



Accountability Statement and Local Needs Duty 2026/27

[HOWCOLLEGE.AC.UK](https://www.howcollege.ac.uk)



HEART OF
WORCESTERSHIRE
COLLEGE

Contents

1. Purpose	3
2. Context and Place	5
2.1. College Characteristics	5
2.2. Geographical area	6
2.3. Economic and Social Characteristics that inform skills needs	7
2.3.1. Worcestershire	7
2.3.2. Birmingham	12
2.3.3. Job trends	13
2.4. Regional Priorities	14
2.5. Informing Skills Needs	19
3. Developing the Accountability Statement	20
3.1. Approach	20
3.2. Consultation	20
3.3. Collaboration	21
4. Meeting National, Regional and Local Priorities	22
5. Local Needs Duty	26
6. Corporation Statement	27
7. Supporting documentation	28

Policies and Documents | Heart of Worcestershire College

1. Purpose

This Accountability Statement outlines the Heart of Worcestershire College's commitment to providing high-quality education, training, and skills development opportunities which align with the priorities set by the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), West Midlands Combined Authority and the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP), in line with the College's strategic objectives. It reviews how well the College meets local needs and what actions will be taken to further meet those needs in the year ahead.

The College's provision is important to:

- Upskill existing employees to ensure they remain equipped with the skills employers need.
- Reskill employees whose jobs may be at risk and those who are unemployed to help them remain economically active.
- Support and re-engage those who have left school without 5 GCSEs at 4-9 grades enabling them to have better life chances, including those who are vulnerable and disadvantaged, by removing barriers, raising aspirations and providing support.
- Train the next generation of the workforce so that they are well prepared for employment and the job roles needed both now and in the future in the region.

The College's provision supports the Government's missions of growing the economy, ensuring the NHS is fit for the future, ensuring there are safer streets, breaking down barriers to ensure there are opportunities for all and making Britain a clean energy superpower. More detail on the College's work to support the missions can be found here: [HoW College Mission Accepted](#).

Heart of Worcestershire College's mission statement is 'to improve lives through learning' and the vision is 'to be recognised for nurturing the brilliance of every student and addressing the skills needs of local and regional employers, through innovative and impactful education.' The strategic objectives of the College are represented as the 7P's:

Strategic Theme	Strategic Objective
Purpose	Providing a high-quality curriculum, focussed on careers and the delivery of excellent outcomes for all.
Place	Delivering from inspirational and safe learning environments.
People	Offering a culture of support, kindness and engagement for staff and students with high expectations of ourselves and others.
Prosper	Focusing on appropriate growth opportunities and efficient and effective delivery.
Partnership	Being an anchor institution for Worcestershire employers and our communities.
Potential	Preserve and innovate today to thrive tomorrow, ensuring we meet skills needs and have a reputation for technological advancement.
Planet	Raising awareness of, and delivering on, our sustainability commitment.

At the heart of our commitment lies a fundamental belief in the importance of our students being “work-ready.” In today’s dynamic job market, with the rapid evolution of technology, students must leave College having developed both the technical, professional, and practical skills as well as the employability skills and behaviours needed by our region’s employers. By developing the technical skills required for their chosen fields, along with the interpersonal and problem-solving abilities necessary, Heart of Worcestershire College students will leave College more likely to thrive in diverse workplaces and a changing economy.

We recognise that our students arrive at college at different points in their personal development journey. Our approach is therefore tailored, whilst our purpose is the same for all – to improve lives through learning.

The Accountability Statement for Heart of Worcestershire College envisions a dynamic educational environment that empowers individuals, supports industries, and contributes to regional development.

By aligning with Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) priorities in Worcestershire and those of the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA), with a focus on the Employer Representative Bodies’ (ERB’s) Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) priorities, the College prepares students for successful careers and contributes to the growth of the regional and national economy whilst addressing the unique needs of the Worcestershire community and West Midlands communities. The College works in partnership with key stakeholders and employers across the region to assess need, develop its offer, and work collaboratively on delivery and assessment. This helps the College to be responsive to employer need, reduce duplication, work collaboratively with other partners and provide progression pathways.

The College’s Accountability Statement also reflects and articulates the longer-term strategic outcomes and actions arising from the Local Needs Duty including: providing consistently high-quality teaching and learning; engaging more employers in curriculum design and implementation; supporting employers to identify their needs including developing more modular delivery; improving the approach to developing skills for employment of apprentices; working in partnership to provide good careers information, advice and guidance; reviewing opportunities in key and emerging sectors; and considering adult learning, tailored learning and enhanced higher education opportunities.



2. Context and Place

2.1. College Characteristics

Heart of Worcestershire College is a General Further Education College providing education to circa 6500 young people and adults. The College's offer is distinctly vocational, technical, higher and adult skills education. Young people study a range of subjects with 27% studying at Level 1 and below, 38% at Level 2 and 25% at Level 3. The percentage of Entry and Level 1 learners is higher than that of the 23/25% of all further education students. Approximately 550 apprentices study at the College, 49% at Intermediate Level, 43% Advanced and 8% studying higher level apprenticeships.

About Us

 **£35M**
TURNOVER

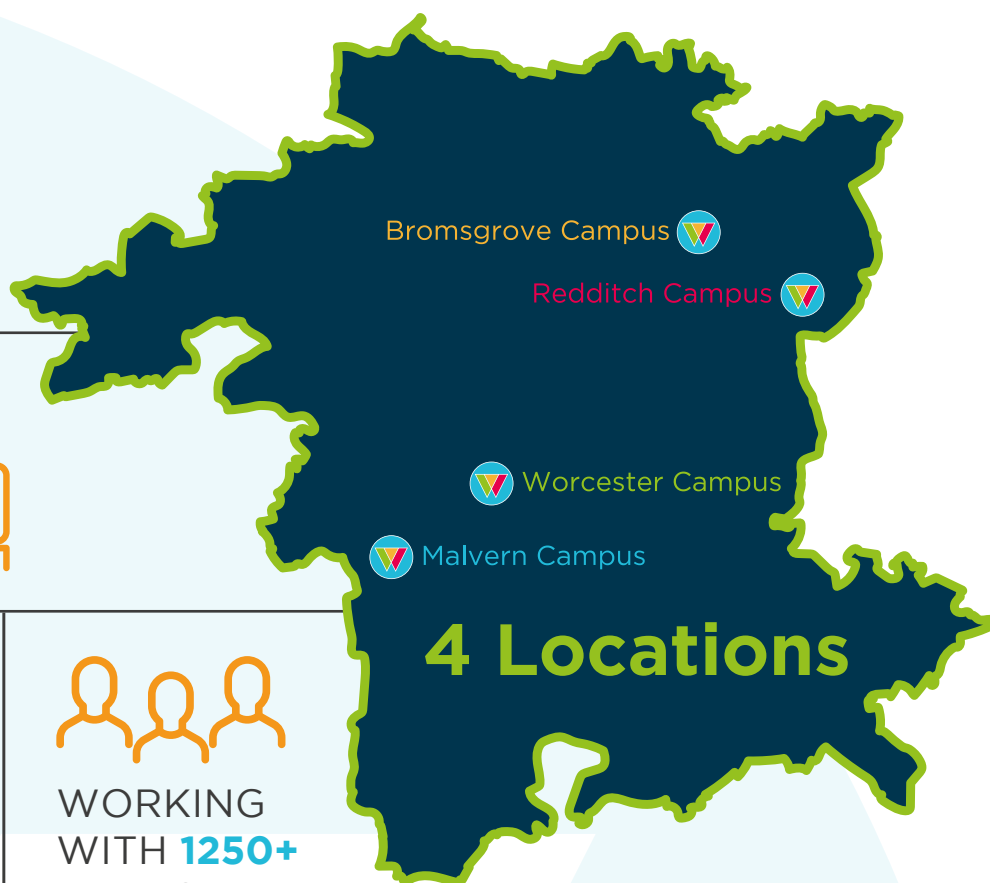
OVER
593
STAFF



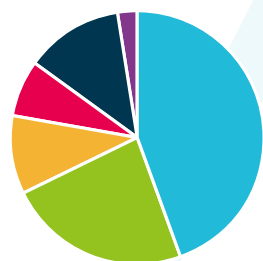
Largest provider in Worcestershire for 16-18 and adult provision and a significant provider of apprenticeships.



