



Cheshire College
South & West

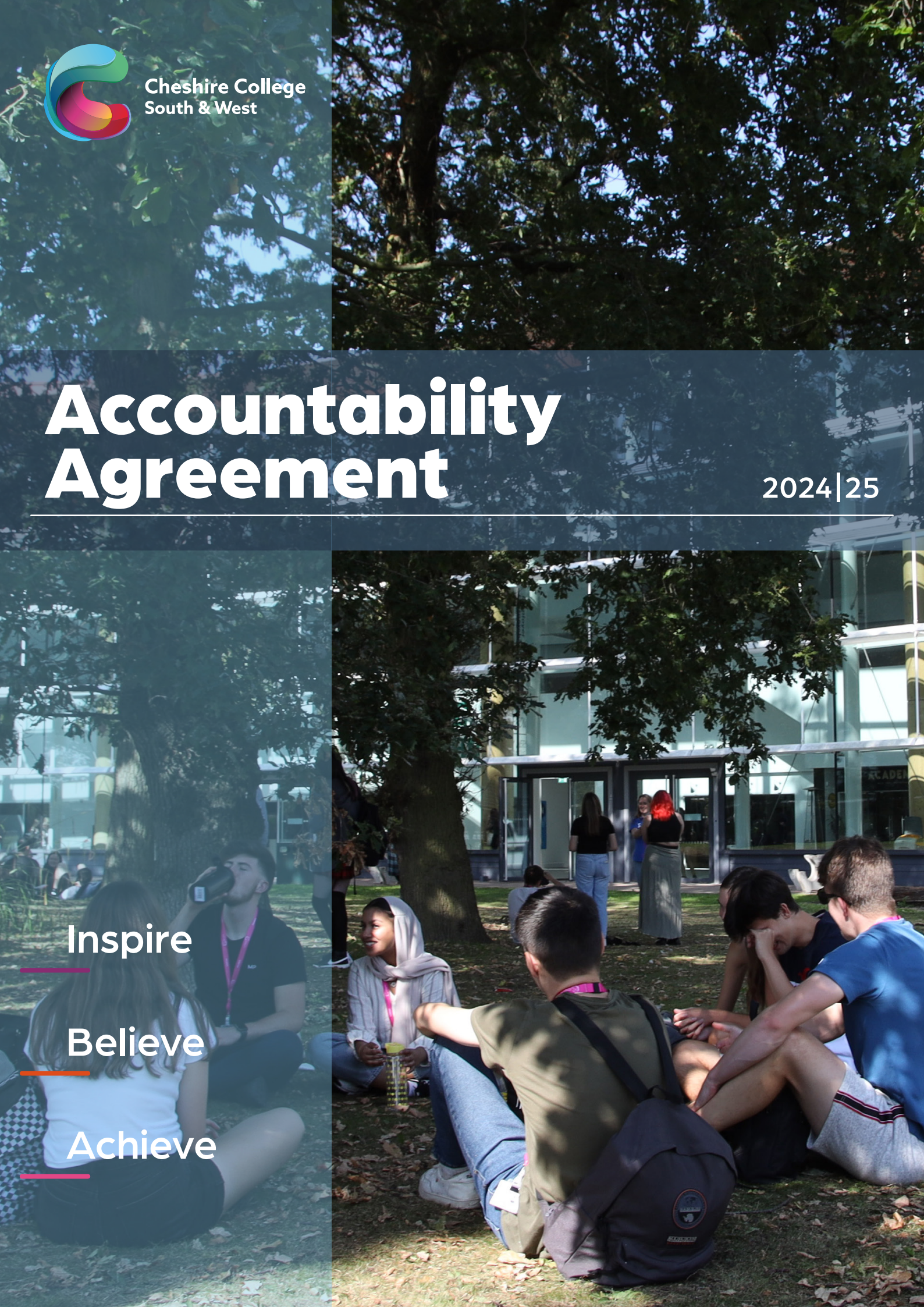
Accountability Agreement

2024|25

Inspire

Believe

Achieve





Cheshire College
South & West



Purpose

Cheshire College's purpose is:

"Nurturing talent and empowering people to achieve their full potential; supporting businesses to succeed and communities to thrive."

