

Accountability Statement and Local Needs Duty 2025/26

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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 skill 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 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;
- 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 new 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 and 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), as well as 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 6000 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 33% studying at Level 1 and below, 32% at Level 2 and 35% at Level 3. The percentage of Level 1 learners is higher than that of the 17% average at General Further Education Colleges. Approximately 600 apprentices study at the College, 51% at Intermediate Level, 42% Advanced and 7% studying higher level apprenticeships. Adult learners study a wide range of courses from entry level to Higher Education with 11% studying at Entry Level, 14% at Level 1, 30% at Level 2 and 45% at Level 3+.

About Us

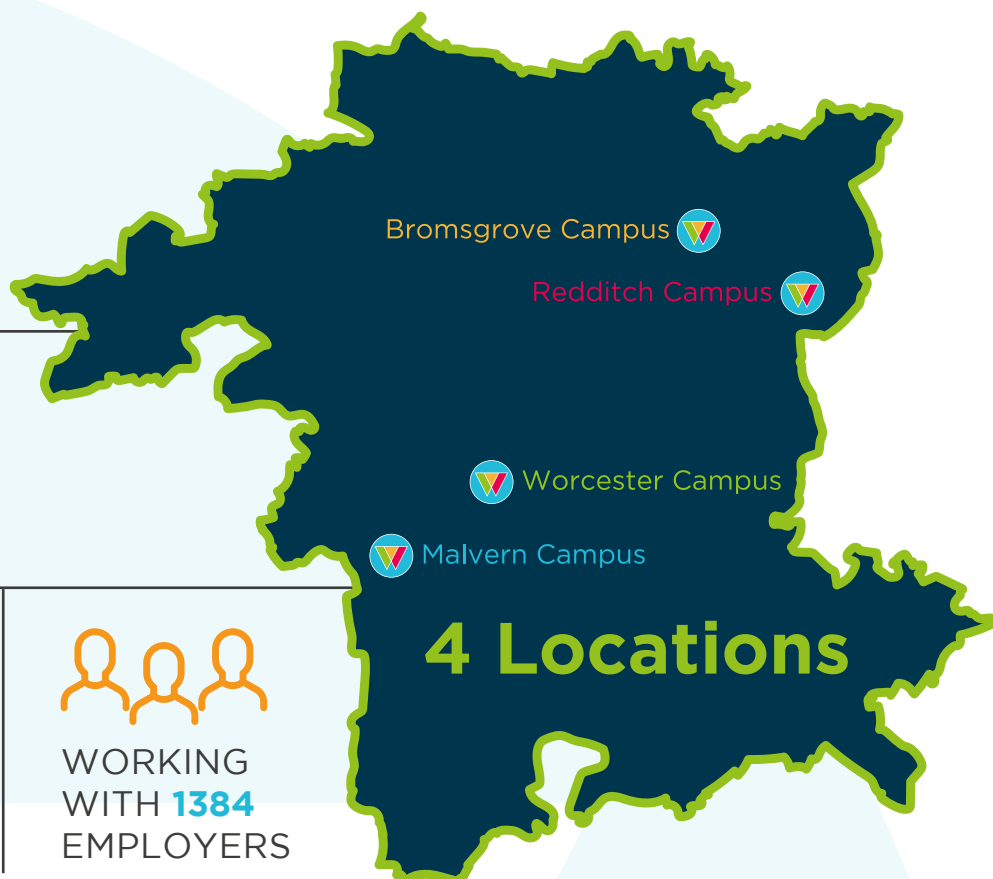
 **£31M**
TURNOVER

OVER
650
STAFF 

Largest provider in Worcestershire of 16 - 18, adult and apprenticeship provision.