WORKING
WITH **1250+**
EMPLOYERS

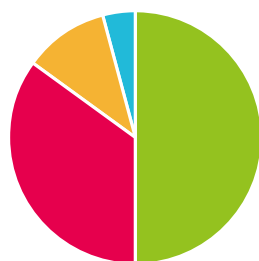


6762
Students



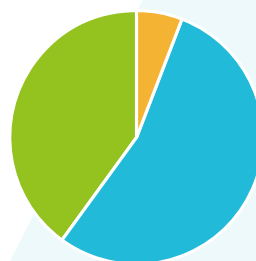
- 16-19 - **2826**
- Adult Skills - **1565**
- Apprenticeships - **586**
- Tailored Learning - **477**
- Higher Education - **294**
- Loans - **92**

% Students
by site



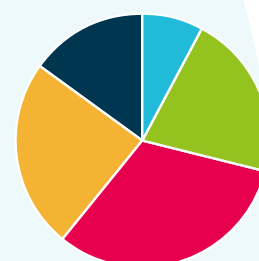
- Worcester - **53.28%**
- Redditch - **29.65%**
- Bromsgrove - **14.81%**
- Malvern - **2.26%**

HoW College
Apprentices by level



- Intermediate (L2) - **48.9%**
- Advanced (L3) - **42.6%**
- Higher (L4+) - **8.5%**

HoW College
Learners by level



- Entry Level - **7.2%**
- Level 1 - **19.49%**
- Level 2 - **37.93%**
- Level 3 - **24.63%**
- Level 4+ - **10.75%**

2.2. Geographical area

The College has key sites in Bromsgrove, Redditch, Worcester, and Malvern supporting education and skills needs across the county and surrounding areas. The College's geographical coverage matches the boundaries of Worcestershire County, where the LEP remains as the strategic economic body. However, the travel patterns of our 16-18 students to the College include those who live on the fringes of Worcestershire in the West Midlands conurbation, and quite extensively in Birmingham for adult provision because of the WMCA funding of adult provision. In addition, the College has training provision near the NEC and Airport to support adult skills and works with a number of niche providers in the WMCA area to address adult skills needs.

86% of the area of Worcestershire is classified as rural (Source: LEP Worcestershire economy report 2026). Transport challenges make it difficult for students to travel in Worcestershire. Students studying at the College who live in the north will mainly travel to Redditch or Bromsgrove. Students living in Malvern, Wychavon and Wyre Forest are most likely to study in Worcester. A small number of students (circa 50) aged 16-19, who live in Birmingham (Frankley Great Park, Rubery & Rednal, Longbridge, and Kings Norton), travel to Redditch or Bromsgrove. (Source: RCU Vector).

More residents of Redditch (42%) and Worcester (50%) work very locally, travelling less than 10km to work compared to a national average of 35%, while it is only 26% of residents of Bromsgrove, 27% of Malvern residents and 29% of Wychavon residents. (Source: ONS 2021 Census). This reflects the more rural conurbations in our region and the need to travel further to work, as well as the opportunities due to the geography and transport links of Worcestershire, for people to travel into Birmingham, The Black Country and Gloucestershire for work. This is also because it is estimated that there are 34,000 more working residents than there are jobs in the County, meaning the County is a net out commuter of labour.

(Source: LEP Worcestershire economy report 2026).



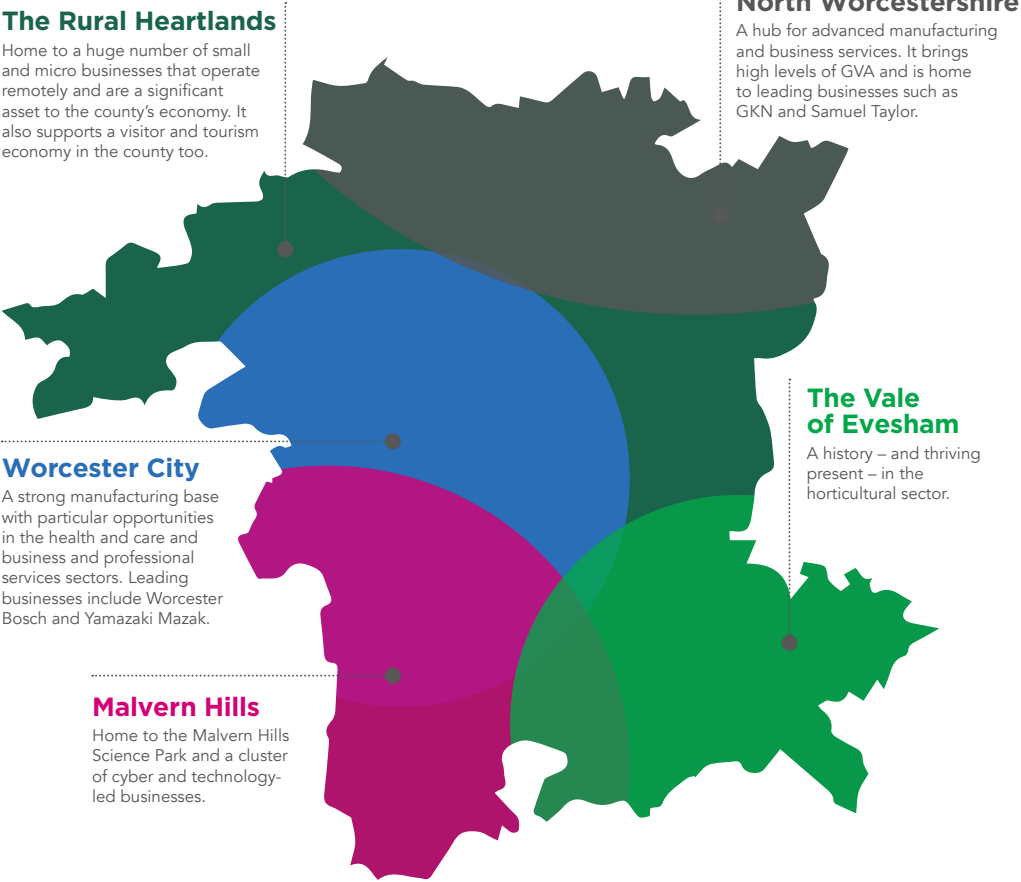
2.3. Economic and Social Characteristics that inform skills needs

2.3.1. Worcestershire

Key sectors

Place

The Worcestershire Plan for Growth (2020-2040) articulates five geographical areas across the county, each with its own distinctive economic base and sector strengths:



(Sources: WLEP-Economy-Report-2025-Final-Version.pdf, NOMIS; Lightcast; Vector)





Workplace Jobs (2024)
262,000 ↘-1,000



Claimant Count Unemployment (2022-2025)
10,765; 2.9% ↘-660; -0.2pp



Economic Inactivity (2017-2025)
69,500; 19.6% ↗8,100; +2.0pp

Youth Claimant Count Unemployment (2022-2025)
2,190; 5.4% ↗165; 0.4pp

Average Gatsby BM Achieved (2018-2025)
6.38 ↘-0.38

GVA per hour worked (June 2024-June 2025)
£38.40 ↗£1.20

Worcestershire supports around 262,000 workplace jobs, with low overall unemployment at 2.9%, although economic inactivity remains relatively high at 19.6%. While claimant unemployment has fallen overall, youth unemployment has increased to 5.4%, highlighting a key challenge for the local labour market. Productivity remains strong, with GVA per hour worked rising to £38.40.

