



Cheshire College
South & West

Accountability Agreement

2026|27

Inspire

Believe

Achieve



Purpose

Cheshire College's purpose is:

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

As Cheshire College enters its tenth year since the successful merger of South Cheshire College and West Cheshire College, it is well positioned to embark on the next phase of its strategic development through the planned merger with Macclesfield College. This milestone reflects the College's continued growth and ambition, ensuring it is best placed to respond to the evolving devolution agenda and the emerging Combined Authority. The merger will provide increased scale, reach and presence across the region, strengthening the College's ability to meet local, regional and national skills priorities, and to deliver outstanding outcomes for learners, employers, communities and staff.



Strategic Priorities (2022–25)

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](#).

The national policy landscape for further education and skills continues to evolve, with a strong focus on post-16 reform, curriculum review and inclusive participation. Technical education is being strengthened through clearer progression routes, including the continued development and rollout of T Levels and the rationalisation of vocational qualifications.

There is a growing emphasis on aligning provision with labour market need to support productivity and economic growth, alongside the development of a more flexible lifelong learning system. At the same time, there is a renewed focus on inclusion and SEND, with increased expectations around high needs provision, inclusive practice and progression into employment and independent living.



Purpose

Cheshire College continues to nurture talent, empower individuals and support economic growth, ensuring learners achieve their full potential and contribute to thriving communities and businesses.

Strategic Context

The College operates within a dynamic national skills system shaped by post-16 education reforms, curriculum review and the reshaping of technical pathways. This includes T Level development and rollout, qualification reform and preparation for two year level 2 pathways and V levels.

National Priorities

There is a clear emphasis on productivity, digital skills, artificial intelligence, sustainability and green skills. In parallel, there is a strong focus on inclusion, SEND and reducing disadvantage gaps, including gender disparities in priority sectors, ensuring all learners can access high-quality education and progress successfully.

Local Context

The College aligns provision with the Cheshire & Warrington LSIP priorities, including advanced manufacturing, life sciences, digital, construction, health and clean energy. Demand for Level 3+ skills continues to grow significantly.

Curriculum Strategy

The College ensures that curriculum planning is informed by robust labour market intelligence, employer advisory boards and regional partnerships, resulting in a responsive and future-focused curriculum offer.

Progress and Impact

Strong application growth across priority sectors, expansion of technical pathways and sustained employer engagement demonstrate the positive impact of this strategic alignment.

Inclusion and SEND

The College continues to strengthen inclusive practice, ensuring learners with SEND and those from disadvantaged backgrounds receive targeted support, achieve positive outcomes and progress into education, employment or independent living.

Employer Engagement

The College works with over 500 employers, embedding co-design and co-delivery within curriculum development to ensure learners gain relevant and current skills.

Skills Priorities and Actions

The College will focus on digital skills, higher-level technical education, adult learning, sustainability, inclusion and employer engagement as core priorities for 2026–27.

On 9 June 2026, the Governing Body resolved to move forward with the Type B merger with Macclesfield College, following the completion of due diligence, statutory consultation, and approval from the Department for Education.

Subject to final approvals, the merger is expected to complete on 1 August 2026. This development represents a significant strategic opportunity to strengthen curriculum offer, enhance financial resilience, and further align provision with local, regional and national skills priorities.



Context & Place



Ellesmere Port



Chester



Crewe

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 banking and finance centres; 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.



Strengths of the Region

- The sub-region has an employment rate of 78.1%, higher than the national rate; and also has higher economic activity at 81.7%.
- 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.
- With the proportion of residents employed in SOC major groups 1-3 at almost 60%, the proportion of jobs in innovative sectors (including high-tech manufacturing, science and technology) is higher than the regional average; although innovation jobs are highly concentrated in certain localities, such as Alderley Park, Trident and Hurdsfield industrial estates.



- 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, and in the Professional, Scientific & Technical sector.
- LSIP priority sectors are advanced manufacturing, life sciences, clean energy, agri-tech, construction and health and social care.
- The area has a high-skilled working age population, compared with Great Britain, with a high proportion of working age residents with Level 4+ qualifications (51.2%).
- 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 60.9% in 2026 to 58.5% in 2046.
- 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.
- Historically, Cheshire and Warrington's business birth rate has trailed the England average by roughly 1.4 percentage points. However, the sub-region compensates with high business survival rates, particularly across the first 3 to 4 years.
- There is a growing gap for skills at Level 3+, with forecast demand from employers far outstripping current supply. The University of Warwick IER (quoted in the 2026 LSIP) forecast that demand for Level 3+ skills will increase 16% by 2035
- 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.
- In 2026, the Claimant Count has risen to over 15,000 (an in-year increase of 6.5%).
- 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:

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



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).



Contribution to National, Regional and Local Priorities

In the 2024–25 Accountability Statement the College set out a series of targets to achieve in the previous academic year. As a result, the College achieved:

1

Digital, Business and Employability Skills

The College has made significant progress in strengthening learners' digital capabilities. A total of 6,712 Office 365 modules have been completed, demonstrating strong engagement with the digital skills programme. Learners are increasingly achieving Microsoft Digital Badges, and awareness of artificial intelligence, particularly its ethical and effective use, is now fully embedded within study programmes, supporting learners to develop the digital literacy required for modern education and employment.

