



St Helens College



Local Needs Duty and Accountability Statement 2024 - 2025



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.

2. Our Curriculum

A highly responsive curriculum offer is a cornerstone of the College's Strategic Plan, setting out clear expectations that learning and skills provision 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, wellbeing, 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 are qualified to at least level 2.
- 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 our partners including businesses, local authorities, and the 'Employer Representative Bodies' (ERBs) - Liverpool City Region's Chambers of Commerce, with whom we have actively collaborated to produce the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP).

This is the second iteration of our Accountability Statement. It is informed by our continuous and forensic review of the responsiveness of our curriculum offer and sets out some of the high-level interventions and improvements we will make next year in response to local needs.

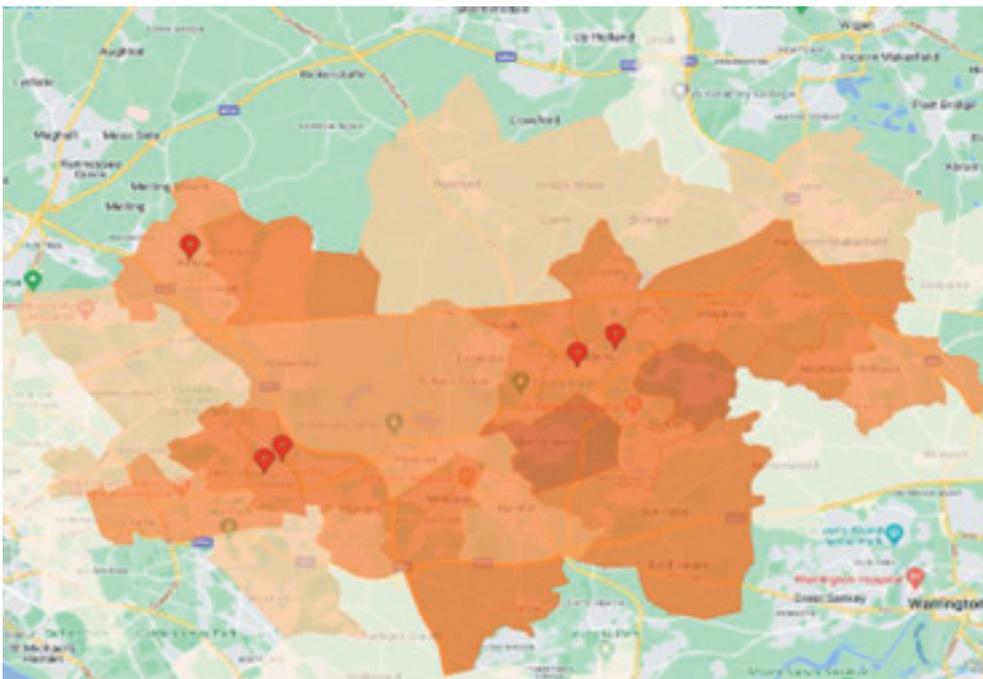


3. Context and Place

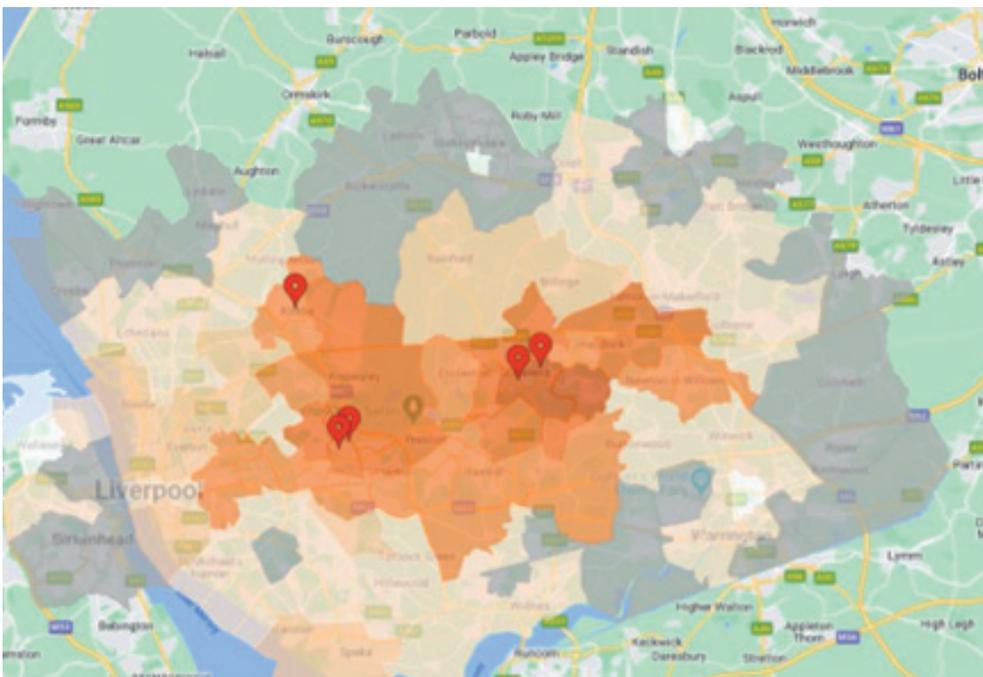
The College currently serves over 7,500 students and apprentices mainly recruited from the St Helens and Knowsley local authority areas, with smaller numbers from the wider Liverpool City Region, Greater Manchester and Cheshire.