The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) ranks small areas in England where 1 is the most deprived. Deprivation in Worcestershire areas is generally below average, with only 25% of small areas in Worcestershire in the lowest 4IMD Deciles, compared to 40% nationally. However, there are pockets of deprivation in urban areas, with some areas of the county in the worst 10% nationally, including parts of Worcester, Redditch, Wyre Forest, and Malvern.



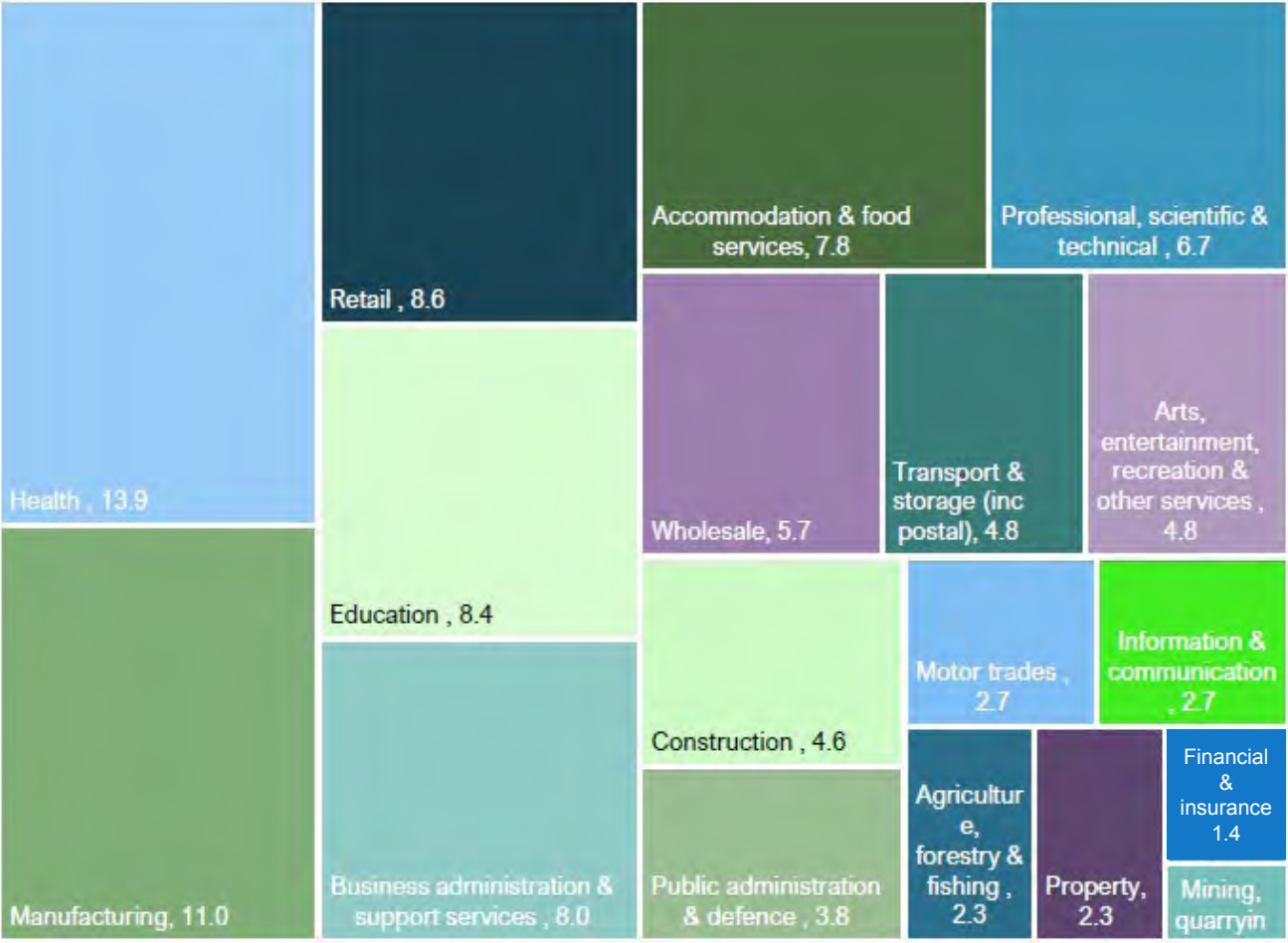
Average Earnings



Average earnings in Worcestershire have risen year on year, with both workplace- and resident-based pay increasing between 2024 and 2025. Earnings in Worcestershire remain below the UK average but are broadly comparable with the West Midlands, showing steady local wage growth. The gap between workplace and resident earnings is small, suggesting most local jobs are reasonably well paid relative to where people live.

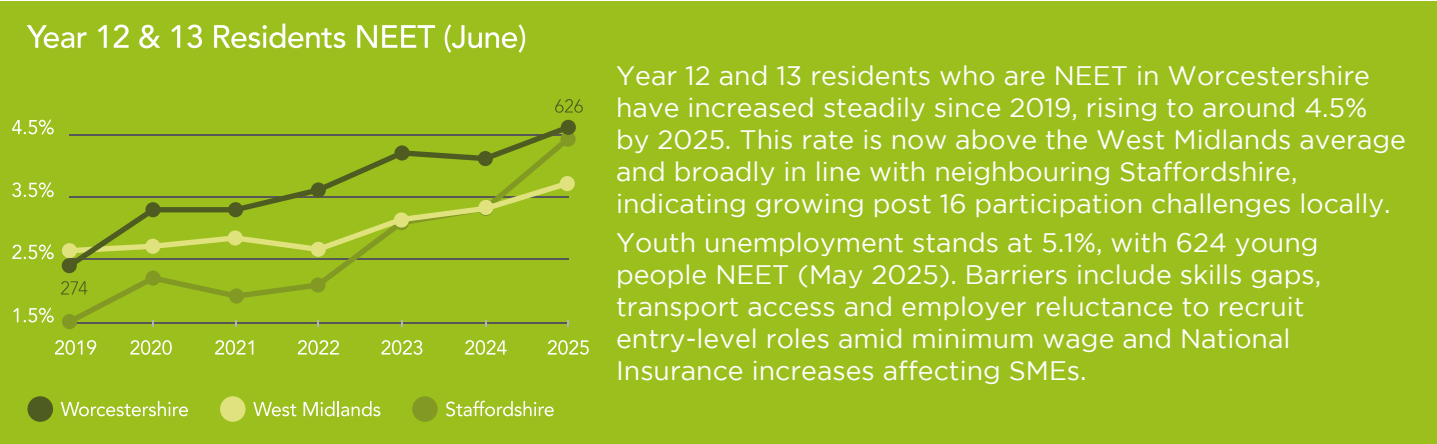
Worcestershire sector employment (2024)

(Employment per sector in percentage terms)



ONS Business Register and Employment Survey (2025)

Employment in Worcestershire in 2024 is broad-based, with the largest shares in health (13.9%) and manufacturing (11.0%), followed by retail (8.6%) and education (8.4%). Business administration and support services, accommodation and food, and professional, scientific and technical roles also make up significant portions of the workforce. Smaller but important sectors include transport and storage, construction, public administration, and agriculture, highlighting a diverse local economy.



