



AGENDA

Hiring, Skilling and Upskilling the Region of Business in the Community

18 September 2025 | 1.30pm-4pm

at Walsall Digital Skills Hub, George Street, Walsall.

Time	Item	Description	Led by
1:30 – 1:40	Welcome and Introduction	Opening Remarks: Brief introduction to the event's purpose and goals. Highlight the importance of inclusive employment and skills development in the West Midlands.	BITC
1:40 – 1:55	Keynote: “The Power of Purposeful Employment”	BITC’s “Inspire, Hire, Thrive” framework and how businesses can drive social mobility through inclusive hiring and development practices.	Ola Kolade, BITC Employment and Skills Director
1:55 – 2:25	Panel 1: Skills for a Changing Economy	Panelists: - Anthony Smith, Ze Education - David Wright, Walsall Digital Skills Hub - Open University representative. Themes: - Sector-specific skills gaps (e.g., construction, care, digital) - Apprenticeship levy transfers - Employer-led training models	What does “skills for the future” mean in your context—and how are you preparing learners for it? How are you engaging underrepresented groups in digital and vocational training? What’s one barrier you consistently face in delivering effective reskilling programmes—and how are you tackling it? How can regional education providers better align with employer needs without losing sight of learner equity? What role do micro-credentials, flexible learning, or hybrid models play in your current strategy?
2:25 – 2:40	Table Discussions: Skills Gaps & Local Solutions	Prompt Questions: - What are the most urgent skills gaps in your area? - How can employers and educators collaborate more effectively?	

Chair: Peter Harrison

Acting Chief Executive: Kieran Harding

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2:40 – 3:10	Panel 2: Employer-Led Upskilling & Inclusive Hiring	Kiera Pullen, National Gas Elizabeth Heath, Severn Trent Fiona Latter, WMCA Employer strategies for inclusive hiring, apprenticeships, and internal upskilling	How is your organisation adapting its hiring and training practices to meet future workforce needs? What does inclusive hiring look like in practice—and how do you ensure it's more than a policy? Can you share a successful internal upskilling initiative and what made it work? How do you balance short-term operational needs with long-term workforce development? What support or partnerships have been most valuable in scaling your skills investment—and what's still missing?
3:10 – 3:25	Table Discussions: What Works in Employer Practice?	Prompt Questions: - What's one successful upskilling or hiring initiative you've seen? - What barriers do employers face in implementing these?	
3:25 – 3:40	Reflections & Audience Q&A	Open floor for questions to any speaker or panel.	BITC
3:40 – 4:00	Informal Networking & Close	Final conversations, connections, and next steps.	