

ACCOUNTABILITY STATEMENT 2023/24 ACADEMIC YEAR



Purpose

Heart of Worcestershire College (HoW College) offers distinctly vocational, technical, professional and community education. Our purpose is offering and delivering education and the development of skills to empower individuals, strengthen our local communities and businesses. The Strategic plan (2022-2025) is organised around four strategic pillars of: Purpose, People, Place and Prosper.

Strategic Pillars:

Purpose: We are committed to the needs of the economy and the 21st Century workplace. Data informs the development of curriculum and the delivery of education to develop skills to meet those needs.

People: Students are at the heart of everything we do. We identify, develop and deliver opportunities for success to students, employers and our stakeholders through the strength of our staff.

Place: We support the local communities within Worcestershire and develop strategic partnerships with employers and wider stakeholders to shape the education and skills landscape.

Prosper: We are committed to focus purposefully on equity in our policies and leadership in the areas of equality and inclusion, in college and wider communities. We will promote access, well-being and success for our college, our students and our staff.

Across all pillars is a key focus on the key role our curriculum has in providing for the needs of students, business, employers and the local, regional and national economies. The strategy is underpinned by a set of key objectives which is updated bi-annually and contains our planned strategic impacts for the year ahead. These priorities are reviewed by the Corporation twice each year.

The college strategy recognises three key cross cutting themes of **technology, resources and climate**. These themes recognise the significance of impact that each has on the organisation, the curriculum we deliver and the role we play within our local and regional communities and in our contribution towards our national objectives.

As reflected within the Strategic plan, the College already has extensive and meaningful links with business, industry and our communities which the College will look to develop even further. Heart of Worcestershire College has a strong partnership record and has always collaborated within and beyond the further education sector working well with partners within the county and wider region. It is our intent that our curriculum will help people develop the capability to do the high-skilled jobs of the future as well as ensuring those who need it are able to access support and employment skills to secure successful progression to the workplace and lead healthy, safe and independent lives.

Context and place:

Heart of Worcestershire College was formed in 2014 following the merger of North East Worcestershire College and Worcester College of Technology. It operates across the county of Worcestershire and has premises in Worcester, Malvern, Bromsgrove and Redditch. The county of Worcestershire borders Herefordshire to the west, Shropshire to the north-west, Warwickshire to the east, Gloucestershire to the south and the wider West Midlands region to the north. The administrative county of Worcestershire comprises six districts: Bromsgrove, Malvern Hills, Wychavon, Wyre Forest, the borough of Redditch, and the city of Worcester. In 2021, the urban population of Worcestershire was approximately 447,900 or 74%, while the rural population was around 157,000 or 26%.

The College's geographical coverage crosses two local enterprise partnership areas (Worcestershire and Greater Birmingham and Solihull) as well as some delivery which falls under the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) devolved area for funding of adult provision. The nature of a geographically dispersed campus offering a comprehensive vocational curriculum, with travel to learn limitations imposed by public transport infrastructure and availability, means that it is necessary to duplicate provision and facilities to the north and south of the county. Heart of Worcestershire College has also invested heavily in its virtual estate in recent years and is a leader in high quality blended learning.

Total GVA in Worcestershire in 2020 was £14 billion, with an average growth of 3% between 2013 and 2020. Workplace earnings in Worcestershire are lower than resident earnings, particularly in Bromsgrove, reflecting out-commuting to higher wage areas such as Birmingham. Productivity in Worcestershire is below average at £26,234, compared to West Midlands £26,315 and England £32,867.

Resident population of Worcestershire is circa 604,900 according to mid-2021 population figures published by ONS and based on recent growth rates population estimates of 613,000 are expected by mid-2023. Overall, the region's population increased by 3.7% since 2016, growing by 21,456. Population is expected to increase to 621,300 by 2025 and to 638,786 by 2030. Working age population (2021) is 361,900 or 59% of the total population compared to higher levels of 62% for wider West Midlands region and 63% for Great Britain.

Worcestershire has an aging population and retirement risk is high whilst the national average for an area this size is 218,142 people 55 or older, there are 253,034 in this county. Worcestershire has 103,512 millennials (ages 25-39) whereas the national average for an area this size is 117,869 compounding this the percentage of students who leave Worcestershire for University and not returning is high at 53% compared to the UK average of 34%. According to the latest 2021 census, the population in Worcestershire is predominantly white (94%), with non-white minorities representing the remaining 6% of the population.

