



Annual Accountability Agreement 2023-24

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1 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.

2 Buckinghamshire College Group Mission and Values

2.1 Our Mission

TRANSFORMING FUTURES THROUGH LEARNING

2.2 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

3 Buckinghamshire College Group Strategic Values and Goals

Buckinghamshire College Group (BCG) 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. BCG 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:

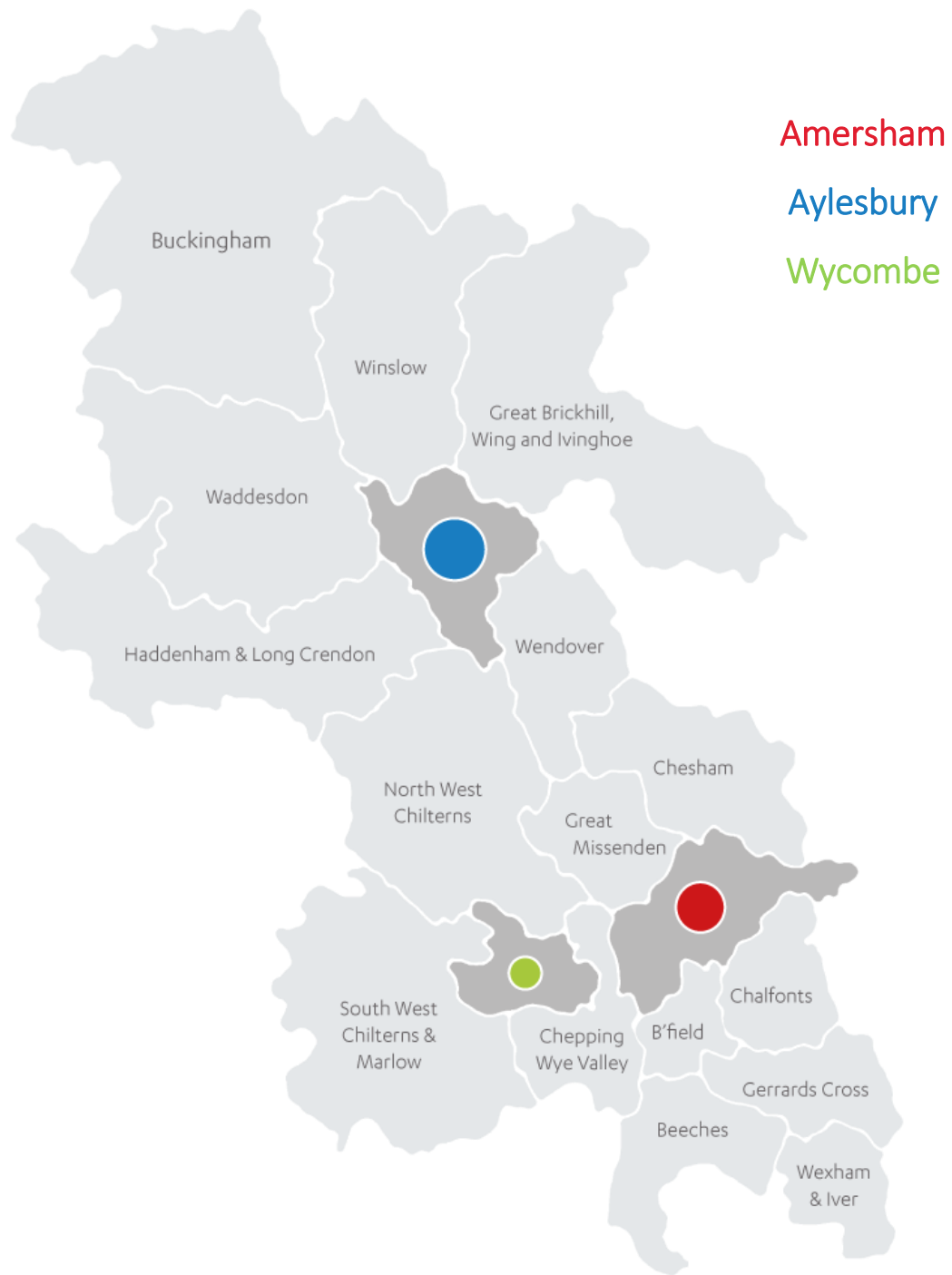
- Create exceptional learning experiences for all our students - We will place learning at the heart of what we do and maintain an unwavering focus on developing exceptional and inclusive learning experiences for our students, ensuring the very best outcomes for all.
- Develop and deliver a future proofed,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