Priority sector summaries

Health & Care				Professional Business Services				Construction				Manufacturing				Cyber Security and IT				Agri/Horti tech			
Employs 36,000	Business 980	GVA £1.55bn		Employs 28,960	Business 5,580	GVA £1.53bn		Employs 10,500	Business 3,670	GVA £1.11bn		Employs 28,500	Business 1,625	GVA £2.34bn		Employs 7,000	Business 1,415	GVA £0.53bn		Employs 2,750	Business 1,600	GVA £0.17bn	
The largest employing sector across Worcestershire, making up 14% of total employment and one of the biggest contributors to the economy, making up 10% of total GVA. Almost a quarter of the population are aged 65 and over, driving the need for social care and health professionals. Caring roles already are among the roles with highest number of vacancies with demand set to continue as the population continues to age and more people are living with multiple and complex health conditions				Worcestershire is home to a wide range of financial, business and professional service firms, spanning accountancy, insurance, legal services, management consultancy, recruitment and business support activities. While the sector is broad and varied locally, it represents a smaller share of employment and GVA than seen nationally, reflecting a lower level of sector concentration. Nonetheless, it remains an important part of the county's economy, accounting for over a fifth of all businesses and 11% of total GVA.				Construction accounts for 14% of all businesses (the second largest sector by business base) and provides a stable foundation for the local economy, contributing 7% of GVA and 5% of employment. Recognised within the IS-8(+2) framework, the sector plays a critical role in delivering local growth priorities, including Wychavon New Town, while also supporting national housebuilding targets and the infrastructure required for clean energy transition.				Manufacturing remains a cornerstone of the local economy, accounting for 15% of GVA and 11% of employment. Advanced manufacturing is identified in the Plan for Growth as a key opportunity sector, with local employment (4%) exceeding both regional (3.5%) and national (2.2%) levels. Both manufacturing and advanced manufacturing demonstrate a clear local specialism, underlining the sector's competitive strength.				The IT sector is a relatively small contributor to Worcestershire's economy, accounting for around 3% of employment and showing lower levels of business concentration compared to national averages. This explains its lower location quotient locally. However, digital capability will become increasingly important as a cross-cutting enabler, particularly with the continued emergence of AI and automation technologies.				Agriculture is used as a proxy for the scale of Agri-Tech in Worcestershire. It represents the county's strongest sector specialism, with employment around 1.5 times more concentrated than nationally. Whilst in absolute terms the sector is relatively small, its local strengths remains important, particularly where they intersect with adjacent sectors such as advanced manufacturing.			
Volume: 1 st (out of 18)	Value: 4 th (out of 16)	LQ	Growth	Volume: 2 nd (out of 19)	Value: 5 th (out of 17)	LQ	Growth	Volume: 11 th (out of 18)	Value: 6 th (out of 16)	LQ	Growth	Volume: 2 nd (out of 18)	Value: 2 nd (out of 16)	LQ	Growth	Volume: 13 th (out of 18)	Value: 11 th (out of 16)	LQ	Growth	Volume: 17 th (out of 18)	Value: 16 th (out of 18)	LQ	Growth



The Challenges for Worcestershire, as laid out in the Local Skills Improvement Plan, are summarised in the table below.

Defining Worcestershire's priorities

Strategic Background

Economic and Skills Evidence

Engagement and Employers

- **Worcestershire's Plan for Growth (2020-2040):** sets the cornerstone sectors (Professional services, Constructions, Health and Care) and opportunity sectors (Advanced Manufacturing, Cyber security IT and defence and Agri/horti tech)
 - **Get Worcestershire Working:** plan to get more people into work and supporting progression through better-joined up employment, skills and health support.
-
- **NEET 16-17s have risen** from 1.9% (2019) to 3.9% (2025) - above regional/national since 2022
 - **Business base declined steeply** since 2022 (-9.5% vs -1.2% GB: -2.4% WM)
 - **The highest employing sectors in Worcestershire** are Health (13.9%), manufacturing (11%), and professional business services (11%), with construction accounting for a further 5%.
 - **Worcestershire's economy is strongly shaped by** manufacturing (14.5%), health (10%), professional business services (9.5%) and construction (7%), which together account for 41% of total GVA
-
- Demand for technical skills, but employability skills and digital skills still a challenge
 - Demand for management skills
 - Difficult environment for businesses, limited capacity to engage and invest in training.



2.3.2. Birmingham & WMCA area



Population

Birmingham is of strategic importance to Worcestershire and has 1.1 million residents, and 42,970 businesses and 555,000 jobs (2021). (SOURCE: Birmingham City Council).



Geography

The West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) area, covers the seven constituent metropolitan boroughs of Birmingham, Coventry, Dudley, Sandwell, Solihull, Walsall, and Wolverhampton where 2.9 million people live in one of the most ethnically diverse areas where nearly four in ten are from an ethnicity other than 'White British'.



Employment

- In 2023, the WMCA area recorded 106,200 active enterprises, a 1.1% decrease from 2022, less than the England decline of 1.9%. In Birmingham, workplace jobs are highest in health and social care (94,000), professional, scientific and technical (58,000), Business administration & support services (54,000), Education (51,000) and Retail, (44,000). (2022)
- The employment rate in Birmingham is 66.9% (Q4 2024). Birmingham has a high unemployment claimant rate of 80,995 (14.4%), compared to the UK rate of 4.6% in July 2023. There are high levels of youth unemployment in the city at 14,500 (17.1%) March 2025.
- The jobs market across the WMCA indicates the most vacancies are in: sales, IT, education, business and administration and accounting with a requirement for teaching professionals, sales accounts and business development managers, teaching assistants, programmers and software development professionals, chartered and certified accountants, businesses and financial project management professionals and book-keepers, payroll managers and wages clerks.
- 89.2% of businesses in Birmingham are micro businesses with between 0-9 employees with 77.3% employing between 0-4 staff.



Educational Attainment

In 2023, 60.7% of residents in the WMCA area aged 16 to 64 held at least one Level 3 qualification.



Productivity

Productivity remains 22% below the national average, driven by shortages in leadership and management capability, technical skills, and foundational digital competence. Employers across manufacturing, digital, health- and med tech, and business, professional and financial services continue to report difficulty recruiting for Levels 3-5 technical and higher level roles, while the Everyday Economy experiences sustained pressures relating to retention, foundational skills, and digital adoption.

Source: West Midlands State of the Region 2024-25 WMCA Executive Summary

Business Statistics 2023 to 2024 | Birmingham City Council

[April_2025_Unemployment_Update_AF.pdf](#)

Birmingham business count update 2024 | Birmingham City Council

Source LSIP West Midlands and Warwickshire

2.3.3. Job trends

The analysis of sectors in the Worcestershire LEP area below, compares the number of jobs, the % growth, the annual openings, and the median annual wage. **(Source: Lightcast)**

Area	Regional Jobs (2026)	Regional Jobs (2030)	% Jobs Growth (2026/30)	Annual Openings	Median Annual Wages
Business, Administration and Law	95,547	96,697	1%	3,231	£34,715.45
Retail and Commercial Enterprise	67,152	67,905	1%	2,391	£23,096.42
Health, Public Services and Care	58,504	59,409	2%	2,190	£30,996.70
Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies	37,461	37,466	0%	1,180	£36,038.78
Construction, Planning and the Built Environment	17,894	17,777	-1%	548	£35,828.46
Education and Training	18,652	18,927	1%	695	£33,688.70
Science and Mathematics	17,202	17,451	1%	590	£44,094.41
Information and Communication Technology	12,157	12,049	-1%	341	£44,784.63
Arts, Media and Publishing	11,962	11,936	4.1%	390	£42,400.81
Agriculture, Horticulture and Animal Care	8,368	8,488	1%	343	£27,544.58
Leisure, Travel and Tourism including hospitality and catering	7,180	7,348	2%	270	£24,192.77
Social Sciences	1,243	1,288	4%	50	£36,645.96
Languages, Literature and Culture	482	492	2%	17	£36,112.66
History, Philosophy and Theology	797	848	-6%	43	£25,193.05
Preparation for Life and Work	0	0	0%	0	£0.00
Regional Average			2%		£31,513

Productivity (GVA per hour worked) increased in 2025 but remains below the national average, although the gap has narrowed slightly. Productivity is particularly low in Wyre Forest, ranked the 15th lowest local authority in England, while Bromsgrove ranks 32nd highest out of 362. Over the past five years, employment growth has been strongest in Health (+4,000 jobs), while Business Administration & Support Services declined by 10,000 jobs (2019–2024), impacting youth entry routes into the labour market. Although Business Administration & support services has declined in Worcestershire it remains the largest sector for employment opportunities.