The College is celebrating its seventh year of inception following the successful merger between South Cheshire College and West Cheshire College. The College is dedicated to providing outstanding opportunities for its stakeholders, inspiring learners to excel and delivering the best possible outcomes for its staff, communities and employers.



Strategic Priorities

1

Our Teaching, Learning and Support

- 1.1 We will inspire all learners to achieve their full potential through consistent high-quality teaching, learning, assessment and support.
- 1.2 We will provide innovative and flexible teaching, learning, assessment and support, making best use of the latest technologies through blended learning.
- 1.3 We will provide our learners with a curriculum that develops the knowledge, skills and behaviours needed to excel in employment and higher-level learning.
- 1.4 We will listen to and understand our learners in order to provide appropriate pastoral support for their personal development, resilience, confidence, health, social and emotional wellbeing.

2

Our People

- 2.1 We will value, respect and recognise the contribution of all colleagues.
- 2.2 We will retain, attract and recruit high calibre talent with shared values and a desire to excel.
- 2.3 We will enhance the performance and career opportunities for colleagues through highly effective Continuous Professional Development (CPD).
- 2.4 We will maintain a positive culture where ownership, accountability and involvement in decision making is championed at all levels.
- 2.5 We will promote and support health and wellbeing opportunities for all colleagues.



3

Our Learning Environments

- 3.1 We will invest in a high-quality digital and data infrastructure to support blended learning and access to the latest technologies.
- 3.2 We will remove barriers to learning by providing all full-time learners access to a personal digital device.
- 3.3 We will implement a capital investment and rolling refurbishment programme that will deliver inspirational learning environments across all curriculum areas.
- 3.4 We will strive to develop an estate that is net zero carbon.

4

Our Finances

- 4.1 We will be a financially robust College by remaining efficient, offering value for money and maintaining a secure cash position.
- 4.2 We will seek out opportunities and apply for projects/grant applications that support the College's strategic aims.

5

Our Communities and Economic Contribution

- 5.1 We will ensure our Campuses are at the heart of the local communities that we serve.
- 5.2 We will work with local, regional and national agencies, partners and employers to deliver economic growth through an offer that meets current and future skills needs, including the development of higher-level technical programmes.

The Strategic Plan was approved by the Governing Body on 7 July 2022 and can be found [here](#).

Since its publication, national skills policy has continued to develop, therefore this annual accountability plan takes account of these changes, including the expected introduction of Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs).

South Cheshire Chamber of Commerce & Industry is the designated Employer Representative Body (ERB) for Cheshire & Warrington with responsibility for producing the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP).

Cheshire College is also implementing a significant capital investment programme, drawing on funds such as the Further Education (FE) Capital Transformation Fund, T Level Capital Funding, Strategic Development Fund and the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme. This investment will support a drive to net zero and improved infrastructure across all three Campuses to providing specialised curriculum linked to local needs.



**Cheshire College
South & West**



Context & Place

Ellesmere Port

Chester

Cheshire and Warrington is a region located in the North West of England, comprising the local authorities of Cheshire East, Cheshire West and Chester, and Warrington. The area is home to a diverse population of around 1 million people, with a mix of urban and rural communities. The population is predominantly White British, although there are significant ethnic minority communities in some areas.

The region has a mix of cities, towns, and villages, with the cities of Chester and Warrington being the largest urban centres. Other notable towns include Crewe, Ellesmere Port, Nantwich, Winsford and Wilmslow. There are pockets of deprivation in some areas, particularly in the larger urban centres. The College serves major concentrations of population with main campuses in Chester (Cheshire West and Chester), Crewe (Cheshire East) and Ellesmere Port (Cheshire West and Chester). The College is highly responsive to the needs of its communities, with the highest levels of recruitment coming from the areas with greatest need.

The region has a strong industrial base, with strengths in sectors such as advanced manufacturing; the professional, scientific and technical sector; and the financial and insurance sector. The local economy includes manufacturers such as Bentley Motors Ltd; major life science companies like AstraZeneca and Recipharm; significant energy and utilities companies including Engie, Sellafield (Warrington) and United Utilities; major retail finance centres, including the headquarters of M&S Bank and the credit card operations of Lloyds Bank; the global Innovation Centre of Barclays Bank; and the UK's largest outlet shopping centre at Cheshire Oaks. The region also has a strong agricultural sector, particularly in the production of dairy products, and is home to a number of rural communities.

