



The Marches Skills Plan 2013 – 2015

First Annual Review October 2013

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Introduction and Objectives

The Marches Local Enterprise Partnership Board adopted its Skills Action Plan for 2013-15 in December 2012. As part of the plan the LEP committed itself to undertaking annual reviews against a number of key indicators in order to determine the level of progress against the stated objective of the Skills Plan, namely:

A GROWING ECONOMY SUPPORTED BY A SKILLED AND FLEXIBLE WORKFORCE WHERE YOUNG PEOPLE CAN REALISE THEIR POTENTIAL

This document is the first in a series of three annual reviews which aim to:

- Review and comment upon the progress and activity against the plan to date;
- Provide a high-level review of any emerging new issues and evidence; and,
- Provide both the Employment & Skills Board and the LEP Board with an opportunity to consider what else needs to be done to realise the LEP's skills vision.

This document draws primarily on official data sources produced or recognised by the Office of National Statistics. In addition to commenting on the LEP area's performance against agreed benchmarks, this report also provides brief summary of a number of additional data sources published over the course of the last 12 months.

Headline Findings

Employment

- Overall, employment in the LEP area has continued to increase by +0.6% over the last 12 months, adding an additional 2,100 jobs on the figure from the previous year. This has not been true across all local authority areas with Herefordshire and Telford & Wrekin both witnessing a decline. Only in Shropshire has total employment continued to rise.
- Overall, the employment rate is 73.4% in The Marches area. This is higher than either the West Midlands (68.4%) or the rest of the UK (70.8%). Shropshire has the highest employment rate (76.8%).
- Private sector employment accounts for 78.9% of the total in The Marches area. This is higher than the proportion in either the West Midlands (77.5%) or the rest of the UK (76.5%).

Self-employment

- The rate of self-employment in The Marches has declined by 0.2% (400 people) in the last 12 months. However, it still remains higher than in the West Midlands (12.7%) or the rest of the UK (13.6%).

Unemployment

- The unemployment rate in The Marches has decreased from 3.1% to 2.6% in the last 12 months. It is significantly lower than the rates in either the West Midlands (4.1%) or the rest of the UK (3.4%).
- The 18-24 unemployment rate in The Marches has decreased by a quarter in the last 12 months from 7.6% to 5.7%. Telford and Wrekin has the highest unemployment rate amongst young people, with 7.5% unemployed.
- The proportion of 18-24 year olds who are unemployed for more than six months has declined, from 2.6% to 2.2%. Telford and Wrekin has the highest rate with 3.2% of 18-24 year olds unemployed for more than 6 months, which is higher than the proportion for either the West Midlands (3.0%) or the UK as a whole (2.3%).
- The proportion of all unemployed who have been out of work for 6 months or more has increased from 41.5% to 45.7%. However, the number of long term unemployed has decreased in absolute terms from 5,020 to 4,800.
- The proportion of NEETs in The Marches has decreased from 6.8% to 6.1% in the last 12 months. Telford has the highest proportion of NEETs (6.9%), which is greater than the proportion for the West Midlands (6.2%) or the rest of the UK (5.7%).

Skills

- The workforce in The Marches is generally better qualified than the workforce in the West Midlands, but less qualified than the UK average.
- Telford and Wrekin has the highest level of attainment for 5 A*-C GCSEs, including English and Mathematics (61%). This is the highest rate in The Marches, and higher than the West Midlands (58.3%) and the UK (58.6%).

Training and Developments

- There has been a 21% increase in the number of 19+ apprenticeship starts in The Marches area in the last year. This is much higher than the 5% increase in the number of 16-18 year old apprenticeship starts over the same period.
- There has been a 20% increase in the number of advanced apprenticeship starts in The Marches area.
- The proportion of the workforce which had received training in the past 4 weeks prior to being surveyed has increased from 9.6% to 11.4% in the past 12 months. The proportion of the workforce which had received training in the past 13 weeks prior to being surveyed has also increased from 18.9% to 20.0% in the last 12 months.

