



# **ANNUAL ACCOUNTABILITY STATEMENT AND LOCAL NEEDS DUTY 2024-2025**

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# 1. Purpose

The College's purpose is *"to support students and employers through outstanding education, training and skills development, to ensure their economic and social success."*

The College's strategic curriculum intent is set out in **'Putting Skills into Focus'**, the College's strategic plan for 2023-2026, which is defined at the corporate level through our mission and vision:

## **Mission**

To enhance the lives of our students and other customers, maximising their potential through learning.

## **Values**

- ▶ Strive to always be excellent
- ▶ Respect and support each other
- ▶ Put students at the heart of our college
- ▶ Ensure the wellbeing of staff and students, build resilience, and celebrate differences
- ▶ Make sure employer needs are at the heart of our plans
- ▶ Be a positive influence in our community.

**The strategic aims outlined below have been taken from the plan which was approved by the corporation in January 2023:**

- ▶ Quality teaching, learning and skills
- ▶ Be an excellent learning organisation
- ▶ Be the college in the community – drive productivity and grow the economy
- ▶ To remain financially stable (ESFA Outstanding).



## **2. Background**

The College has a curriculum offer that spans a wide range of subjects from Entry Level to Level 5, including programmes for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those on higher education (HE) courses. The College also offers a wide range of training programmes for small and large employers.

Our curriculum offer is reviewed regularly and is based on employer feedback to ensure it matches the ambitions and demands of Northamptonshire's employers. The curriculum offer will further develop to reflect the national drive for skills development through technical and professional qualifications, T Levels in sectors of regional importance, and a focus on apprenticeship opportunities for young people.

Digital Skills form a large part of the curriculum and students are supported well to realise the powerful effect that using technology can have on their learning and readiness for the rapidly changing workplace. Within their core qualification, students develop vital skills in maths and English as the foundation for other skills to be built upon. All students that do not have a grade 4 or higher in these subjects at GCSE level are supported until they achieve these important qualifications.

The Corporation challenges leaders to ensure that the College curriculum offered is carefully considered, researched and delivered to meet the needs and requirements of the community, national and regional skills priorities, and the specific requirements of local students, employers, and stakeholders.

Progress against the College's strategic plan is reviewed annually and KPIs are measured and refreshed on a regular basis as part of the business planning process. The College's strategic intent is tested regularly with local partners and periodically through Ofsted Inspection. Governors evaluate the accountability statement annually in line with the strategic plan which enables the College to work to meet the priorities identified in the LSIP.

In analysing the South East Midlands job vacancies posted in the previous year in comparison to the curriculum offer, there continues to be a close correlation with the provision that the College offers. Examples of recent initiatives to help meet local, regional, and national skills needs include the creation of a £4.75million Advanced Construction Engineering (ACE) Centre and £6.3million Digital Academy at Booth Lane, new provision in international supply chain logistics and a revised strategy to further develop the performance of GCSE maths and English.

Work is underway to develop a Green Skills Centre at the College's Booth Lane campus to address the skills shortage and help students gain the knowledge required to install and maintain emerging technologies. Specialist equipment will include air source heat pumps, solar photovoltaic panels, wind turbines and EV (electric vehicles) charging points. This state-of-the-art facility will also provide businesses with an opportunity to upskill their existing workforce through a range of short courses and apprenticeships.

This document sets out our priorities for development in line with the LSIP for 2024/25 in the context of the continuing work of the Local Skills Improvement Plan, developing local need and national skills priorities.

### 3. Context and place

#### Our economy:

Northamptonshire is part of the government's South Midlands Growth Area and is covered by the Northamptonshire and Milton Keynes Chamber of Commerce and South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership (SEMLEP, whose responsibilities are now transferring to the respective local authorities). It is home to a high number of small and micro businesses with 98% of businesses falling into this category, substantially above the national figure (85%). The county is also located within the Oxford-Cambridge Arc, with the opportunity to be a beneficiary of investment and economic growth relating to the Arc.

