

# Annual Accountability Statement



**2023/2024 Academic Year**

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# Introduction

This document sets out West Suffolk Colleges Annual Accountability Statement for the academic year 2023/24 and our key strategic aims, which link to and enhance our existing strategic priorities for 2022-25.

This document should be conjunction with our strategic plan and Board Curriculum Review 2022-2023.

## Our Vision

As part of the Eastern Colleges Group, our vision is simple. In an ever-changing world, we deliver a world-class, inspiring life-long learning journey that drives prosperity and wellbeing for all in our communities.

At the heart of this is **progression**. We support students to the next stages of their lives by focusing on:



### **Qualifications**

We enable every student to achieve the qualifications, acquire knowledge and develop the transferable skills that will support them to move onto the next stage of their education or employment.



### **Connections**

Our strong relationships with businesses give our students real life work experience and contacts, and gives employers their future pipeline of talent.



### **Personal Development**

We develop social skills, resilience and growth. We help our students leave us with the attributes that will enable them to thrive and grasp the opportunities that await them.

# Strategic Priorities

## Our Students

1. We will ensure every student is able to progress throughout our provisions
2. We will ensure every student is able to develop personally and academically
3. We will ensure every student is able to build strong employer connections
4. We will provide excellent wraparound support and celebrate and champion diversity

## Our People

1. We will encourage and engage our people to develop mastery by offering a comprehensive range of courses and programmes
2. We will unlock autonomy for all by advocating cross-discipline working
3. We will showcase and reward purpose by continually celebrating the successes and achievements of our students and staff
4. We will continue to create opportunity underpinned by a strong commitment to welfare that will support our people to thrive personally and professionally

## Our Communities

1. We will support our communities educationally through our Escalator Model
2. We will support businesses in the region by sharing knowledge, ideas, resources, skills and developing work-led education in collaboration with employers
3. We will work in collaboration with the public and the third sectors to help fulfil workforce needs and ensure that they have the knowledge to succeed operationally
4. We will promote safe, respectful and socially inclusive communities where a strong sense of place and a shared vision of equality and diversity is enjoyed by all

## Our Infrastructure

1. We will ensure that every person has access to an appropriate virtual and physical learning environment
2. We will ensure that every student and colleague has access to the appropriate and innovative technology and equipment, and that our systems promote a seamless flow of information
3. We will focus on best practice resource management and diversifying of revenue streams will support our ongoing financial viability
4. We will ensure that decisions that we make about our infrastructure, policies and practices reflect our environmental responsibilities and aspirations



# West Suffolk College: Understanding the local and regional context

West Suffolk College (the College) is located in Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, which has a population of over 42,000. There are seven other towns within a twenty mile radius of Bury St Edmunds (the College's main catchment area for full time students) with populations of between 8,000 and 30,000, including Thetford and Diss. Teaching, Learning, and Assessment predominantly takes place at the main Bury St Edmunds campus, supplemented by outstanding, well-resourced Construction and Building Services facilities at the nearby Built Environment Campus. STEM and Higher Education take place at the STEM innovation/University and Professional Development Campus. There are a further four University and Professional Development centres in nearby Haverhill, Sudbury, Ipswich, and Thetford. The apprenticeship provision delivers across the region with large numbers of employers and apprentices in Cambridgeshire, Essex, as well as Suffolk and Norfolk. The College holds national NHS contracts to deliver Pharmacy Technician and a national payroll contract. Adult provision is delivered in Cambridgeshire, Suffolk and Norfolk with increasing delivery taking place in employer premises.

The College had a total of 8,020 funded students in 2021/22, 3,222 on full time programmes and 4,364 on part time programmes. Students studying Education Programmes for Young People represented the greatest proportion (45.5%) of students studying at the College, followed by Apprentices which represented 28.2% of the College's cohort with 94% of the apprenticeship cohort on the new Standard, compared with 6% on the Framework. Adult Provision represented 26.3% of the total student cohort.