(Source: LEP Worcestershire economy report 2025).

2.4. Regional Priorities

Worcestershire LEP Priorities

Opportunity Sectors	Cornerstone Sectors
Advanced Manufacturing	Construction
Agri-Tech	Health and Care
Cyber security, IT and defence	Business Administration and Professional Services

LEP Priorities

Worcestershire LEP has 5 skills priorities:

1. To enhance the coordination within employment support aimed at reducing claimant levels and improving individual health and well-being whilst impacting positively on economic activity within the County.
2. To aim for all educational establishments to annually meet all eight Gatsby benchmarks of Good Career Guidance, with a particular focus on the Worcestershire economy.
3. To create an education and training provision eco-system that meets local needs and the future trends of Worcestershire's economy i.e., ensuring Further Education (FE) and Higher Education (HE) are responsive.
4. To increase the number of graduates and skilled young people who spend a significant part of their economic life in Worcestershire.
5. To improve the economic activity rates in our older workforce by creating a culture of flexible work environments and upskilling/reskilling opportunities.

WMCA priority sectors

In 2024, the Mayor of the West Midlands, Richard Parker, set out his four priorities for his mayoral term, which are:

- Jobs for everyone: investing in jobs, skills, training and apprenticeships and reducing youth unemployment and ensuring everyone has a job that pays well.
- Homes for everyone: building social and affordable homes and creating vibrant communities so that everyone will have a place to call home.
- Growth for everyone: helping businesses grow, supporting innovation and creativity and making sure everyone benefits and the environment is protected.
- Journeys for everyone: connecting communities and making travel easier, safer and more affordable for everyone.



LSIP

The Local Skills Improvement plan (LSIP), key priorities are as follows:

The plan focuses on two main areas:

Supporting people to get into work: This focuses on those entering employment for the first time, including young people and those furthest from the labour market.

Supporting people to get on at work: this focuses on those already in employment, helping them to progress, upskill and reskill.

To maximise impact, activity is focussed on:

Three of Worcestershire's largest employing sectors:

Health and Social Care

Construction

Manufacturing and Engineering

Two cross-cutting capability areas, across all sectors:

Everyday employability, with strong emphasis on digital skill and workplace skills.

Business resilience, with a focus on management capability and the transition to net zero.



HoW College - meeting skills needs

The local, regional, national and emergent priorities are detailed below along with the detail of where the College provides curriculum offers in these areas. The following two tables demonstrate that the College's curriculum is aligned to key priorities.

Skilled Area	Local priority	WMCA priority	NATIONAL priority	EMERGENT or local priority	HoW College Offer
Aerospace		✓			
Advanced manufacturing/ Engineering	✓	✓	✓		✓
Agritech	✓				
Business Services	✓				✓
Construction	✓	✓	✓		✓
Creative Content Production and Gaming		✓	✓		✓
Defence			✓		
Digital and Technology	✓	✓	✓		✓
Health and Social care	✓		✓		✓
Health tech and Med tech		✓			✓
Leisure, Travel and Tourism including Hospitality and Catering	✓			✓	✓
Life Sciences			✓		
Logistics and Distribution/Haulage and Logistics		✓			
Manufacturing	✓	✓	✓		
Manufacture of future housing		✓			
Manufacture of Electric light vehicles and associated battery devices		✓	✓		
Maintenance of Electric light vehicles	✓				
Modern and Low-Carbon Utilities		✓	✓		Under review
Professional and Financial Services and Supply	✓	✓	✓		✓
Public Services				✓	✓
Science and Maths					✓

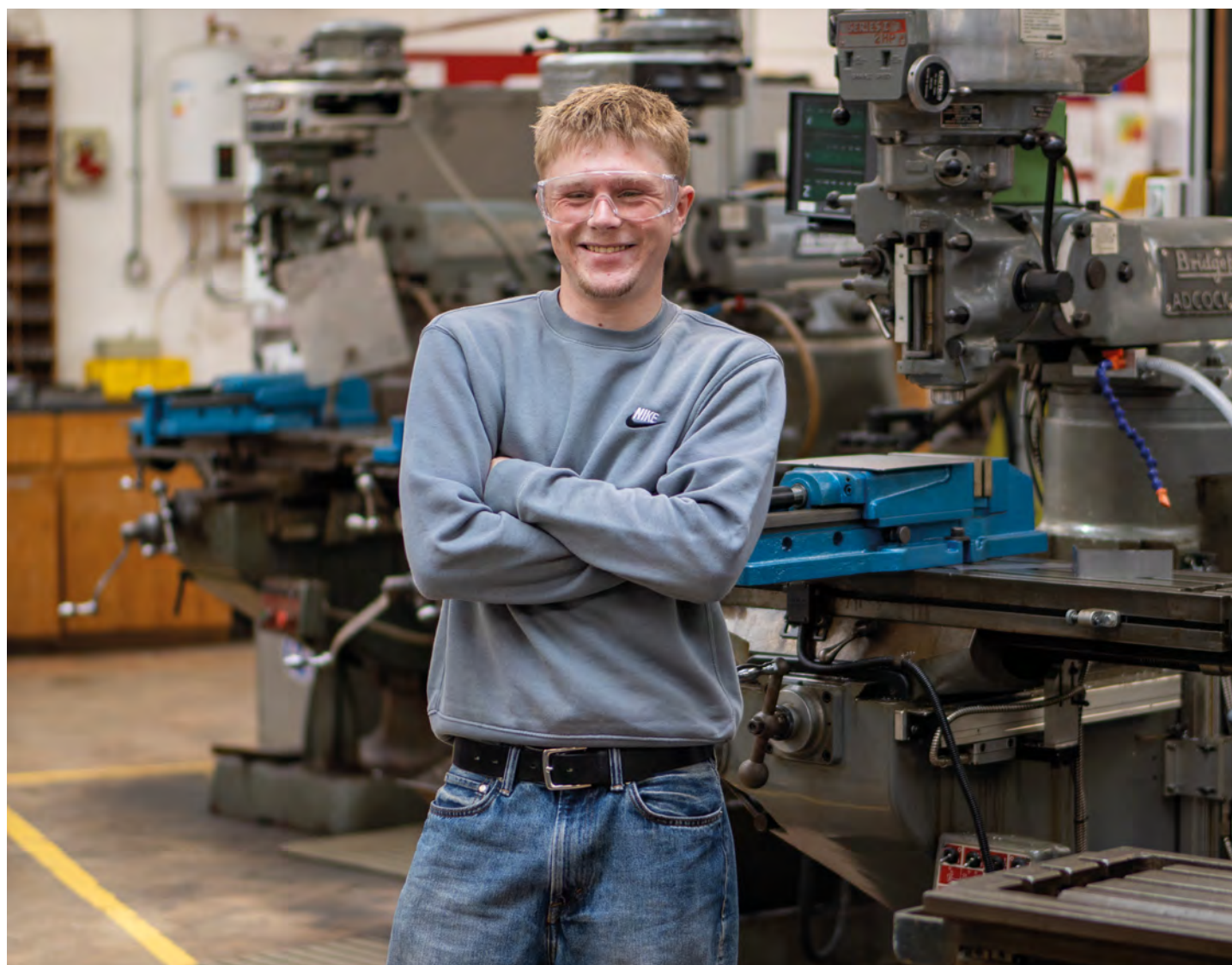
HoW College Contribution by provision type