WORKING
WITH **1384**
EMPLOYERS

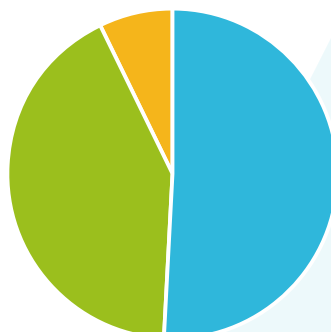


**HoW College
Learners by level**



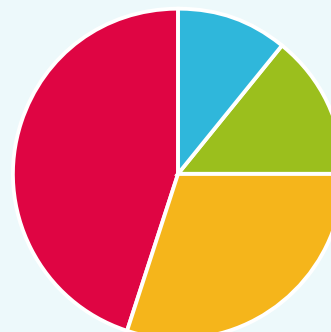
- Level 1 and below - **33%**
- Level 2 - **32%**
- Level 3 - **35%**

**HoW College
Apprentices by level**



- Intermediate - **51%**
- Advanced - **42%**
- Higher - **7%**

**Higher
Education**



- Entry Level - **11%**
- Level 1 - **14%**
- Level 2 - **30%**
- Level 3+ - **45%**

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 students to the College include those who live in the West Midlands conurbation, where delivery involves the WMCA area for 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 2025). 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, 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 35,000 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 2025**).



2.3. Economic and Social Characteristics that inform skills needs

2.3.1. Worcestershire



Population

- 614,185 residents (2023, an increase of 3.7% since 2016).
- Population is expected to increase to 639,000 by 2030.
- Working age population (Census 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.



Economy

- Worcestershire is a £15.6bn economy (2022).
- Economy grown on average by 3.5% a year from 2013 to 2022, representing an increase of £3.8bn to 2022.
- Productivity in Worcestershire is below average at £26,234, compared to West Midlands £26,315 and England £32,867 (ONS 2022)



Employment

- 263,000 jobs. An increase of 28,000 since 2013. Further growth predicted of circa 7,500 over 5 years.
- 26,005 businesses in Worcestershire (2024). This has fallen by 3.3% since 2023.
- 115 high growth enterprises (2023).
- 89% of the county's businesses employ 1-9 people (2024), and 78% are micro businesses with less than 5 employees.
- Workplace jobs increasing with the largest increases over the last five years in Health and Social Care and Business Administration and Support services, both increasing by 4,000.
- High employment at 80.3% of the population being economically active (October 2023 - September 2024) and low unemployment at 3.2% (March 2025).
- According to the Worcestershire County Economic Summary, the number of claimants aged 18-24 stood at 2,190 March 2025.



Earnings

- The ONS statistics for earnings and employment for Pay as you Earn Real Time Information April 2025, indicate that the median pay for employees is less than the UK, but higher than the West Midlands. **Source: Earnings and employment from Pay As You Earn Real Time Information, UK: April 2025 - Office for National Statistics**
- According to the Annual survey of hours and earnings (ONS), data on workplace earnings suggests that although resident earnings are high in Bromsgrove and Malvern Hills, workplace earnings are below the Worcestershire average.



Educational attainment

- Percentage of the Worcestershire working age (aged 16-64) population with a degree or higher is 43.7% (43.2%-degree qualification rate for England). (Source 2022 Annual Population Survey ONS).
- 6% of the population have no qualifications and 9.8% have qualifications up to level 1 only.