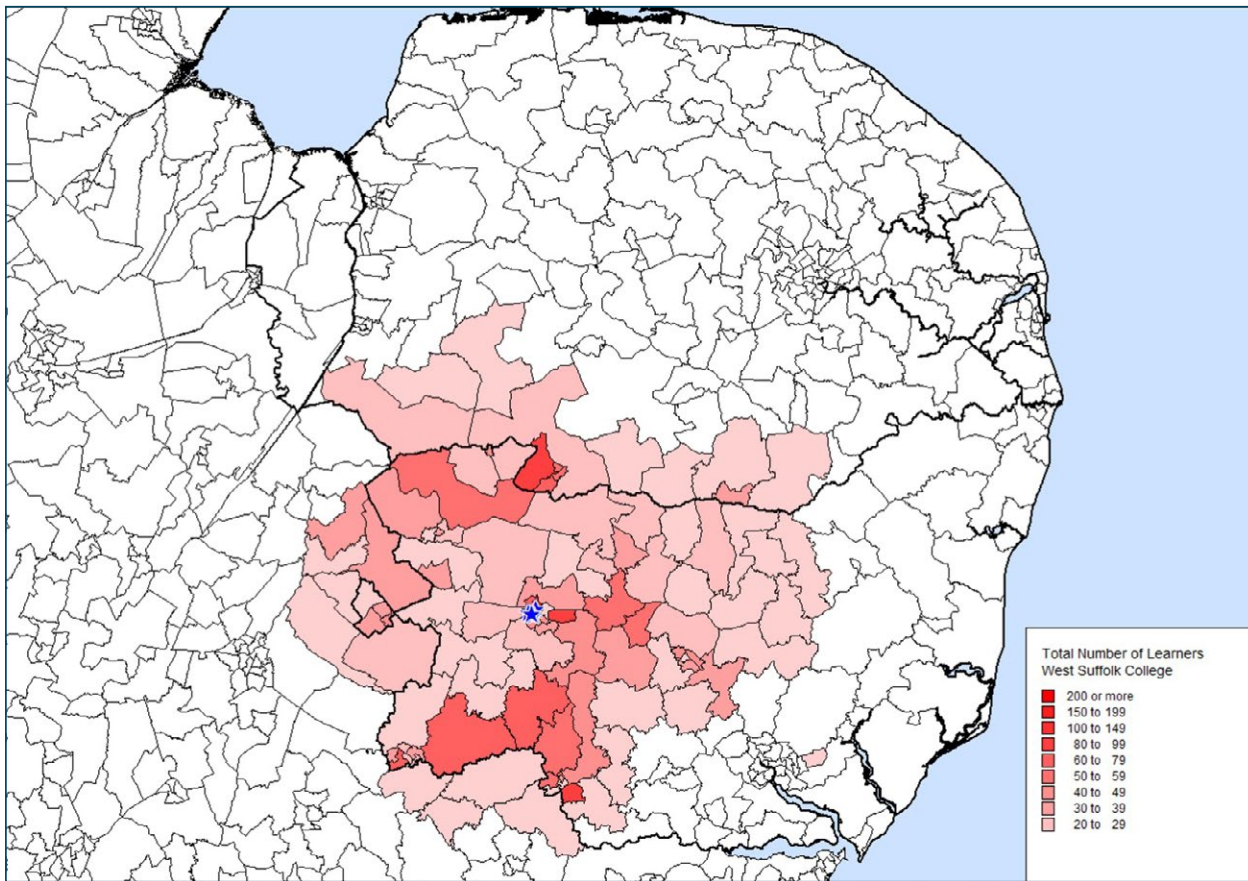
The College is part of Eastern Colleges Group with Abbeygate Sixth Form College (newly built in 2019) in Bury St Edmunds offering A level provision to over 911 students and One Sixth Form College (Ofsted grade outstanding April 2022) offering a mix of vocational, technical and A level provision to over 2182 students.

Unemployment remains below the national rates for the region and there is significant employment in health, social care and other public services, business and retail services, distribution, hospitality and tourism, construction, and manufacturing industries. However, since the end of the pandemic, employers have experienced difficulties in recruiting individuals with the relevant skill sets in most sectors.

It's important to note that 13% of the 16-19 cohort come from some of the most deprived wards in the the East of England. It is also important to contextualise the East of England lags behind other parts of the country in terms of gross salaries. The East sees gross weekly pay fall in between that of the national average. It's also important to note that 90.0% of enterprise in the East is made up of Micro (0-9 staff) businesses. Small (10-49 staff) businesses make up 8.2%, Medium (50-249 staff) businesses hold a 1.5% market share and only 0.4% of enterprise is from Large (250+) businesses. The nearest General Further Education (GFE) College is 24 miles from Bury St Edmunds, as such, West Suffolk College have a wide remit and important role in ensuring engagement, promoting opportunities, raising aspiration level and ensuring no community is left behind.