Northamptonshire has a diverse economy that continues to grow and attract new investment. It is a major hub for financial services, logistics and advanced manufacturing. The county continues to enjoy one of the fastest growing populations and highest employment rates in the country, reflecting the vibrancy of the local economy and its status as a highly desirable areas to live. It is perfectly positioned at the heart of the country, acting as the crossroads of the rail and road network and providing a premier location for inward and local investors.

#### Our College:

Northampton College is a general further education (GFE) college in the East Midlands with over 9,000 students across a range of academic levels studying full- and part-time programmes and apprenticeships. It operates from: a main campus on the outskirts of Northampton in a densely populated, predominantly working-class suburb; a town centre campus which will include an ESOL offer from 2024 to support refugees as they develop lines of sight to building careers alongside other vocational provision; and a third, smaller campus in the more rural town of Daventry.

Data released as part of the latest 2022/23 National Achievement Rates Tables (NART) shows Northampton College is placed fifth out of 225 colleges for 16 to 18 year old education and training. The College was rated 1st for its English for Speakers of other Languages (ESOL) provision, 10th for its adult provision and given an overall rating of fifth nationally. National Apprenticeship data has also revealed an overall achievement rate 10 percentage points higher than the national average.

These ratings cement Northampton College's position as the leading provider of Further Education in the Midlands, placing it amongst the very best in the whole country thanks to a continuing and determined focus on ensuring each individual student reaches their full potential.

**NORTHAMPTON**

**COLLEGE IS PLACED**

**FIFTH OUT OF 225**

**COLLEGES FOR 16-18**

**EDUCATION AND TRAINING.**



## Northampton College

Annual Accountability Statement and Local Needs Duty  
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The College has significant strengths in health & social care, engineering, creative industries, construction, catering and digital with an overall pass rate of 96%. Highly effective careers advice and guidance ensures the large majority of students (94%) progress to further study or employment.

The College has seen increasing numbers of students aged between 16 and 18-years-old thanks to a growing reputation, with 500 extra students enrolling last year. Year-on-year applications are up once again this year. As a result, the College has sustained impressive financial results and its turnover has grown to £32million which has enabled it to maintain ESFA outstanding financial status.

### The Wider Education Landscape:

The College's Schools Liaison team 'Futures' works closely with schools, sixth forms, academies and alternative education providers across Northamptonshire to provide students with careers education, information, advice and guidance to meet the eight requirements of the Gatsby benchmarks outlined below.

- ▶ A stable career programme
- ▶ Learning from career and labour market information
- ▶ Addressing the needs of each student
- ▶ Linking curriculum learning to careers
- ▶ Encounters with employers and employees
- ▶ Experiences of workplaces
- ▶ Encounters with further and higher education
- ▶ Personal guidance.

Students join us from over 180 different schools, travelling from as far as Market Harborough and Brackley to attend, although most live in the core areas of Northampton and Wellingborough. Over recent years, the performance of pupils in year 11 has improved locally as indicated by improved levels of attainment and Ofsted grades of key feeder schools. The percentage of the adult population in West Northamptonshire qualified to Level 3 has increased slightly to 64%, which remains lower than the rest of Great Britain at 70%. The College will continue to play a leading role in increasing this percentage to at least match the national average in order to support increased productivity and economic performance in our local area.

Young students joining our study programmes have slightly lower levels of prior attainment in mathematics and English (source: AoC MiDES ILR R13 2022/23) compared with the national picture.

In the 2022/23 academic year, 28% of students (21/22: 24%) joined the College without a grade 4 or better in both subjects compared to 26% in GFE colleges nationally. In the same year, 48% of students (21/22: 54%) joined the College with a grade 4 or better in both subjects compared to 53% in GFE colleges nationally.