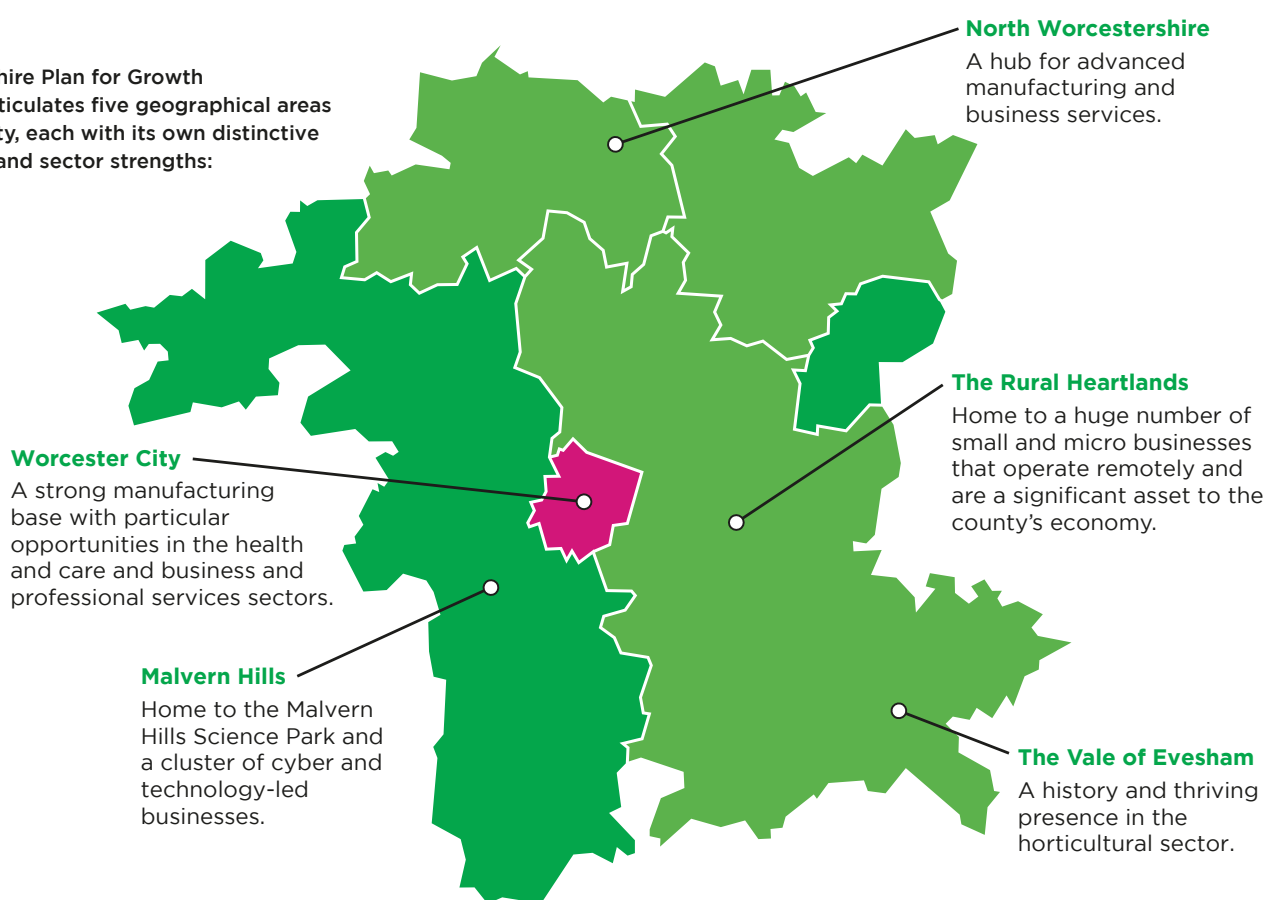
Deprivation

- 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. (Source: The English Indices of Deprivation 2019).

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)

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 compared to 67.4% in England. It is estimated that 164,000 residents in the WMCA area aged between 16 and 64 have no qualifications, this is 1.1% of residents aged 16 to 64.