A Review of New Evidence

- The economy of The Marches area is improving. Recent surveys show that two-fifths of businesses in The Marches reported that their level of output was higher than the same time the year before, compared to 19% who reported a decline. The net figure was +21%, but this was slightly lower than the West Midlands (+25%) or England as a whole (+26%).
- Marches businesses are slightly more confident about the future than those regionally or nationally. One-quarter of businesses are forecasting a growth in output over the next three months, as compared to 23% for the West Midlands and 22% across England.
- There has been a net change of 5% of businesses increasing the size of their workforces. This is lower than either the West Midlands (+8%) or England (+10%) rates.
- Local businesses are cautious about the prospect of increasing the size of their workforce over the next 12 months, with a net increase of +6%. This is less than that predicted in either the West Midlands (+9%) or England as a whole (10%).
- The Marches has experienced higher growth in economic output from 2009-2011 than the average for England (4.5% compared to 3.9%).
- The Marches has the fourth highest rate of employment in the Manufacturing sector for any LEP (15.1%). This is almost double the proportion in England as a whole (8.7%). However, from 2010-2011, there was a 0.1% decline in the proportion employed in the Manufacturing sector.
- According to the Telford Employer Survey, one-fifth of employers stated they had Hard-To-Fill vacancies. The main causes for these HTF vacancies were a low number of applicants with the required skills, lack of work experience and a lack of required qualifications.
- Just less than one-in-ten companies in Telford & Wrekin reported skills gaps amongst their existing employees. 15.6% of employers have done nothing to reduce these gaps.
- Only just over half (51.5%) of employers had a training plan and only around one quarter (25.6%) had a training budget. Over 40% of employers had not provided any training for employees over the last 12 months.
- Less than one-fifth (18.6%) of employers in Telford & Wrekin employ apprentices and only 6% of employers use them every year. The majority of companies who do not use them either do not want them or have skills/qualification needs that are higher than the apprenticeships can provide.

Performance Indicators

Performance Indicator	Baseline Position	Update 2013	West Midlands	UK	Year and Source
Employment					
Employment change year on year	+0.4% (1,012)	The Marches +0.6% (2,100); Herefordshire -0.7% (-1,200); Shropshire +2.2% (4,000); Telford and Wrekin -0.6% (-1,700)	+0.1% (4,100)	+0.2% (90,900)	April 2012- March 2013 (APS)
Employment rate	72.7%	The Marches 73.4%; Herefordshire 71.8%; Shropshire 76.8%; Telford and Wrekin 69.0%	68.4%	70.8%	March 2013 (APS)
Private sector employment	78.0%	78.9%	77.5%	76.5%	April 2012 - March 2013 (APS)
Rate of self-employment (aged 16-64)	15.7%	15.5% (43,500)	12.7%	13.6%	March 2013 (APS)
Unemployment rate	3.1%	The Marches 2.6% (10,500); Herefordshire 2.0% (2,300); Shropshire 2.2% (4,200); Telford and Wrekin 3.7% (4,000)	4.1% (147,206)	3.4% (1,389,688)	August 2013 (JSA Claimant count)
18-24 unemployment rate	7.6%	The Marches 5.7% (3,010 people); Herefordshire 4.9% (655 people); Shropshire 5.0% (1,185 people); Telford and	7.4% (39,900 people)	6.2% (369,170 people)	August 2013 (Claimant count)