4 Buckinghamshire College Group in Context

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 2025. BCG 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.

Buckinghamshire has a fast-growing population with a 0.6% annual change (between 2019-2020) according to the 2021 ONS report and a total population of 534,720. The south is densely populated, whilst the north is more sparse, however, there has been a particularly large population change in Aylesbury Vale which has seen a 10.4% rise since 2011, the highest rate of growth of any local authority in Great Britain. 16-18 year old population is predicted to peak in 2027 representing one of the highest demographic increases nationally.



4.1 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 inequality¹, 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 Acorn² household segmentation data and there is a life expectancy³ difference of 8 years for a woman and 6 years for a man depending on where residents live in Buckinghamshire.

4.2 Education Profile

47.5% of Bucks residents have a degree or equivalent qualification or higher compared to 43.5% nationally and 66% of pupils achieve grades 9-5 in GCSE English and Maths compared to 52% nationally⁴. However, 27% of the residents over the age of 16 in a number of deprived county wards have no qualifications at all compared to 17% across Buckinghamshire. 30% of 16-18 students enrolled at the College come to us with neither GCSE English nor Maths at grade 4 or above compared to 23% studying at FE colleges nationally⁵.

¹ MHCLG Indices of Deprivation 2019

² CACI Acorn geodemographic segmentation data (2022)

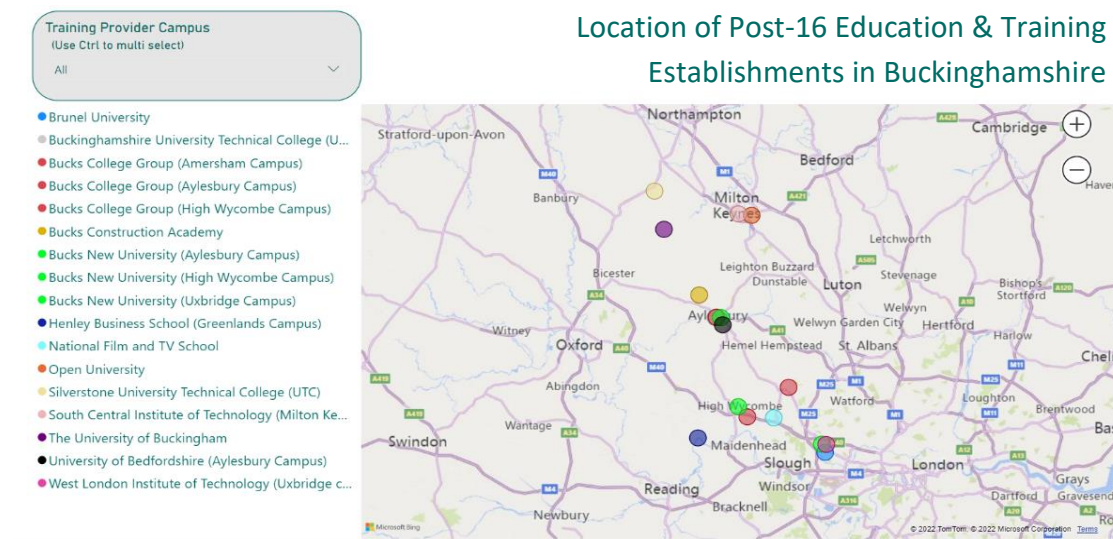
³ ONS Life expectancy at birth (2019)

⁴ Department for Education (2016/17 to 2020/21 for Buckinghamshire)

⁵ RCU MIDES Data 2021-22

4.3 Post-16 Education and Training Providers

Buckinghamshire operates a mixed education economy with selective Grammar schools, upper schools, school sixth forms, UTC and the further education college. 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.



