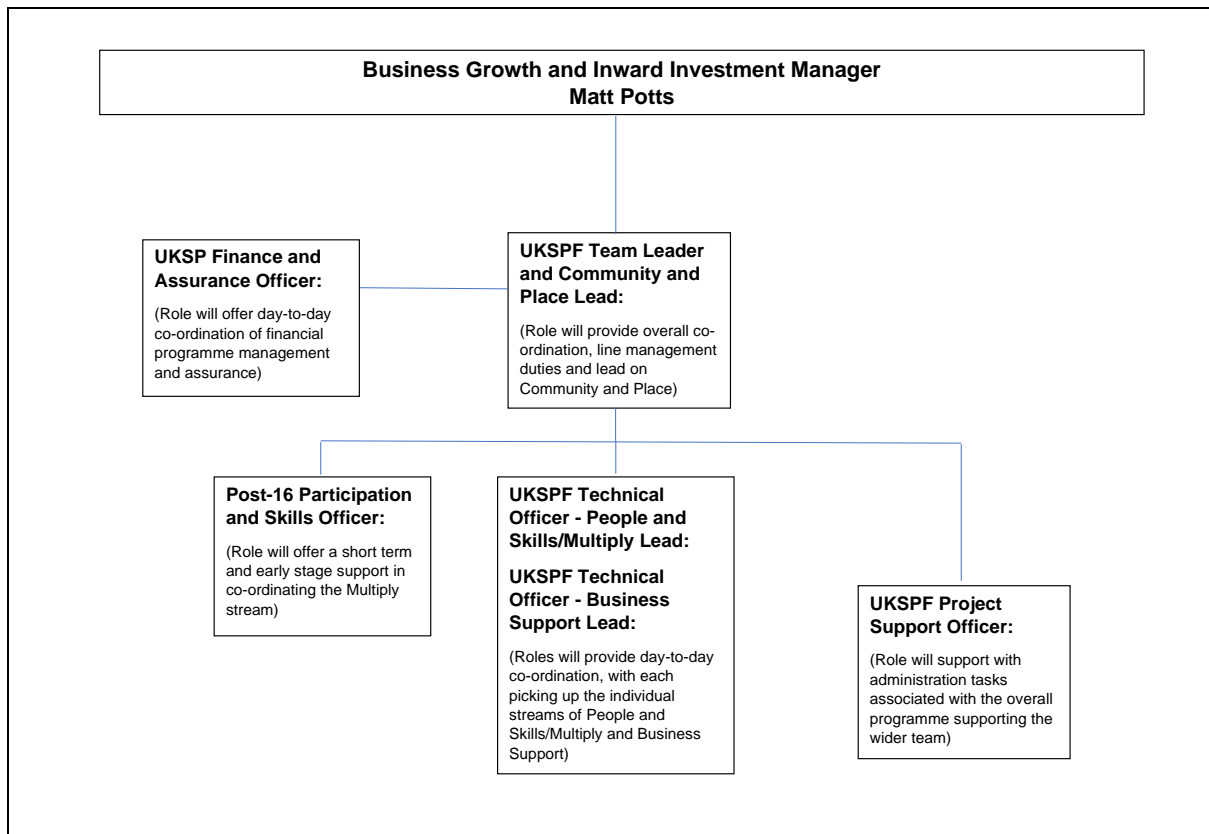
It is estimated that the M&A allowance will cover 4 to 5 FTE posts, including on costs, for at least the 2.5 years of UKSPF delivery from October 2022, as well as a small allocation for incidental expenses like room hire and, potentially, bespoke expertise, e.g. subsidy control.

Depending on the recruitment process and internal approvals, certain posts could commence before October 2022.

Certain aspects of UKSPF delivery will be covered by existing members of staff as part of their day-to-day duties around areas such as procurement and contracting and as such these costs will be absorbed within the council's operating budget.

#### **Describe what role these people will have, including any seniority and experience.**

Provisional team and hierarchy is as follows:



- Strong capability: Has extensive experience and/or a proven track record of delivery in this area.
- Strong capacity: High degree of confidence that there is enough staffing/resource to manage funding in this area.
- Some capability: Has previous experience of delivery in this area.
- Some capacity: Confident that there is enough staffing/resource to manage funding in this area.
- Limited capability: Does not have previous experience and/or no track record of delivery in this area.
- Limited capacity: Limited confidence that there is enough staffing/resource to manage funding in this area. Additional resource may be needed to support delivery.