		Wrekin 7.5% (1,165 people)			
18-24 long term unemployment rate (>6 months)	(2.6%) 1,290	The Marches 2.2% (1,160 people); Herefordshire 1.8% (250 people); Shropshire 1.7% (405 people); Telford and Wrekin 3.2% (505 people)	3.0% (16,365 people)	2.3% (139,490 people)	August 2013(Claimant count)
Proportion of all unemployed who have been out of work for more than 6 months	41.5% (5020 people)	The Marches 45.7% (4,800 people); Herefordshire 44.3% (1,015 people); Shropshire 44.3% (1,870 people); Telford and Wrekin 47.8% (1,915 people)	51.6% (75,965 people)	49.2% (683,940 people)	August 2013(Claimant count)
NEETs (%)	6.8% (1460 people)	The Marches 6.1% (1,280 people); Herefordshire 6.2% (360 people); Shropshire 5.4% (500 people); Telford and Wrekin 6.9% (420 people)	6.2% (11,940 people)	5.7% (99,895 people)	2012 (Department for Education)
Skills					
% of workforce qualified to Level 4	28.5%	28.5%	27.8%	34.2%	January-December 2012 (APS)
% of workforce qualified to below Level 2	30.7%	28.9%	33.3%	28.3%	January-December 2012 (APS)
% of workforce with no qualifications	11.7%	10.6%	13.6%	9.9%	January-December 2012 (APS)

% of young people attaining 5 GCSEs at A-C including English and Maths	Herefordshire (56.5%) Shropshire (58.5%) Telford and Wrekin (61.0%)	Herefordshire (56.5%) Shropshire (58.5%) Telford and Wrekin (61.0%)	58.3%	58.6%	SFR 25/2012 (Results for 2012)
Training and development					
Apprentices 19+	5170 starts	6,260 starts (19-24: 2,960) (25+:3,300)	44,810 starts	390,700 starts	NAS starts May 2013 (relating to 2011/2012)
Apprentices 16-18	1650 starts	1,740 starts	15,660 starts	129,900 starts	NAS starts May 2013 (relating to 2011/2012)
Number of advanced apprenticeships	2,810 starts	3,360 starts	21,650 starts	187,900 starts	NAS starts May 2013 (relating to 2011/2012)
Training¹					
% who have received job related training in the last 4 weeks aged 16-64	9.6% (37,200 people) Herefordshire 8.8% Shropshire 9.3% Telford and Wrekin 11.1%	The Marches 11.4% (43,600 people); Herefordshire 10.1%; Shropshire 12.3%; Telford and Wrekin 11.1%	8.1% (277,800 people)	9.5% (3,814,900 people)	Baseline Position APS (April 2011-March 2012) Updated 2013 APS (April 2012 – March 2013) NB These figures were not included in the original 'Marches Skills Plan 2013-2015'
% who have received job related training in the last 13 weeks	18.9% (72,800 people) Herefordshire 16.8% Shropshire 19.0% Telford and	The Marches 20.0% (76,700 people); Herefordshire 17.8%; Shropshire 21.2%;	16.1% (552,100 people)	18.8% (7,540,000)	Baseline Position APS (April 2011-March 2012) Updated 2013

¹ NB These figures were not included in the original 'Marches Skills Plan 2013-2015'

	Wrekin 20.7%	Telford and Wrekin 20.3%			APS (April 2012 – March 2013)
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Key

	Indicator shows improvement		No change or minor decline		Significant decline in indicator
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Employment

Since the original report, employment in The Marches has, overall, improved. The employment change year on year has increased, from +0.4% in 2011-2012, to +0.6% in 2012-2013. This equates to 2,100 additional jobs in the last year. However, by local authority, only Shropshire has experienced an increase in employment, with an additional 4,000 jobs created. Both Herefordshire (-0.7%) and Telford and Wrekin (-0.6%) have both had decreases in employment and have, together, lost almost 3,000 jobs over the course of the last 12 months.

As a whole, The Marches has had a much greater increase in the employment rate (+0.7%) than either the rest of the West Midlands (+0.1%) or the UK (+0.2%).

The sectors which had the greatest increase in the numbers working in them were distribution, hotels and restaurants (2,300) and construction (2,000). The sectors with the greatest decrease in the numbers working in them were related to the services industry; transport and communications (-2,500) and other services (-1,200). Across the Marches, the most significant changes in the proportion employed in each broad industrial sector have been in the transport and communications (-0.8%) and construction (0.7%).

The employment rate has also increased with an additional 0.7% of the population being employed in March 2013, compared to March 2012. However, again, at a local authority level, it can be seen that only Shropshire has more than three-quarters of its working age economically active population in employment (76.8%), whilst only 71.8% of the same group in Herefordshire and 69.0% of Telford and Wrekin are in employment.

