

Accountability Agreement

2023/24

1. Mission and Purpose

St Helens College (operating in Knowsley as Knowsley Community College) aspires to be one of the very best technical and vocational colleges in the country through its mission of “transforming lives through excellence in education and training.”

The College’s Strategic Plan 2022-2025 sets out our high-level objectives and commitments and is founded on six key goals, which provide a framework for more detailed operational activities, transforming the way we work with our students, staff, employers, and local communities:

- **Outstanding student experience:** Delivering an outstanding experience, placing students and apprentices at the heart of everything we do.
- **Exceptional curriculum:** Developing an innovative and agile curriculum that meets the needs of our students and communities.
- **Growth:** Achieving growth through strategic partnerships and relationships with key organisations and employers.
- **Transformed estate:** Transforming the College’s estate to inspire outstanding teaching and learning.
- **Employer of choice:** Attracting and retaining skilled staff through reputation, recognition, and a strong sense of community.
- **Anchor institution:** Building upon our role as an anchor institution in Knowsley and St Helens and contributing to the leadership of education and skills ecosystems.

Developed in consultation with our staff teams, our core values of **ambition, excellence, collaboration, innovation, respect, trust,** and **care** define who we are, how we engage with our students, stakeholders and each other and guide us in the work that we do.

A highly responsive curriculum offer is a cornerstone of the College’s Strategic Plan, setting out clear expectations that curriculum will be co-developed with employers and other stakeholders who will in turn invest in college facilities and equipment. The Strategic Plan also positions the College as an anchor institution in each borough, contributing fully to the leadership of the education and skills ecosystem and making a significant contribution to health, well-being, and local prosperity.

Most importantly, our students and apprentices remain at the heart of everything we do. From cultivating aspirational learning environments through outstanding curriculum and facilities to delivering high quality teaching and learning, we are committed to providing them with every opportunity to excel and achieve the very best outcomes.

We successfully support the skills and employment needs of hundreds of employers from small local sole traders to large global organisations. In our most recent inspection, Ofsted recognised the contribution that we make to ensuring our curriculum meets skills needs, reporting:

- effective links with stakeholders and employers that ensure that the curriculum meets the needs of the local and regional economy and helps employers to recruit and retain suitably qualified employees.
- an increasing range of courses and qualifications at level 3 to meet the need for increased, higher-level skills in the area.
- our collaboration with civic partners such as Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCRCA) and St Helens Local Authority that enables us to raise aspirations and increase the proportion of residents in the Knowsley and St Helens boroughs who hold level 2 qualifications.
- effective partnerships with other education providers in the local area that ensure that college curriculums complement other providers' offers and avoid duplication.

We constantly review our curriculum based on feedback from partners such as businesses, local authorities, Local Enterprise Partnerships, and the 'Employer Representative Bodies' (ERBs) - Liverpool City Region's five Chambers of Commerce, with whom we have actively collaborated to produce the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP).

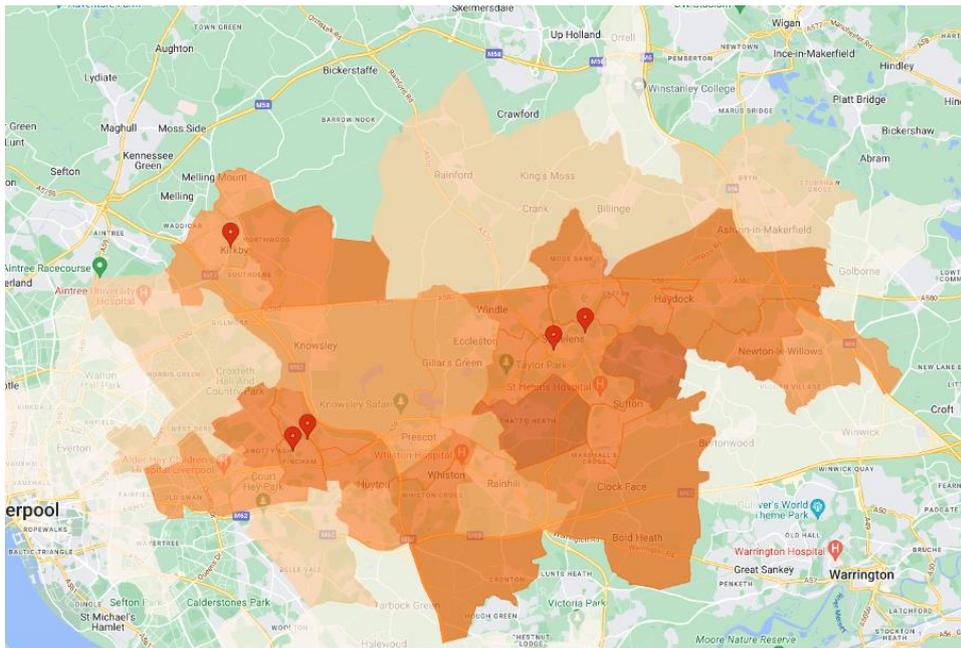
We will produce annual Accountability Statements (of which this is the first) that are informed by the published LSIP, and which set out the high-level interventions and improvements we will make each year.