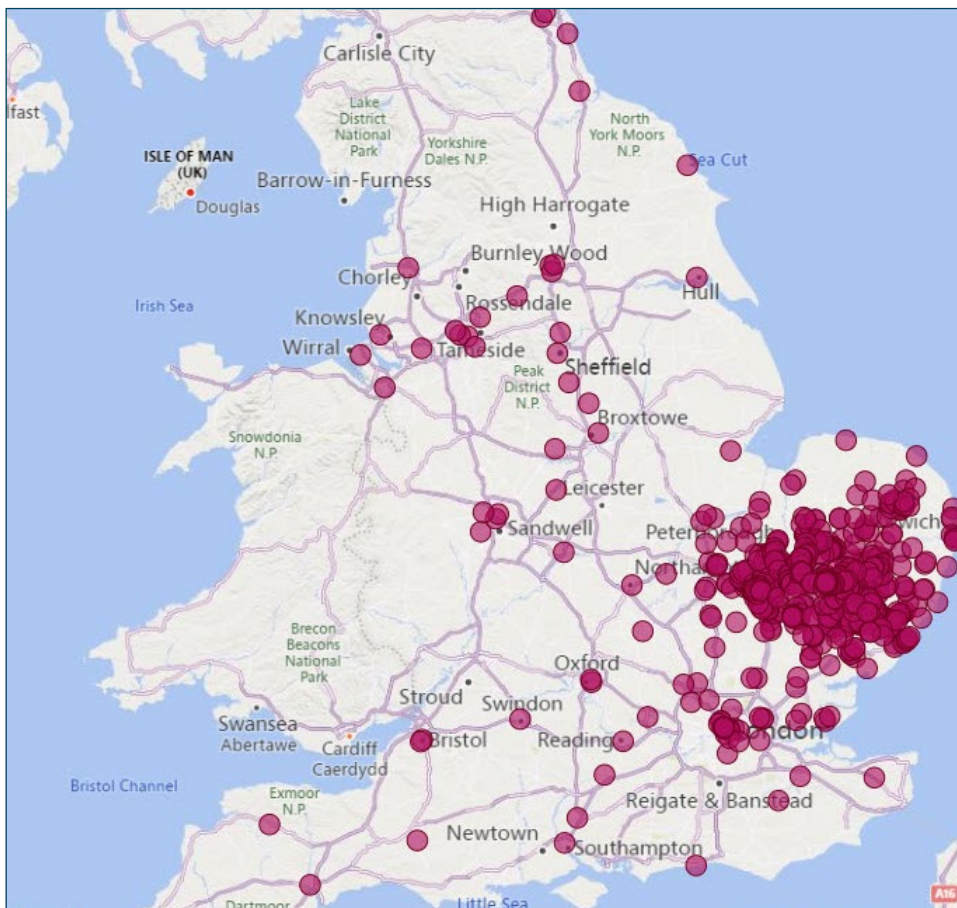
The catchment area is extensive with at least half of the population living in villages with poor public transport links. The 16-19 student cohort represents the largest group of students attending the College, with the vast majority studying full-time Study Programmes. The College delivers vocational and technical, including T-Level courses and has provision in all sector skill areas; this breadth is important for a college serving such a dispersed rural community. The College maintains a broad range of programmes, from pre-entry to graduate level to ensure that its community and stakeholders enjoy good access to appropriate education and training that meets their needs.