The employment rate in The Marches, and in Herefordshire and Shropshire, is higher than the rate in either the West Midlands (68.4%) or the rest of the UK (70.8%).

Private sector employment has increased from the previous report; in March 2012, only 78% were employed in the private sector, whilst in March 2013, 78.9% were employed in the private sector. There has been a decrease in public sector spending and a reduction in jobs in The Marches, with a £13 million savings plan in Telford and Wrekin including staff cuts, more than 3.9% cut of staff numbers at Shropshire Council, with a further 1,700 additional jobs expected to be cut, and a

£10.8 million reduction of spending at Herefordshire Council. This reduction of public sector employment is expected to continue for the foreseeable future. The Marches has a slightly higher rate of private employment than either the West Midlands (77.5%) or the rest of the UK (76.5%).

Whilst local authority figures are not available, regional figures for the West Midlands show that 9.6% of the workforce is estimated to be under-employed. If this same level were true in The Marches LEP area, this would equate to 29,100 in the Marches LEP, of which there would be 7,700 in Herefordshire, 13,900 in Shropshire and 7,500 in Telford and Wrekin.

Self Employment

The rate of self employment has decreased since March 2012, with 400-500 fewer people self-employed in March 2013, meaning only 43,500 are now self-employed. It may be the reduction of self-employed people is also leading to the increase in unemployment, in areas like Herefordshire and Telford and Wrekin. The rate of self-employment in The Marches is proportionally still higher than either the West Midlands (12.7%) or UK average's (13.6%).

The reasons behind the fall in self-employment are not immediately obvious. One possible explanation, however, is that many of those made redundant during the early years of the recession sought to move into self-employment and, for a variety of reasons, this has not proved successful. These individuals are likely to have either moved back into employment as the economy recovered or left the labour market altogether following their period of self-employment.

Unemployment

The unemployment rate in The Marches has decreased since the original report, from 3.1% in July 2012, to only 2.6% in August 2013. This is a promising sign, as it shows that the impact of the retrenchment in public spending has not fed through to a rise in unemployment. However, unemployment remains far higher in Telford and Wrekin than in the other local authorities, standing at 3.7%. This is almost twice the proportions in Herefordshire and Shropshire (2.0% and 2.2% respectively) and is 0.4% higher than the Great Britain average. However, it is still lower than the West Midlands average of 4.1%.

Whilst the proportion of people suffering from long-term unemployment has increased from 41.5% to 45.7%, the actual number of individuals who have been out of work for more than six months has actually decreased from 5,020 in July 2012 to 4,800 in August 2013. This is also a promising sign, as it suggests that the rate of increase in long-term unemployment has been arrested and may now be beginning to fall. Telford and Wrekin has a higher proportion of unemployed people out of work for more than six months than the other local authorities; 47% compared to 44.3% in both Herefordshire and Shropshire.

The proportion that have been out of work for longer than six months is lower in The Marches area and the three local authorities, than either the West Midlands (51.6%) or the rest of the UK (49.2%).

The rate of unemployment amongst 18-24 year olds has also decreased from 7.6% in July 2012 to 5.7% in August 2013. This is a drop of 1.9 percentage points, which is almost four times greater than the decrease for the unemployment rate for all groups. The average for Shropshire and Herefordshire is even lower at only 5%, whilst Telford and Wrekin's youth unemployment stands at 7.5%, which is 1.5 times greater than for Herefordshire and Shropshire.

The West Midland unemployment rate amongst 18-24 year olds is almost one and a half times greater than the rate for The Marches (7.4% compared to 5.7% respectively).

The long term unemployment rate (those who have been unemployed for 6 months or more) for 18-24 year olds has reduced from 2.6% in July 2012 to only 2.2% in August 2013. This equates to 130 fewer 18-24 year olds in long term unemployment across The Marches area.

The long term 18-24 unemployment rate is 0.8% higher in the West Midlands than The Marches (3.0% compared to 2.2% respectively). The Marches rate is comparable with the rate for the rest of the UK (2.3%).

