



**Skills Bootcamps**

**Application Guidance**

**Surrey County Council**

**2026/27**

**(Wave 7)**

## Overview

This guidance sets out the basis on which Surrey County Council (SCC) will deal with any competitive grant application received from course providers and the factors to be considered when assessing applications.

The Department for Education (DfE) is supporting the development of Skills Bootcamps across the country as part of their Skills for Life Programme.

Skills Bootcamps will support Surrey County Council's core mission of the economic growth strategy which is:

“Ensure that Surrey continues to retain its position as one of the country's leading high-value and innovative regional economies by increasing productivity (GVA) and delivering wider socio-economic benefits to ensure no one is left behind.”

There are three interconnected strategic priorities underpinning this mission:

**Priority 1** - Ensuring Surrey's residents can support the workforce and skills demands of Surrey businesses

**Priority 2** - Creating the right conditions for Surrey businesses to start, grow and thrive

**Priority 3** - Enabling economic infrastructure to unlock growth through place-based approaches

Skills Bootcamps will enable:

- our employers to fill vacancies and reduce skills gaps and shortages in their workforce
- job seekers to develop the digital and technical skills needed to move into work
- employed individuals to develop the changing skills needed by employers
- self-employed individuals to develop changing skills needed to expand their opportunities/contracts



Surrey County Council has published this grant application guidance for the financial year 2026/27 for training providers and employers interested in delivering a Skills Bootcamp within the county.

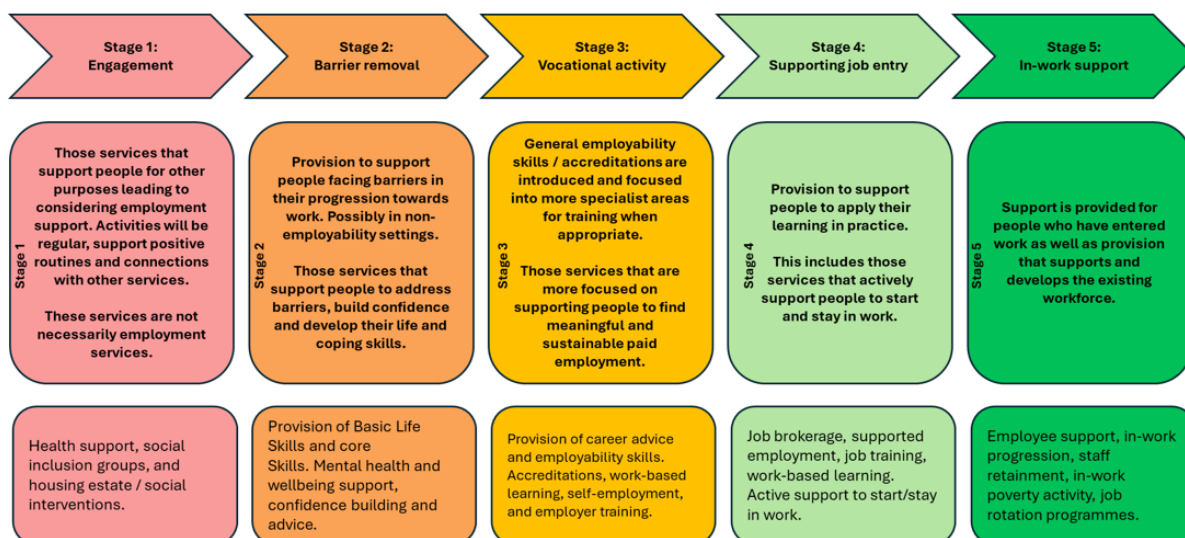
The application guidance has been designed to:

- maximise innovation
- maximise flexibility and build on good practice
- provide clarity around deadlines
- reinforce the requirement for the Skills Bootcamps to be local employer-led and backed by the local data and labour market information.

Surrey County Council therefore is open to receive applications of any potential scale throughout the financial year, on a phased approach and will make allocation decisions based on the content of this document and available funds.

Surrey County Council is of the view that Skills Bootcamps is a major driver in the 5-stage employment model, offering vocational activity and supporting job entry. Applicants will therefore need to evidence how their organisation and provision can support this.