<b>CAPACITY AND CAPABILITY</b>		
<b>How would you describe your team's current experience of delivering funding and managing growth funds?</b>		
Very experienced	Some experience	No previous experience
<b>How would you describe your team's current capacity for delivering funding and managing growth funds?</b>		
Strong capacity	Some Capacity	Limited capacity
<b>How would you describe your team's current capability to manage funding for procurement?</b>		
Strong capability	Some capability	Limited capability
<b>How would you describe your team's current capacity to manage funding for procurement?</b>		
Strong capacity	Some capacity	Limited capacity
<b>How would you describe your team's current capability to manage funding for subsidies?</b>		
Strong capability	Some capability	Limited capability
<b>How would you describe your team's current capacity to manage funding for subsidies?</b>		
Strong capacity	Some capacity	Limited capacity

**COMMUNITIES AND PLACE CAPACITY AND CAPABILITY****Does your local authority have any previous experience of delivering the Communities and Place interventions you have select?**Yes  No **How would you describe your team's current capability to manage funding for Communities and Place interventions?**Strong capability  Some capability  Limited capability **Describe the key capability challenges (if you have any) for delivering Communities and Place interventions. This may include challenges within your local authority and/or your local/regional delivery system.**

Shropshire Council already has strong partnership working in the larger towns through the Shrewsbury Big Town Plan and Future Oswestry, working with the town councils and Business Improvement Districts. Similar arrangements are being explored in the other market towns, through the Place Plan work and in general for place-based activity there will be clear process for bringing forward activity. There is a similar process for community-based activity through the work of the Voluntary Sector Assembly.

Culture and tourism development is being taken forward through the development of the destination management plan and the cultural compact, informed by development of strategies as referenced in the challenges and opportunities section of this form.

**Describe what further support would help address these challenges.**

Shropshire Council and its partners are developing an number of exciting place-based initiatives and UKSPF will not fulfil their ambitions by itself, which is why support through the Level Up Fund for the strategic projects in Oswestry, Shrewsbury and Craven Arms is vital.

**How would you describe your team's current capacity to manage funding for Communities and Place interventions?**Strong capability  Some capability  Limited capability **Describe the key capacity challenges (if you have any) for delivering Communities and Place interventions. This may include challenges within your local authority and/or your local/regional delivery system.**

A key delivery challenge relates to the capacity required to develop and administer programmes and projects, particularly the delivery of small grant schemes which are important to the VCS and local organisations but are admin heavy. Therefore, there will need to be an acceptance by the Council and partners that such activity requires investment in resources to manage delivery effectively.

**Describe what further support would help address these challenges.**

Shropshire Council would want recognition from Government that for the effective delivery of schemes, particularly across a large rural authority, a realistic amount of UKSPF funding will need to be used on the management and administration of programme and project delivery.

**SUPPORTING LOCAL BUSINESS CAPACITY AND CAPABILITY****Does your local authority have any previous experience of delivering the Supporting Local Business interventions you have select?**Yes  No **How would you describe your team's current capability to manage funding for Supporting Local Business interventions?**

Strong capability	Some capability	Limited capability
<b>Describe the key capability challenges (if you have any) for delivering Supporting Local Business interventions. This may include challenges within your local authority and/or your local/regional delivery system.</b>		
<p>Shropshire Council has extensive experience in delivering business support activities, either directly or in partnership with other authorities. Experience covers a range of ERDF programmes, working with different partners from the public and private sectors, the provision of the Marches Growth Hub Shropshire, and the recent delivery of the business support package through the government-funded Additional Restrictions Grant (COVID).</p> <p>However, the key challenge around business support will be managing the transition between the ERDF funding regime and UKSPF. This will involve a lot of dialogue with a range of organisations to ensure that UKSPF can build on the successes of the ERDF programme in the Marches, whilst managing expectations and preventing a funding void, which will be particularly felt during a crucial time for the UK economy.</p>		
<b>Describe what further support would help address these challenges.</b>		
<p>Government should recognise that a good deal of capacity and time is needed in bringing forward new programmes and projects whilst avoid duplication and ensuring that fresh activity reflects the findings of the ERDF summative assessments and reflects local business need.</p> <p>Therefore, we ask that Government is mindful of these challenges and offers flexibility for areas to reprofile expenditure into following years should there be a clear rationale for this.</p>		
<b>How would you describe your team's current capacity to manage funding for Supporting Local Business interventions?</b>		
Strong capability	Some capability	Limited capability
<b>Describe the key capacity challenges (if you have any) for delivering Supporting Local Business interventions. This may include challenges within your local authority and/or your local/regional delivery system.</b>		
<p>Shropshire Council has an active Business Growth and Investment Team which provides a range of support to local businesses, including Growth Hub Shropshire, and has experience of delivering externally funded programmes and projects. It has specialisms in inward investment, skills and funding.</p> <p>However, resourcing the team remains challenging particularly in view of the reducing scale of funding through the Marches LEP for the provision of the Marches Growth Hub Shropshire.</p>		
<b>Describe what further support would help address these challenges.</b>		
<p>Shropshire Council sees the Marches Growth Hub Shropshire as the key model for business engagement and support but would like Government to consider ways that this could be funded long—term outside of time-limited funding arrangements.</p>		

