DEFENCE WORKFORCE ROUNDTABLE

STRATEGIC COLLABORATION SESSION

Building the Workforce Behind Defence Growth

Unlocking UK Defence capabilities through accredited training, technical skills delivery, and strategic supply chain partnerships.

ACTIVATE LEARNING

ELS
Explosive Learning Solutions

Activate Learning

Explosive Learning Solutions

Employer Roundtable Discussion

RATIONALE & CONTEXT

Why Are We Doing This?

DEFENCE INVESTMENT PLAN (DIP)

£298 Billion

Total committed UK defence expenditure over the next 4 years.

- Massive funding expansion
- Urgent demand for skills and technical training capacity
- Priority areas include engineering, space, cyber and advanced technologies

The value of this roundtable:

Organisations in this room have the relevant technical expertise but may not have considered themselves as part of the defence sector.

This session aims to break down that barrier and form supportive partnerships.

Broad supply chain:

Opportunities span engineering, manufacturing, space, education and professional services

Long-term demand:

Desired defence programmes aim to achieve sustained skills and workforce requirements

Misconception: Value in defence sits with the existing primes.

Truth: 63% of recent defence award value sits with SMEs, technical experts and the wider supply chain.

ROUNDTABLE OUTCOMES

Session Objectives & Expected Deliverables

By the end of the session, we aim to have:

A clearer picture of the opportunity

Where defence investment is creating demand for skills, training and capability.

A rounded view of potential solutions

Combining defence knowledge, technical expertise, education, training and assessment capabilities.

New partnerships to pursue

Identify relevant capabilities for each organisation in the room to contribute.

Practical insight

Share what organisations are seeing on the ground, including skills gaps, barriers and emerging requirements.

Opportunities to pursue together

Confirm specific procurement, collaboration or supply-chain opportunities where there is a clear fit.



Regional Skills and Workforce Context

Key sector priorities and emerging skills needs across Oxfordshire, Berkshire and Surrey Local Skills Improvement Plans.

Sector	Oxfordshire	Berkshire	Surrey
Space & Aerospace	• Space, satellites, robotics, AI & R&D	• Systems, secure comms, cyber & aerospace	• Satellites, software, AI & aerospace engineering
Defence & Security	• Systems, cyber, software & cleared talent	• Engineering, compliance, cyber & project management	• Aerospace, electronics, cyber & systems
Advanced Manufacturing	• Automation, robotics & digital manufacturing	• CNC, CAD/CAM, automation & precision manufacturing	• Engineering, electronics & automation
Life Sciences	• Lab, biotech, bioinformatics & digital health	• Pharma engineering, GMP, QA & automation	• Research, laboratory science, data & innovation
Digital & AI	• AI, ML, robotics & data science	• AI, cyber, automation & cloud	• AI, cyber, software & data

MARKET INSIGHTS

Defence Skills and Workforce Context

What we’re hearing from employers:

Engineering Bottlenecks

Systems, software, electronics and manufacturing engineers are increasingly difficult to recruit.

