



Buckinghamshire  
College Group

# **LOCAL NEEDS DUTY & ANNUAL ACCOUNTABILITY AGREEMENT 2025-26**



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## PURPOSE

### Introduction and Background

The Government set out its vision to transform further education in the Skills for Jobs White Paper (2021) and, as part of the reforms, colleges and other in-scope providers are required to submit an annual accountability agreement focusing on what and how they intend to deliver in support of local, regional and national needs. This accountability agreement sets out a number of outcome targets focussed on curriculum changes and adaptations to provision planned for the coming year. These plans and targets articulate how Buckinghamshire College Group will contribute to sector priorities outlined in Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs) and to national skills priorities.

**Our Mission**

# **TRANSFORMING FUTURES THROUGH LEARNING**

**Our Vision**

We will deliver excellence in employer focused technical, vocational and professional education, improving life chances for individuals and supporting communities throughout Buckinghamshire and beyond to realise their career ambitions.



## **Buckinghamshire College Group Strategic Values and Goals**

Buckinghamshire College Group was formed in 2017 as a result of a merger between Aylesbury College and Amersham and Wycombe College and has recently refreshed its strategic plan to take the College to 2028. Buckinghamshire College Group provides high quality technical, vocational and professional education enabling young people, apprentices and adults to achieve their career and life goals. We play a key part in Buckinghamshire's Place Based Leadership approach to driving economic growth and prosperity for all, across the county.

### **Our strategic values drive what and how we do things and have been developed in collaboration with staff, students and stakeholders:**

#### **AMBITION**

We are highly ambitious and support everyone to achieve more than they ever thought possible

#### **INNOVATION**

We are continuously improving and embrace the power to think differently about how we learn and work

#### **INTEGRITY**

We operate with honesty and fairness and deliver on our promises

#### **RESPECT**

We value diversity and the opinions and contributions of others, acting with kindness and respect for all

## **Our Strategic Plan 2023-28 sets out five clear strategic goals:**

### **1. Create exceptional learning experiences for all students**

We will place learning at the heart of what we do and maintain an unwavering focus on developing exceptional and inclusive learning experiences for our students, ensuring the very best outcomes for all.

### **2. Develop and deliver a future proofed, careers-focused curriculum**

We will closely align our curriculum with the region's current and future skills needs, ensuring that our students progress positively in life and their future careers.

### **3. Empower and support our people to thrive and achieve personal and professional goals**

We will build an inclusive culture to attract, retain and develop high performing staff who feel empowered and supported to innovate, question and build positive career paths.

### **4. Strengthen our financial resilience supporting investment for a sustainable future**

We will build our financial resilience to enable investment in our estate and resources, reducing carbon emissions and ensuring that stakeholders benefit from excellent learning environments both now and into the future.

### **5. Grow our impact in the local and regional economy and enhance our reputation**

We will operate at the heart of the Region's skills community developing strong employer and community partnerships and a reputation for excellence.



# CONTEXT AND PLACE

## Buckinghamshire College Group

Buckinghamshire College Group operates from three main campuses in Aylesbury, Flackwell Heath (Wycombe) and Amersham and has exciting plans to transition from Flackwell Heath and Amersham to a brand-new purpose-built campus right in the heart of High Wycombe in 2027. Buckinghamshire College Group works closely in partnership with key stakeholders to ensure that we continue to meet the economic, skills and social needs of the Buckinghamshire community.

In 2020, former Buckinghamshire district councils and county council came together to form a single Unitary Authority, Buckinghamshire Council. Buckinghamshire is well connected to the existing road and rail network, including the M40, London underground and national rail services which run north to south. High Speed Rail 2 (HS2) is under construction through the county, from London to Birmingham. East West Rail (EWR) is under construction to connect Oxford to Milton Keynes and Bedford. HS2 and EWR cross at Calvert in the north of the county.