2. Context

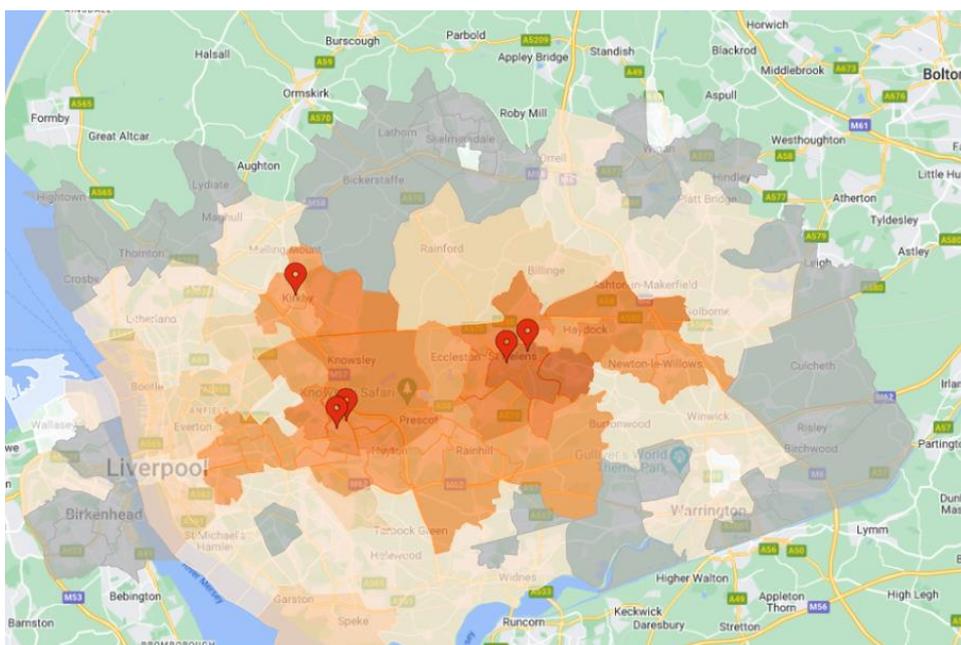
The College currently serves over 7,500 students and apprentices mainly recruited from the St Helens and Knowsley local authority areas, with smaller numbers from the Greater Merseyside and Greater Manchester City Regions and from Cheshire and Warrington.

The distribution of college students by residency is shown below (red pins are the location of the main campuses):

16-18 Students



Adult Students



St Helens and Knowsley local communities are situated between two major regional cities that themselves have high population densities and in many areas, similar economic and social challenges, and opportunities.

Both local authority areas have a strong focus on 'making and moving' economies and there are significant inward investment and regeneration plans. The borough of St Helens has a large, Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering sector, which is home to high-value, innovative firms, including in low carbon, materials science, metals, and glass. Knowsley's local economy has grown substantially in recent years and the Manufacturing sector is driving local economic growth. There has been significant private sector investment, and this is driving job creation, for example:

- Knowsley Business Park is one of the largest employment areas in Europe and the second largest of its kind in the Northwest.
- New research and development (R&D) investment in Glass Futures.
- Parkside Colliery: a 350-acre site transformed into an employment park and the largest Freeport site in the Liverpool City Region

At the same time, our local communities face continuing challenges driven by deprivation and inequality:

- There is projected slower growth in GVA compared to the rest of the country (although compared to other areas in LCR, Knowsley has slightly higher growth projections).
- Knowsley and St Helens are respectively the 3rd and 28th most deprived boroughs in England (IoD 2019).
- Unemployment is higher than national averages and economic inactivity rates are still too high, partially due to health-related inactivity and health inequalities.
- Despite recent improvements, our local communities still have a high proportion of people with no or lower-level qualifications. This creates a less flexible labour market, which acts as a drag on economic performance.
- This starts with poor educational attainment at key stage 4, with fewer pupils achieving grades 4 or above in English and Maths GCSEs, compared to pupils nationally. This leads to a higher proportion of young people not in employment, education, or training (NEET).