## **Our Economy:**

Our primary catchment area includes much deprivation, reflected in the extensive support we put in place to give our learners every opportunity to overcome barriers to be successful in their studies, lives and careers. Almost one third of North Northamptonshire and West Northamptonshire's Lower Super Output Areas (LSOA – a measure of local deprivation) are ranked to be in the most deprived three deciles in England with respect to the index of multiple deprivation (IMD). The most deprived areas are in the towns of Corby, Kettering, Wellingborough and Northampton. For education, skills and training deprivation, 35.5% of LSOAs are in the worst three deciles. In Corby, 31 out of its 41 LSOAs are in the worst three deciles (75.6%) (source: Census, Nomis, Office for National Statistics). This is reflected in the high percentage of young people accessing the College bursary (33%) and free school meals (15%) support.

Unemployment for over 16s is 2.9% (2022) of the population, 0.7% below the national average. However, both Luton (6.5%) and North Northamptonshire (4.7%) are above the average and North Northamptonshire has seen increases since 2020 (source: Office for National Statistics, Annual Population Survey). It remains a challenge to ensure residents of the communities serve have access to higher paid, higher skilled job roles across our region.

The number and proportion of 16-64 year olds economically inactive (neither in employment nor unemployed including students, people looking after a home, retired or sick) have increased in the South East Midlands from 2020 to 2022 and are now at the highest since records started in 2004. The three main reasons for inactivity are: long-term sickness (27%); study (25%); and looking after the family/home as carers for family members (20%).

Long-term sickness is growing rapidly. The number that retired decreased during 2022 following an increasing trend. The largest increase of numbers is for male and female aged 50-64, female 16-19 and 65+ and male 65+. Both the number and percentage proportion people defined as economic inactive and wanting a job has increased in the South East Midlands in recent years.

The proportions of those economically inactive who are looking to return to work in 2022 are respectively: North Northamptonshire (27.6%); Milton Keynes (20.7%); West Northamptonshire (19.0%); Bedford (16.6%); Central Bedfordshire (14.0%); and Luton (11.6%). The national average is 17.9% (source: ONS, Annual Population Survey).



## 4. Approach to developing the plan

Northampton College is continuing to work closely with a range of key stakeholders to develop the annual accountability statement and achieve its strategic objectives.

These include:

- ▶ West Northamptonshire Council
- ▶ North Northamptonshire Council
- ▶ Northamptonshire Chamber of Commerce
- ▶ The University of Northampton
- ▶ Strategically important employers e.g.:
  - ▶ *Dr Martens*
  - ▶ *Church's Shoes*
  - ▶ *Taylor Wimpey*
  - ▶ *DSV (Logistics)*
  - ▶ *Carmac*
  - ▶ *Northants Saints Rugby Club*
  - ▶ *Northamptonshire NHS trust*
  - ▶ *Wincanton*
  - ▶ *Three Shires Hospital*
  - ▶ *Whittlebury Hall*
  - ▶ *Digital Northampton*
  - ▶ *Royal and Derngate Theatre*
- ▶ Business representative groups and networks
- ▶ Schools
- ▶ South East Midlands Colleges and wider college groups
- ▶ Local MPs and councillors
- ▶ The Careers & Enterprise Company
- ▶ Jobcentre Plus.





The College continues to contribute significantly to the local and regional skills agenda through joint work with SEMLEP (until April 2024, services now delivered through West Northamptonshire Council), the Skills Advisory Panel and other groups promoting collaboration and prioritising employment and skills to drive regional economic recovery and growth. This enables the sharing of good practice in careers education and ensures that the College is up to date with economic developments in the region. The increasing partnerships with Northamptonshire employers can be seen in the expanding range of visits and speakers that are increasingly embedded across our curriculum areas. The incoming Principal and CEO is committed to continuing this proactive work.