## PEOPLE AND SKILLS CAPACITY AND CAPABILITY

**Does your local authority have any previous experience of delivering the People and Skills interventions you have select?**

Yes

No

**How would you describe your team's current capability to manage funding for People and Skills interventions?**

Strong capability

Some capability

Limited capability

**Describe the key capability challenges (if you have any) for delivering People and Skills interventions. This may include challenges within your local authority and/or your local/regional delivery system.**

The main challenge is that Shropshire Council does not have an extensive background in direct delivery of people and skills interventions, although does have some experience in relation to its Enable Team which provides specific support into employment for service users, such as people with disabilities.

However, the Council has had a strategic role through in the delivery of ESF contracts through the Marches ESIF delivery structures and therefore has recent experience of delivering a programme-based approach to People and Skills, and this resource will be strengthened through the proposed UKSPF delivery team, which will have dedicated officers relating to People and Skills including Multiply.

Additionally, the Marches Growth Hub Shropshire has the connections within the business community to ensure that delivery of the E37 and E39 interventions will gain the necessary traction within the relevant sectors, through marketing, promotion and networking.

**Describe what further support would help address these challenges.**

Shropshire Council would find it useful if DLUC could provide areas with information on best practice and collaborative opportunities, possibly through facilitating regional networks.

**How would you describe your team's current capacity to manage funding for People and Skills interventions?**

Strong capability

Some capability

Limited capability

**Describe the key capacity challenges (if you have any) for delivering People and Skills interventions. This may include challenges within your local authority and/or your local/regional delivery system.**

The capacity required to develop and administer programmes and projects in a rural area, particularly the delivery of small grant schemes, which are important to the VCS and local organisations, are likely to be relatively expensive to deliver and have a high unit costs.

**Describe what further support would help address these challenges.**

Based on recent experience through ESF contacts, Government should recognise that the unit costs for delivering people and skills interventions in rural areas like Shropshire will be relatively higher than those delivered within urban areas.

## **SUPPORT TO DELIVER UKSPF**

All lead authorities can use up to 4% of their UKSPF allocation to support the delivery of their chosen interventions but by exception, lead authorities will be able to use more than 4%. Are you planning to use more than 4%?

Yes

No

**(If Yes) Explain why you wish to use more than 4%.**

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## Approvals

Before submitting your investment plan, you should have approval from your:

- Chief Executive Officer
- Section 151 Officer
- Leader of your lead authority

Do you have approval from your Chief Executive Officer for this investment plan?

- Yes**
- No

Do you have approval from your Section 151 Officer for this investment plan?

- Yes**
- No

Do you have approval from the leader of your lead authority for this investment plan?

- Yes**
- No

<b>If you do not have approval from any of these people, please explain why this is:</b>
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Shropshire Council's cabinet approved the delegation of the approval of Shropshire's UKSPF Investment Plan to our Section 151 Officer and the Executive Director of Place. See Item 13 of <a href="https://shropshire.gov.uk/committee-services/ieListDocuments.aspx?Cid=130&amp;Mid=4591&amp;Ver=4">https://shropshire.gov.uk/committee-services/ieListDocuments.aspx?Cid=130&amp;Mid=4591&amp;Ver=4</a>
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## Additional documents

You will have received an email giving you access to a folder where you will need to upload supporting evidence to your investment plan. All applicants must complete and upload the following spreadsheet to the folder prior to submitting their investment plan:

- UKSPF Expenditure Profile spreadsheet
- UKSPF Indicative Deliverables spreadsheet

Your investment plan submission will be considered incomplete without the required documents.

Have you completed and uploaded the two spreadsheets to the SharePoint folder as requested?

- Yes
- No