3. Approach to developing the annual accountability statement

In developing the Accountability Agreement Statement, our approach has been driven by two principles: **partnership**, building on our role as an anchor institution in Knowsley and St Helens and being **evidence-based**.

Partnerships

The College enjoys strong and productive relationships with a wide range of stakeholders, both locally and across the Liverpool City Region, that enable it to respond to the existing and emerging skills needs of employers and local communities.

Regular discussions with civic leaders and employers and a detailed understanding of the employment and skills strategies of the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), LCRCA, ERBs and local authorities in St Helens and Knowsley underpin the development of the College's Strategic Plan, Operational Plan and Curriculum Business Plans.

Post-pandemic, the College has taken an active role, not only in responding to employment and skills needs through its curriculum offer, but also as a key partner in supporting local authority ambitions and goals and helping to shape their updated strategies, for example, the *St Helens Inclusive Growth Strategy*, *Knowsley 2030 Delivery Plan* and *Knowsley's emerging Post-16 Learning and Skills Strategy*.

Recent examples of our partnership work include:

- A new partnership with St Helens Council, St Helens and Knowsley National Health Service (NHS) Trust and St Helens Chamber to develop a 'Health Innovation Hub,' with the College leading on a purpose built 'Skills Academy' that will offer new and enhanced provision to meet employment and skills needs both within the NHS and in social care settings.
- Development of a new adult training centre in Kirkby Town Centre in Council owned premises to create a community hub and one-stop-shop for IAG/careers, training and local access to skills development and education opportunities.
- A relationship with a housing association to develop bespoke upskilling for gas engineers in renewable energy technologies with investment in Air Source Heat Pumps and new Plumbing & Heating facilities at our Langtree Street site.

Evidence Base

We have taken an evidence-based approach to our accountability statement, using a wide range of national and local labour market information and other sources of data to focus on what and how we deliver to support local, regional, and national needs.

In addition, we have commissioned an external 'Curriculum Review' to support our evidence base and provide insights for future curriculum planning and changes.

Relationships with Other Providers in the Area

We have a strong partnership with the other five Further Education (FE) colleges through the Association of Liverpool City Region Colleges (AoLCRC). This has led to a successful collaborative bid to deliver a Strategic Development Fund (SDF) project in green technologies, which has enabled the College to provide training in sustainable/renewable heating technologies, including retrofitting of homes, installation and maintenance of electric vehicle charging points and electric vehicle repair. As a group of colleges, key green technologies were identified and projects allocated based on existing capabilities, to maximise efficiency in delivery and avoid duplication of offer. There are continuing opportunities for collaboration, including the development of the 'cross college' LCR Freeport Skills Academy, which will deliver skills and training to support the development of the tax and customs site planned as part of the project, including the above mentioned Parkside Colliery. The group will also oversee the development of a joint bid for the Local Skills Improvement Fund following publishing of the region's LSIP priorities.

Our partnerships with civic leaders and other providers enable the strategic planning of provision. In St Helens, strong links with the local sixth form College and the Chamber of Commerce help to avoid duplication and enable mutual referral of students to appropriate provision. The College has also worked closely with the local authorities to facilitate medium term planning of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) provision in both boroughs.

The College enjoys excellent relationships with local schools leading to opportunities for 14–16-year-olds who are struggling to engage with mainstream schooling to experience college-based vocational taster sessions and enhanced transitional support. A dedicated Schools Liaison Team works closely with the schools' careers teachers to provide advice and guidance on post-16 options.

The College also works strategically with independent training providers for example in the development of a Rail Engineering programme for ex-offenders and in the development of community-based NEET engagement programmes.

4. Contribution to national, regional, and local skills priorities

| National Skills Priorities | Local Skills Improvement Plan Emerging Priority Sectors (May 2023) |
|--|--|
| Construction Manufacturing Digital and Technology Health and Social Care Haulage and Logistics Engineering Science and Mathematics | Construction Manufacturing Logistics and Warehousing (for St Helens and Halton) Professional and Business Services Visitor Economy |

The College continues to offer a broad and deep curriculum enabling students to gain employment across the LCRCA's seven key priority sectors as set out in the *Plan For Prosperity*, with increased access to higher value jobs through a greater focus on sectors such as Construction and Engineering, strategic growth in level 3 provision to enable students to access higher level jobs and apprenticeships (not just entry level positions), and upskilling of the existing workforce (e.g., in Professional and Business Services).

College apprenticeship provision has grown significantly over the last two years, bucking the national trend, with over 75% of apprentices employed in the high priority sectors of Construction and Engineering. At the same time, high achievement rates have been maintained.