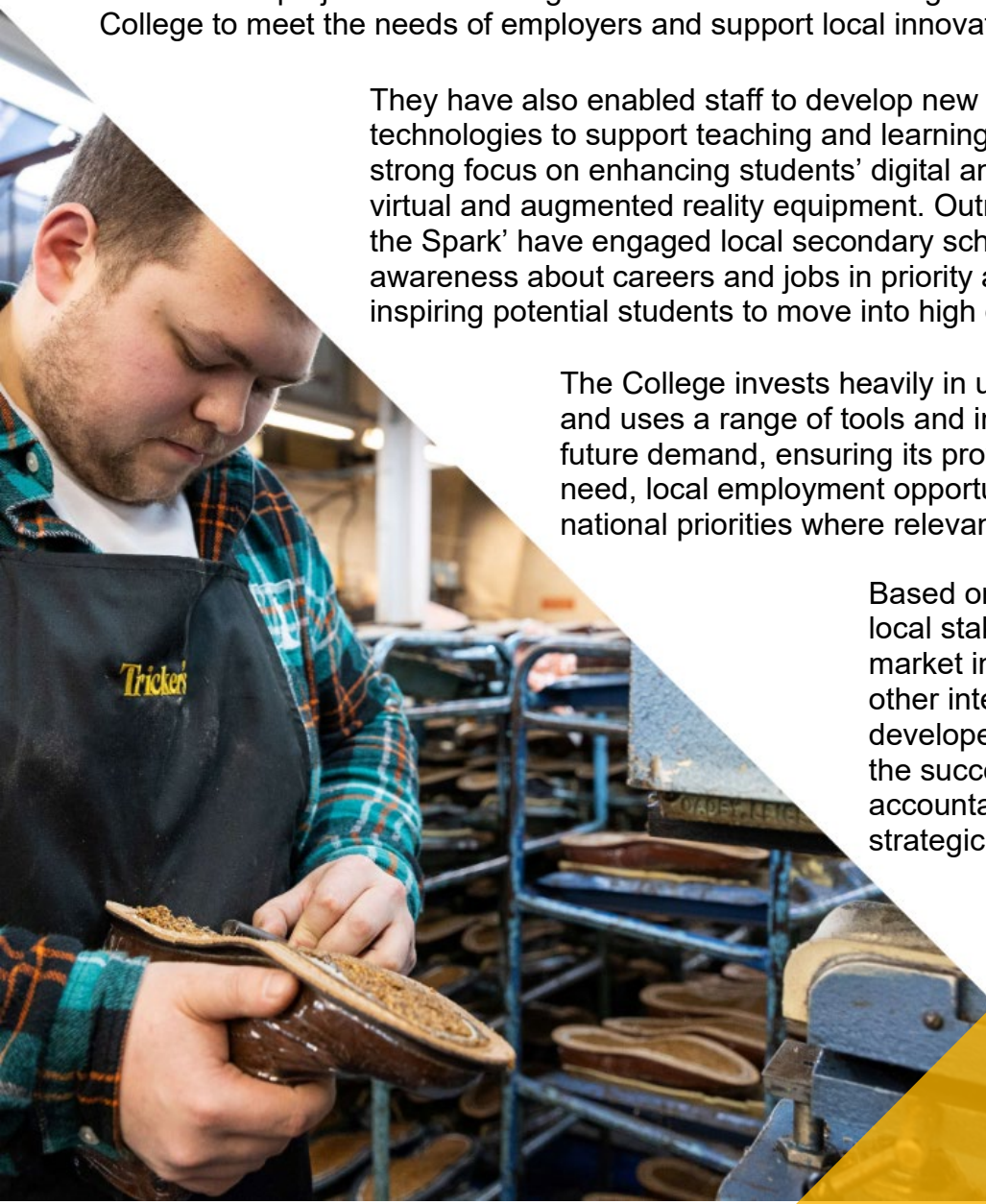
The College continues to be an active member of the Association of Colleges (AoC), with the incoming Principal continuing to participate in two AoC National Policy Groups (SEND and curriculum) and chairing our regional SEND Group. The current Principal has played an active role in working on policy with the DfE, AoC and others and the incoming Principal will continue this work. Other senior leaders regularly participate in national AoC policy forums to shape and respond to government priorities and regional and national skills needs.

The College is part of a proactive group of colleges that acts as a voice for the County's Further Education sector. A recent example of this close collaboration includes Strategic Development Fund (SDF) and Local Skills Improvement Fund projects focussing on key priority areas including health and care, digital, logistics, sustainability and future technologies to meet the needs of the LSIP. These projects are enabling transformations to teaching facilities and provision, enabling the College to meet the needs of employers and support local innovation and economic growth.