Skills Area	16-19	Apprenticeships	Adult	HE
Aerospace	Delivered by colleges in Birmingham.			
Advanced Manufacturing/Engineering	✓	✓	✓	✓
Agritech	Delivered by WCG.			
Business Services	✓	✓	✓	✓
Construction	✓	✓	✓	✓
Creative Content Production and Gaming	✓		✓	✓
Defence	Delivered by other Colleges; Solihull College, Sandwell College			
Digital and Technology	✓	✓	✓	✓
Early Years	✓	✓	✓	✓
Health and Social care	✓		✓	✓
Health tech and Med tech	✓		✓	
Leisure, Travel and Tourism including Hospitality and Catering	✓	✓	✓	✓
Life Sciences	Delivered by other colleges: BMet, South & City College, Solihull College, Walsall College, Dudley College, Halesowen College			
Logistics and Distribution	Delivered by other colleges: BMet, South & City College, Walsall College, Dudley College, Halesowen College and Sandwell			
Manufacturing	✓	✓	✓	
Manufacture of future housing	Delivered by other colleges: Dudley College			
Manufacture of Electric light vehicles and associated battery devices	Delivered by; Birmingham Colleges, University College Birmingham, Wolverhampton College			
Modern and Low-Carbon Utilities	Energy Advisor course in development.			
Professional and Financial Services and Supply	✓	✓	✓	✓
Public Services	✓		✓	✓
Science and Maths	✓		✓	

The Government's new Industrial Strategy ([Invest 2035: the UK's modern industrial strategy - GOV.UK](#)), highlights the eight growth driving sectors as advanced manufacturing, clean energy industries, creative industries, defence, digital and technologies, financial services, life sciences, and professional and business services. In addition, construction and health and care are seen as priority sectors, and this reflects the requirements of the region to support the NHS Workforce Plan and to provide a workforce to build the housing that has been identified by the local Councils. The enrolment analysis for HoW College for 2025/26 identifies the following compared to the Industrial Strategy growth and priority sectors.

Course Type	% of enrolments compared to Government 10 Industrial Strategy key sectors and priority	Areas outside or not included in the key sectors
Full-time	66.9% (+ 1.6%)	SEN, Adults Skills, ESOL, Tailored Learning, Progressions, Sport, Uniformed Public Services, Hair and Beauty, Travel and Tourism, Hospitality and Catering.
Part-time	45.3% (+1.3%)	
Apprenticeships	87.8% (-1.8%)	
HE	89% (-5.6%)	

Although Hospitality and Catering, Travel and Tourism, ESOL, and SEN are not directly aligned with the Government's Industrial Strategy, they remain highly relevant at a regional level. Demand for ESOL is already significant and may grow further depending on future immigration policy. In line with our commitment to inclusion, we continue to work with Worcestershire County Council to support SEN provision and with Government on SEND reforms supporting more learners to be able to study in high-quality mainstream provision. Whilst not specifically highlighted in the 'Plan for Growth', the LEP has recognised tourism as a key sector for Worcestershire.



2.5. Informing Skills Needs

In determining the College's offer, several factors inform skills needs:

- Propensity of SMEs.
- Proximity to Birmingham.
- Transport challenges from the north to south of the region.
- An increasing number of claimants with higher numbers of youth unemployment.
- Ageing demographic forecasts with one in three of the current workforce aged 50 or over and around a quarter of the population aged 65 and over.
- Priority to improve the economic activity rates in the older workforce.
- Employer requirement for common skills and workplace behaviours especially digital skills.
- A high level of out-commuting for high value jobs.
- Attracting younger highly skilled individuals to work in the County.
- Some areas of poor social mobility and high levels of learners who are vulnerable and disadvantaged, including increased demand for SEND provision.
- LEP, WMCA and Worcestershire LSIP and WM LSIP priorities.
- Demand for jobs in Business, Administration and Law, Retail and Commercial Enterprises; Health, Public Services and Care Construction; and Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies.
- Government policy changes particularly in qualifications reforms, SEND reforms, Apprenticeship Modules, and Lifelong Learning Entitlement and modularised HE.



3. Developing the Accountability Statement

3.1. Approach

Heart of Worcestershire College is recognised as an 'anchor institution' in our region and works in collaboration with others to meet skills needs. Our annual and rolling curriculum planning cycle, ensures that our provision meets the needs of employers and communities in our region.

The College's approach to the development of the Accountability Statement has included:

- Ensuring alignment with other stakeholder plans and priorities.
- Consulting with key stakeholders including regular meetings with civic leaders and a pre-accountability statement event to assess the views of key influencers.
- Gathering insight from Boards that the College is represented on such as the LEP Board, Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) Board, Bromsgrove Partnership, Redditch BID, Worcester Towns Deal, Redditch Towns Deal, and Skills West Midlands and Warwickshire.
- Governor strategy day to consider Government priorities and policy and the College in line with emerging skills priorities.
- Utilising labour market information such as Lightcast and RCU Vector to identify key employment; opportunities in Worcestershire over the next decade.
- Data from the DfE and FESIT dashboards.
- Gathering employer views at meetings throughout the year as well as annual engagement to support curriculum planning and design.
- A balanced scorecard approach to curriculum planning to assess quality, demand, skills need, financial viability and capacity to deliver.
- Ensuring alignment with national skills policy and priorities.



3.2. Consultation

The College works proactively with employers and other key stakeholders to address regional skills gaps and workforce development needs.

Consultation has been undertaken to develop the Accountability Statement and has included:

Worcestershire County Council, Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership, Herefordshire and Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce/LSIP, Worcester City Council, Redditch Borough Council, Bromsgrove District Council, Malvern Hills Town Council, West Midlands Combined Authority, University of Worcester, neighbouring FE colleges and employer input in varying sectors including the NHS, DWP, Redditch United FC, Bromsgrove & Redditch Network (BARN), Leon Building Services, Redditch BID, National Star, Scala, Worcester BOSCH, Worcester BID Worcestershire County Cricket Club, Benniman Ltd, CIPP.

3.3. Collaboration

The College collaborates with other local providers to review provision and identify any collective actions planned to better meet local needs.

There are two other Further Education colleges in Worcestershire: Kidderminster College (part of Newcastle College Group) and Pershore College (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 collaboratively with these partners on projects and has included over recent years the Strategic Development Fund and the LSIF. The Colleges and University, also collaborate to support the Integrated Care Service with their workforce strategy.

The College is leading on an Innovate Artificial Intelligence project as part of a Colleges West Midlands collaborative bid. This project involves research and then utilising this to develop training for SMEs, and teachers as part of industry updating.

A Youth Hub in Redditch operates in partnership with Worcestershire County Council and DWP, to support those aged 15 – 24 creating a one-stop-shop for young people within the district, to provide support to reduce the number of NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) and youth claimants. Hosting the Youth Hub in the College, breaks down barriers to engagement.

The College has representation on the Worcester Association of School Heads (WASH). This has led to joint working supporting students transitioning from Alternative Provision to colleges and providing opportunities for 14-16 year olds to study vocational subjects.

The College works with the University of Worcester to promote clearer progression pathways and is an official University Centre. The partnership includes working together on the University's PGCE programme where the College supplies placements to a significant number of their trainees and support with a workshop on working in FE.

The strong partnership with the University enables a range of joint activities, including shared events, guest speakers, visits, and access for both College staff and students to specialist University facilities such as The Hive, Europe's first fully integrated University and Public Library.

The College has worked with Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust to provide clinical placements for T Level Students and deliver a successful nursing cadet programme, which aims to provide a pipeline of nursing students to the University.