# 16-19 Funded Learners - West Suffolk College (2021/22)

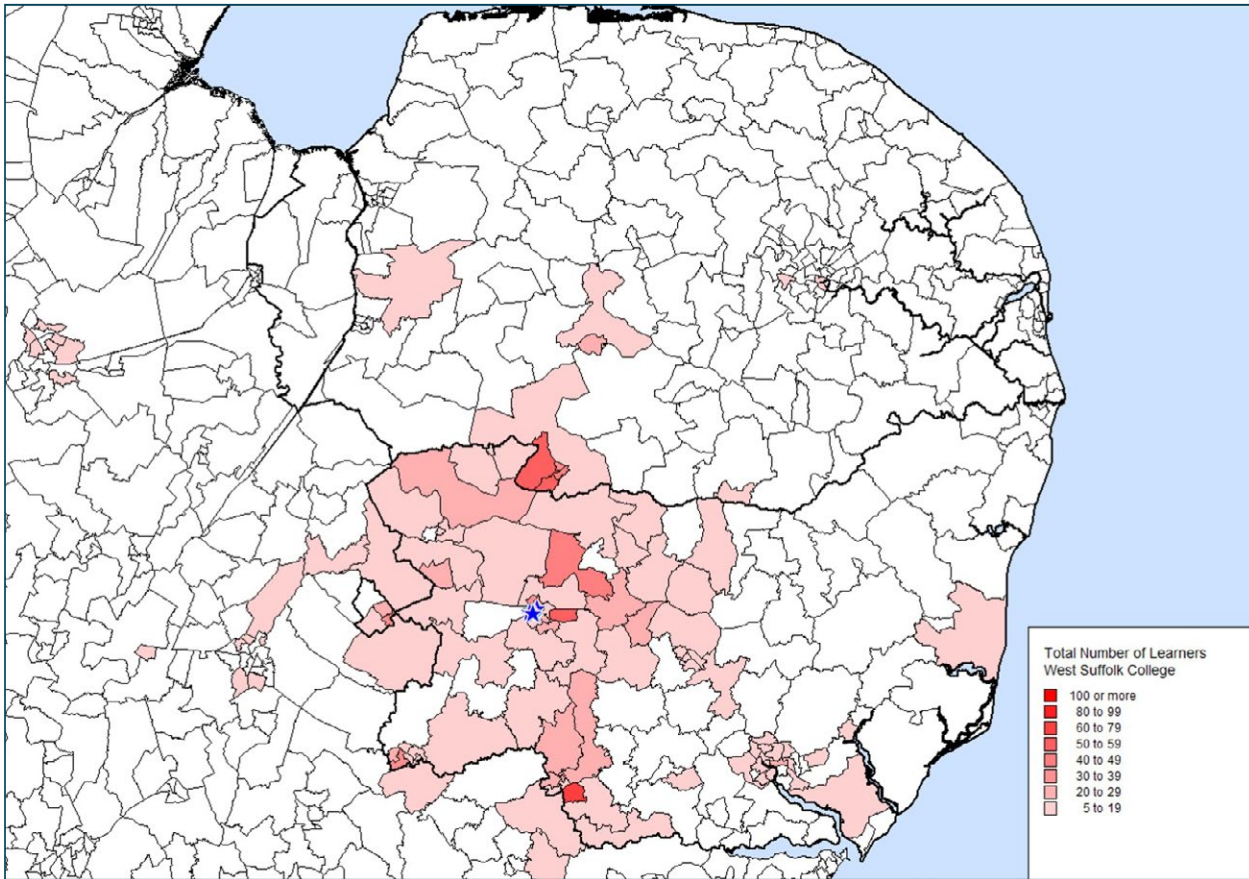


Source: RCU Norfolk and Suffolk Regional Mapping Report R14 2021/22

## Locations of Employers with current Apprenticeship Enrolments

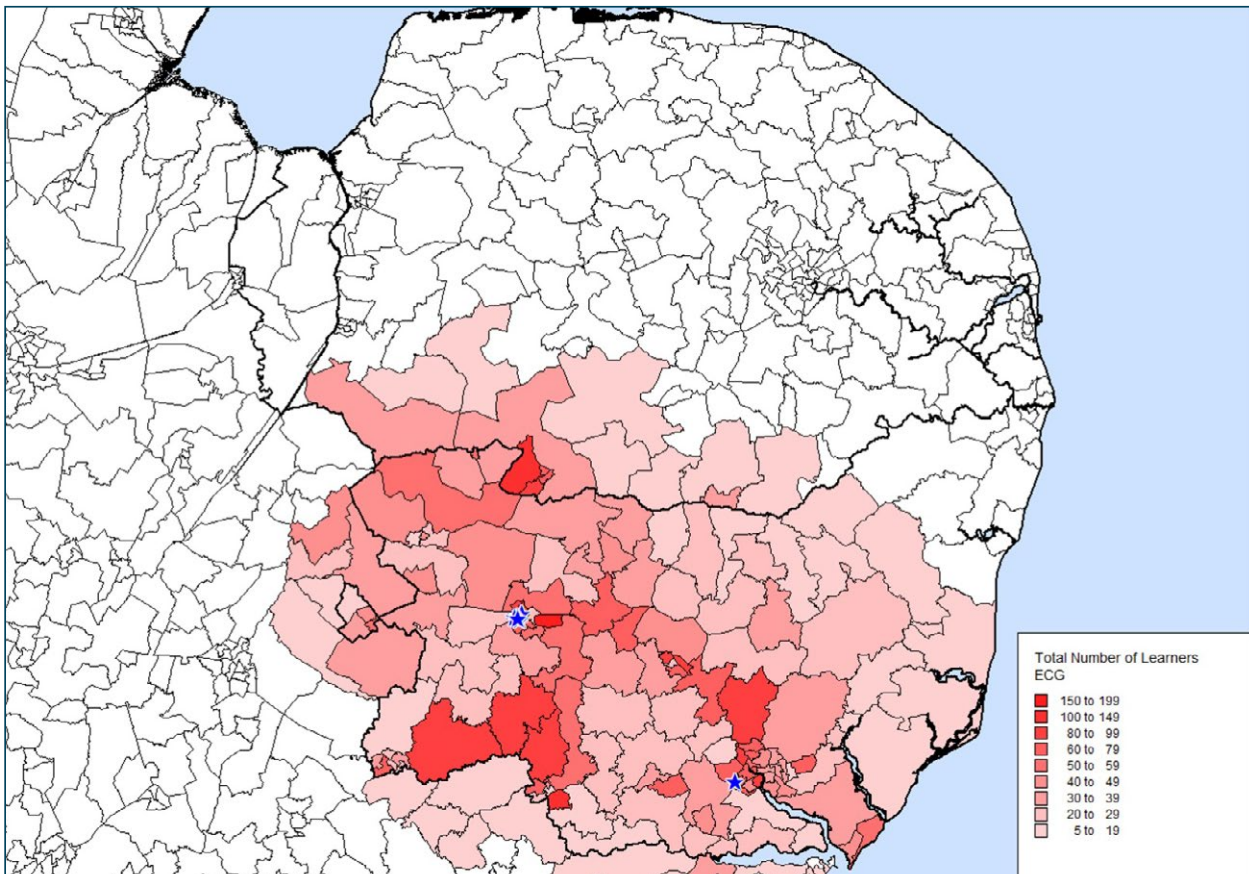