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



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 (2025)	Regional Jobs (2030)	% Jobs Growth (2025-2030)	Annual Openings	Median Annual Wages
Business, Administration and Law	98,459	100,660	2.2%	3,417	£33,526.32
Retail and Commercial Enterprise	71,012	72,912	2.7%	2,517	£21,647.94
Health, Public Services and Care	58,948	59,893	1.6%	2,178	£29,151.12
Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies	38,213	39,029	2.1%	1,324	£34,267.58
Construction, Planning and the Built Environment	19,984	20,644	3.3%	771	£34,026.83
Education and Training	18,710	19,042	1.8%	704	£31,790.10
Science and Mathematics	17,655	18,039	2.2%	637	£40,198.90
Information and Communication Technology	13,403	13,797	2.9%	455	£43,490.39
Arts, Media and Publishing	13,098	13,632	4.1%	508	£41,142.36
Agriculture, Horticulture and Animal Care	11,475	12,078	5.3%	569	£26,926.70
Leisure, Travel and Tourism including hospitality and catering	7,751	8,151	5.2%	346	£23,136.19
Social Sciences	878	852	-2.5%	0	£27,125.00
Languages, Literature and Culture	295	295	-0.3%	9	£30,679.10
History, Philosophy and Theology	125	121	-2.5%	0	£24,087.10
Preparation for Life and Work	0	0	0.0%	0	£0.00
Regional Average			2%		£31,513

Average

Above Average

Below Average

Employment by occupation data shows that 'Professional Occupations' make up the largest (52,311) occupational employment groups in the county. 36,897 residents are in elementary occupations and 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 69.1%. These roles are in personal care, warehousing and to some degree manufacturing,

Over the last five years the largest increase in jobs has been in Accommodation & Food Services, which has increased by 4,000. The largest fall in jobs has been in the Business Administration & Support Services sector, where jobs decreased by 3,000 between 2018 and 2023. Yet, the County has nearly double the national average of the workforce working in manufacturing, engineering and production, areas of skills shortage and therefore the provision of people entering these careers is crucial to the future workforce. **(Source: LEP Worcestershire economy report 2025).**

2.4. Regional Priorities

Worcestershire LEP priority sectors

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:

Resolving short-term priorities	Equipping workers with technical skills & knowledge needed to alleviate employers' skills shortfalls and enable individuals to progress in their career.
	Developing the common skills and workplace behaviours that will promote employability and progression opportunities.
Developing long-term plans	Promoting a culture where business leaders recognise the strategic importance of proactively developing people & talent to the productivity of their businesses.
	Developing the workforce planning capabilities of managers to enable businesses to identify their skills needs and providers to adapt training accordingly.
Building partnerships	Encouraging a collaborative skills system in which provision can be tailored to the needs of employers.



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		✓			Under review
Manufacturing	✓		✓		
Manufacture of future housing		✓			
Manufacture of Electric light vehicles and associated battery devices		✓			
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.			
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.			
Logistics and Distribution	Currently being reviewed by adult provision.			
Manufacturing	✓	✓	✓	
Manufacture of future housing	Delivered by the Black Country and Marches Institute of Technology.			
Manufacture of Electric light vehicles and associated battery devices	Delivered by colleges in Birmingham.			
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 2024/25 identifies the following compared to the Industrial Strategy growth and priority sectors for 2025/25:

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	65.3%	SEN, Adults Skills, ESOL, Tailored Learning, Progressions, Sport, Uniformed Public Services, Hair and Beauty, Travel and Tourism, Hospitality and Catering.
Part-time	44%	
Apprenticeships	89.6%	
HE	94.6%	

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. 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, a number of factors inform skills needs:

- Propensity of SMEs;
- Proximity to Birmingham;
- Transport challenges from the north to south of the region;
- A higher number of claimants than pre-covid with higher numbers of youth unemployment;
- Ageing demographic forecasts with one in three of the current workforce aged 50 or over;
- Priority to improve the economic activity rates in the older workforce;
- Employer requirement for common skills and workplace behaviours;
- 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;
- LEP, WMCA and LSIP priorities;
- Demand for jobs and expected growth in Business, Administration and Law, Retail and Commercial Enterprises; Health, Public Services and Care; and Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies;
- Expected job growth in Construction; Science and Maths; ICT; Arts, Media and Publishing, Leisure; and Travel and Tourism.



3. Developing the Accountability Statement

3.1. Approach

Heart of Worcestershire College is 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.
- 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.
- Utilising labour market information such as Lightcast and RCU Vector to identify key employment; opportunities in Worcestershire over the next decade.
- Data from the FE and FESIT dashboards.
- Undertaking a research project with Lightcast on the future needs of key sectors.
- Gathering employer views at meetings throughout the year as well as annual engagement to support curriculum planning and design.
- Developing a balanced scorecard approach to curriculum planning to assess quality, demand, skills needs, 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..