5 Buckinghamshire Business and Economic Profile

Official data⁶ suggests that Buckinghamshire's economy is slightly more productive than the national (UK) average, although it has lost ground in recent years. In 2010, Buckinghamshire was ranked 4th highest of the 38 LEP areas in terms of productivity but by 2020 had slipped to 9th position. When the housing element is stripped out, Buckinghamshire has below national average levels of productivity, and sits mid-table of all LEP areas. Buckinghamshire's economy supports a predominance of small businesses with levels of self-employment second highest of all

⁶ Subregional productivity: labour productivity indices by economic enterprise region - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk)

38 LEP areas, particularly within the County's creative and construction sectors. The county boasts world-class economic assets and strong growth potential in the areas of film and TV, high-performance engineering, space and medtech with one of the least 'self-contained' labour markets in England (high levels of commuting into London and to other nearby large towns and cities).

The Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) has identified the following key sectors as priority areas for future skills development:

- Construction
- Film and Television
- Health and Social Care
- Digital
- Engineering

The LSIP also identified key cross cutting themes highlighted as areas for development across all priority sectors:

- Work readiness including digital literacy - For a lot of employers, work readiness ranked higher than technical skills and key to their business performance and growth. The majority of employers gave the view that it is the basic attitudes to work that is often missing.
- Green skills – net zero - The need for the workforce to have a greater awareness of net-zero and their own contribution to this has been reported across all the priority sectors. However, this demand is more acute in the construction and engineering sectors.

6 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:



7 Buckinghamshire College Group's plans to meet local (LP) and national skills (NP) needs

Skills Priority Area	NP	LP	Identified Need	Buckinghamshire College Group Priorities and Objectives for 2023/24
Construction Skills Sector	✓	✓	Requirement for increased provider capacity to meet demand for qualified construction trades professionals at level 2/3. Gaps in provision related to civil engineering and renewables apprenticeships and training.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce T Level in Plumbing and Heating Engineering from Sept. 23 with minimum of 10 learners enrolled. • Introduce Plant Operator Apprenticeship programme with Flannery Plant Hire enrolling 10 apprentices by Sept. 25. • Introduce Site Management Safety Training Scheme (SMSTS) qualification to support site management skills development with minimum of 20 enrolments by July 24. • Evaluate demand and feasibility re. introduction of provision in refrigeration, air conditioning and heat pump engineering technician training. • Work with infrastructure employer, qualification development and regional FE College representatives to develop future new full time Diploma qualification in Infrastructure. • Develop capacity and resources to introduce T Level (and Transition Programme) in Civil Engineering from Sept. 25.
Film and TV Industry		✓	Insufficient numbers of people entering and progressing within the sector with supporting sector skills (production skills, construction, accounting, leadership and management, hair and makeup).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop innovative industry placement programme for film and tv learners supporting 20 learners to gain industry relevant experiences. • Develop capacity and resources to introduce T Level in Media, Broadcast and Production from Sept. 24. • Support development of physical and virtual Film and TV Hub bringing providers and industry together to develop talent and skills • Engage over 200 students across different subject areas to showcase range of careers within the Film and TV sector.