The rate of long term youth unemployment varies between the local authorities; in Herefordshire and Shropshire, on average, only 1.8% of people aged 18-24 have been unemployed for more than six months. In Telford and Wrekin, 3.2% have been unemployed for more than 6 months, accounting for the greatest number of long term young people unemployed, 505, despite only having the second largest population of people aged between 18 and 24. From this and other evidence, it can be seen that Telford and Wrekin has had greater problems with regard to youth unemployment than other areas.

As well as the reduction of unemployment amongst 18-24 year olds, there has also been a reduction in the number and percentage of NEETs (young people aged 16-24). In 2011, 1,460 young people (6.8%) were recorded as NEETs, whilst the latest figures show that only 1,280 (6.1%) were recorded as NEETs. The proportion of NEETs varies between each local authority; whilst Shropshire has the highest number of NEETs (500), it has the lowest proportion, with only 5.4% of its young people believed to be NEETs. Telford and Wrekin has the highest proportion of young people regarded as NEETs, with 6.9%, which is 0.7% higher than the proportion in Herefordshire (6.2%).

The Marches has a higher rate of NEETs compared to the rest of the UK (6.1% compared to 5.7%) but a marginally lower rate than the West Midlands (6.2%).

Skills

Since the original report, there has been an overall improvement in the level of qualification attainment. The proportion of the workforce with no qualifications has decreased from 11.7% in 2011 to 10.6% in 2012, which indicates that the supply of new recruits entering the labour market are, on average, better qualified than those leaving. It may also indicate that older workers in the workforce recognise the need to up-skill in order to be able to effectively compete for work in the future.

The proportion of the workforce qualified to below Level 2 has also reduced significantly by 1.8 percentage points, from 30.7% in 2011 to 28.9% in 2012. The proportion of the workforce qualified to Level 4 has remained broadly the same in the last 12 months at 28.5%.

There has been no updated data for the percentage of young people attaining 5 GCSEs at A-C, including English and Mathematics since the original report, so it is not possible to compare any changes.

Overall, it can be seen that The Marches has a higher rate of qualification attainment than the West Midlands, but it is still lower than the rest of the UK. 28.5% of people in The Marches have achieved Level 4 qualification, whilst 34.2% of the rest of the UK had attained them and only 27.8% in the West Midlands had achieved them.

Similarly, 10.6% in The Marches have attained no qualifications, whilst 13.6% have no qualifications in the West Midlands but only 9.9% across the UK have no qualifications.

The GCSE attainment level, for 5 A*-C including Maths and English is lower in The Marches than either the West Midlands (58.3%) or the rest of the UK (58.6%). However, Telford has a much higher rate of attainment, with 61.0% of students attaining 5 GCSEs.

Training and Development

Since the original report, figures are now available for the number of apprenticeship starts for 2011/2012. Overall, there has been an 18% increase in the number of apprenticeship starts, especially for 19+ year olds and advanced apprenticeships.

In 2011/2012, there were an additional 90 apprenticeship starts amongst 16-18 year olds than in 2010/2011. This represents an increase of only 5.4%, which is much lower than the increases for the apprentices 19+ years old and the number of advanced apprentices.

In 2011/2012, there were 6,260 apprenticeship starts by people aged 19+, compared to only 5,170 in 2010/2011. This represents an increase of 21% and may be evidence of the greater difficulty of people in finding employment.

The number of advanced apprentices has also increased, with an additional 550 starts (representing 19.6%) from 2010/2011 to 2011/2012; in 2010/2011, there were only 2,810 advanced apprenticeships, but in 2011/2012, this had increased to 3,360.

Whilst not included in the original report, it is also possible to examine what proportion of the workforce has received training recently. Overall, according to figures from April 2012-March 2013, 11.4% of The Marches workforce had received job related training in the last 4 weeks, whilst one-fifth (20.0%) have received training in the last 13 weeks. These both show an increase from the same period for the previous 12 months; an additional 1.8% have received training in the last 4 weeks and an additional 1.1% in the last 13 weeks. Whilst the growth in the proportion is quite small, it does provide evidence of more, regular training in The Marches area.