Concerning educational attainment, the Annual Population Survey for 2021 published by the ONS reports the percentage of the Worcestershire working age (aged 16-64) population who have a degree or higher is 43.2%, which is above the 42.8%-degree qualification rate for England. Of this same age category 6.6% of the population have no qualifications and 9.8% have qualifications up to level 1 only.

Deprivation in Worcestershire areas is generally below average, with only 24% of small areas in Worcestershire in the lowest 4 IMD Deciles, compared to 40% nationally. In the indices of deprivation, Worcester ranks 266 out of 533, with 1 being the most deprived. There are eight highly deprived LSOAs in the constituency, meaning 13 per cent of the LSOAs in the constituency are highly deprived. The Worcester areas which are in the top 10 per cent of most deprived neighbourhoods in the country include parts of Sycamore Road, Dines Green, Blackpole, Tolladine Road and Windermere Drive.

The constituency of Redditch ranks in the top half of the most deprived constituencies at 240 out of 533, with 1 being the most deprived. There are five highly deprived LSOAs (lower super output areas) in the constituency, meaning 8% of the LSOAs in the constituency are highly deprived. The Redditch areas which are in the top 10 per cent of most deprived neighbourhoods in the UK include parts of Abbeydale, Park Farm, Woodrow and Winyates.

In the indices of deprivation Bromsgrove ranks 458 out of 533, with 1 being the most deprived. There are no highly deprived LSOAs in the constituency, with ONS data noting that the area performed well in the areas of education, health and income.

Looking at the indices of deprivation, the West Worcestershire constituency, which covers the Malvern Hills district, ranks 373 out of 533, with 1 being the most deprived. There's one highly deprived LSOAs in the constituency, meaning just two per cent of the LSOAs in the constituency are highly deprived. The LSOA includes the Pound Bank area in Malvern Hills and roads such as Oak Crescent, Skyrrold Road and Moat Way.

The remaining constituencies of Worcestershire are Wyre Forest and Wychavon which the College has no physical presence within however are served by neighbouring Colleges of Kidderminster College (part of Newcastle College Group) for the Wyre Forest and Pershore and Evesham Colleges (part of Warwickshire College Group) which are in Wychavon. Based on the total number of jobs, the largest industry in Wyre Forest is Retail. Other major industries include Transport & Storage, Business Administration & Support Services, Health, which represents over 10% of roles in Wyre Forest. Based on the total number of jobs, the largest industry in Wychavon is Manufacturing. The fastest-growing industry in Wychavon is Information & Communication, with jobs in the sector increasing 33% between 2020 and 2021 from 1,500 to 2,000.

Total regional employment in Worcestershire saw the numbers of jobs grow by over 17,000 since 2018 with further growth predicted over the next 5 years of circa 7,500. Total jobs in Worcestershire are circa 264,700. The average salary in Worcestershire is £35,405, according to figures published by the ONS for 2022 and is lower than the West Midland average of £36,785 and 13.1% lower than England's national average salary of £40,746. After adjusting for the difference in hours worked, the gender pay gap in Worcestershire is 13.2% - males in Worcestershire earn 13.2% more per hour than females on average.

There is relatively high employment in the county (79%) which is slightly higher than the wider region (West Midlands) at 78.5%. Claimant count is low at 3.1% compared to regional (4.8%) and national (3.8%) rates. The claimant count decreased in December 2022 by 55 to 11,135 and the number of claimants aged 18-24 decreased by 35 to 1,930. Comparisons with March 2020, prior to the impact of the pandemic, show that the claimant count has increased by 2,830 or 34% and the number of claimants aged 18-24 has increased by 335 or 21%.

Worcestershire's Plan for Growth sets out a plan to 2040 for supporting economic growth, improving productivity, and ensuring greater social inclusion. The Worcestershire economy is diverse with a total almost 44,000 (2022) businesses registered, with an increase of nearly 5,000 new businesses registrations in the same year. 91% of the county's businesses employ 1-9 people so with such a large number of SMEs, our communication and stakeholder engagement activity is vital to ensure reach and clear information.

The top industries are health (14.2%), manufacturing (11.2%), wholesale and retail trade (9.4%), business administration and support services (7.9%) and education (7.9%). The fastest-growing industry in Worcestershire is Information & Communication, with jobs in the sector increasing 25% between 2020 and 2021 from 8,000 to 10,000 and represents 4% of the total jobs in Worcestershire. The low carbon economy in Worcestershire has grown on average by 5.7% per year between 2017/18 and 2019/20 and is on track to meet the target to grow by 5% annually and double in size by 2030.