2

Technical Skills Aligned to Priority Areas

The College continues to strengthen its technical curriculum in line with national and regional priority sectors, with significant growth in applications across key routes, including a 47.2% increase in Digital, 49.1% in Engineering, and strong rises in Science, Construction and Health. This growth is supported by targeted curriculum developments such as the Teach Your Trade initiative, which attracts industry specialists into teaching, and the expansion of advanced technical training using the College's Sustainable House facilities, where learners develop applied skills in modern construction methods and emerging technologies.

3

Adult Learning and Progression to Level 3

The College has continued to widen participation and strengthen adult learning pathways through effective use of Tailored Learning and an expanded programme of community outreach, enabling 241 adult learners to access flexible, confidence building provision. These short, sector focused courses have supported adults to develop essential employability skills and gain relevant upskilling, providing clear progression routes into accredited qualifications and onward to Level 3 study. This approach has proven particularly effective in re-engaging adults with low prior attainment and supporting their transition into higher level learning and improved employment prospects.



4

Skills Bootcamps

The College has continued to deliver a strong programme of Skills Bootcamps that address regional and national skills shortages. The Smart Metering Skills Bootcamp has equipped learners with technical competencies aligned to net zero priorities, while the Rail Track Maintenance Bootcamp has prepared participants for industry standard roles, resulting in high levels of sustained employment outcomes, including progression into roles with Utilita Energy Ltd and The Crown Group. In addition, the College has expanded its offer through the development of new green skills Bootcamps and strengthened early career pathways via Foundation Apprenticeships, securing seven of approximately forty national starts in Engineering, representing a notable contribution to national uptake.

5

Sustainability and Carbon Literacy

The College has significantly expanded its sustainability and carbon literacy offer, embedding modern environmental practices across both curriculum delivery and enrichment. Learners now benefit from enhanced retrofit and sustainability training, supported through practical application in the Eco House and Institute of Technology facilities, where they engage with contemporary construction technologies and sustainable building methods. This curriculum expansion is further strengthened by increased employer engagement, with industry specialists contributing to enrichment sessions and advising on sustainable practice, ensuring learners gain the knowledge, skills, and behaviours required for an evolving low carbon sector.



Inclusive Mainstream Fund

In line with SEND reform: putting children and young people first, the College is reviewing and developing supported transition arrangements for young people. Systems, processes and data sharing will be prioritised to ensure they are fit for purpose and support the: Universal Offer, Targeted Support and Targeted Plus Support. The Colleges development of pedagogy will focus on inclusive practices that support the governments ambition of creating high-quality inclusive education for all.

Whilst strong progress has been made, the College will further:

1

Extend the breadth and reach of digital, sustainability and carbon literacy provision, including delivery of planned developments from summer 2026.

2

Strengthen consistency of impact across all curriculum areas, ensuring that successful initiatives are embedded and lead to sustained improvements in outcomes.



2026–27 Key Priorities and Action Plan

Table 1 below shows aims and target outcomes for 2026–27 in an Action Plan, that reflects how the College is responding to national, regional and/or local priorities and skills needs. Progress against these actions will be monitored through termly performance reviews by Senior Leadership Team and Governing Body, supported by KPI dashboards and quality improvement processes.



Aim/Action	Outcome/Impact
Ensure all learners develop advanced digital, AI, employability and enterprise skills aligned to future workforce needs	Learners achieve recognised digital credentials; improved progression to employment, apprenticeships and further study; increased learner confidence in use of AI and digital tools
Ensure curriculum provision is aligned to LSIP priorities and post-16 reforms including T Levels and qualification changes	Growth in recruitment across priority sectors; improved alignment to labour market need; clear progression pathways established
Increase participation in Level 3 and Level 4+ technical education including apprenticeships and HTQs	Increased enrolment and achievement at Level 3+; improved progression into higher skilled employment; strengthened employer engagement
Expand adult learning pathways and progression from Tailored Learning to accredited provision	Increased adult participation; higher progression rates to Level 3; improved employability and upskilling outcomes
Extend green skills, sustainability and carbon literacy across curriculum	Increased learner engagement in green skills; strengthened alignment to net zero priorities; enhanced employer partnerships
Strengthen inclusive practice including SEND and reduce gaps in participation and achievement, including gender representation in priority sectors	Improved retention and achievement for SEND and disadvantaged learners; reduced NEET risk; improved progression outcomes
Enhance employer engagement through advisory boards, partnerships and curriculum co-design	Increased employer satisfaction; more placements and apprenticeships; curriculum remains responsive to skills demand
Provide high-quality careers education, information, advice and guidance for all learners	Improved learner decision-making; increased progression to employment and further study; high levels of engagement with careers services
Embed the Inclusive Mainstream Fund to strengthen universal, targeted and targeted-plus SEND support across all curriculum areas	Improved identification and support for SEND learners; increased retention and achievement; reduced attainment gaps and enhanced inclusive teaching practice across provision



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

The plan will be published on the College's website within three months of the start of the new academic year. For colleges and designated institutions in scope the statement should explicitly confirm this document as having fulfilled the statutory Local Needs Duty.



Supporting Documents

[Strategic Priorities \(2022–25\)](#)

[Statutory Accounts \(2024–25\)](#)

[Ofsted Inspection \(2024\)](#)

[Enterprise Cheshire and Warrington – Skills and Education Priorities](#)

[Enterprise Cheshire and Warrington – Data and LMI](#)

[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 \(2025–28\)*](#)

*These documents are confidential but are available upon request