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

16-18 Students



Adult Students



Our Communities

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 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 North West.
- 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 gross value added (GVA) compared to the rest of the country (although compared to other areas in the Liverpool City Region, Knowsley has slightly higher growth projections).
- Knowsley and St Helens are respectively the 2nd and 28th most deprived boroughs in England.
- Unemployment is higher than national averages and economic inactivity rates are still too high, partially due to poor health.
- 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 grade 4 or above in English and Math's GCSEs, compared to pupils nationally. This in turn leads to a higher proportion of young people not in employment, education, or training (NEET).

4. Approach to Developing the Annual Accountability Statement

In developing the Accountability 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**.

Our 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 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.

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's Post-16 Learning and Skills Strategy*, and the emerging employment and skills strategies in each borough.

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, including an independent review, to provide insights for future curriculum planning and changes.

The College continues to work closely with local businesses and industries through its Employer Engagement Strategy, utilising intelligence drawn from skills trend data and sector-based employer forums to evaluate new and emerging market trends and direct our strategic engagement with employers. A Skills Advisory Panel drawn from local leaders and employers will provide further challenge and support to the development of the college offer.

Our Senior Leadership Team actively seeks strategic engagement with local authorities, business groups and to be central to skills improvement planning. The Governing Board will continue to champion and review college curriculums, ensuring that they are primary to the college educational character and meet current and future skills needs.



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

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, and upskilling of the existing workforce (e.g., in Professional and Business Services).

College apprenticeship provision has grown significantly, bucking the national trend, with over 75% of apprentices employed in the high priority sectors of Construction and Engineering and sustained growth for 16-18s. At the same time, our high achievement rates have been maintained.

Whilst the College works closely with employers to meet employment and skills needs directly, a considerable 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, including internships.

Provision for adults is also closely aligned to local and subregional needs with an expanded Tailored Learning offer designed to engage adults furthest from learning and employment and improve community cohesion. Demand for English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) has increased significantly in both boroughs and a broader 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 and the 'Multiply' project in 2023/24; this continues into 2024/2025 and focuses on the financial literacy of adults and improving their application of number skills needed in everyday life.

The College's 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 (with a growing strength in green energy), Engineering, Advanced Manufacturing, and Health and Social Care.



Response to Skills Needs

The table below summarises the College's current and planned response to skills needs, focusing on national and local priority sectors, Government curriculum priorities and the Local Skills Improvement Plan, and identifying key areas to be taken forward in the 2024/25 Accountability Statement:

Group	Current College Offer	Planned Developments for 24/25	Accountability Statement 24/25
National Skills Priorities			
Construction	✓	✓	✓
Manufacturing	✓	✓	
Digital and Technology	✓		
Health and Social Care	✓	✓	✓
Haulage and Logistics	✓	✓	✓
Engineering	✓	✓	
Science and Mathematics	✓	✓	
Government Skills Reform			
T levels	✓	✓	✓
Apprenticeships	✓	✓	✓
Skills Bootcamps	✓	✓	✓
Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQs)	✓		
Local Skills Improvement Plan Specific			
Visitor Economy	✓	✓	✓
Professional and Business Services	✓	✓	
Power (Soft) Skills	✓	✓	✓

6. Engagement and Collaboration with Other Providers in the Area

The College works closely and collaboratively with other providers, seeking to address unhelpful competition and duplication of provision, whilst continuing to offer a broad range of provision types with an increased focus on key sectors.

There is a clearly defined strategy to specialise in vocational and technical provision and the College has made a deliberate decision not to offer A-Levels, which are delivered locally by high performing further education and sixth form colleges, and school sixth forms in St Helens.

Where overlap with other local providers exists, this is largely in higher priority sectors such as Health and Social Care and Early Years or in more generic, applied general qualifications that enable access to a range of higher education courses.