Employment by occupation data shows that 'Professional occupations' make up the largest (44,000) occupational employment groups in the county. However, a further 35,000 residents are in elementary occupations. This category has an automation index (occupations requiring tasks which are at high risk of automation and other technological change in the next 10-12 years) of 69% and is reflected in skills analysis as those occupations in personal care, warehousing and to some degree manufacturing. There are above National average levels in administrative, customer service, care, skilled trades and engineering occupations.

Approach to Developing the Annual Accountability statement.

The College is an 'anchor institution' and works in a highly collaborative approach to meet local community skills needs and proactively support and work with other organisations to meet their priorities. As part of the current strategy the College aims to build even further on its stakeholder engagement, consulting with employers, the employer representative body and other providers, through the establishment of sector aligned industry advisory groups/councils and proactive engagement at local forums. will consult large and small organisations to understand the knowledge, skills and behaviours required to drive up productivity and address local need. Through this process, the college will further consolidate itself as a key partner in driving up local prosperity through meeting needs across our key priority and high employment sectors.

Heart of Worcestershire College has a strong partnership record. We have always collaborated within and beyond our own sector and are proud of our activities with our partners working within the county and wider region. Our work in the field of blended learning, where we lead a consortium of over 150 FE colleges across the UK, saw our role become pivotal in response to Department for Education (DfE) investment to secure online content to support delivery during long periods of lockdown and also led to us supporting schools and colleges in developing their own blended learning capabilities as part of education providers' collective learned experience to make better use of technology and digital skills beyond the pandemic.

The Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) builds upon existing intelligence from the work of the Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership (WLEP) Skills Advisory Panel (SAP), and Employment and Skills board (ESB). The College is an active member represented at these boards and as this evolves to form the LSIP board, senior leaders will continue to actively engage in this activity to ensure our strategies and curriculum offers are tailored to the economic and social needs of the communities we serve, alongside working proactively with employers and other key stakeholders to address regional skills gaps and workforce development needs. In Worcestershire the lead Employer Representative body (ERB) is Herefordshire and Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce who the college has consulted with to identify what key employee skills are a priority for local businesses informing a key part of the objectives listed in our agreement. Other key strategic partners key to the College in identifying and achieving these priorities are Worcestershire County Council, Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership, Worcestershire Children's First, Worcester City Council, Redditch Borough Council, Bromsgrove District Council, Malvern Hills Town Council, Worcestershire Training Providers Association, University of Worcester, other FE Colleges and a range of employer's representative of priority industries.

There are three other further education colleges in Worcestershire; Kidderminster College (part of Newcastle College Group) and Pershore and Evesham colleges (part of Warwickshire College Group). There is one sixth form college, Worcester 6th Form which is part of Heart of Mercia Multi-Academy Trust. The College works well collaboratively with these partners, most recently leading the successful bid and project delivery for the Strategic Development Fund investment, leading a collaboration between all further education Colleges in Worcestershire ('Colleges Worcestershire') alongside the Chamber of Commerce to develop, in partnership with key employers. This project sought to increase the skills based in health and social care, and up-skill digital capabilities of prospective and existing employees. The project is strategically aligned to the levelling up agenda, providing an opportunity for those already in the sector to enhance career prospects through industry specific training and resource alongside digital upskilling.

Contribution to meeting local, regional and national priorities.

During the College's annual planning cycle, the college prepares detailed plans taking into consideration quality factors and the curriculum intent of sector areas. In recent years this process has been increasingly informed by labour market data as well as seeking to align to local and regional economic plans. The labour market data is analysed to explore several factors for example live job postings data to understand the skills in demand with employers, industry forecasts to inform future skills requirements and demographic analysis reviewing age and educational attainment levels. Additionally occupational analysis is conducted to examine the increasing frequency of 'green skills' needs.

Reviewing whole College data for 2021-22 shows the tradition of supporting inclusive growth with higher proportions of learners studying at L1 and below for 16-19. Whilst L2 is slightly above the sector and regional average the college does have lower proportions of 16-19 learners accessing L3 programmes, although this is higher than average for those aged over 19. The apprenticeship offer is positive in volume with slightly higher volumes than seen in the sector and regional comparator colleges although slightly lower at higher level.