Digital & AI Surge

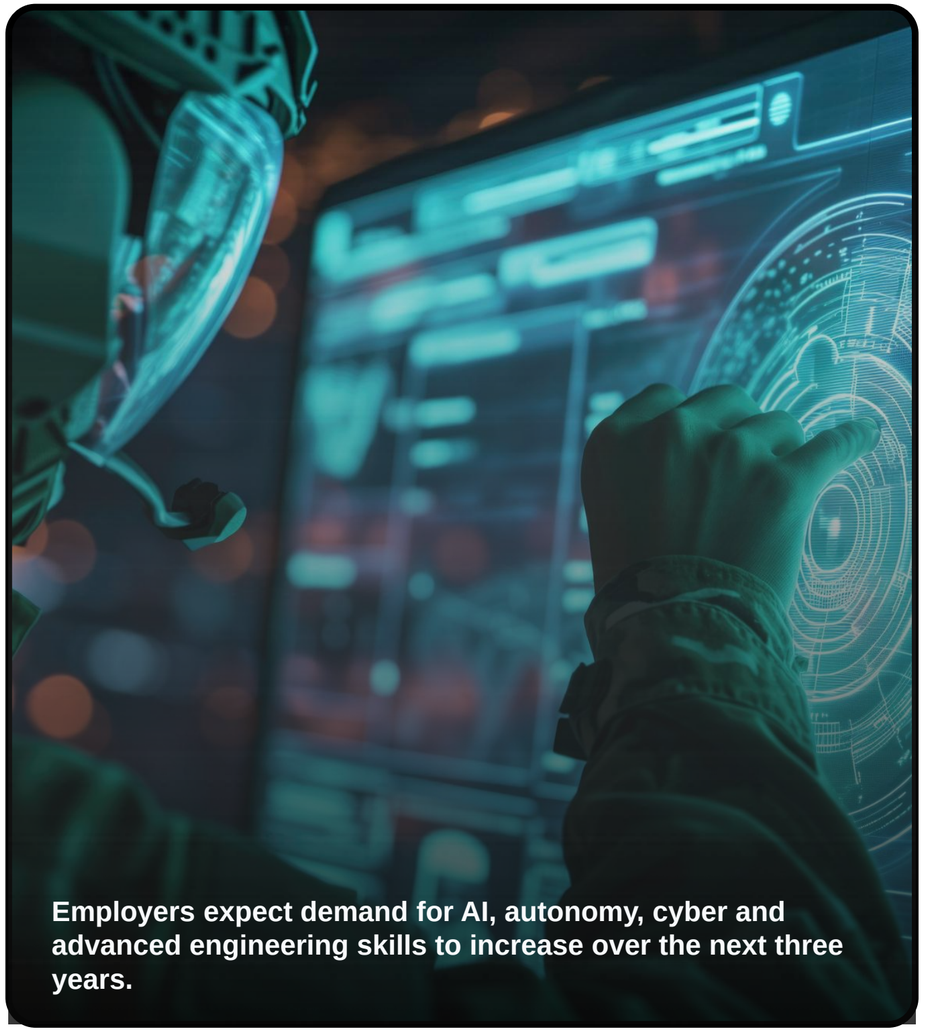
Exponential growth in demand for cyber defence, cloud architecture, and autonomous AI skills.

Clearance Pool Constraints

Security clearance and experience requirements are shrinking talent pools.

The Technical-to-Leadership Gap

Leadership & Management skills are in short supply for employees moving into these roles from technical backgrounds.



Employers expect demand for AI, autonomy, cyber and advanced engineering skills to increase over the next three years.

INTERACTIVE DISCUSSION

Discussion Time: Questions for the Room

1. Do these skills priorities align with your own workforce challenges?

2. Which sectors / skills represent your strengths?

3. Which sectors / skills do you need to develop?

4. What sector changes do you see influencing future workforce needs?

5. Which are the top job roles you struggle to recruit?

DIGITAL FEEDBACK STATION

Prefer to share thoughts digitally?

Scan with your phone camera to open the **MS Forms Feedback Tool**.

Defence Skills and Workforce Context

PILLAR 01

Engineering & Manufacturing

Precision mechanical, avionics, systems integration.

PILLAR 02

Digital, Cyber, AI & Electronics

Threat intelligence, data engineering, electronics.

PILLAR 03

Space & Aerospace

Satellite systems, orbital tech, flight control.

PILLAR 04

(likely DTEC specialist)

Infrastructure, Maritime & Specialist Defence Systems

Uncrewed platforms, naval systems & robotics.

Priority Occupations include (53,000 roles in demand):

- Programmers, software development professionals
- IT business analysts
- Architects and systems designers
- Civil, Electrical, Electronics, Mechanical, Production and Process Engineers
- Engineering technicians
- Welders

ACCREDITED PATHWAYS

Why the emphasis on Apprenticeships and Accredited Training?

- ✓ Build the defence skills pipeline
- ✓ Achieves mandated social value
- ✓ Provide transferable qualifications
- ✓ Strengthen industry capability
- ✓ Invest in people, not just capability

Goal: Turn capability into accredited, sustainable workforce growth.

Current and Future Opportunities

1. Growth Potential

Significant investment across defence, space, engineering and digital sectors will create new opportunities for organisations with the right capability.

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2. Talent Competition

Businesses will increasingly compete for the same scarce engineering, digital and technical talent.

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3. Broader Capability

Success will depend on more than technical expertise. Organisations will need strong leadership, digital maturity and adaptable workforces.

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4. Essential Collaboration

No single organisation can solve these challenges alone. Stronger partnerships between employers, training providers and defence specialists/ adjacent sectors will be essential.

Investment creates opportunity → talent becomes contested → capability broadens → collaboration becomes essential