Whilst the College works closely with employers to meet employment and skills needs directly, a significant proportion of the College's provision is focused on those furthest from learning and work. For example, the 'Directions' programme provides opportunities in both boroughs to reengage young people who are NEET, or at risk of becoming NEET, and offers a safe space for those students who are not yet ready to access other curriculum areas. The College also offers discrete 'supported learning' provision at both Knowsley and St Helens campuses, with pathways for young people focused on both skills for independent living and skills for work.

Provision for adults is closely aligned to the LCRCA's *Skills Strategy*, with an expanded Community Learning offer designed to engage adults furthest from learning and employment and improve community cohesion. Demand for ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) has increased significantly in both boroughs and a curriculum has been developed to include maths and personal, social development qualifications. The College continues to engage with the LCRCA's 'Test and Learn' pilots, including the 'Multiply' project in 2022/23. This focuses on financial literacy of adults and improving their application of number skills needed in everyday life.

The College has a clearly defined strategy to specialise in vocational and technical provision and has made a deliberate decision not to offer A-Levels. This ensures that the College contributes to serving the local community in an effective and efficient way.

The Strategic Plan sets out the focus on key specialisms, sectors and emerging technologies that enable economic recovery and future growth. The largest curriculum areas by student number at the College demonstrably respond to meeting expressed regional and national need. These include Construction, Engineering & Manufacturing and Health and Social Care.

5. Our priorities for action

This accountability agreement establishes a number of priorities and interventions linked to our longer-term strategic goals. We are enhancing and broadening our curriculum in identified priority sectors whilst recognising that the College must continue to contribute training and qualifications to enable access to entry level jobs, upskilling those seeking career change or progression, and reskilling the region's existing workforce to meet current and future skill needs.

The table below outlines the key objectives we have set for the 2023/24 academic year, aligned to the key sectors and priorities emerging from the LSIP and local, regional and national skills priorities.

| Aims and Objectives | Contribution towards National, Regional and Local Priorities for Learning and Skills | Interventions and Measures |
|--|---|---|
| <p>Objective 1:</p> <p>Enhance the vocational offer for 16–18-year-olds, providing a wider range of high-quality programmes that enable progression to skilled employment, including apprenticeships.</p> | <p>The expanded offer will enable the College to meet national, regional and local skills priorities in Health and Social Care and Construction.</p> <p>Early years is identified as a potential growth sector following the government announcement of funded places for under 3s.</p> <p>T Levels are a vocational alternative to A Levels, allowing many young people to access Higher Education who would not have engaged with A Levels.</p> | <p>Launch the following T level routes in St Helens and Knowsley:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting the Adult Nursing Team (St H and K) • Education and Childcare (St H) • Building Services Engineering (Electrotechnical) (St H) |
| <p>Objective 2:</p> | <p>Addresses the College and local authority's desire for a vibrant local offer with increased level 3 provision to raise</p> | <p>Introduce new study programmes at Knowsley Campuses:</p> |

| Aims and Objectives | Contribution towards National, Regional and Local Priorities for Learning and Skills | Interventions and Measures |
|---|--|---|
| Continue to grow provision in Knowsley to meet local demand and provide progression opportunities. | <p>ambition and enable young people to fulfil their potential (<i>Knowsley 2030 Strategy</i>)</p> <p>Health and Life Sciences are a national priority; LCR has been identified as an Investment Zone for Life Sciences</p> <p>The expansion of Catering provision will help to address the emerging Knowsley LSIP priority of Visitor Economy.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level 3 Professional Theatre • Level 3 Applied Science • Level 2 Catering Operations • Level 3 Public Services |
| <p>Objective 3:</p> <p>Build upon the College's success in delivering high quality apprenticeships in Engineering, Manufacturing and Construction and diversify the offer to support the Professional and Business Services growth sector.</p> | <p>Addresses labour shortage in those sectors experiencing high levels of replacement demand, such as Construction and Engineering.</p> <p>Construction, Engineering and Manufacturing are identified as LSIP, local and national priority sectors.</p> <p>Construction and Engineering are targeted in the St Helens <i>Inclusive Growth Strategy</i>.</p> <p>The introduction of the Property Maintenance Operative apprenticeship standard meets local housing association employer demand.</p> <p>Leadership and Management are identified as a key LSIP priority across the growth sectors.</p> | <p>Grow apprenticeship income to over £4m by 2024 (baseline £3.3m) increasing starts in Engineering, Manufacturing and Construction/Building Services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target of 30 additional starts in 2023/2024 <p>Grow Waterside Training Ltd Engineering starts by 15 in 2023/2024.</p> <p>Introduce the following apprenticeship standards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level 2 Property Maintenance Operations standard in 2023/2024 (target 12 starts). • Level 3 Team Leader (target 14 starts). • Level 3 Safety, Health & Environment Technician • Level 4 Quality Practitioner |