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 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 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.

Chairs of Governors and Principals from Worcestershire meet quarterly for updates on regional skills needs and to consider collaborative opportunities.

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 has been established 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 to deliver a successful pilot Royal College of Nursing Cadet programme in Redditch, which aims to provide a pipeline of nursing students to the University.

The College's work in the field of blended learning, where we lead a consortium of over 160 FE colleges across the UK, supports the development of high-quality teaching materials to support national skills priorities.



4. Meeting National, Regional and Local Priorities

Key achievements against our 2024/25 ambitions are detailed below.

Our aims	Our achievements
Development of employability skills (LSIP)	New College 5Cs Core Employability Skills approach endorsed by the Chamber of Commerce and embedded in all programmes. Most learners are able to articulate the 5Cs and how they have developed these skills. The 5Cs programme gained national coverage and widespread sector interest.
New Business Hub (LSIF)	Launched and used by 20+ employers. Website with courses launched and being promoted to employers. - Home Local Skills Improvement Fund.
Explore new markets for Green Skills	Energy Advisor programme developed now seeking funding for pilot. One short course developed and delivered to seven employers. Two new courses being finalised with Redditch Borough Council. HoW College in top 10 in SDG Teach In for 3rd year running and won the Planet Earth Games Challenge for the most amount of sustainable activity for a medium-sized college.
Deliver AI COE project	Research completed and website launched. Impact in 2025/26. UKRI AI Innovation. Secured an additional year of funding for further research and development work.
Utilise ASF	On track to utilise all ASF Funding. Adult enrolments in health and social care increased by 3.3% compared to nationally 0.5%. Developed online offer with a specific focus on health and social care. New Level 1 award in Cyber security launched with 24 students. New construction provision added for 46 students.
Promote health and social care sector	Further enhanced the educational partnership relationship with the NHS and Integrated Care Board leading to the delivery of an RCN Cadet Nursing Scheme to 29 students. Health and Social Care and Media students supported the NHS with their workforce attraction programme. New tech enabled course available.
Enhance links with employers (Ofsted)	Three strategic partners. Every curriculum area engaged with employers for work encounters and curriculum design.
Expand SEN provision	National Star at HoW College launched in Worcester and growth forecasted for year 2. Increased High Needs numbers from 250 to 293.

The College's skills objectives for 2025/26 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. Our skills and accountability targets for 2025/26 are detailed below:

We will:

1. Continue to develop strong partnerships with the NHS and support them to address their workforce needs through the provision of a T Level in health, (adult nursing pathway), expanding the Cadet Programme, looking at opportunities to further utilise our Tech-enabled Care Academy utilising various funding streams, and to collaborate with the University of Worcester to further enhance our partnership. Through our ongoing collaboration with the NHS, we will also explore their wider workforce needs and assess where we can offer support – for example, in areas such as Healthcare Science, where recruitment remains particularly challenging. In addition, we will launch a new Level 3 Counselling Therapies course in Redditch, providing progression for Level 2 learners. A new Level 2 Counselling offer will be introduced at Worcester, subject to demand. We will launch a new Access to HE online programme for nursing and midwifery, building on a pilot in 2024/25. This will provide opportunities for learners in Worcestershire and the West Midlands.
2. Increase our offer in construction through the implementation of a new apprenticeship in Electrical Installation. This will see the number of apprenticeship opportunities for employers in the region increased. We will increase the number of adults training in Electrical Installation utilising our new facility in Bromsgrove.
3. Expand our offer in engineering and higher-level qualifications, with the provision of a new HTQ with mechanical and electrical pathways for both Level 4 and Level 5 entry. We will also explore collaboration opportunities with other providers for higher level courses, including exploring opportunities with the University of Worcester to encourage more people in Redditch, an HE cold spot, to progress to Level 4+.
4. Support the West Midlands Combined Authority in their mission to reduce youth unemployment and ensuring everyone has a job that pays well, supported through healthier and thriving communities. This will see a revised strategy which will explore support for those in the Health and Social Care sector with a focus on supporting people into nursing, new and revised into employment programmes with wraparound support and an increased focus on supporting the achievement of Level 3.
5. Continue to enhance our collaboration with employers, further increasing the numbers involved in curriculum design, work encounters and co-assessment/delivery. In 2025/26, we will expand opportunities for HoW staff to return to industry for upskilling. We will also increase the number of employers who collaborate with the College in strategic partnership programmes.
6. Expand opportunities for adults to enhance or gain key employment sector skills through classroom learning and online courses. Implement our new Adult learning strategy which focuses on Skills for Employment, Community Development and Lifelong Learning including launching a small number of online courses to support those learners who face barriers to in person delivery.
7. Support the Government's clean energy mission by continuing to find funding to launch the energy advisor offer, in association with Act on Energy.
8. Seek to further reduce NEET numbers in the region through the provision of more 14 – 16 provision in partnership with schools and new courses for learners leaving school with low or no qualifications.
9. Work with National Star College, to expand our SEN Provision through our facility in Worcester, and explore opportunities for the north of the region for 2026/27. We will also continue to work closely with Worcestershire County Council to ensure that the College's SEN provision remains responsive to the needs of both students and parents, as an integral part of our commitment to inclusion.
10. Develop a plan to increase enrolments in digital over the next 3 years exploring opportunities to deliver professional qualifications and, through the College West Midlands and WMCA Innovate Project, support more employers with the adoption of AI.
11. Meet industry and sector needs through the provision of a new Level 3 Access to Aesthetic course to be followed by a Level 4 course in 2026/27, offering a part time barbering course for adults, and to offer a new Women's Football Academy programme in sport. We will also launch a new partnership with Redditch United Football Club providing further opportunities to young people in the north of the region.
12. Continue to be ambitious for our learners improving outcomes so that all courses are above the national average for achievement.
13. Continue to expand our partnerships and provision with local and regional Job Center Plus Centres, to provide education and training programmes to prepare more people to progress to work, in line with the Government's strategy to 'Get Britain Working'.

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 increasingly strong partnership arrangements which have been further expanded since the last full Ofsted inspection in 2023 which stated – "Leaders have positioned themselves sensibly with a range of key strategic stakeholders, such as the Chamber of Commerce. They are members of several strategic boards that include a range of stakeholders. Leaders have an awareness of key priority sector areas within the geographical areas they serve, such as in health and engineering."

The College, as the largest provider of 16 – 18 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 – 18-year-olds is 40%.

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 data analysis.



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 **XX** June 2025.

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

Worcestershire's Local Skills Improvement Plan

[Worcestershire's Local Skills Improvement Plan \(hwchamber.co.uk\)](https://www.hwchamber.co.uk)

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-2025-Final-Version.pdf](#)

Heart of Worcestershire College Ofsted inspection report November 2023

[50233070 \(ofsted.gov.uk\)](#)

Heart of Worcestershire College Report and Financial Statements 2024

[HoW-financial-statements-year-ended-31-july-2023-signed-copy.pdf \(HoWcollege.ac.uk\)](#)

HoW College Mission Accepted

howcollege.ac.uk/media/42ep3l34/how-5-missions-brochure-2025.pdf

West Midlands salary stats

adzuna.co.uk/jobs/salaries/west-midlands

Salary Stats

adzuna.co.uk/jobs/salaries

Worcestershire salary stats

adzuna.co.uk/jobs/salaries/worcestershire

WLEP Economy Report 2025

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/

Business Statistics 2023 to 2024

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

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

Colleges Worcestershire

localskillsimprovementfund.co.uk/

AI Innovation Hub

innovationhub.howcollege.ac.uk/