The College works with providers in the West Midlands who have secured Technical Excellence Colleges to enhance skills and increased capacity in the region.

The College's work in the field of blended learning, where we lead a consortium of approximately 100 FE colleges across the UK, supports the development of high-quality teaching materials to support national skills priorities.

The Principal is an Expert Advisor to Government on SEND reforms and a National Qualifications Pioneer, collaborating with others to support the effective implementation of new policy. The Principal is also Chair of the Association of Colleges Student Strategy Group, working with others in the sector to share good practice and influence Government policy.



4. Meeting National, Regional and Local Priorities

Key achievements against our 2025/26 ambitions are detailed below.

Our aims	Our achievements
Partnerships with the NHS	Launched new T Levels in Health in Redditch and Worcester Delivered Digital Skills sessions and Leadership and Management training courses to the NHS. The Tech-Enabled Care Academy is fully integrated into study programmes in health. New Cadet Programme in partnership with ICB and NHS launched to provide outstanding work experience to young people. Overall impact: strengthened partnerships leading to collaborative projects, greater opportunities for students and the opportunity to support the NHS to upskill their existing workforce. Students even more prepared for future careers including understanding of tech-enabled care. Student numbers in health and care increased by 40 learners.
Increase our offer in construction	Electrical Installation Apprenticeship – launched. Launched new Property Maintenance provision Overall impact – expanded the number of student numbers undertaking construction at the College by 26. We will use the updated figures in the Autumn from RCU Vector to consider if the number of learners across the region has grown from 810 16–19 year olds in the LSIP region. Across both campuses there has been an increase of 15 adult learners in 2025/26 in comparison to 2024/25.
Expand our offer in engineering; and higher-level qualifications in Redditch	New partnership formed with Redditch United FC to increase the number of higher-level learners in Sport from 24 to 32 in 2026/27. New HND Public Services enrolling for 2026/27. New HTQ in Engineering in place ready for 2026/27. Overall impact: The number of learners studying at HoW Redditch Campus is predicted to increase by 12 in 2026/27 supporting more local learners achieving a higher-level qualification. The number of Engineering learners studying HE is forecast to increase by 3% in 26/27.
Support the West Midlands Combined Authority in their mission to reduce youth unemployment	Achieved 72% progression into sustained employment against the WMCA target of 65%. Maths and English provision within the WMCA area has a projected achievement rate of 95% Continuing focus to respond to youth unemployment rates across the region.
Continue to enhance our collaboration with employers further increasing curriculum design, work encounters, co-assessment/delivery and industry updating opportunities.	Continued to increase employer engagement. New industry updating day added to College CPD programme for all lecturers. Overall impact - Employers engagement in curriculum design, work encounters, co assessment/ delivery in every curriculum area of the College, strengthening the relevance and links to local skills needs and jobs. This will ensure that learner destinations remain strong. Recognised as ‘Strong’ for Skills by Ofsted. 616 hours of industry upskilling undertaken by staff, to ensure their teaching remains industry relevant.

Expand opportunities for adults with a focus on Skills for Employment, Community Development and Lifelong Learning	Delivered 15 sector-based work programmes with all vacancies available being filled. Vacancies filled included; roles in care, retail and business administration. Developed and delivered bespoke training using tailored learning funding in digital and AI, leadership and management and social media marketing for employers including the NHS and Worcester City Council. Overall impact - The full allocation of adult skills funding, WMCA funding and tailored learning was utilised in 2025/26.
Support the Government's clean energy mission	Continued development with Act on Energy regarding Energy Advisor Programme. Commenced estates work on HoW Sustainable Green Skills Centre in Worcester.
Seek to further reduce NEET numbers through increased 14 – 16 provision	Cohorts of Tudor Grange and South Bromsgrove High School (17) learners engaged to study carpentry for half a day per week. Overall impact: The schools report improved engagement with school lessons, improved attendance and improved behaviours. Learners say: "I come into school because I don't want to miss construction." "I feel calmer after being there." "I've stayed out of trouble more since starting it." "I want to do this when I leave school." Two more schools intend to join this provision in 2026/27.
Work with National Star College, to expand our SEN provision	Continuing to explore opportunities for expansion in Redditch Overall impact - Number of learners increased by over 100% in Worcester as per the business plan enabling more learners with complex needs to study locally, at a lower cost.
Develop a plan to increase enrolments in digital	Increased opportunity to enhance digital skills have been created across the College. This has led to increased part time Adult enrolments and increased activity with employers around digital skills like AI. In Creative Digital Media department there has been a coordinated recruitment and onboarding offer designed to boost enrolment and retention: sustained early engagement, strengthened pre start onboarding and clear progression motivation This is underpinned by a future proofed curriculum aligned to qualification reform and strong employer validation, ensuring learners see clear pathways, industry relevance, and confidence in progression from day one. There are 46 more learners on digital courses this year compared to 2024/25.

Meet industry and sector needs through expanding our provision	New L4 Aesthetics course launched ready for enrolments in 2026/27 New barbering course launched New Women's Football Programme launched Property Maintenance launched Electrical Installation and Maintenance Apprenticeship Overall impact: These new courses, along with expansion of existing courses have seen the College student numbers increase by 336
Continue to be ambitious for our learners with improvements in achievement rates.	The number of courses above National Average alongside improved Apprenticeship achievement rates was reflected in the Ofsted report following the inspection in March 2026. Further improvements are expected for the 3rd consecutive year. Overall impact: More learners achieve their qualifications and secure higher grades. 16-18 achievement is expected to improve to 84% for 2025/26, sustaining the improvement from 74% in 2022/23 to 82% in 2024/25. Adult regulated qualification achievement is expected to reach 88%, maintaining the annual 2 percentage point increase seen since 2022/23. Apprenticeship achievement rates increased to 68.1% and improvement of 9.1% on 2023/24 and above the National Average of 65.4%.
Expand our partnerships and provision with local and regional Job Centre Plus Centres	Improved relationships with regional DWP in The Shires and the West Midlands. Overall impact: 15 Sector Work-based Academy Programmes delivered. Vacancies successfully recruited to including teaching assistants, roles in care, retail and business admin.



PLAN FOR 2026/27

The College's skills objectives for 2026/27 are aligned to the overall strategic objectives with a particular emphasis on purpose, partnership, potential and planet. These skills objectives are relevant and where possible, aligned to the Government's Industrial Strategy, and are areas where vacancies in the region are expected to increase and will provide opportunities for employment in key growth areas. The skills objectives will also support the delivery of the LSIP priorities in the region. Our skills and accountability targets for 2026/27 are detailed below:

ACCESS, INCLUSION AND PARTICIPATION

1. Subject to funding, collaborate with DWP, to expand the College's offer for NEETs aged 16-18 and unemployed adults and additionally increase capacity for 14-16 provision to support schools whilst continuing to host and work collectively with the Youth Hub in Redditch.
2. The College will utilise the Inclusive Mainstream Fund to further strengthen its capacity to support learners with additional needs within high-quality mainstream provision. This will support our strategic objective to improve access, inclusion and participation, particularly in response to increasing demand for SEND provision and the need to remove barriers for vulnerable and disadvantaged learners. Funding will be targeted to enhance teaching practice, support effective transitions into and through the College, and enable learners to engage, progress and achieve within vocational and technical programmes. This will align with our broader commitment to ensure all students, regardless of starting point, are able to develop the skills, behaviours and confidence required for employment and progression. In preparation for SEND reforms, the fund will support workforce development and strengthen inclusive approaches across curriculum areas, ensuring that support is embedded within mainstream delivery.
3. Further expand SEND capacity and provision, including in partnerships with National Star to meet the needs of the region.