## Adult Learners - West Suffolk College (2021/22)



Source: RCU Norfolk and Suffolk Regional Mapping Report R14 2021/22

## 16-19 Funded Learners - Eastern College Group (2021/22)



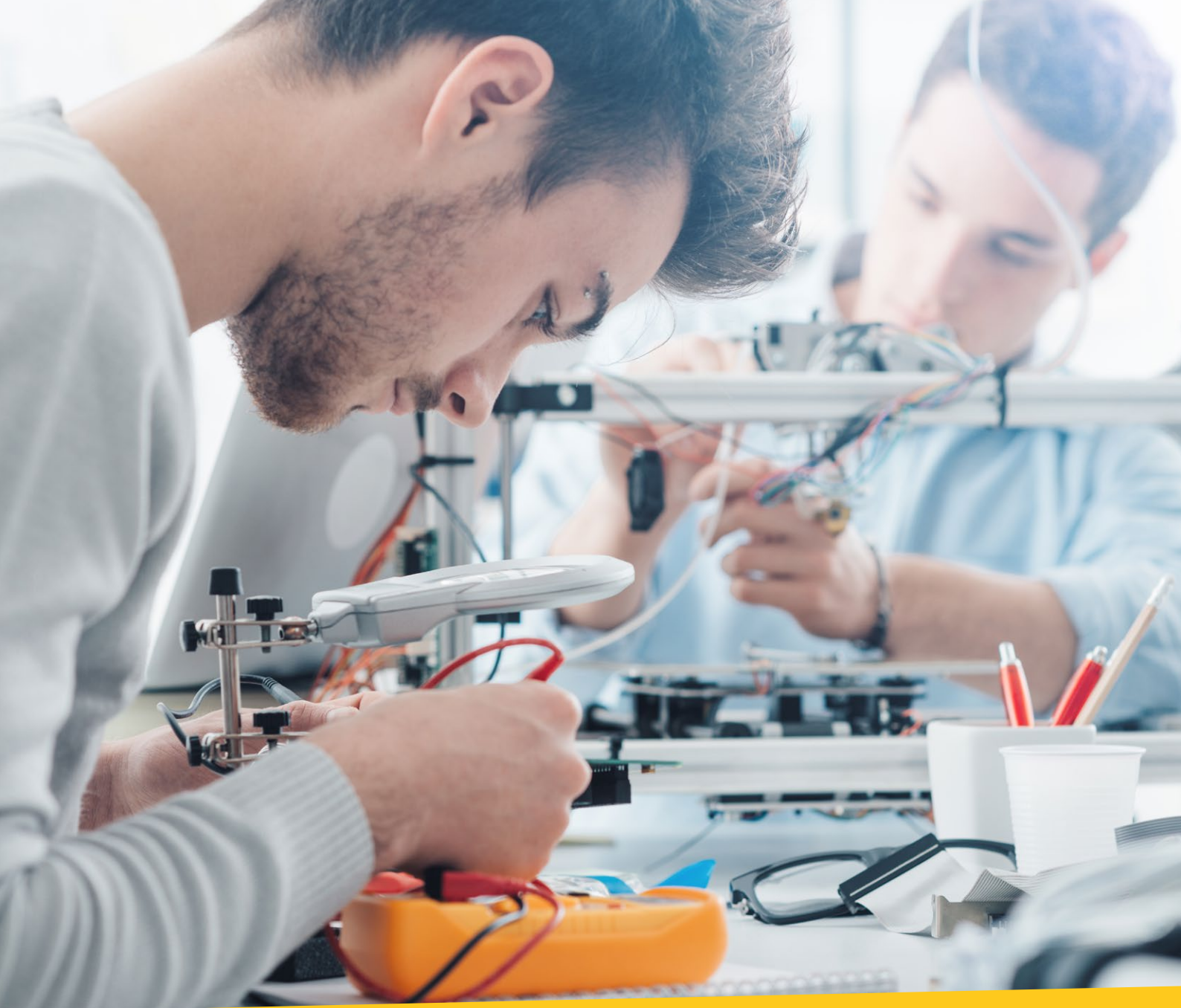
Source: RCU Norfolk and Suffolk Regional Mapping Report R14 2021/22

# Collaborative approach

The College has a strong history of collaborative working and we are at the heart of the community to ensure we develop the right knowledge, skills and behaviours that employers and businesses require. The key organisations and groups in the table below are just an example of those who we have a strong relationship with:

Civic	Community
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Suffolk County Council</li> <li>• West Suffolk Council</li> <li>• Norfolk County Council</li> <li>• Suffolk Chamber of Commerce</li> <li>• Norfolk Chamber of Commerce</li> <li>• Cambridge County Council</li> <li>• Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA)</li> <li>• Ipswich Borough Council</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Royal British Legion</li> <li>• Job Centre Plus</li> <li>• Guild of Ceilers and Joiners</li> <li>• Bury Town Trust</li> </ul>
Education	Employers
<p><b>New Anglia Colleges Group</b> – including College of West Anglia, Suffolk New College, City College Norwich, East Coast College, One Sixth Form College, Abbeygate Sixth Form College, East Norfolk Sixth Form and West Suffolk College.</p> <p><b>Feeder Schools</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bury St Edmunds County Upper School</li> <li>• Castle Manor Academy</li> <li>• Churchill Special Free School</li> <li>• Culford School</li> <li>• Debenham High School</li> <li>• Ely College</li> <li>• Felixstowe Academy</li> <li>• Hillside Special School</li> <li>• Icen Academy</li> <li>• King Edward VI School</li> <li>• Linton Village College</li> <li>• Mildenhall College Academy</li> <li>• Newmarket Academy</li> <li>• Olive AP Academy Suffolk (Central)</li> <li>• Ormiston Sudbury Academy</li> <li>• Priors School</li> <li>• Riverwalk School</li> <li>• Samuel Ward Academy</li> <li>• Soham Village College</li> <li>• St Benedict's Catholic School</li> <li>• Stour Valley Community School</li> <li>• Stowmarket High School</li> <li>• Stowupland High School</li> <li>• Sybil Andrews Academy</li> <li>• The Albany Centre</li> <li>• The Thetford Academy</li> <li>• Thomas Gainsborough School</li> <li>• Thurston Community College</li> </ul> <p><b>Associations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Association of Colleges</li> <li>• Sixth Form College Association</li> </ul> <p><b>Higher Education Institutes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• University of East Anglia</li> <li>• University of Suffolk</li> <li>• University of Cambridge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Institute of Carpenters</li> <li>• Pentaco</li> <li>• English Architectural Glazing</li> <li>• Bloor Homes</li> <li>• Gasway</li> <li>• Havebury Housing Association</li> <li>• Anglian Water</li> <li>• Claret</li> <li>• Morgan Sindall</li> <li>• Grid2</li> <li>• National Trust</li> <li>• North West Anglia NHS Foundation Trust - Peterborough</li> <li>• Flagship Group - Norwich</li> <li>• James Paget University Hospital</li> <li>• Omar Park Homes Limited</li> <li>• Broomfield Hospital</li> <li>• Southend University Hospital</li> <li>• Taylor Wimpy Homes - Bury St Edmunds</li> <li>• Addenbrookes Hospital - Cambridge University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust</li> <li>• University of Cambridge - Madingley Rise</li> <li>• Siemens Healthineers</li> <li>• J S Bloor Limited - Swadlincote</li> <li>• JEB Technologies Limited</li> <li>• Taylor Made Joinery Interiors Limited</li> <li>• Cranswick Country Foods - Watton</li> <li>• Seamans Building</li> <li>• Abbeycroft Leisure - Bury St Edmunds Leisure Centre</li> <li>• G's Group Holdings Limited (Shropshire Group)</li> <li>• Stainless Metalcraft (Chatteris) Ltd</li> <li>• Videndum Production Solutions</li> <li>• Allied Mechanical Ltd</li> <li>• Warren Services</li> </ul>





As an education provider, the College does not work in isolation and is an integral partner of the New Anglia Colleges Group, where the Principals and Deputy Principals meet on a regular basis to ensure the skills required by the community are being addressed.

Senior leaders continued to strengthen the College's links with secondary and primary schools in the area. This is part of the College's wider strategic priority to encourage interest in STEM subjects among pupils and students, from an early age. This extensive work has reached over 5000 under 16s and over 500 educators over the 21/22 academic year and has enabled the College to become the heart of education in the county and the region.

The College has continue to extend its outstanding links with the business community for the benefit of students across the ECG group. Over the past year the College has worked with 1814 businesses for both Apprenticeship and Student Work Placements. We have recruited over 850 new Apprentices, and supported over 2,500 Student Work Placements. As a result of this activity, the College has started to adopt and develop Employer Advisory Panels (EAP).

We have supported organisations with a large amount of bespoke commercial training and continued to develop our open course offer to meet the local and regional skills requirements. This year we have trained over 1200 individuals on various programmes. We have, for the first time, started to deliver in Wales and plan to grow this relationship in 2022/23. The College invests time in developing its strategic approach, developing relationships with larger stakeholders such as the Local Enterprise Partnership(s) (LEP) including the Skills Advisory Panel (SAP) sub-groups, the local Chamber(s) of Commerce, the District and County Council(s), the Federation of Small Businesses, HM Prison(s), Job Centre Plus, Confederation of British Industry (CBI) and other business enterprise boards. This ensures we provide greater targeted support to a wider community.



# Local Skills Improvement Plan

The Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) is a new initiative from the Department for Education (DfE) that will set out the key priorities needed to make technical education and skills provision more responsive to the changing needs of employers and the local economy by:

ensuring a better match between the supply of, and demand for, the skills employers most need to thrive and boost productivity, as well as helping to drive greater collaboration between providers to realise the benefits of economies of scale and specialisation.

A key objective is making provision more accessible and addressing barriers to progression. The LSIP will put employers at the heart of the skills agenda in Norfolk and Suffolk.