Summary of 2021/22 Learning

	Learners	% College	% GFE/SC	% WM GFE/SF
16-19 Funded	2,500	45%	43%	45%
L1 or below	760	14%	9%	9%
Level 2	620	11%	10%	10%
Level 3	1,120	20%	24%	25%
Apprenticeships	890	16%	13%	13%
Intermediate	430	8%	4%	4%
Advanced	390	7%	7%	7%
Higher	70	1%	2%	3%
Adults (Adult skills and loans)	2,130	39%	44%	42%
Level 1 or below	720	13%	16%	114%
Level 2	960	17%	23%	21%
Level 3+	450	8%	6%	7%
Total	5,520	100%	100%	100%

Source: MiDES, January 2023

Reviewing whole college data for 2021-22 enrolments by subject sector area (SSA) show that the college is broadly in line with the FE sector and regional average against most subject areas except for engineering and manufacturing which is higher and reflects the local economy demand and also retail and commercial enterprise and health, public services and care which again reflects local demand and growth. In terms of maintaining existing activity where demand holds steady but where some opportunities exist to develop within a sector, this is seen in construction (surveying and management), digital (software development, security, programming) and arts (graphics, photography, design).

Profile of 16-10 Learners by Subject (Core Aim)

SSA	Learners	% College	% GFE/SC	% WM GFE/SF
1. Health, Public Services and care	520	21%	14%	17%
2. Science and Mathematics	30	1%	3%	4%
3. Agriculture, Hort. and Animal Care	0	0%	5%	4%
4. Engineering and Manufacturing	380	15%	9%	9%
5. Construction	280	11%	10%	10%
6. ICT	90	4%	4%	4%
7. Retail and Commercial Enterprise	270	11%	7%	6%
8. Leisure, Travel and Tourism	210	8%	7%	7%
9. Arts, Media and Publishing	370	15%	14%	14%
10. History, Philosophy and Theology	0	0%	0%	0%
11. Social Sciences	0	0%	1%	1%
12. Languages, Literature and Culture	<5	<5	0%	0%
13. Education and Training	<5	<5	1%	1%
14. Preparation for Life and Work	220	9%	10%	9%
15. Business Administration and Law	90	4%	6%	7%
A Level		0%	9%	7%
Total	2,500	100%	100%	100%

Source: MiDES, January 2023

Industries not currently offered by the college, but which show relative demand are logistics, ecommerce and the housing sector (property managers). The leadership and management curriculum meets to some degree these needs; however further exploration of how more specialist offers might be developed for example, by industry sector will be one area to explore and is an emerging feature with the local skills improvement plan.

The College does not offer agriculture, horticulture and animal care and is not a provider of A Levels which reflects the data showing nil enrolments compared to sector and regional averages.

Aims and target outcomes for 2023/24

Strategic aims and objectives	Contribution towards local, regional and national priorities
<p>Aim/objective 01</p> <p>Innovative and responsive curriculum</p> <p>Further development of T levels, transition pathways and HTQ curriculum which deliver progression to higher level study and/or employment.</p> <p>National priorities (matched to Worcestershire LSIP emerging priority sectors) – construction, manufacturing, digital and tech, HSC, Haulage and logistics, Engineering, Science and maths.</p> <p>LSIP priority: Supporting the development of workforce planning capabilities of managers to enable businesses to better identify their skills needs and adapt training and skills curriculum offers to provide bespoke, responsive access.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Stronger and more systematic partnerships with employers and industry leaders to inform the development of the curriculum and support the successful introduction of T Levels in Business, Science/health and Engineering by 2024. Working with Worcestershire Colleges, the Chamber of Commerce and other providers, establish industry advisory groups in each National skill priority area: Construction, Manufacturing, Engineering, Digital and Technology, Health and Social care and Science (December 2023) to inform curriculum development. b. 50% of students’ progress from level 1 to level 2 and from level 2 to level 3. c. 45% progression of students overall from relevant L3 full time programmes into Higher Education. d. 60% of students with high needs on a supported internship programme progress into employment. e. Increase adult participation and progression to higher level (L4+) qualifications by 2%. f. Investigate/research and develop leadership and management content which specifically develops skills beyond ‘mandatory’ training and which focusses on workforce development, planning and horizon scanning, underpinned by aspects of the impact of technology and sustainability within relevant sectors.
<p>Aim/objective 02</p> <p>LSIP Priorities: Common (employability) skills and behaviours and embedding employment experiences to develop these skills.</p> <p>To ensure that learners have employability and work-ready skills. Within the LSIP process, findings from employer engagement shows that some employers feel that young people in particular are not ‘work ready’, where this is the case, it tends to be about behaviours (to improve employability) and transferable skills (to improve progression).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. 85% of students achieve the main qualification of their programme of study. b. 97% of students will move onto a positive destination. c. 100% of students aged 16-18 will undertake the Elements programme (independent digital learning via industry contextualised projects), representing 10% at L2 and 15% at L3 of study programme hours. (September 2023). d. All full-time students will undertake minimum work experience hours and have at least two additional encounters with employers. e. Student satisfaction survey rating personal development skills of resilience, study skills and agility, 90% or more.
<p>Aim/objective 03</p> <p>Improve outcomes on apprenticeship provision towards supporting growth in key sector and LSIP Priority areas (Construction, Engineering, Manufacturing, Management).</p> <p>Improve outcomes for apprentices to include functional skills, end point assessment and timely achievement rates.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Improvement in the quality of our apprenticeship programmes (measured by a 5% improvement in achievement on 2021/22 outturn). b. We will grow the number of apprenticeships starts by 10%. c. Achieve retention of 65% for apprenticeships d. Less than 8% of apprentices 365 days overdue and less than 10% of apprentices who are 180 days overdue on timely achievement. e. Improve the number of apprentices achieving high grades in end point assessment across all areas.