Crewe



Strengths of the Region

- The sub-region has an employment rate of 80.1%, higher than national average; and also has higher economic activity at 82.3%.
- Job density is high and the area is a net importer of labour, drawing workers from surrounding areas, benefiting from the neighbouring cities and their services and housing offer.
- Jobs in innovative sectors (including high-tech manufacturing, science and technology) are higher than the regional average, although innovation jobs are highly concentrated in certain localities, such as Alderley Park, Trident and Hurdsfield industrial estates.



- There are 102,000 jobs in knowledge-based sectors (an increase of 26% since 2015 vs an increase of 6.2% in England). STEM related professionals represent 7.5% of the workforce, the 5th highest out of 40 Nomenclature of Territorial Units 2 (NUTS2) sub regions in England.
- Compared with England, Cheshire and Warrington has a higher percentage of employees employed in the Manufacturing sector, in the Retail sector, in Administrative and Support Service Activities, in Finance, in Transportation & Storage, and in the Professional, Scientific & Technical sector.
- The area has a high-skilled working age population, with a high proportion of working age residents with Level 4+ qualifications (52.2%).
- There is good alignment of FE delivery with those that need it, in the places where many of those people live. Additionally, more adults and young people travel into Cheshire and Warrington to learn than travel out, particularly at Level 3.

Challenges

- Cheshire and Warrington has an ageing population. The proportion of the population who are of working age is projected to fall from 60.1% in 2018 to 55.2% in 2040.
- The area has an historically strong economy but recent success has been achieved without productivity growth. Productivity has remained stagnant since 2008, although it is still above national average.
- The area has a lower-than-average business birth rate (10.7% compared to 12.1% nationally).
- Growth in the population with NVQ4+ has slowed. The proportion of people with NVQ4+ skills has increased at only half the rate of the rest of the country. There is a growing gap for skills at Level 3+, with forecast demand from employers far outstripping current supply.
- There is a lower-than-average proportion of adults completing 19+ FE and skills training (compared with England). There are sectoral gender disparities in FE and apprenticeships.
- There are gaps in KS2 and KS4 educational attainment between pupils on Free School Meals and those not. Children in places with highest income deprivation have poorer progression and job outcomes.
- The claimant count has risen while the number of claimants looking for work has fallen.
- There are growing levels of economic inactivity due to early retirement and poor health.



Approach to Developing the Annual Accountability Statement

The development of the Accountability Statement has been integrated into the annual College planning cycle, which includes curriculum, financial, estates and strategic planning processes, all of which are interdependent.

The College constantly engages with a range of local, regional and national stakeholders, to ensure learners have a high-quality learning experience to gain the relevant skills, knowledge and confidence required to succeed. These stakeholders include:

- Learners
- Apprentices
- Individual Employers
- Strategic Skills Advisory Board
- Employer Advisory Boards
- Prospective learners/ apprentices
- Parents/Carers
- Staff
- Governors
- South Cheshire Chamber of Commerce & Industry
- West Cheshire & North Wales Chamber of Commerce & Industry
- Federation of Small Business
- Cheshire & Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership
- Crewe Town Investment Board
- Ellesmere Port Development Board
- Cheshire West & Chester Council
- Cheshire East Council
- MPs
- Councillors
- Local Residents
- Neighbouring Colleges
- Independent Training Providers
- Local Schools (Primary and Secondary)
- Universities
- Cheshire East Leaders Board
- Cheshire West Anchor Institutions Group
- Institutes of Technology Network
- ESFA

The various ways in which the College engages with stakeholders to plan, develop and deliver education training and support is set out in the College's Skills & Employer Strategy (2023-26).