## The area we serve

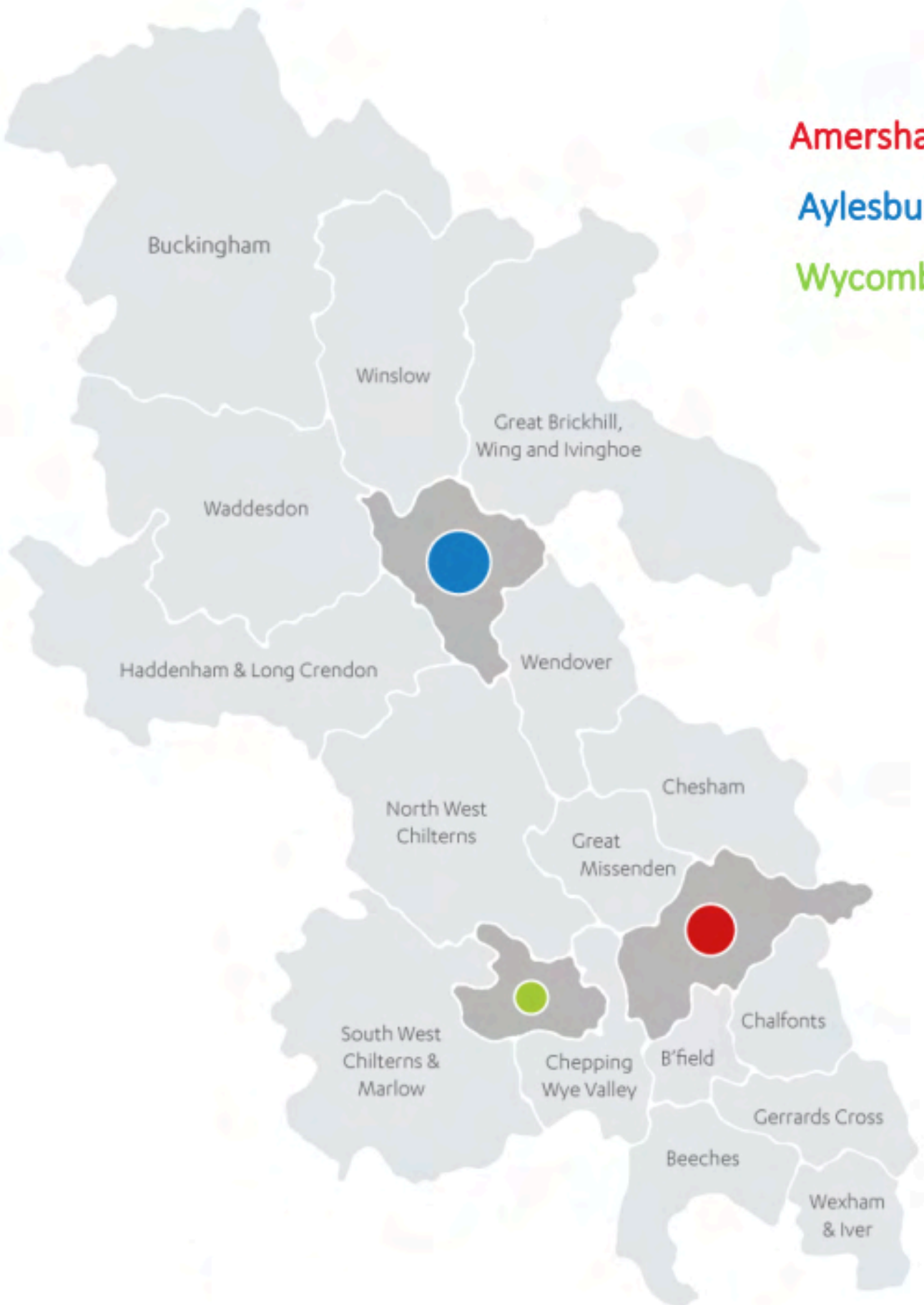
Buckinghamshire is one of the fastest-growing counties in England, with significant implications for education institutions and local infrastructure planning. As of mid-2023, the county's population was estimated at 566,700, a 9.5% increase since 2011. The former district of Aylesbury Vale has seen a projected population growth of 10.2% from 2020 to 2030, the highest among the county's former districts. Buckinghamshire is projected to see a 20.3% increase in the 15 to 19 age group between 2020 and 2030, indicating one of the highest demographic increases nationally.