They have also enabled staff to develop new training methods, using latest technologies to support teaching and learning. These are delivering a strong focus on enhancing students' digital and transferable skills using virtual and augmented reality equipment. Outreach projects such as 'Ignite the Spark' have engaged local secondary schools and helped to raise awareness about careers and jobs in priority areas such as logistics and inspiring potential students to move into high quality training in priority

The College invests heavily in understanding the labour market and uses a range of tools and intelligence to identify current and future demand, ensuring its provision is aligned to community need, local employment opportunities and supports regional and national priorities where relevant.

Based on this extensive engagement with local stakeholders, use of available labour market information and detailed analysis of other intelligence, the College has developed this plan for 2024/25 to build on the successes of the previous accountability agreement and other strategic developments.



## 5. Contribution to National, Regional and Local Priorities

The College plays a key role in helping to support employers and learners by providing high-quality professional and technical training that supports local, regional and national labour market needs and skills gaps.

The table below summarises the current provision of Northampton College, setting out its alignment with the local priorities set out by the LSIP for Northamptonshire (and the wider SEMLEP region) and the national priorities set out in the DfE guidance (Meeting skills needs: Guidance on annual Accountability Agreements 2024/25 and the Local Needs Duty).

	Priority Sectors		College Provision			
Sector	Local	National	Study Programme	Adult	Apprenticeship	Higher Education
Business & administration	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Care services	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Catering & hospitality	✓		✓		✓	
Construction & built environment	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Digital	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Education & childcare	✓		✓	✓	✓	
Engineering & manufacturing	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Health & science	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Legal, finance & accounting	✓		✓	✓	✓	
Protective services	✓		✓			
Sales, marketing & procurement	✓		✓			
Service (cleaning)	✓			✓		
Transport & logistics	✓	✓	✓			
Mathematics		✓	✓	✓		

Over the course of the 2024/25 academic year, the College will continue to work with the Chamber of Commerce, employers, our education partners and other stakeholders to develop and implement the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) to ensure: more businesses are engaged; there is more shared strategic thinking; and local provision is reflective of emerging skills needs.

To date the development of the LSIP has identified eight draft priorities which include:

- 1.** Better reach and support for businesses
- 2.** Soft skills and readiness for work
- 3.** Raising awareness of existing provision
- 4.** Accessibility and training opportunities
- 5.** Develop new initiatives to engage with employers
- 6.** Engage with niche sectors
- 7.** Initiatives to stimulate continuing and more regular engagement with employers
- 8.** Resources and specialism around a green and sustainable agenda.

These LSIP priorities align with the College's strategic aims and objectives below and continue to shape our development of provision and services in the LSIP priority sectors (see table above).





## 6. College annual objectives

### Progress made since the 2023/24 Accountability Agreement

Based on last year's plan as set out in our Accountability Agreement, we have:

- 1. Academic and Vocational Support:** Introduced a new strategy for our School of Academic and Vocational Studies leading to high retention rates and better preparation for employment through impactful support including mentoring and support sessions.
- 2. Maths and English GCSEs:** Revised teaching strategies and incorporated EdTech resulting in the development of students' employability skills and better success in the workplace. Over 1,700 students taking GCSE mathematics and over 1200 students taking GCSE English in 2023/24.
- 3. Secure Growth in student recruitment, including in priority sectors with specific initiatives:** Growth has been in 16-19 student numbers which in 23/24 was an increase of 16% compared to 22/23 (an extra 545 students). Notable curriculum areas of student growth include construction which has grown by 18% (449), business which has grown by 36% (432), motor vehicle grown by 19% (297), social science grown by 42% (504) and art which has grown by 10% (402).
  - ▶ **Construction Education:** Opened a £4.75M Advanced Construction Engineering Centre, contributing to a significant increase in construction course enrolments and a high pass rate of 91.9%. Developed innovative curriculum and strong industry partnerships, leading to a pipeline of students entering industry or apprenticeships.
  - ▶ **Health and Social Care:** Expanded course offerings, including a T Level in Health and Adult Nursing, and renovated facilities to include a hospital ward simulation, resulting in a 34% increase in enrolments and a high pass rate.
  - ▶ **Digital Skills:** Launched a £6.3M Digital Academy, highlighted as a Centre of Excellence, with innovative curriculum like AR/VR and Esports, contributing to a 19% increase in IT and Digital course enrolments and a pass rate of 99.4%.
  - ▶ **Engineering and Manufacturing:** Offered comprehensive courses with a focus on sustainability, and participated in events like F1 in Schools, leading to an increased number of enrolments and partnerships for apprenticeships.
  - ▶ **Business and Finance:** Developed courses with pathways in in-demand specialisms, resulting in an increase in business course enrolments and a 98% pass rate.
  - ▶ **Logistics:** Launched new provisions at Level 2 and 3, and hosted industry events, resulting in 100% pass rate and increased enrolments and partnerships.

- 4. Curriculum Development:** Collaborated with stakeholders to align curriculum with industry needs, resulting in 97% of students passing their qualifications and 94% progressing to further study and/or employment.
- 5. Apprenticeship Provision:** Grown apprenticeship programmes in key sectors, achieving a first-time EPA pass rate of 77.68% and 94.2% total pass rate, with the large majority of apprentices gaining promotion or remaining in employment post-completion (achievement around 10 pp. higher than national rates).
- 6. T Levels Introduction:** Successfully enrolled students in T Levels for Health/Adult Nursing and Education and Childcare, with plans to expand the offer across various sectors, targeting 195 new enrolments by 2024/25.

In addition, the senior management team have recognised the need for more investment and focus into green and sustainable skills for the wider curriculum, building on recent successes in achieving external awards for sustainability. Sustainability is currently embedded into existing curriculum areas where there is the naturally occurring opportunity, resulting in exciting projects to date including The Big Rig skills event, the introduction of a sustainable construction classroom and the purchase of an electric vehicle and training simulators.

To develop this agenda further, sustainability and low carbon technologies will be embedded across the whole college culture and operations. The college has recently secured LSIF funding to part fund a dedicated Green Skills Centre and specialist equipment including wind turbines, air source heat pumps, drones and solar photovoltaic panels. This investment will ensure that the college is equipped to meet green skills and growth needs through to 2026 and beyond.

We have and continue to work with key local education partners to review and refine our own curriculum offer. This work includes engaging stakeholders and employers in an LSIF project to analyse the skills needs and provision across the county and how we can collectively meet the needs of our region. The project also looks at employer and stakeholder perceptions of college and education providers to support improvements in future engagement. Northampton College will continue to act as a key contributor to educational partnership working across the region, sharing best practice, resources and skills. Our collaborative approach continues to build on our excellent work across the region to date, strengthening our relationships to develop collaborative models and solutions to meet local skills needs.

In fulfilling the Local Needs Duty, leaders and governors have reviewed a detailed analysis of development and impact across the organisation aligned with local and regional needs of which the above is a high-level summary.

## **Priorities for the 2024/25 accountability agreement**

Building on this success and continuing our work to meet out local and national skills priorities, we will:

### **1. Continue to develop and align our curriculum to address local and national priorities, including:**

- 1.1.** Introduce town-centre delivery of ESOL to better meet learner, employer and local skills and workforce needs.
- 1.2.** Further introduction of T-Levels: up to 8 new T levels across business, IT and digital, construction and engineering. Particular examples include T level in Construction Design, Surveying and Planning, T level in Digital Production, Design and Development (ICT) and T level in Business Management and Administration.
- 1.3.** Introduce A-Levels to facilitate the development of targeted curriculum strands addressing both academic and vocational routeways: a new Sixth Form Centre (NC6) offering a suite of up to 13 A level subjects will be introduced, initially focused on Social Sciences, English and Business (with complementary AAQ qualifications aligned to career pathways to follow).
- 1.4.** Undertake a review of the apprenticeship curriculum to identify additional curriculum strands for potential introduction (sector-specific, general business need and higher-level routes).