<p>Aim/objective 04</p> <p>Increase adult participation on National priority programmes including Multiply Bootcamps, Free Courses for Jobs, Apprenticeships and Sector Based Work Academy Programmes (SWAPs). This supports Foundational, Flexible and Common skills as identified in the Worcestershire LSIP.</p> <p>Redevelopment and focus on community learning programmes to support attainment of core skills and progression to employment widening participation and transforming people's destinies by supporting progression relevant to personal circumstances. All learners to progress onto new or more stretching provision to help them into more formal learning or employment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Launch Bootcamp in Leadership and Management of Care – Autumn 2023. b. Deliver additional Bootcamps in Construction (Brickwork, Carpentry and joinery, Plumbing, Plastering, Painting and decorating) May 2023 – May 2024. c. Develop additional SWAP programmes in response to DWP demand and align with employers to support direct recruitment and progression to employment. (Teaching assistant, domiciliary care, retail) d. Utilising online offer, increase uptake to full L3 progression qualifications increasing by 10%. e. Redevelop all community learning provision to ensure 100% (by September 2023) have planned progression routes to focus on people who are disadvantaged and least likely to participate, including in rural areas and people on low incomes with low skills. Intent outcomes will include one or more of the following: - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. improved confidence and willingness to engage first step in learning 2. acquisition of skills preparing people for training, employment or self-employment 3. improved digital, financial literacy and/or communication skills 4. improved/maintained health and/or social well-being.
<p>Aim/objective 05</p> <p>To be a key leader in the delivery and development of foundational digital skills (e.g. Microsoft tools) and lead research into the role of increasing and emerging technology across each industry, enabling the future of work and the delivery of skills delivery to adapt.</p> <p>Develop, with partners digital and technology skills support provision to support leadership and management of workforce planning development identifying and delivering provision to support personal digital skills as well as identifying and adapting curriculum to teach the impact of technology in each industry.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Secure growth of 100% in high quality online learning provision, specifically targeting adults in Worcestershire and within a travel to work radius and focussing in the following sectors: Health and care, logistics, digital, education, mathematics, leadership and management. b. 100% of students aged 16-18 undertaking digital skills training of at least 3 hours. c. Employees having digital skills embedded is a key to driving productivity within the regional economy. Within Worcestershire it is estimated that only 66% of employees have essential digital skills for the workplace at present and this is a significant factor in the regions productivity currently falling behind the national average. Increase uptake of IT skills delivery with adults by 10%. d. Research activity will focus on four of the main subject areas of FE, aligned to the first T Level courses as part of a research project across Construction, Health and Science, Digital and Education and Childcare. e. Support the development and launch of digital skills platform to support delivery of foundational skills including mathematics, digital skills and a range of introductory vocational/technical skills topics to showcase opportunities available to in work adults and employers.

Corporation Statement

We are committed to complying with our duty under a new section 52B of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 to review provision in relation to local needs, as set out in the Skills and Post-16 Education Bill 2022. We will hold a review at least every three years to identify how well we are meeting local needs associated with securing appropriate further and higher education leading to good employment. We will publish a report on our main website following this review. We will factor in any actions from this report into our Accountability Agreement plan.

On behalf of Heart of Worcestershire College Corporation, it is hereby confirmed that the college plan as set out above reflects an agreed statement of purpose, aims and objectives as approved by the corporation at their meeting on 16th May 2023.



Neill Bucktin
Chair of Governors



Michelle Dowse
Principal and Chief Executive Officer

Hyperlink to website location: howcollege.ac.uk/about/legal/policies-and-documents/

Reference to Relevant Supporting Documentation

Heart of Worcestershire College Strategy 2022-2025

Financial statement year ending 31.07.2022

Interim LSIP findings

Worcestershire Plan for Growth