

## 3.3 Skills forecasting

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### Forecasting system(s)

The UKCES [Working Futures](#) report series, published in 2016 before UKCES closed in 2017 (see below), presents official labour market projections for the UK from 2014 to 2024. The series projects the future size and shape of the labour market by considering employment prospects by industry, occupation, qualification level, gender and employment status. The Working Futures model focuses on sectoral and occupational employment structures, qualifications, and general workforce trends (including replacement demand). The approach exploited existing official data, including the [Labour Force Survey](#) (LFS). The full methodology used is set out in the 2016 [Technical Report](#).

A suite of data workbooks complement the Working Futures reports. Each workbook contains analysis of projected employment and replacement demand by occupation and qualification level. [Workbooks](#) are available at varying levels of sectoral detail for the UK.

The [Employer Skills Survey](#) (ESS) and [Employer Perspective Survey](#) (EPS) also contribute to the UK's labour marketing forecasting. Both are biennial surveys, carried out in alternate years. The ESS provides insight into the skills issues employers face and the action they are taking to address them. The EPS provides data on the views and actions of 18,000 employers across the UK as they make decisions about how to engage with training providers, schools, colleges and individuals in the wider skills system, to get the skills they need.

Working Futures, the Employer Skills Survey and Employer Perspectives were produced by the [UK Commission for Employment and Skills](#) (UKCES). Management of the Employer Skills Survey and the Employer Perspectives Survey moved to the UK Government's [Department for Education](#) when UKCES closed

in early 2017.

There is some debate on whether this forecasting system is effective. According to a [report](#) from the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR), skills forecasting in England relies on market signals to generate a supply of young skilled workers. The report suggests that this system is vulnerable to the possibility of inaccurate market information and labour market mismatch, especially in niche and emerging sectors.

## **Skills development**

Skills policy is the responsibility of the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) since 2016. The [BEIS Single Departmental Plan 2019](#) is the key policy document, replacing the BIS single developmental plan: 2015 to 2020. There have been some developments in skills policy post-Brexit vote in 2016. [An apprenticeship levy](#) was introduced in April 2017 to fund the doubling in investment by the government in apprenticeships by 2020. A [Register for Apprenticeship Training Providers](#) was set up in May 2017.

A network of [National Colleges](#), providing high level technical skills, was established. They ensure the UK has skilled people in industries crucial to economic growth – high speed rail, nuclear, onshore oil and gas, digital skills and the creative industries. The first Colleges opened in October 2016, with the network fully operational by September 2017. A [research report](#) evaluating the initial phase of the National College programme delivery was published in February 2020. The process evaluation explored various facets of the National Colleges' establishment and delivery, including the commissioning processing for the National Colleges, the Colleges' funding arrangements in relation to their operational costs, and the funding awarded for their capital build projects and progress against these initial plans.

## **Post-16 Skills Plan**

The July 2016 [Post-16 Skills Plan](#), published by the then Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (now Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy) and the Department for Education based on the recommendations of the [Sainsbury Review](#), sets a framework to support young people and adults, enabling them to access sustained, skilled employment and meeting the needs of the UK's growing and rapidly changing economy.

The plan establishes a common framework of 15 routes across all technical education, which will group occupations together to reflect where there are shared training requirements. The proposed routes are:

- agriculture, environmental and animal care
- business and administration
- catering and hospitality
- childcare and education
- construction
- creative and design
- digital
- engineering and manufacturing
- hair and beauty
- health and science
- legal, finance and accounting

- protective services
- sales, marketing and procurement
- social care
- transport and logistics.

Only high-quality technical qualifications which match employer-set standards will be approved. The new, employer-led Institute for Apprenticeships, opened in 2017 (see the article on ['Traineeships and Apprenticeships'](#)) regulates quality across apprenticeships, with its remit eventually expanding to cover all technical education. All 15 routes will begin with high-quality, two-year, college-based programmes, aligned to apprenticeships.