In St Helens, strong links with the local sixth form college and the recently closed Chamber of Commerce, have helped 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. This ensures that the College contributes to serving the local community in an effective and efficient way.

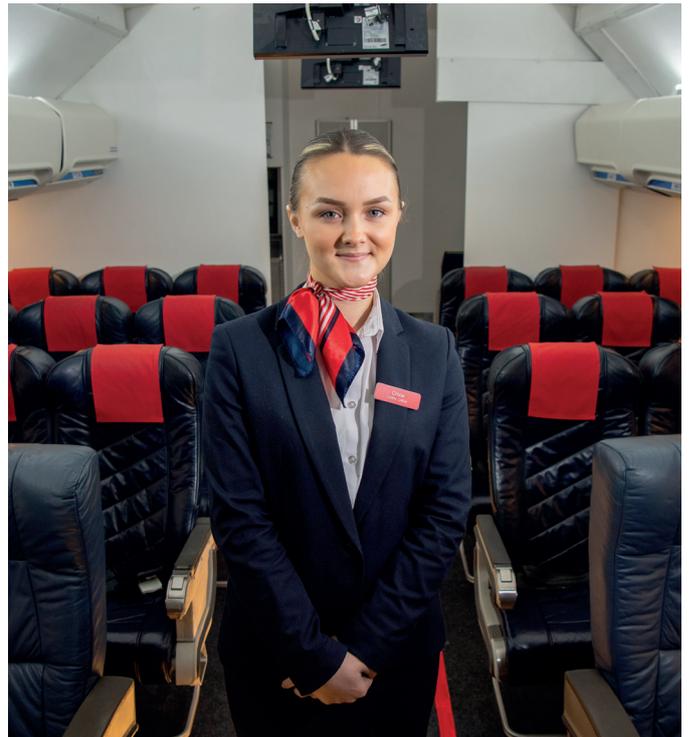
The College works closely with other five local FE (Further Education) providers through the Association of Liverpool City Region Colleges (AoLCRC), which was established by the FE member Colleges and has been operating for c20 years, to facilitate collaborative work. In the last 2 years, in addition to representing and supporting developments within the FE sector, the AoLCRC has secured investment from the Skills Development Fund and the Local Skills Improvement Fund, which has facilitated capital investment, development of new curriculum, employer and school engagement and professional updating. Throughout this time, the AoLCRC and all the colleges it represents have also worked closely with the Combined Authority and local Chambers of Commerce, informing, and contributing to, the Local Skills Strategy and Improvement Plan.

The focus of the recent and current project work relates to the development of a range of curriculum initiatives to create a greener, cleaner, and more sustainable offer. This supports Liverpool City Region's priority to work towards net carbon zero by 2035 and benefits the FE sector both regionally, as a devolved administration, and nationally, as public sector anchor organisations responsible for education and skills. The collective commitment to, and engagement in AoLCRC, is a component of the colleges' focus on harnessing innovation and improving efficiency through collaborative work within the FE sector.

The College also works closely with its university partners, University of Chester, University of Lancashire, and Liverpool John Moores University to align its higher education curriculum and enable clear progression pathways. The College is currently developing a revised Higher Education offer that focuses on technical skills in key priority sectors.

The College enjoys excellent relationships with local secondary 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 School 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.



7. Our Priorities for Action

This Accountability Statement 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 nine objectives we have set for the 2024/25 academic year, aligned to the key sectors and priorities set out in the Local Skills Improvement Plan and local, regional, and national skills priorities.

Aims and Objectives	Contribution towards National, Regional and Local Priorities for Learning and Skills	Planned Interventions and Measures
<p>Priority 1</p> <p>Responding to NEET:</p> <p>Designing and delivering comprehensive curriculum pathways to facilitate progression onto full-time further education courses or apprenticeships, whilst ensuring more flexible access to provision.</p>	<p>The enhanced offer will enable the College to respond to the increasing NEET levels in both St Helens and Knowsley, which have been exacerbated by the withdrawal of local providers from the market.</p>	<p>The College will work with local authorities and other partners to expand and enhance its NEET provision to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction of more flexible entry and stepping off points. • Providing greater opportunities for work experience and taster sessions. • Exploring the potential for community-based provision. • Facilitating greater collaboration amongst college teams and partners to ensure a coordinated approach to students' support and development.

Aims and Objectives

Contribution towards National, Regional and Local Priorities for Learning and Skills

Planned Interventions and Measures

Priority 2

Power Skills Development:

Raising awareness of the value of power skills (soft skills) and ensuring that all students and apprentices can develop and apply these skills effectively, supporting them in their journey to further learning or sustained employment.

