SOUTHAMPTON, United Kingdom

A Local Approach to the Future of Work

September 2021

Key facts

The city of Southampton in the UK recently carried out an extensive inquiry on the future of work in the city. It considered the potential impact of artificial intelligence (AI), robotics and other digital technologies on the Southampton economy, identifying good practices implemented elsewhere and policies to introduce in the city. Building on the inquiry, the City Council has designed an action plan, to ensure the city and its residents stay ahead of the curve in the digital age.

Timeframe and funding	The inquiry was held between September 2018 and March 2019.
City population	254,361
Governing body	Southampton City Council
Link	[Southampton City Council launches digital skills pilot](#)

Main objectives

The key objective of the inquiry was:

- To support the design of an action plan that could ensure that the city's demand and supply of digital skills are aligned now and in the future

Content and mode of delivery

The inquiry, led by a panel comprised of elected officials, was held to consider how the city could maximise the opportunities created by AI, automation and technological changes. At the same time, it aimed to identify and mitigate potential disruption to the local economy, particularly for workers in sectors that are most likely to see the greatest increase in the level of use of AI, automation and technological advancement. As part of the inquiry, the city council gathered advice and insights from experts as well as local practitioners in other cities. They undertook this work alongside extensive analysis conducted by a dedicated team at the council to develop a robust business case to shape the city's future growth. The inquiry identifies the components available in the city, the potential for the tech sector to grow and become more vibrant, and institutions and partnerships that could help advance the city's objectives.

A resulting action plan identifies main actions the city plans to undertake in response to the future of work inquiry. These include the development of a citywide skills strategy and update of education curricula to enrich the offer of digital skills, as well as the analysis of the current skills on offer by education providers in the city. As part of the strategy, the city also plans to map existing platforms facilitating lifelong learning across Southampton and find ways to improve access, rates of progression and increase job outcomes.

One key activity that has been put in place following the agreement on the action plan is a digital skills pilot where up to 40 local businesses will from benefit support to become more agile, digital-savvy and competitive. Each business will receive a digital health check, dedicated 1-2-1 support from a trained advisor plus access to a suite of learning modules. They will also learn a wide range of digital subjects, including creating a digital focused business plan. .

Stakeholders

For the implementation of the digital skills pilot, the City Council has teamed up with DNAsix, a digital e-programme already in use in other boroughs. In addition, the City Council will be working with key local partners, including Solent Local Enterprise Partnership, Hampshire Chamber of Commerce, Federation of Small Businesses, Solent University, Barclays Eagle Labs and Business South, to ensure participating businesses have access to a comprehensive suite of support to help them on their digital journey.

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