**Amersham**

**Aylesbury**

**Wycombe**



## Travel to Learn

Students attending Amersham and Wycombe campuses tend to travel significantly longer distances by public transport compared to those attending Aylesbury. 68% of Level 2 students at Amersham and 65% of Level 3 students travel between 60–89 minutes, with some exceeding 90 minutes. In contrast, Aylesbury students are more likely to live within 30–59 minutes of campus. Travel times also increase with course level, with Level 4+ learners averaging 94 minutes, likely due to older students being more willing or able to travel further, possibly by car. The new campus in the High Wycombe town centre is expected to improve accessibility and reduce travel times for students from key postcodes.

# LOCAL CHARACTERISTICS INFORMING SKILLS NEEDS

## Buckinghamshire Business and Economic Profile

Buckinghamshire's economy is characterised by a dominance of micro and small businesses with the highest business start-up and survival rates outside London, and over 34,000 active businesses across the county (Buckinghamshire Council, 2024), high self-employment, and significant sector strengths in creative industries, advanced manufacturing, medtech, and the space sector. Large firms, only 0.3% of the total, account for 41% of local employment.

Productivity growth has slowed in recent years, with Gross Value Added (GVA) per hour now below the national average when housing is excluded (Buckinghamshire Productivity Review, 2023). Many employers face ongoing challenges in accessing the skilled workforce they need, particularly in technical and digital roles. Buckinghamshire has the second-lowest proportion of employment in knowledge-intensive business services in the South East and a lower-than-average share of workers qualified to Level 4 and above. Buckinghamshire has one of the least self-contained labour markets in England, with a high level of commuting out of the county.

The College, through its active representation on the Growth Board, Skills Strategy Board and underpinning task and advisory groups, is well placed to contribute to the future skill agenda and economic development of the County.

## Social Needs

Buckinghamshire is an affluent county, however this overall picture masks significant variations in outcomes across the county, with some areas experiencing substantial hardship. Across multiple indices of deprivation and inequality, the wards experiencing the poorest outcomes within High Wycombe and Aylesbury areas are served by the College. 22% of Bucks residents are identified as ‘urban adversity and financially stretched’ according to Acorn household segmentation data and there is a life expectancy difference of 8 years for a woman and 6 years for a man depending on where residents live in Buckinghamshire. In response, the Council has launched Opportunity Bucks—a targeted, place-based initiative supported by the College. This collaborative programme seeks to reduce inequality and improve long-term outcomes for residents in key areas of Aylesbury, Chesham, and High Wycombe by focusing on education, employment, and community wellbeing.

## Education Profile

Buckinghamshire continues to demonstrate strong educational outcomes overall. 47.5% of residents hold a degree-level qualification or higher, compared to 43.5% nationally (DfE, 2024). At school level, 66% of pupils in Buckinghamshire achieve grades 9–5 in GCSE English and Maths, outperforming the national average of 52% (DfE, 2024). However, stark disparities persist within the county. In several of Buckinghamshire’s most deprived wards—such as parts of Aylesbury and High Wycombe—27% of residents aged 16 and over have no formal qualifications, significantly above the county-wide figure of 17% (MHCLG, 2019; ONS, 2023). These inequalities are reflected in the student intake at Buckinghamshire College Group, where 35% of 16–18-year-old learners arrive without a grade 4 or above in either GCSE English or Maths. This is notably higher than the national average of 26% for learners at general Further Education colleges (RCU MIDES, 2024).



# APPROACH TO DEVELOPING THE ANNUAL ACCOUNTABILITY STATEMENT

## 2024/25 Reflections

In 2024–25, Buckinghamshire College Group continued to deliver high-quality, inclusive, and future-focused education across its three campuses in Aylesbury, Amersham, and High Wycombe. The College’s commitment to excellence was reaffirmed in its November 2024 Ofsted inspection, where it retained a ‘Good’ overall effectiveness rating, with all areas—including adult learning, apprenticeships, and provision for learners with high needs—also rated Good.