Local Needs Duty

To meet the Local Needs Duty and produce the Accountability Statement, the College has worked collaboratively with other local providers and partners across the region most notably through formal and informal local networks. Planning of curriculum across the region is developing and is particularly strong at level 4 and 5, to ensure that the region's future need for high technical skills is met. As a consequence co-ordinated and complementary investment in new buildings and facilities is happening Crewe, Nantwich, Winsford and Macclesfield, through the establishment of the Cheshire & Warrington Institute of Technology (IoT), a joint initiative between Reaseheath College, Macclesfield College, Warrington & Vale Royal College, Priestley College and the University of Chester, with Cheshire College as the lead partner. Collaboration and planning between colleges has also secured significant investment via the Strategic Development Fund (SDF), Local Skills Investment Fund (LSIF) to continue to ensure the region has the best resources to meet specific needs identified by employers. In addition, the College in partnership with Reaseheath College, Warrington & Vale Royal College and Torus housing association worked collaboratively to scale up the current Retrofit Skills offer across Cheshire and Warrington. This included both upskilling new and existing teachers and designing curriculum content and associated resources.

Furthermore, the College works with industry training boards to ensure currency of skills, national standards are met and to deliver a curriculum reflective of the sector. This includes College collaboration between national project leads such as HyNet Project (produce, store and transport low carbon hydrogen) and Engineering Construction Industry Training Body (ECTIB) to design and develop Skills Bootcamps.

The College works with several local charities and community-based organisations, for example Motherwell a women's charity based within Cheshire East. The College works closely with Motherwell to support their service users and wider community engagement. The College has a strong partnership with Youth Federation which has led to learners benefitting from bespoke provision and the delivery of Careers Information, Advice and Guidance to young people and adults integrated into their study programmes.

Working in partnership with Department for Working Pensions (DWP) local Jobcentre Plus offices, the College has supported claimants access to digital resources and development of basic skills to support reviewing job vacancies, preparing CVs and applying for roles. This has been successfully extended to YMCA service users to support engagement in education and training.

The College allows local schools and Independent Training Providers (ITPs) to share resources and facilities at each Campus and in some instances employers and ITPs are co-located on Campuses to provide a co-ordinated offer and to best utilisation of combined resources to meet the region's needs.

The Principal/CEO and Deputy Principal/Deputy CEO are members of town and regional boards ensuring close alignment of curriculum to local skills needs.

The College's leaders and Chair work collaboratively with other FE colleges regionally and nationally. The Group also works closely with local schools and



other providers through the relevant forums. During July, each year the College Campuses are used to deliver Primary and Secondary College, in which the Campuses are only used by year 6 and year 10 pupils working on projects with employer partners.

The College undertakes an annual review of how well it meets local needs through the Self-Assessment process, which is challenged and validated by Governors and approved by the Corporation. This follows the clear criteria within the Education Inspection Framework (EIF). The outcomes of the Self-Assessment process contribute to the objectives that are set in the annual Accountability Statement. The Board also approves the overall annual Curriculum Plan, which includes oversight of any proposed changes in provision. To provide monitoring and oversight of the Local Needs Duty and the Accountability Statement. Performance against the Annual Accountability Statement is reported formally to the Corporation.



Curriculum Planning and Engagement with the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP)

The College's annual planning cycle has an emphasis on ensuring the College meets current and emerging employer demand and skills needs prioritised by the Cheshire & Warrington Employer Representative Body (South Cheshire Chamber) as well as others. The annual curriculum planning process uses Local Market Intelligence (LMI) sources, including Lightcast (labour market analytics specialist), the National Careers Service, RCU Marketing Intelligence & Research in FE, Office for National Statistics and Department of Working Pensions well as on-going dialogue with local authorities and employers to review and amend the College offer to ensure identified skills growth and gaps. In recent years this has led to significant investment, upskilling and relocation of curriculum to best meet the needs of the region.



Employer Advisory Boards

The College has a well-developed Skills & Employment Stakeholder Strategy, approved by the Corporation in 2023, to meet current and future local and regional skills needs. The College works with over 500 employers across a wide range of sectors. An established and strong relationship with key employer representative groups such as South Cheshire Chamber of Commerce, West Cheshire & North Wales Chamber, Crewe Town Investment Board, Ellesmere Port Investment Board and Enterprise Cheshire & Warrington ensures the College is seen as a core partner in meeting local and regional skills needs. A close relationship with key regional employers such as Bentley Motors, Stellantis, Utilita, Grief, Unipart Rail, housing associations and several NHS Trusts further enhances the College's ability to respond to needs as does the close partnership



with the Economic Development teams at both Cheshire East and Chester and Cheshire West Local Authorities.