| Aims and Objectives | Contribution towards National, Regional and Local Priorities for Learning and Skills | Interventions and Measures |
|--|---|---|
| | | Continue to develop our partnership with Glass Futures. |
| <p>Objective 4:</p> <p>Invest in industry leading skills, training and facilities to support the City Region’s target for net zero emissions by 2040.</p> | <p>The low carbon sector is estimated to support 140,000 jobs by 2040 across the LCR. The city region has an ambitious target of net zero by 2040, intending to capitalise on its significant natural resources such as tidal and offshore wind power.</p> <p>23% of all vehicles registered in 2022 were hybrid or full electric.</p> <p>Green technology/net zero is a cross-cutting theme across all growth sectors.</p> | <p>Introduce upskilling training for gas engineers on renewable heating solutions, including through Bootcamp provision:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target of 100 enrolments in 2023/2024 for air source heat pump courses <p>Provide training in external wall insulation (EWI) from 2023/24 as AEB funded short programme (TBA with the LCRCA):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target 35 students <p>Introduce the Low Carbon Technician apprenticeship standard when approved by IFATE.</p> <p>Deliver EV charging point installation courses from 2023/24:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target 80 enrolments |

| Aims and Objectives | Contribution towards National, Regional and Local Priorities for Learning and Skills | Interventions and Measures |
|---|--|---|
| | | <p>Continue to explore the potential for hydrogen vehicle fitting, including through the use of LSIF.</p> <p>Embed green technologies into existing construction technologies.</p> |
| <p>Objective 5:</p> <p>Develop partnerships with LCR training providers to support the demand of the growing Haulage and Logistics sectors.</p> | <p>Logistics is identified as a national and LSIP priority sector.</p> <p>Continuing opportunities to work collaboratively with other LCR colleges around the development of a Freeport Skills Academy.</p> | <p>Establish partnerships with specialist logistics training providers, delivering £200k of AEB funded training for employability provision, supporting local residents into employment.</p> |
| <p>Objective 6:</p> <p>Support adults who are furthest from learning and employment through the delivery of a range of entry level programmes that effectively engage the most marginalised communities leading to improved confidence and progression to further study.</p> | <p>Increased demand for ESOL reflecting the higher number of refugees and asylum seekers in Knowsley and St Helens.</p> <p>Secondary school attainment levels are lower in the LCR than nationally: the Multiply programme enables adults to support children's maths development.</p> <p>Employability soft skills identified as a cross-cutting theme in the LSIP.</p> | <p>Increase ESOL provision at Kirkby Campus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of additional two groups supporting 36 students <p>Develop and deliver an ESOL volunteering qualification and deliver ESOL wraparound care through the Test and Learn initiative.</p> <p>Continue to offer financial literacy through the Multiply programme and improve access to learning through community learning initiatives.</p> |

| Aims and Objectives | Contribution towards National, Regional and Local Priorities for Learning and Skills | Interventions and Measures |
|---|--|--|
| | | <p>Increase provision for SEND students at Knowsley campuses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional group of 16 adult students funded through AEB ALS <p>Grow employability provision (including SWAPs) within the St Helens area to support positive outcomes for local people with employment opportunities (£200k target).</p> |
| <p>Objective 7:</p> <p>Develop novel approaches in both boroughs that help to support the recruitment and retention of staff to the health and social care sector.</p> | <p>National, LCR and local priority.</p> | <p>Broaden the range of Health and Social Care programmes for adults, offering provision at the new Kirkby Adult Skills Centre.</p> <p>Develop and deliver the curriculum offer for the Health Innovation Skills Hub informed by local employers and other stakeholders.</p> |

Corporation Statement

The Corporation of St Helens College has reviewed this accountability statement and supporting documentation. We have approved the accountability statement in our meeting of 6 July 2023.

We will continue to use our annual accountability statement in the range of discussions with local partners (such as Employer Representative Bodies and other providers) to form a useful backdrop to strategic conversations and to ensure we contribute effectively to collaborative efforts to meet skills needs.

We will review and update this accountability statement annually.

Signed:

Chair of the Corporation

Hyperlinks

<Insert link to Accountability Statement on website>

Supporting Documentation

[LCR Plan for Prosperity & Evidence Base](#)

[LCR Skills Strategy](#)

[Knowsley 2030 Strategy](#)

[St Helens Inclusive Growth Strategy](#)

LCR LSIP – final publication and recommendations TBC

[College Strategic Plan 2022-2025](#)