## Key Achievements

- **Strong Ofsted Endorsement:** Ofsted praised the College’s “calm and respectful learning environment,” the “ambitious curriculum,” and the “effective support for learners with high needs”.
- **T-Level Expansion:** Successfully introduced new T-Level pathways in media, broadcast and production, and legal services, building on existing strengths in health, digital, and business.
- **Apprenticeships:** The quality of provision continues to improve, with forecast 62% overall achievement rate. Over 60% of apprentices were aged 16–18, supporting early career development with a strong focus, aligned to local and national priorities, on construction trades, building services and health and social care.
- **Adult Learning:** Over 470 adult learners accessed flexible, career-relevant courses in access to HE, accountancy, counselling, and employability programmes for the construction and education sectors, with consistently high retention and achievement rates.
- **SEND and High Needs Provision:** Supported 326 learners with high needs, including 14 on supported internships and 93 in specialist pathways, ensuring inclusive access to vocational and life skills education.
- **Employer and Community Engagement:** Strengthened partnerships with local employers and community groups, including co-delivery of training and participation in regional college skills competitions.
- **Celebrating Learner Success:** Construction students have won regional competitions, creative arts learners exhibited work publicly, and healthcare students progressed into NHS roles.

## Key Stakeholders Consulted

The College has worked closely with Buckinghamshire Business First as the Employer Representative Body to help shape the LSIP work. We have built on already strong links with key priority sector employers, Buckinghamshire County Council and other providers and have worked in partnership with the following main stakeholders in the development of this agreement:



## Post-16 Education and Training Providers

Buckinghamshire operates a mixed education economy with secondary education comprising selective grammar schools and upper schools, all of which have sixth forms, a UTC and the college itself. There is an Adult Education Service operating across Bucks, and several private training providers as well as a number of schools providing for students with learning difficulties and disabilities. The local universities offer higher level vocational degrees and degree apprenticeships with a particular focus on offering careers-related courses.

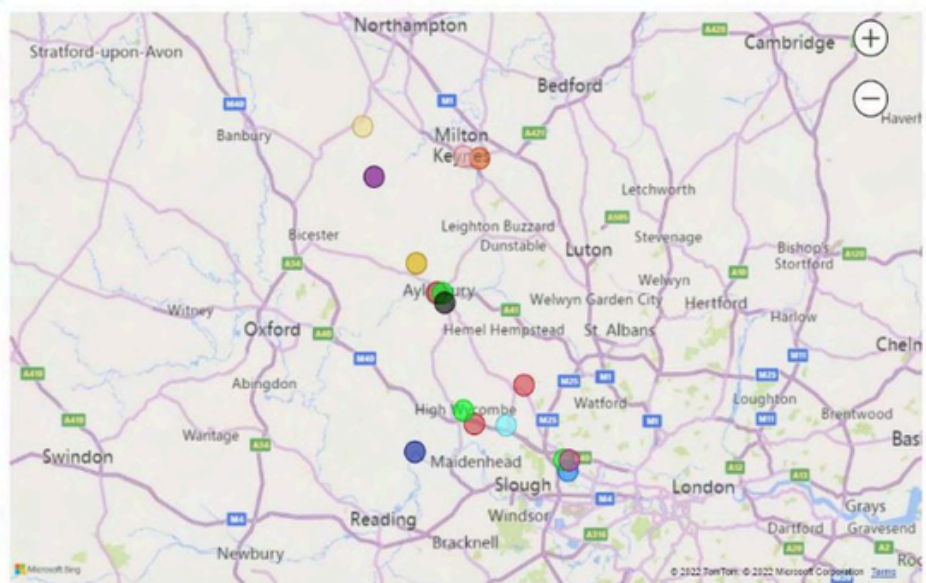
The College takes a partnership approach to working with other providers to meet skills needs and its own objectives. The College is an active member of the Buckinghamshire Business First Training Provider Forum. Through this and broader partnership working, the College is:

- Partnering with independent providers who specialise in working with those with the greatest barriers to participation to establish niche provision for young people, an 'online and on campus' adult curriculum and those specialising in support for adults seeking employment.
- Collaborating with Buckinghamshire Adult Learning to reduce unhelpful duplication of adult English and maths provision as well as identifying locations with more challenging access to, or no, local provision.
- Promoting clearer progression pathways from Buckinghamshire Adult Learning's tailored learning courses to the College's vocational and technical courses and working with Buckinghamshire New University to design T level and Apprenticeship curriculum at Level 3 directly aligned to Higher Education courses.