# 5-stage employment model



## Priority skills areas

Surrey County Council has conducted labour market insight that has been validated through engagement with employers, as well as aligning with priorities identified through collaboration with the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP). As a result of this research, we are now considering applications for courses linked to the following priority sectors:

- Manufacturing and engineering
- Health and social care
- Adoption of existing and emerging digital technologies

It is important to highlight that through the application process, bidders will be expected to evidence:

- their ability to deliver provision that aligns with our priorities and the occupations identified
- commitment from employers
- experience in delivery of Skills Bootcamps or similar provision
- a robust screening process for applicants that ensures positive outcomes
- delivery locations
- George to add anything additional from panel comments

The table below sets out the key occupations that we are looking to support through our Skills Bootcamps provision.

<b>1. Strengthen entry pathways</b>		
<b>Focus on early-career roles that increases the future talent pipeline for senior and supervisory roles.</b>		
<b>Priority occupations</b>	<b>Entry-level rationale</b>	<b>Upskilling rationale</b>
IT Business Analysts, Architects and System Designers;  Electrical Engineers;  Cyber Security Professionals; Electronics Engineers; Programmers and Software Development Professionals;  Aerospace Engineers;  Engineering Technicians;  Data Analysts;  Engineering Professionals (Mechanical, Electrical, Electronics, Aerospace);  IT Operations Technicians;  Production Managers and Directors in Manufacturing;  IT Quality and Testing Professionals;  Mechanical Engineers;  Skilled Metal, Electrical and Electronic Trades Supervisors;  Information Technology Professionals (not elsewhere classified)	Courses aligned to these job roles will provide valuable entry routes into the manufacturing and engineering sectors, as well as supporting other sub-sectors including space, digital and cyber technologies, specialist engineering, construction and complex supply chains.	Those already in entry-level roles can benefit from courses that will support career progression.

<b>2. Improve recruitment, retention and development within the health and social care sector</b>		
Focusing on <b>addressing shortfalls</b> in the retention and recruitment of <b>core functions</b> , and providing <b>progression into senior and supervisory roles</b> .		
<b>Priority occupations</b>	<b>Entry-level rationale</b>	<b>Upskilling rationale</b>
Care workers; Leadership professionals; Digital skills professionals; Business support professionals; Specialist complex care professionals; Early Years educators; Teaching professionals;	With high vacancy rates locally and nationally, entry level roles are a high priority.  The sector suffers from poor sector perceptions, limited career awareness, unclear progression routes and low appeal to younger workers.	Those already in entry-level roles can benefit from courses that will support career progression.
<b>3. Adoption of existing and emerging digital tools</b>		
Delivery of courses to <b>target key digital tools across a range of sectors</b>		
<b>Demand and supply challenges across sectors</b>	<b>Rationale</b>	
Space, Creative, Cyber Security, Life Sciences, and Net Zero/Sustainability	Rapid advances in AI, automation and data technologies are transforming operating models across all sectors, not just specialist sectors, meaning productivity and business resilience are increasingly dependent on having the right digital foundations, infrastructure and workforce capability in place.	

Typically, courses should be delivered at levels 3 to 5 (or equivalent), with some being accepted at level 2.

**Surrey County Council will judge each application on its own merit and will need to see significant evidence that supports the application before agreeing to any funding.**

## Alignment with Department for Education Policy

To be eligible for consideration, all Skills Bootcamps must meet the following principles:

- Minimum 60 guided learning hours.
- Training to be delivered over a maximum of 16 weeks.
- Meet one of the Department for Education (DfE) acceptable category themes
  - One of the acceptable DfE category themes is “Other,” Surrey County Council will therefore consider pilot proposals for alternative themes not currently specified, however the available pilot allocation within Surrey County Council is limited to approximately 50% of SCC’s available grant and therefore pilot proposals should be scaled appropriately and must have strong evidence of employer demand. Other categories include Health & Social Care, life sciences, financial sector, business growth and administration.
  - All pilot proposals should align with the IfATE Occupational Routes, and proposals must evidence the following:
    - Where the Skills Bootcamp fits on the occupational route and pathway.
    - The occupation(s) that learners from the Skills Bootcamp will move into on completion.
    - While alignment of Skills Bootcamps with occupational maps is expected at route and pathway, we do not require full alignment at knowledge, skill and behaviour level unless they are designed to lead onto an apprenticeship via the existing Pathway to Accelerated Apprenticeship model. However, providers should outline how much alignment they intend to deliver.