The development of essential power skills (soft skills) has been identified through the LSIP as an essential requirement for most sectors. Typical skills include:

- Self-management
- Communication
- Presentation
- Digital literacy
- Leadership
- Teamwork
- Problem solving
- Analytical skills
- Administrative skills

The College will:

- Ensure that personal development programmes include a deliberate and planned focus on the development of power skills.
- Embed power skills development in course development plans to enable the honing of skills in a vocational and technical context.
- Introduce power skill workshops and masterclasses.
- Develop systems for capturing and tracking progress in skill development.

Priority 3

Growing Curriculum Provision at Knowsley Campuses:

Increasing curriculum pathways in further education, focusing on progression routes from entry-level/level 1 through level 2 to level 3.

Addresses the College and local authority's desire for a vibrant local offer with increased level 3 provision to raise ambition and enable young people in Knowsley to fulfil their potential (Knowsley 2030 Strategy).

Health and Life Sciences are a national priority; LCR has been identified as an Investment Zone for Life Sciences.

The expansion of Catering provision will address the Knowsley LSIP priority of Visitor Economy.

The expanded offer will enable the College to meet national, regional, and local skills priorities in Health and Social Care; Early Years is identified as a growth sector following the government announcement of funded places for under 3s.

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.

The College will introduce new study programmes at Knowsley Campuses to include:

- Supported Learning Pre-Entry
- L3 Catering
- L3 Performing Arts
- L3 Beauty
- L3 Public Services
- L3 Engineering (IAMTech)
- T level Supporting the Adult Nursing Team
- T level Education and Childcare

Aims and Objectives	Contribution towards National, Regional and Local Priorities for Learning and Skills	Planned Interventions and Measures
<p>Priority 4</p> <p>Developing and expanding Inclusive Learning:</p> <p>Supporting students within discreet provision to prepare for independence and/or employment by offering wider range of opportunities, including the provision of supported internships.</p>	<p>The College is responding to local authority requests for a greater range of college-based provision for residents with SEND.</p> <p>The enhanced offer will include improved access to internships and work experience in skills shortage sectors such as hospitality, and the introduction of new pathways and therapies for students with more complex needs, supported by investment in new teaching areas.</p>	<p>The College will introduce a range of new initiatives and programmes for students with diverse needs to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Pre-Internships programme that will provide work experience and skills development opportunities as a stepping stone to a full supported internship • A new sensory and communication pathway at St Helens to cater for students requiring specialist support. The program will focus on enhancing sensory processing skills and improving communication abilities through tailored interventions and activities • Extending the duration of work placements to two or three years.
<p>Priority 5</p> <p>Developing Green Technology Jobs:</p> <p>Further developing qualification pathways at IAMTech and STEM campuses, building on the relationship between employers and the College to meet the demand for skilled workers in the green technology sector.</p>	<p>The College will continue to develop programmes to support green technology jobs, working in close partnerships with key employers and utilising its state-of-the-art Green Energy Skills Centre.</p> <p>The low carbon sector is estimated to support 140,000 jobs by 2040 across the LCR.</p> <p>The city region has an ambitious target of net zero by 2035, 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>To support our commitment to providing high-quality education and training in the green energy sector, we are introducing the following enhanced curriculum offerings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level 3 Low Carbon Heating Technician Apprenticeship • Installation and Maintenance of Solar Thermal Technologies • Installation of PV to Battery Storage • External Wall Insulation (EWI) • Level 2 Award in Understanding Environmental Technologies • T Level Building Services: Plumbing Pathway

Aims and Objectives

Contribution towards National, Regional and Local Priorities for Learning and Skills

Planned Interventions and Measures

Priority 6

Developing Logistics Partnership:

Continue opportunities to work collaboratively with other LCR colleges around the development of a Freeport Skills Academy.

Logistics is identified as a priority sector nationally and within the Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIP). As part of our commitment to addressing the skills needs of the logistics industry, we are actively pursuing opportunities to collaborate with our partners to secure a talent pipeline for local employers.

The College will:

- Grow partnerships with Logistics employers to provide effective pre-employment training, tailoring training programmes to match the needs of high-volume, entry-level jobs in warehousing and storage.
- Implement the LSIF Freeport curriculum, developed in partnership with the City of Liverpool College, to provide specialised training tailored to the needs of the Freeport area.
- Engage with the local authority and other partners to develop a relevant curriculum offer to support the development of Parkside.

Priority 7

Responding to the National Early Years Campaign:

Developing a pre-entry pathway designed to introduce individuals to the Early Years sector and to provide individuals with the necessary skills and knowledge to pursue a career in childcare.