Training Provider Campus  
(Use Ctrl to multi select)  
All

- Brunel University
- Buckinghamshire University Technical College (U...)
- Bucks College Group (Amersham Campus)
- Bucks College Group (Aylesbury Campus)
- Bucks College Group (High Wycombe Campus)
- Bucks Construction Academy
- Bucks New University (Aylesbury Campus)
- Bucks New University (High Wycombe Campus)
- Bucks New University (Uxbridge Campus)
- Henley Business School (Greenlands Campus)
- National Film and TV School
- Open University
- Silverstone University Technical College (UTC)
- South Central Institute of Technology (Milton Ke...)
- The University of Buckingham
- University of Bedfordshire (Aylesbury Campus)
- West London Institute of Technology (Uxbridge c...

## Location of Post-16 Education & Training Establishments in Buckinghamshire



## Data Used to Inform

To inform the development of this annual accountability statement the college has utilised data from RCU vector, a comprehensive labour market intelligence tool. This resource provides detailed insights into local and regional employer demand, emerging industry trends and skills shortages. By analysing these data, the College aligns its curriculum planning and strategic priorities with the needs of the local economy, identifies gaps between current provision and labour market demand, and supports employer engagement with evidence-based decision making this ensures a responsive and forward-looking approach to addressing local skills needs and contributes to meeting regional workforce development goals. This data is supplemented with intelligence gathered directly from stakeholders and analysis of learner data over recent years.



# CONTRIBUTION TO NATIONAL, REGIONAL AND LOCAL PRIORITIES

Buckinghamshire College Group is responding to national skills priorities and those identified in the Buckinghamshire Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP).

## **Underpinning aims:**

- Use LSIP and local data to identify sector needs, integrating labour market data.
- Expand employer engagement and employers' contributions to curriculum design.
- Expand community engagement and improve access for underrepresented learners.
- Strengthen Higher Education progression pathways.
- Enhance the digital competency of learners.
- Embed sustainability in learning, skills and the College's operations.



## National and Local Skills Priorities Objectives

| National Skills Priorities | LSIP Priorities     | Objectives for 2025-26  |
|----------------------------|---------------------|---|
| Creative Industries        | Film and Television | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Secure a cornerstone employer for the T level in Media, Broadcast and Production to provide a good proportion of the industry placements.</li> <li>• Increase enrolments on creative industry courses for 2025–26, with a focus on niche programmes such as the Pinewood provision, which offer unique opportunities not available elsewhere. Strengthen the future student pipeline by establishing partnerships with industry leaders at Pinewood and other creative studios in the county. This will support a county-wide approach to the creative sector and provide a variety of pathways for school and college students to progress into employment</li> <li>• Baseline: 632 (of which 134 are at Pinewood)</li> <li>• Target: 779 (of which 222 will be at Pinewood)</li> </ul> |
| Digital Technologies       | Digital             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with Buckinghamshire Business First to determine subject demand in the county, using their comprehensive business membership as the source. Develop five new digital courses for 2026-7 to address evident demand.</li> </ul>   |

| National Skills Priorities | LSIP Priorities               | Objectives for 2025-26  |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------|---|
| Advanced Manufacturing     | Engineering                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Determine the viability of a pilot apprenticeship cohort based at Westcott Venture Park, focused on developing engineering technicians for the space sector.</li> <li>• Collaborate with HEIs and the LSIP Engineering Sector Group to develop student pipelines for T Level and apprenticeship programmes in mechanical and electrical engineering at levels 2 and 3 for September 2027 intakes.</li> </ul> |
| Clean Energy Industries    | Cross sectoral – green skills | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a range of courses at the Buckinghamshire Green Energy Skills Training Centre at Aylesbury campus.</li> <li>• Baseline: Zero / Target: 150 enrolments</li> </ul>   |
| Construction               | Construction                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase the number of enrolments on construction-related courses by introducing courses such as T Level Civil Engineering, Maintenance Operations, construction-related apprenticeships and Skills Bootcamps.</li> <li>• Baseline: 854 / Target: 1,092</li> </ul>   |