## Objectives and Key Performance Indicators

The providers who are awarded this funding must deliver the following 4 objectives

Objective 1	Performance Indicators
Participating employers to commit to interviewing for their skills shortage vacancies (SSV) from the pool of trained individuals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 100% guaranteed interview (job, new role, or apprenticeship), or access to new opportunities in the case of the self-employed for each learner completing a Skills Bootcamp.</li> <li>• At least 80% of individuals to move into a new job or role within 6 months of completing training.</li> </ul>
Objective 2	Performance Indicators
Successful providers to work with groups of employers to design and deliver appropriate courses to suit their vacancies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 100% of Skills Bootcamps should be able to evidence employer engagement throughout the course (design/delivery/outcome)</li> <li>• 100% of courses designed to meet employer requirements to address their SSV.</li> <li>• Co-funding committed and achieved by employers.</li> <li>• 100% of learners who successfully complete a Skills Bootcamp will have acquired new skills within the scope of the Skills Bootcamp programme</li> </ul>
Objective 3	Performance Indicators
Recruit individuals using open and impartial methods to ensure fairness and equality of opportunity to local residents and protected groups.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Numbers applying</li> <li>• Numbers starting</li> <li>• Numbers completing (&gt;=80%)</li> <li>• Data on dropouts (&lt;/=20%)</li> <li>• Success rates</li> </ul>
Objective 4	Performance Indicators
Collect/ensure all relevant data is provided to allow DfE to evaluate the effectiveness of the initiatives and the delivery model.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data collection will be monitored monthly and will need to meet the minimum reporting requirements of DfE.</li> </ul>

Grant recipients will therefore need to demonstrate an active local network to ensure success at both maximising local employer engagement and maximising learner recruitment and engagement.

## Timescales

Surrey County Council does not advertise a deadline within the financial year for submissions, all grant applications will be accepted and reviewed in the order they are received and on a “first come first served basis”. However, grant funds will only be allocated if there is sufficient funding capacity within the programme when an application is received, and applications are always subject to approval.

For each specific Skills Bootcamp Wave, there are timescales set out by DfE that need to be adhered to. **Currently, all learners must have completed their course by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2027.** For clarity on timescales, please contact [skillsbootcamps@surreycc.gov.uk](mailto:skillsbootcamps@surreycc.gov.uk)

In addition, it is expected that a bootcamp must start within 3 months of grant award offer (milestone 1) and learners must finish the bootcamp within 3 months of starting, thus achieving milestone 2. Skills Bootcamp providers have until 6 months after the financial year end to submit evidence for Milestone 3 – successful outcomes for the learners. See payment terms for milestone definitions.

## Grant Award Criteria

Assessment criteria and weighting	
Theme and level of proposed courses	Pass/Fail
Alignment to local data and labour market insight – addressing the skills gap and demand	20%
Approach – target learners	10%
Experience of delivery	20%
Approach – collaboration with employers and evidence of employer commitment <b>(evidence to be uploaded during application process)</b>	20%
Delivery model of proposed bootcamp	20%
Data collection, management and reporting	10%
Cost/Value for money	Pass/Fail

Surrey County Council are committed to providing a variety of learning opportunities to its residents and may reject any application for a Skills Bootcamp whereby it is felt that the curriculum and content is already offered and is meeting the needs of that specific sector.

The level of any grant awarded remains in the sole discretion of Surrey County Council. There is no guarantee that the amount of grant awarded by Surrey County Council will be the total amount claimed by an applicant.