### **2. Further develop our delivery and use of digital technologies, including revising and implementing our digital strategy across the college to more impactfully enhance the digital literacy and specialised digital skills of both students and staff, integrating advanced technologies like AI (Artificial Intelligence) into teaching and assessment methodologies and enhancing staff skills in using latest digital technology to improve efficiency and educational outcomes.**





- 3. Review and strengthen curriculum in engineering and advanced manufacturing** to ensure it maintains industrial relevance, fully explore latest advances in technology and meet the skills needs of our region. This will particularly focus on the extent to which our curriculum addresses latest developments such as automation, robotics, artificial intelligence and hybrid/electrical vehicle technologies and will guide future investment.
- 4. Further develop our delivery of mathematics and English** in line with the national focus on these crucial skills, thereby enhancing students' foundational competencies essential for success in their course, life, work and progression to higher education. This to include further strengthening the curriculum design for mathematics and English, better equipping students to use mathematics and English in their lives and work alongside improving their fluency to support their knowledge, skills and progress in their technical and vocational curriculum.
- 5. Build on and extend our leadership in sustainability and environmental leadership**, including creating a new Green Skills Centre (part funded by LSIF) to further extend the delivery of skills in installing and maintaining environmental and sustainability technologies and support the wider delivery of sustainability in other curriculum areas.
- 6. Further strengthen progression pathways and curriculum to higher level education** by further strengthening partnerships with local HE institutions including, as appropriate, progression agreements, joint curriculum development/delivery and collaborative HE curriculum to align and strengthen progression in priority sectors.



## **7. Local Needs Duty**

As required by The Skills Act (2022), Northampton College's Corporation has reviewed how well our education and training meets local, regional and national skills needs and prepares for those that will emerge in the future.

To do this, the Corporation has considered: the ongoing close collaboration with employers, stakeholders and education leaders; sources of information about local, regional and national skills needs provided through the LSIP; a range of labour market information and projections; internal data and information related to business planning and recruitment aligned to labour market needs; College and local curriculum maps; data and information related to destinations and progression; feedback from students, parents and employers on students' experience and readiness for their next steps; the College's self-assessment report accurately articulating the college's current performance, impact and areas to further develop; and progress against the College's ambitious 3-year strategic plan "Putting Skills in Focus" to ensure the College remains at the forefront of meeting changing skills needs.

It has also considered in detail the progress made and impact seen in implementing the actions set out in the 2023/24 Annual Accountability Statement, summarised above.

In order to further the work of the College in meeting the local, regional and national skills priorities, the Board has confirmed that the College will undertake over the next year to: continue to develop and align our curriculum to address local and national priorities; further develop our delivery and use of digital technologies; review and strengthen our curriculum in engineering and advanced manufacturing; further develop our delivery of mathematics and English; build on and extend our leadership in sustainability and environmental leadership; and further strengthen progression pathways and curriculum to higher level education.

Further details on these actions are described in Section 6 above.

Northampton College remains committed to meet the ever-changing needs of Northamptonshire, the wider region and our nation by remaining financially stable, ensuring our students achieve and grow through exceptional standards of training, being an excellent learning organisation and being the college in the community.

Through the actions set out in this annual accountability agreement, the College will further its strategic plan and deliver the training and education our students, community and economy require.

## 8. Corporation statement

The Northampton College Corporation hereby confirms that the plan as set out above reflects an agreed statement of purpose, aims and objectives and that this document fulfils the statutory Local Needs Duty.

This document was approved by the Corporation at their meeting on 2 May 2024 and will be published on the College's website.

**Chair of Governors:**



**CEO and Principal/Accounting Officer:**



**Dated:**

7 June 2024

## 9. Other supporting information

Ofsted report  
LSIP report  
Annual financial statements  
College Self-Assessment report