The proportions of the workforce who have received job related training recently differ between the local authorities. Shropshire has the highest proportion receiving training; 12.3%, equating to 21,700 people, in the last 4 weeks and 21.2%, equating to 37,200 people, in the last 13 weeks. Telford and Wrekin has the second highest proportion, with 11.1% having received training in the last 4 weeks, and 20.3% having received it in the last 13 weeks. Herefordshire has the lowest proportion receiving training, with only 10.1% having received any in the last four weeks and only 17.8% having received any in the last 13 weeks.

A higher proportion have received training in The Marches, both in the last four and 13 weeks, compared to the West Midlands and the rest of the UK. In the last four weeks, 11.4% of the workforce in The Marches received training, compared to only 8.1% in the West Midlands and 9.5% in the rest of the UK. In the last 13 weeks, one-fifth of workers in have received training, compared to only 16.1% of workers in the West Midlands and 18.8% of workers across the UK. This implies that The Marches' economy is more focused on providing training and may also be more able to afford to pay for more training compared to the other areas. The higher levels of qualification attainment in the area may also mean that the jobs in the area require more training to retain the highest possible skills levels.

A Review of New Evidence

The Marches' Economy

Data from the English Business Survey for the second quarter of 2013 shows evidence that the economy of The Marches area is improving. Two-fifths (40%) of businesses reported that their level of output was higher than the same time the year before, as compared with 19% which reported a decline in output over the same period. The net position was therefore +21% (40% -19%) but this was slightly lower than the corresponding figures for either the West Midlands region (+25%) or England as a whole (+26%).

Marches businesses are, however, slightly more confident about the future than those regionally or nationally. Data from the English Business Survey shows that a net (e.g. higher – lower) 25% of businesses are forecasting a growth in output as compared with 23% for the West Midlands and 22% across England.

While the local economy has witnessed a growth in output over the last few months, employment growth has been much more modest. Approximately 18% of local businesses have seen a growth in employment over the last three months with 13% witnessing a contraction. There has been, therefore, a net change of 5% of businesses increasing their workforces over the period which is lower than either the West Midlands (+8%) or England (+10%) averages.

Local businesses are also more cautious about the prospect of increasing the size of their workforces than either those regionally or nationally. While 16% of businesses in The Marches believe their total workforce will increase over the next three months 10% believe their workforce will decline, leaving a net +6% of businesses. The

corresponding figure for the West Midlands region is +9% and for England as a whole the rate is +10%.

According to the LEP Network 'Review of Local Enterprise Partnership area economies in 2013,' The Marches has experienced higher growth in economic output from 2009 to 2011 than the average for England; 4.5% compared to 3.9%. This means The Marches has the 19th highest growth in economic output of all 39 LEPs.

The Marches also has one of the highest rates of employment in the Manufacturing sector: 15.1%. The only LEPs with higher rates are Cumbria (16.8%), the Black Country (15.8%) and Humber (15.2%). The Marches has almost twice the proportion employed in manufacturing compared to England as a whole (8.7%). From 2010-2011, there was a 0.1% decline in the proportion employed in manufacturing in The Marches area.

Telford Employer Survey 2013

According to the Telford Employer Skills survey, one-fifth of employers stated they had experienced Hard-to-Fill vacancies, which was more than three times the rate for England as a whole. The main causes for HTF vacancies were a low number of applicants with the required skills (39%), lack of work experience (24%) and a lack of required qualifications (23%).

According to the same survey, 8.7% of companies reported skills gaps amongst their existing employees. More than one-third of employers (36.9%) reported that technical, practical and job-related skills were missing amongst their existing employees. Whilst 72.3% of companies have undertaken training to reduce these skills gaps, 15.6% have **done nothing to reduce these gaps**.