Skills Priority Area	NP	LP	Identified Need	Buckinghamshire College Group Priorities and Objectives for 2023/24
Health and Social Care	✓	✓	Requirement to support more young people and adults to enter health and care professions including the overseas workforce. Additional skills needed to support increased prevalence of mental health illness. Need to specifically support skills shortages in social care.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reintroduce T Level Health adult nursing with additional specialism in mental health nursing – minimum of 40 enrolments. • Introduce Transition to T programme to ensure stronger progression into T Levels – minimum of 30 enrolments. • Reinvigorate Access to HE provision with clear career pathways through to Nursing, Paramedic and Allied Health Professions. • In support of adult reskilling, increase number of Adults studying on nursing support and adult care worker courses (apprenticeships / lifetime skills guarantee) by 20% • Increase number of enrolments on the Positive Steps programme in collaboration with Bucks Healthcare Trust and DWP to support long term unemployed into work in the care sector – up to 36 enrolments (200% increase) • Introduce intensive ESOL and bespoke induction/support programmes in support of overseas workforce transition with at least 30 new enrolments by July 2024. • Deliver Mental Health First Aid to employers and community groups through HeathTec supporting 30 new learners. • Secure funding to upgrade HealthTec simulation suite to support provision of immersive learning to young people throughout Buckinghamshire, improving work readiness and enabling them to engage with the range of career pathways.
Digital	✓	✓	Skills shortage in a number of occupations including software development and cyber security. Work readiness skills and appropriate aptitude are seen as key.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reinvigorate T Level Digital Programmes to consider inclusion of Cyber Security specialism from Sept. 24 with minimum of 15 enrolments. • Work collaboratively with digital employers, Bucks Skills Hub and careers advisor teams to generate greater engagement with digital technical skills development as a meaningful career route. • Collaborate with Milton Keynes College to support the development of employer focused short courses in the digital sector.

Skills Priority Area	NP	LP	Identified Need	Buckinghamshire College Group Priorities and Objectives for 2023/24
Engineering and manufacturing	✓	✓	Lack of Engineering provision in Buckinghamshire leading to lack of talent pipeline through to key industry sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborate with Milton Keynes College to develop employer focused short courses supporting core skills development Collaborate with Bucks New University and the Engineering Employer Sector Group to develop full time talent pipeline programmes in mechanical and electrical engineering for launch in Sept. 2025.
Cross sectoral - Work Readiness including digital literacy		✓	Employers identified need to improve the level of work readiness amongst Bucks school, college and university leavers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build on current Employer Advisory Boards throughout the BCG curriculum ensuring that all programmes are co-designed and co-delivered with sector specialist employers. Refresh the design of BCG study programme curriculum adopting the LSIP work readiness model as a blueprint including development of digital literacy skills. 92% learners progress to positive destination (2pp increase). Further integrate Project Based Learning methodologies into the BCG Teaching Learning and Assessment strategy promoting the development of work readiness skills throughout. Pilot the Volunteer Skills Record in collaboration with the Bucks Health and Social Care Academy for onward development and rollout across Buckinghamshire.
Cross sectoral – essential skills	✓	✓	Essential skills up to Level 2 in English, mathematics, and Level 1 for digital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support county wide ‘Opportunity Bucks’ work by developing programmes in support of those furthest away from education to improve opportunities for all. As part of Multiply Project deliver interventions to support adults in deprived wards to develop skills and confidence in maths and numeracy – 40% growth in provision.
Cross sectoral – supporting skills		✓	Need to support job roles, e.g. business administration and leadership and management.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduce Business Administration apprenticeships with 10 apprentices in learning by end 2023-24 Introduce blended learning provision in accountancy and leadership and management with 36 learners enrolled by end 2023-24.
Cross sectoral - Green skills	✓	✓	Employers identified need to enhance knowledge of green agenda throughout priority industry sectors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduce ‘curriculum 2030’ as part of redesigned study programmes to include industry relevant green skills and knowledge into every programme.

8 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 approved by the corporation via email resolution dated 26/5/2023. 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: [insert link when approved]



Max Hailey

Chair of Governors

Dated: 30/05/2023



Jenny Craig

Principal/Chief Executive and Accounting Officer

9 Linked Documents

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

BCG strategic plan 2023-28 <https://www.buckcollegegroup.ac.uk/ambition>

[link to final LSIP to be included once submitted]