COMMUNITY AND CIVIC CONTRIBUTION

4. Strengthen community and civic engagement and extend the reach of the College by increasing the use of college facilities for community benefit, raising student awareness of and participation in volunteering and community based projects, and supporting activity that benefits local communities. This will contribute to civic pride and community cohesion, students' readiness for work, while also encouraging increased staff engagement in local initiatives and improving understanding of community and sector needs.

PRIORITY SECTORS

5. Further expand capacity for learners studying Health and Social Care, including investment in the College estate where appropriate.
6. Continue to deliver and increase capacity to support businesses through short courses in leadership and management, including exploring viability of new modular apprenticeship units in AI, and enhance communications to improve awareness, understanding and access. This includes working with the new Growth Hub Account Manager to strengthen two way referrals, encourage greater business engagement, increase take up of HR and people management support through the Growth Hub, and improve overall system navigability.
7. Launch HoW Sustainable Green Skills Centre and develop a programme to embed modern and low-carbon construction across all construction courses, alongside further opportunities for adults to upskill within the construction sector.
8. Review and, where appropriate, adapt the College's offer in Birmingham and the West Midlands to align with WMCA priority sectors and targets.
9. Increase the development, competence and confidence of digital skills to support the LSIP's priority of improving digital literacy.

APPRENTICESHIPS

10. Grow apprenticeship numbers and strengthen the College's reputation as a sector leader. This includes the introduction of new standards: Property Maintenance Operative L2, Administration Assistant L2 and Multi Channel Marketer L3, supporting increased access to entry-level employment opportunities for young people.
11. Engage fully in the region wide campaign to increase engineering apprenticeships and continue to grow Level 4 pathways within this sector.

HIGHER LEVEL SKILLS

12. Grow higher level programmes to increase the number of learners studying at Level 4 and Level 5, in line with Government priorities. This includes the launch of Level 4 Access to Aesthetics, HND Public Services and HTQ in Engineering.

WIDER SYSTEM ENGAGEMENT

13. Enhance support for schools and parents in relation to Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG), supporting achievement of Gatsby Benchmarks with a particular focus on identified 'cold spots'. This includes myth busting with parents and carers around FE, post 16 and post 18 pathways.
14. Continue to grow employer engagement in activities that support students by providing clear, practical and manageable ways for employers to engage with the College.
15. As a listed DfE Post 16 Qualifications Pioneer College, prepare for the implementation of qualifications reform and work with colleges and partners to support effective communication. This includes ensuring each qualification has a clear purpose and progression pathway.
16. Work with colleges across the West Midlands to reduce NEETs and improve skills, contributing to the success of the technical excellence colleges in the region.
17. Strengthen strategic alignment with evolving local and regional governance structures by proactively engaging with emerging authorities (including potential Mayoral Combined Authority arrangements) and existing partnerships, ensuring the College's curriculum and skills offer remains responsive to changing economic priorities and maximises opportunities for regional collaboration and investment.



5. Local Needs Duty

Key conclusions

In response to The Skills Act (2022), the Corporation (Board of Governors) at the Heart of Worcestershire College has conducted an annual review of the College's approach, determining how well the curriculum meets local skills needs and identifying new areas of focus to ensure relevancy to the region's employers.

The Corporation's review of its provision concludes that the College does meet local, regional and national needs, operating in almost all key priority sectors. Where the College does not provide an offer, another provider in the region does or the College continues to explore opportunities and market need.

The College has a robust curriculum planning process based on guidance from the FE Commissioner's team. The use of the balanced scorecard approach means that decisions are made about the future curriculum offer using robust data and market insight.

The College has significantly strengthened partnerships with employers and other stakeholders, and this was recognised within the full Ofsted inspection in 2026 which stated the College "have devised and implemented a highly effective skills strategy that places stakeholders at the centre of curriculum design, teaching and review. Leaders have assessed the impact of this strategy accurately, elevating the focus on subject-level skills development and re-establishing and strengthening the college as an anchor organisation in the region."

The College, as the largest provider of 16-19 education in Worcestershire, is supporting large numbers of young people to gain the skills needed by employers. This includes those with lower levels of qualifications particularly in the north where in Redditch the market share of 16-19 year olds is 39%.

Student destinations are also positive with ongoing analysis of the 2023/24 cohort indicating that for the Study Programme learners, 98% were in 'positive' destinations – including further study and employment – (compared to 97% in the previous year). Of the adult provision, 98% were in 'positive' destinations, compared to 98% in the previous year.

Agility remains key for the College to identify and respond to the needs of business and emerging markets including modern and low-carbon utilities, AI and applied digital skills.



6. Corporation Statement

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 7th July 2026.

The Corporation of Heart of Worcestershire College, confirms that it has fulfilled the statutory Local Needs Duty.



David Ash
Chair of Governors



Michelle Dowse
Principal and CEO

7. Supporting Documents

Local Skills Report

[**WLEP-A4-Landscape-Local-Skills-Report-update-2022-FINAL-Version.pdf**](#)

Worcestershire LEP Plan for Growth

[**WLEP-Plan-for-Growth-2020-2040-FULL-VERSION.pdf**](#)

West Midlands Combined Authority Employment and Skills Strategy 2024 – 2027

[**wmca-employment-and-skills-strategy-2024-2027.pdf**](#)

West Midlands State of the Region 2024-25 WMCA

[**Executive Summary**](#)

[**WLEP-Economy-Report-2026-LR.pdf**](#)

Heart of Worcestershire College Ofsted inspection report March 2026

[**Heart of Worcestershire College - Open - Find an Inspection Report - Ofsted**](#)

Heart of Worcestershire College Report and Financial Statements 2024

[**financial-statements-2425.pdf**](#)

HoW College Mission Accepted

[**howcollege.ac.uk/media/42ep3l34/how-5-missions-brochure-2025.pdf**](https://howcollege.ac.uk/media/42ep3l34/how-5-missions-brochure-2025.pdf)

West Midlands salary stats

[**adzuna.co.uk/jobs/salaries/west-midlands**](https://adzuna.co.uk/jobs/salaries/west-midlands)

Salary Stats

[**adzuna.co.uk/jobs/salaries**](https://adzuna.co.uk/jobs/salaries)

Worcestershire salary stats

[**adzuna.co.uk/jobs/salaries/worcestershire**](https://adzuna.co.uk/jobs/salaries/worcestershire)

WLEP Economy Report 2025

[**wlep.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/WLEP-Economy-Report-2025-Final-Version.pdf**](https://wlep.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/WLEP-Economy-Report-2025-Final-Version.pdf)

West Midlands State of the Region 2024-2025

[**wmca.org.uk/documents/research-and-insights/west-midlands-state-of-the-region-2024-2025/west-midlands-state-of-the-region-2024-2025/executive-summary/**](https://wmca.org.uk/documents/research-and-insights/west-midlands-state-of-the-region-2024-2025/west-midlands-state-of-the-region-2024-2025/executive-summary/)

Business Statistics 2023 to 2024

[**birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/file/2868/business_statistics_2022_to_2023**](https://birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/file/2868/business_statistics_2022_to_2023)

Birmingham business count update 2024

[**birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/file/8449/birmingham_business_count_update_2017**](https://birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/file/8449/birmingham_business_count_update_2017)

Invest 2035: the UK's modern industrial strategy

[**gov.uk/government/consultations/invest-2035-the-uks-modern-industrial-strategy/invest-2035-the-uks-modern-industrial-strategy**](https://gov.uk/government/consultations/invest-2035-the-uks-modern-industrial-strategy/invest-2035-the-uks-modern-industrial-strategy)

Colleges Worcestershire

[**localskillsimprovementfund.co.uk/**](https://localskillsimprovementfund.co.uk/)

AI Innovation Hub

[**innovationhub.howcollege.ac.uk/**](https://innovationhub.howcollege.ac.uk/)