Only just over half (51.5%) of employers had a training plan and only a quarter (25.6%) had a training budget. Over 40% of employers had not provided any training for any employees over the last 12 months, which is lower than the national average (42%). Whilst the majority (63%) of these businesses felt that there was no need for additional training, as their staff are already fully trained, there were still 8% of companies who felt that their employees were too busy or courses were too expensive.

Currently, less than one-fifth (18.6%) of employers use apprenticeships in Telford and Wrekin and only approximately 6% of companies employ an apprentice every year. Companies who do not employ apprentices are either not interested in employing apprentices, they have no need for apprentices or they have skills/qualification needs that are higher than apprenticeships can provide.

Local Authority: Positives and Negatives

Herefordshire

Positives

- The employment rate in Herefordshire is 71.8%, which is higher than either the West Midlands (68.4%) or the UK average (70.8%).
- Herefordshire has the lowest unemployment rate in the Marches, only 2.0% compared to the Marches' average of 2.6%. Herefordshire also the lowest number of unemployed people, with only 1,200 unemployed. Herefordshire's unemployment rate is also lower than either the West Midlands (4.1%) or the UK (3.4%).
- The long term unemployment rate (more than six months) in Herefordshire is 44.3%, which is lower than the Marches average of 45.7%. Herefordshire's long term unemployment rate is also less than the West Midlands (51.6%) or UK (49.2%) average.
- Herefordshire has the lowest unemployment rate for 18-24 year olds in the Marches area, at only 4.9%. The Marches average is 5.7%, Shropshire's rate is 5.0% and Telford and Wrekin is at 7.5%. Herefordshire is also lower than both the West Midlands (7.4%) and the UK (6.2%).
- Herefordshire has a lower than average rate of youth long term unemployment in the Marches (1.8% compared to 2.2%).

Negatives

- The employment level in Herefordshire has decreased by 0.7%, which equates to 1,200 fewer jobs. This is the highest rate of decline in the Marches area. In the Marches overall, there has been a 0.6% increase in the employment level. The West Midlands has had a 0.1% increase and the UK, a 0.2% increase in the same period.
- The employment rate in Herefordshire (71.8%) is lower than that in either Shropshire (76.8%) or the Marches average (73.4%).
- The 18-24 year old unemployment rate is marginally higher in Herefordshire (1.8%) than Shropshire (1.7%).
- Herefordshire has a higher NEET rate (6.2%) than either Shropshire (5.4%) or the UK as a whole (5.7%).
- Of the benchmark areas, Herefordshire has the lowest rate of attainment for five GCSEs grade A*-C, including English and Mathematics (56.5%). It is almost 5% lower than Telford and Wrekin, and more than 2% lower than the UK average.

Shropshire

Positives

- Shropshire has the highest employment rate of any of the areas (76.8%). This is higher than the average for the Marches (73.4%) or either of the other local authorities in it. It is 7.8% higher than the rate in Telford and Wrekin. It is also higher than either the West Midlands (68.4%) or the UK as a whole (70.8%).
- Shropshire has the highest employment change from 2011-2013, with an increase of 2.2%. This equates to an additional 4,000 jobs. This means that Shropshire is the only area in the Marches LEP which had an increase in its employment level.

- The unemployment rate in Shropshire (2.2%) is lower than both Telford and Wrekin (3.7%) and the Marches average (2.6%). It is also substantially lower than the rates in the West Midlands (4.1%) and the UK (3.4%).
- Shropshire has the joint lowest long term unemployment rate (all those unemployed for more than six months) in the Marches LEP (44.3%). It is lower than the Marches average (43.7%), the West Midlands (51.6%) or the UK average (49.2%)
- Shropshire has a youth unemployment rate of only 5.0%. This is lower than the proportion in either Telford and Wrekin (7.5%) or the Marches (5.7%). It is also lower than both the West Midlands (7.4%) and the UK (6.2%).
- Shropshire has the lowest long term youth unemployment of any of the benchmark areas, with only 1.7% of 18-24 year olds being unemployed for 6 months or more. The West Midlands rate is almost double that of Shropshire (3.0%) and the rate for the UK as a whole is 0.6% higher (2.3%).
- The proportion of NEETs in Shropshire is only 5.4%, which is the lowest proportion in the Marches. It is also lower than the proportions in both the West Midlands (6.2%) and the UK as a whole (5.7%).
- The rate of attainment for 5 GCSEs at grade A*-C, including English and Mathematics, is 58.5% in Shropshire, which is higher than both Herefordshire (56.5%) and the West Midlands (58.3%).
- The proportion of the workforce in Shropshire which had received training in the four weeks prior to being surveyed was 12.3%. This was the highest proportion in the Marches area. It was also higher than the rates in both the West Midlands (8.1%) and the UK (9.5%)