The College is committed to supporting the wider community by ensuring that its curriculum offer aligns with the expansion of national free additional childcare places, effective from April 2024.

In response to the government's commitment to ongoing sector support for careers in the Early Years sector, the College has developed plans to introduce a pre-entry pathway to the sector.

Successful completion of the diploma program will enable individuals to pursue roles as Early Years practitioners with a license to practice.

The College will develop a pre-entry pathway designed to introduce primarily adult returners to the Early Years sector and provide individuals with the necessary skills and knowledge to pursue a career in childcare:

- NCFE Level 1 CACHE Award in Caring for Children provides individuals with foundational knowledge and skills in caring for children, covering essential topics such as child development, health and safety, and communication.
- NCFE Level 2 CACHE Diploma in Early Years Practitioner, a diploma level program, builds upon the foundational knowledge acquired in the Level 1 Award and provides more in-depth training and practical experience in Early Years practice.

Aims and Objectives	Contribution towards National, Regional and Local Priorities for Learning and Skills	Planned Interventions and Measures
<p>Priority 8</p> <p>Engaging Disadvantaged and Marginalised Adults:</p> <p>Strengthening adult education provision through tailored learning, WorkWorld initiatives, free courses for jobs, and ESOL provision.</p>	<p>Region and the two local authorities to ensure a responsive and sequenced curriculum offer for all adult learners.</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>The College will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build on our successful community engagement initiatives to expand our outreach efforts to specific groups around the Knowsley campuses. This includes a relaunch of community engagement activities at Knowsley and the creation of a ‘hub-and-spoke’ model with Knowsley campuses at the centre. • Offer a range of tailored learning opportunities to re-engage adults, promote social integration, increase confidence and improve emotional wellbeing. • Rollout new adult provision developed through the LSIF programmes. • Extend the adult tutorial program to cater for the diverse needs of adult learners, to include, where appropriate, a greater focus on supporting good mental health. • Continue to respond to the growing demand for ESOL provision in both local authority areas.
<p>Priority 9</p> <p>Skills Supporting Health and Social Care Recruitment:</p> <p>Continuing to build on strong collaboration with key partners such as the NHS, including through the Health and Social Care Skills Hub, to identify and respond to sector skills gaps.</p>	<p>Health and Social Care is a National, LCR and local priority.</p> <p>The College places great emphasis on collaboration with the NHS and social care sector.</p> <p>The combination of distance learning and work-based learning options offers flexibility and enhances the employability and career prospects of adults by providing them with relevant skills and qualifications.</p>	<p>The College will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grow distance learning programmes. • Introduce workplace learning programmes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Level 2 Certificate in Preparing to Work in Adult Social Care - Level 2 Diploma in Care - Level 3 Diploma in Adult Care - Level 4 Diploma in Adult Care - Level 5 Diploma for Health and Social Care • Develop and deliver the curriculum offer for the Health Innovation Skills Hub informed by local employers and other stakeholders.

8. Local Needs Duty

The Governing Board regularly reviews how St Helens College is meeting local, regional, and national skills needs through several mechanisms that allow for both long-term strategic planning and short-term operational oversight.

These processes include a new and revised annual curriculum planning cycle, the introduction of industry panels, which ensure alignment to priority sectors, and further interrogation of labour market intelligence.

This year's Accountability Statement focuses on addressing urgent curriculum needs and supports longer term plans. Together, these mechanisms of review enable regular scrutiny of how the College serves its local communities by filling gaps, avoiding duplication, and collaborating with partners.

The introduction of a Skills Advisory Panel will provide further support to this strategic review and will help the College to maintain a strong connection with industry so that our offer remains agile, responsive, and future focused.

The Corporation continues to look outward, responding to changing regional, national, and global skills landscapes. This multifaceted approach enables the governors to ensure that St Helens College leads on technical education, boosting productivity and inclusive growth across the region.





Corporation Statement

The Corporation of St Helens College has reviewed this accountability statement and supporting documentation and confirms that this fulfils the statutory Local Needs Duty.

We have approved the Accountability Statement in our meeting of 16 May 2024.

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:

Phil Han
Chair of the Corporation

This accountability statement is published on our website and can be found [here](#).

Supporting Documentation

[LCR Plan for Prosperity & Evidence Base](#)
[LCR Skills Strategy](#)
[Knowsley 2030 Strategy](#)
[St Helens Inclusive Growth Strategy](#)
[College Strategic Plan 2022-2025](#)
[Liverpool City Region Investment Zone](#)
[Draft Long-Term Skills Plan 2024](#)