This well-established close relationship with employers is further enhanced by the College's Employer Advisory Boards (EABs) across a range of sectors which inform curriculum planning and content as well in some instances joint delivery. The EABs influence the design and content of the current College offer whilst also informing future developments and investment decisions. This form is essential as it provides interaction, discussion and feedback, which informs the College offer, ways of working and provides constructive challenge. For employers it also supports growing recognition of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), as employers look to give back to the communities they operate in and provides social value for those delivering large scale government contracts.



Contribution to National, Regional and Local Priorities

In the 2023–24 Accountability Statement the College set out a series of targets to achieve in the previous academic year. As a result the College achieved:

- Learners on 16–19 study programmes have benefitted from accessing and completing Microsoft Digital Badges. This is supporting learners to develop a greater awareness of their digital skills enabling them to demonstrate their digital literacy in a way employers value and recognise.
- Clear planning across the vocational areas link the theory elements of the curriculum study programme to practical activities where employability skills are contextualised. This is facilitated through realistic working environments and employer led workshops, gourmet evenings in partnership with local and national employers, off site live briefs to include hotel takeovers (Devonshire Fell). Employer led business start-up sessions (Fractured Society) barbers and Hazel Dixon nail artist.
- The T level and HTQ offer is fully aligned to national and key priorities. The full technical offer has been planned against the IfATE career routes and the College delivers curriculum within 14 of the 15 routes. Recruitment strategies are mapped against the identified key priority career routes In Digital, Sustainable/Low Carbon/Life Sciences/Manufacturing/Health & Science Industries.
- Patterns of growth are emerging across all campuses for Health based courses which has seen a 32% increase in applications and Science based courses of 38%. All other routes are showing growth but not at all campuses. For example applications have grown in Digital at the Chester campus by 17% but not Crewe.
- The College has successfully delivered skills bootcamps in Personal Track Safety enabling learners to progress to full time permanent employment as well as working with the NHS to provide learners entering the care industry with industry skills in empathy, first aid, ethical code of practice, communication, diversity, safeguarding, diversity and cross infection control.



- 16–19 learners have developed their carbon literacy/sustainability project skills through weekly tutorials with a showcase for all learners at the end of the year.
- In early March, the College hosted the "Green skills" LSIP Steering Group meeting at Ellesmere Port Campus to promote the sustainable house opportunities and the College's green skills offer.
- An employer responsive curriculum continues to exploit opportunities created by the development of the LSIP. There are three annual employer and stakeholder formal meetings. 122 employers, governors, curriculum leaders and teachers have attended Advisory Boards across sectors. Employers support on influencing the content of the College's curriculum offer, they share risks and opportunities in the sector and advise on the priority skills required in the sector. Employers also advise on LSIP cross cutting themes such as digital skills and employability skills required in the sector, barriers and solutions required.
- Information Advice and Guidance has been targeted to support local need and targeted programmes of activity specifically linked to Apprenticeship awareness and HE within FE. This has resulted in increased engagement levels by 11% within this area being realised.
- There has been a clear focus on engaging learners within the non-traditional areas of learning through the showcasing of male and female ambassadors within open evenings and College taster days, in addition to showcasing STEM workshops on social media platforms. The resulted in an increased number of males applying and enrolling to Health Care pathways as well as more females in Engineering and Construction courses.

Table 1 below shows aims and target outcomes for 2024–25 in an Action Plan, that reflects how the College is responding to national, regional and/or local priorities and skills needs.

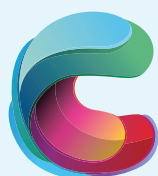
Aim/Action

Ensure learners on Study Programmes develop digital, business and employability skills so they can and do progress to employment, self-employment and further learning.