Negatives

- The 18-24 year old unemployment rate in Shropshire (5.0%) is marginally higher than in Herefordshire (4.9%)
- The level of GCSE attainment for grades A*-C, including English and Mathematics, in Shropshire is 58.5%. This is lower than the rate in Telford and Wrekin (61.0%) and the UK average (58.6%).

Telford and Wrekin

Positives

- Telford and Wrekin has an employment rate of 69.0%, which is higher than the employment rate for the West Midlands as a whole (68.4%).
- The unemployment rate in Telford and Wrekin is 3.7%, which is lower than the rate in the West Midlands as a whole (4.1%).
- Telford and Wrekin has a lower long term unemployment rate (47.8%) (proportion all who have been unemployed for more than six months) than both the West Midlands (51.6%) and the UK as a whole (49.2%).
- Telford and Wrekin has the highest rate of attainment for 5 GCSEs grade A*-C, including English and Mathematics of any of the benchmark areas. It is significantly higher than other areas in the Marches; Herefordshire has an attainment rate of only 56.5% and 58.5% in Shropshire.
- The proportion of the workforce in Telford and Wrekin which had received training in the four weeks prior to being surveyed was 11.1%. This was the second highest proportion in the Marches area; in Herefordshire, only 10.1% had received training. It was also higher than the rates in both the West Midlands (8.1%) and the UK (9.5%)

- The proportion of the workforce in Telford and Wrekin which had received training in the thirteen weeks prior to being surveyed was 20.3%. This was the second highest proportion in the Marches area; in Herefordshire only 17.8% had received training. It was higher than the rates in both the West Midlands (16.1%) and the UK (18.8%).

Negatives

- Telford and Wrekin has the lowest employment rate in The Marches LEP (69.0%). This is 4.4% lower than the Marches average and 7.8% lower than the rate in Shropshire. It is also lower than the average for the UK as a whole (70.8%).
- Employment in Telford and Wrekin has decreased by 0.6% from 2011-2013. This equates to 1,700 fewer jobs in the local authority area. Shropshire has experienced a 2.2% increase in the number of jobs, whilst the Marches overall has had a 0.6%. Telford and Wrekin has experienced a decrease in the number of jobs whilst the West Midlands (0.1%) and the UK (0.2%) have both experienced an increase in the number of jobs.
- The unemployment rate in Telford and Wrekin is 3.7%, which is higher than both of the other areas in the Marches; Herefordshire's unemployment rate is only 2.0%, whilst Shropshire's is only 2.2%. It is also higher than the rate in the UK as a whole (3.4%).
- Telford and Wrekin has the highest long term unemployment rate (proportion of all unemployed, who have been unemployed for more than 6 months) in the Marches area (47.8%). Shropshire and Herefordshire have only 44.3% of unemployed out of work for more than six months.
- Telford and Wrekin has the highest proportion of NEETs of any of the benchmark areas, with 6.9% of young people not in employment, education or training. The overall rate in the Marches is 6.1%, 0.8% lower than Telford and Wrekin. The rate of NEETs in the West Midlands is 6.2% and the UK 5.7%, almost one-fifth lower than the proportion in Telford and Wrekin.
- The proportion of the workforce in Telford and Wrekin which had received training in the four weeks prior to being surveyed was 11.1%. This is lower than the proportion in Shropshire, where 12.3% of the workforce had received training.
- Less than one-fifth of local employers currently use apprenticeships in their business.