Where the current financial year's programme funding is fully allocated, any applicant with an application that meets the Skills Bootcamp criteria will be put onto a reserve list, until such time that funding may become available within the current financial year. This may include capacity becoming available in the current financial year or additional funding awards from the DfE within the current financial year. The reserve list will close at the end of the current financial year and anyone on the reserve list at the end of the current financial year will have to make a new application to apply for funding in future financial years.

## **Pilot Skills Bootcamps**

Surrey County Council may consider a pilot Skills Bootcamp funding award in the following situations:

- Where a provider has limited delivery experience in the Surrey area
- The Skills Bootcamp theme and curriculum is innovative, novel and has not been delivered before in the Surrey area

A pilot award may consist of one cohort, that will be required to meet the standard DfE and Surrey County Council criteria for successful delivery. The Skills Bootcamp programme team at Surrey County Council will provide support and ensure regular dialogue with the training provider before a feedback session is held, whereby any future funding allocations would be discussed. Any further funding would be dependent on successful delivery, employer demand and the funds being available. Any additional funding request following the provisions of a successful pilot Skills Bootcamp would have to be applied for and such an application for funding would be considered in accordance with the content of this document.

## Key Features of Skills Bootcamps

The key features of the Skills Bootcamps must include a focus on achieving the social and economic benefits of the Skills Bootcamp, as well as the following:

### 1. Level of training

Training to be pitched at level 2 (or equivalent) and above. The Department for Education are not providing funding for entry level Skills Bootcamps. The training may be delivered virtually, face to face or a combination of the two (hybrid).

### 2. Employer Involvement

Employers can apply to be either a provider of training directly, or when an application is received from a training provider, employers **must** be actively and strategically engaged with training providers. **Letters evidencing employer engagement and commitment are mandatory and will need to be submitted as part of the application process.**

This does not prevent recruitment of additional employers once the grant has been awarded.

Employers must be involved in determining the training on offer, and it must deliver the skills they need to be able to recruit and/or fill skills gaps. Employer engagement should include:

- direct employment of learners completing the course
- defining skills / certification requirements
- the development and delivery of Skills Bootcamps
- clearly identified guaranteed interviews for job vacancies for specific roles
- involvement in screening potential learners
- coaching and mentoring
- offering work experience – e.g. with other employers in networks (in addition to direct employment)

**Preference will be given to applications that evidence direct employment of learners completing the course.**

Preference will be given to employers who have a base in Surrey and the funding must look to support training for jobs and vacancies in this geography.

Skills Bootcamps will be co-funded by the employer where the employer is training their own existing employees (defined as someone directly employed by the employer, not a sub-contractor, or freelancer). If the employer is a large business, they will contribute 30% and this is reduced to 10% where the employer is a small or medium enterprise (SME) (defined as an employer with fewer than 250 employees).

Courses are fully funded for unemployed individuals or those not being co-funded by their employer, and for the self-employed.

### **3. Target learners**

Learners on the Skills Bootcamp must be aged 19 or over on 31 August of the financial year 2025/26 to qualify for a Skills Bootcamp for 2026/27:

- on or before 31 August 2025 for Skills Bootcamps starting between 01 April 2026 and 31 July 2026
- on or before 31 August 2026 for Skills Bootcamps starting between 01 August 2026 and 31 March 2027

They can be employed (full-time or part-time), self-employed or unemployed within the last 12 months. **When recruiting self-employed learners, you must outline how you intend to ensure you can evidence milestone 3 outcomes for these individuals.**

Where Jobcentre work coaches or equivalent sponsors identify individuals who have been unemployed for longer than 12 months, there is discretion to make a recommendation for attending a Skills Bootcamp, to be considered on a case-by-case basis. We would expect training providers to liaise regularly with relevant Department for Work & Pensions and Jobcentre colleagues to identify potential applicants.

Serving prisoners due to be released within 6 months of completion of a Skills Bootcamp and those on temporary release are also eligible.

We want to ensure that the training is accessible to all eligible adults within the community. Recruitment for learners who are unemployed or self-employed and screening for learners who are employed must use a fair and open process. Skills Bootcamps should be designed to encourage the participation of under-represented groups, such as those with protected characteristics and those who might face barriers

to employment (e.g. veterans, refugees) and aim to reflect the diversity of the local area. An adult must have the right to work in the UK, this right can be checked on [Right to work checks: an employer's guide - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#). An adult may only undertake one Skills Bootcamp per funding year. Providers have an obligation to ask prospective learners whether they have already undertaken a Skills Bootcamp in that funding year.