Ensure the Colleges' T Level, Higher Education HTQ and Apprenticeship offer provides opportunity for learners to develop technical skills aligned to national and regional key priority areas

Outcome/Impact

- Continue to provide opportunities for learners to gain Microsoft Digital badges.
- Continue to prioritise the development of digital skills within the tutorial programme so that learners recognise the value of their digital skills.
- Create further opportunities within the study programme for learners to recognise and develop employability skills and, where relevant, business and entrepreneurship skills.
- Continue to promote the College technical offer against the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE) career routes.
- Target recruitment strategies to secure enrolments onto courses mapped against the identified key priorities career routes in Digital, Sustainable/ Low Carbon/Life Sciences/Manufacturing/Health & Science Industries.
- Fully utilise the Adult Education Budget, 'Multiply' and Skills Free Courses for Jobs so that Adults can progress from a point of low prior attainment to at least level three.
- Continue delivering Skills Bootcamps in Health Care and multiskilled Railtrack operatives



Aim/Action	Outcome/Impact
Extend the range and reach of the curriculum offer relating to sustainability and carbon literacy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop the 16–19 construction offer to include the development of retrofit technologies and skills. Pro-actively promote an enhanced offer of Adult Education focused on sustainability. Promote the use of the sustainable house located at the Ellesmere Port Campus to engage employers in the development and delivery of innovative educational activities. Deliver Skills Bootcamps in Green Skills for example installation of electrical vehicle charging points and solar installation photovoltaic panels
Exploit opportunities created by the development of the LSIP to develop an employer responsive curriculum.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure skills and Labour Market Intelligence (LMI) is embedded within the curriculum planning cycle. Refresh and review the Employer Advisory Boards to ensure all sectors and skills are represented and provide meaningful opportunities to influence and support curriculum development. Embed a new Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system to support effective stakeholder communication and relationships.
Support employers and local stakeholders to develop an understanding and awareness of the Cheshire and Warrington Institute of Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to identify key employers and develop meaningful interactions whereby employers derive benefits from these interactions leading to increased employer support for the College. Promote the benefits to employers of investing in their existing workforce by engaging with higher level study. Maintain a Level 4+ curriculum offer that is accessible to employees and supports them to advance their career.
Continue to provide an extensive range of Information, Advice and Guidance activities to ensure people get valuable information to help them make informed decisions about the subjects to study and the career pathway to follow.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Further develop relationships with schools to ensure learners understand the options available to them when they leave school. Further extend opportunities for careers, information, advice and guidance for adults. Continued focus on engaging learners with non-traditional areas of learning i.e., males into health and care, females into digital, engineering and construction. Develop an adult curriculum offer that promotes opportunities across the life sciences sector including an enhanced offer of GCSE Sciences and Access courses.

(Table 1: Contribution to National, Regional and Local Priorities)

The College is meeting the needs of local learners and preparing them to become successful employees and citizens who contribute to local, regional and national economy. A core focus for learners throughout their time at the College is the development of behaviours and skills required by employers, these include social, problem solving, team work, adaptability and resilience.



**Cheshire College
South & West**



Corporation Statement

On behalf of Corporation of Cheshire College – South & West, it is hereby confirmed that the plan as set out above reflects an agreed statement of purpose, aims and objectives as approved by the corporation.

Lesley Davies CBE FCFE
Chair of Cheshire College – South & West

Here is a hyperlink to the website where the annual Accountability Statement is located.



Supporting Documents

[Strategic Priorities \(2022–25\)](#)

[Statutory Accounts \(2022–23\)](#)

[Ofsted Inspection \(2019\)](#)

[Cheshire & Warrington Skills Report \(2022\)](#)

[Cheshire & Warrington Adult Workforce & Skills Report \(2022\)](#)

[Digital Skills in Cheshire & Warrington Report \(2022\)](#)

[Cheshire & Warrington Economically Inactive & Unemployed](#)

[NOMIS Cheshire & Warrington Labour Market Statistics](#)

[DfE Local Skills Dashboard \(Cheshire & Warrington\)](#)

[ONS Economic activity status, England and Wales: Census 2021](#)

[Cheshire College Skills & Employment Stakeholder Strategy \(2023–26\)](#)

[Cheshire College Estates Strategy \(2022–27\)](#)

[Cheshire College Marketing Strategy \(2022–25\)](#)