| National Skills Priorities         | LSIP Priorities                    | Objectives for 2025-26  |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|---|
| Professional and Business Services | Cross sectoral – supporting skills | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase the number of T Level Business students with the addition of the new T Level in Marketing.</li> <li>• Increase the number of part-time adult learners and re-introduce Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development courses at levels 3 and 5.</li> <li>• T level baseline: 34 / Target: 68 (12 Marketing)</li> <li>• Adult baseline: 32 / Adult target: 100</li> </ul> |
| Health                             | Health and Social Care             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase the enrolments to Health and Social Care related courses through additional HealthTec part time CPD, apprenticeships and professional development, for example, new courses such as Oliver McGowan training and growing the number of apprentices on Health standards.</li> <li>• Baseline: 406 / Target: 1,006 (of which 469 are HealthTec)</li> </ul>                     |
| Essential Skills                   | Cross sectoral – green skills      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce an online and on-campus model of delivery for adult English and maths courses to increase student enrolments.</li> <li>• Baseline: 208 enrolments / Target: 384 enrolments</li> </ul>  |

## LOCAL NEEDS DUTY

The College meets national and local skills needs through the provision of study programmes (85 Courses) 2,700 students, T Levels (10 Courses) 300 students, apprenticeships (10 Courses) 360 apprentices and part time adult (39 courses) 1,100 enrolments.

Annual curriculum planning cycle and governing body oversight enable regular scrutiny of how the college serves its communities by filling skills gaps, avoiding duplication, and collaborating with partners. Alongside curriculum development, capital investment of £0.9m has been allocated to improve technology infrastructure, learning facilities and resources for 2025-26 to meet local and national priority skills needs. Ofsted endorsed the College as making a reasonable skills contribution; the College was commended for its collaborative work with stakeholders to address gaps in provision identified in the local skills improvement plan, notably through initiatives like the Bucks Green Energy Skills Hub and its partnerships with the NHS and regional dentists in developing a new Level 3 Dental Nurse Apprenticeship, recognising it as a leading example of health partnership innovation.

The Corporation remains outward-focused, proactively responding to evolving regional, national, and global skills environments. This dynamic approach empowers Buckinghamshire College Group to take the lead in technical education, thereby enhancing productivity and fostering inclusive growth within Buckinghamshire.



## **CORPORATION STATEMENT OF ENDORSEMENT**

On behalf of Buckinghamshire College Group, it is hereby confirmed that the College plan as set out above reflects an agreed statement of purpose, aims and objectives as recommended by the Quality, Curriculum & Students governance committee meeting on 18 June 2025 and approved via email by the Corporation Board on 25 June 2025. The plan will be published on the College's website within three months of the start of the new academic year and can be accessed from the following link: <https://www.buckscollegigroup.ac.uk/about-the-college/corporate-information/strategic-plan>.



Martin Tugwell  
Chair of Governors  
Dated: 26 June 2025



Jenny Craig  
Principal/Chief Executive  
and Accounting Officer

## LINKED DOCUMENTS

Please see links below to documents which have been referenced or informed this accountability agreement:

Buckinghamshire College Group Strategic Plan 2023-28

<https://www.buckscollegegroup.ac.uk/ambition>

Buckinghamshire Local Skills Improvement Plan [Local Skills Improvement Plan - Buckinghamshire Business First \(bbf.uk.com\)](#).

Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) (2019). English Indices of Deprivation 2019. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2019>

Office for National Statistics (2023). Qualifications by Area and Life Expectancy by Ward.

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/>

RCU (2024). MIDES Benchmarking Dataset. [Accessed via RCU portal]

Buckinghamshire Local Enterprise Partnership (2023). Buckinghamshire Productivity Review – Final Report. <https://www.buckstvllep.co.uk>

Office for National Statistics (2023). Subregional Productivity: Labour Productivity Indices by Local Authority and Region. <https://www.ons.gov.uk>

Department for Business and Trade (2023). Integration of Local Enterprise Partnership Functions into Local Government: Policy Paper. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-enterprise-partnerships-integration-plan>

Buckinghamshire College Group Ofsted report, published January 2025:

<https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/31/130607>