No prior attainment is required unless specifically prescribed by an employer and/or specifically related to the job and sector within which the vacancies or development opportunities are offered. When recruiting learners, providers must have robust screening processes to ensure learners have the baseline skills, attitudes, and competencies to successfully complete the course. Where possible, employers should be involved in the initial screening process.

Charging learners in any form, including consumable and devices required for the duration of the Skills Bootcamp is not permitted. This includes any proposals that involve asking learners to pay the funding back afterwards.

It is essential that learners live in Surrey. As previously referenced the funding must look to support training for jobs in this geography. However, we understand our geography and that many people commute across boundaries to work. With this in mind, we would be happy to have a conversation to discuss.

## **Data & Quality assurance**

The grant recipient must submit data via the Individualised Learner Record (ILR) system. This data collection is mandatory and will be used for audit, assurance, and evaluation purposes. It is the responsibility of the grant recipient to ensure that they are registered for the ILR process and further information can be found here <https://guidance.submit-learner-data.service.gov.uk/>

Suppliers will be required to engage with the Skills Bootcamps programme team, who are responsible for exploring opportunities to continuously improve policy and delivery.

Skills Bootcamps will be within the remit of Ofsted from Wave 4 onwards (i.e., from April 2023), following the recommendations and publication of the Ofsted thematic survey from Wave 2. Surrey County Council will provide support and share best practice where Ofsted is concerned, however it is the responsibility of the grant recipients to ensure that their organisation is prepared for any visits or assessments.

## **Evaluation of the programme**

All employers and grant recipients must agree to work with Surrey County Council to fully evaluate the success of the Skills Bootcamps, including:

- Names/Details of employers involved
- Levels and details of employer co-funding achieved
- Numbers of and personal details/demographic data for all applicants wishing to become learners on the Skills Bootcamp
- Data on individual levels of training engagement and achievement (e.g., how many hours engage with the course, number of completions)
- Details of job interviews by employers and the success rate
- Track learners who complete the Skills Bootcamp, up to 6 months after completing the Skills Bootcamp to determine their outcome
- Participate in qualitative interviews to reflect on implementation and identify lessons learned for future roll-out
- Completion of an audit exercise for the Skills Bootcamp, including a spot-check review of the outcome of a minimum of 10% of the learners who complete the Skills Bootcamp

## Payment Terms

Payments are made through the achievement of 3 key milestones for each learner, as detailed below.

First Payment – Milestone 1	Second Payment – Milestone 2	Third Payment – Milestone 3
30% - Attended Day 1; 14 qualifying days; 10 Guided Learning Hours	30% - course completion AND offer of an interview*	40% - successful outcome**

\*\*“Successful outcome” relates to the utilisation of the skills acquired, being deployed within 6 months of completing the Skills Bootcamp, and the learner achieving:

- Offer of a new job and continuous employment for at least 12 weeks
- Apprenticeship
- New role or additional/change in responsibilities with an existing employer
- New contracts or new opportunities for the self-employed

## Terms and conditions of submissions

Through applying, the applicant is committing to meet and abide by the following terms and conditions:

- Confidentiality and disclaimer
- Material misrepresentation
- Collusive Bidding
- Bribery
- TUPE
- Data Protection Act compliance
- Social value

Note any grant award may create a subsidy, please ensure you are familiar with the Subsidy Control Act of 2022 and any implications of public funded grants for your organisation.

## Contact Details

Questions to be sent to [skillsbootcamps@surreycc.gov.uk](mailto:skillsbootcamps@surreycc.gov.uk).

*\*Please not this guidance is subject to regular review with the sponsoring department's policies and best practice measures.*

### Version control

Version number	Purpose/Changes	Author	Date
1.0	Initial draft	Dan Callaghan	02/06/2026
1.1	Publication	Dan Callaghan	19/06/2026