## The remit for the Norfolk and Suffolk LSIP is in four parts:

- Articulate the employers' skills need – what are the skills employers need locally and struggle to find?
- Translating employers' needs into changes in provision – how can those employers' needs best be met by the provider in more responsive ways?
- Address learner demand and employer engagement – what can local stakeholders and employers do to raise demand for, and make better use, of those skills?
- Report annually to the DfE on what we want to achieve, why it matters, what changes are needed, and who needs to be involved. In other words what does skills success look like?

The LSIP contract runs from September 2022 until March 2025. The DfE have articulated that the LSIP is about quality engagement with a wide range of businesses. To achieve this, the College will be working in close collaboration with a wide range of stakeholders across the region including: other colleges and training providers, Norfolk and Suffolk County Councils, New Anglia LEP, all the universities, employers, charities and the voluntary sector, as well as the DWP/Job Centre Plus and other business organisations such as the Federation of Small Business and the Confederation of British Industry.

## Norfolk and Suffolk have a joint LSIP which focuses on the following areas:

### Agri-Tech:

- Data Analysis
- Health and Safety with Wellbeing
- Engineering for Advanced Technology and Machinery
- Land, Water and Waste Management

### Net Zero:

- Solar and Wind
- Mobility
- BioEnergy and Alternative Fuels
- Fuel Cells and Energy Storage

### Digital:

- Social Media for Marketing
- Microsoft Applications
- Website Updating and Development
- Industry Specific software e.g. CAD
- Data Entry e.g. CRM

### Soft Skills:

- Communication
- Teamwork
- Problem Solving
- Leadership
- Time Management

The College has a place as the Suffolk Further Education representative on the Norfolk and Suffolk LSIP Governance Board, as well as having representation on the four working sub-groups, one for each of the areas listed in the LSIP.

While the College has reviewed the LSIPs for Norfolk and Suffolk and will enhance aspects of the curriculum offer to ensure we support the skills required, we will also ensure other national priorities such as Health and Social Care, Advanced manufacturing and Construction are not overlooked, as well as ensuring that we are cognisant of LSIPs within the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority, as the College works closely with the Authority and is one of their providers of choice, as well as Essex.

# Contribution to National, Regional and Local Priorities

## Aim 1:

**Continue to take proactive steps to ensure the College is driving local productivity by delivering the skills needed by businesses**

## Objectives:

1. Work with key stakeholders to establish Employer Advisory Boards (EAB) across all curriculum areas
2. Use LMI data to inform the curriculum
3. Agree strategic priorities with other education providers

Link to National, Regional and Local Priorities	Current Performance /Numbers	Target Performance /Numbers	Deadline Date
This will address national, regional and local skills priorities as the aim is to develop skills across all curriculum sectors including Health and Social Care, Science, Engineering, Digital and Social Media, Construction, Transport and Logistics etc... by addressing the needs of businesses the economy will be able to grow and increase productivity.	The College has strong relationships with many employers, working with 870 new businesses in 2021/22; however, these relationships will be further developed to ensure employers and businesses help to co-design and, where possible, co-deliver the curriculum.	The target is for all curriculum areas to co-design curriculum that meets the skills needs for businesses.	July 2024

## Aim 2:

**Continue to embed Character Strengths within Personal Development sessions to improve transferable (soft) skills for students and apprentices**

## Objectives:

1. Embed communication, teamwork, problem solving and time management into the Personal Development programmes for all students on 16-19 study programmes as appropriate for the level of study
2. Further develop My Skills for Success for all apprentices to enable them to improve communication, teamwork, problem solving and leadership skills where appropriate
3. Increase the number of courses that can be delivered flexibly for adult students

Link to National, Regional and Local Priorities	Current Performance /Numbers	Target Performance /Numbers	Deadline Date
Soft Skills have been identified by the Norfolk and Suffolk LSIP as an area that employers believe requires improvement, especially in Communication, Teamworking, Problem Solving, Time Management and Leadership. Whilst these skills have been identified as a local need, improving these will have a regional and national benefit for businesses.	<p>Currently students on 16-19 study programmes develop their soft skills through character strengths, which will be further enhanced to cover professional attributes.</p> <p>Current Adult students accessing related training.</p> <p>Level 2 Team Leading = 13</p> <p>Level 3 ILM = 35</p> <p>Level 5 ILM = 15</p> <p>Short courses in communication, problem solving and time management = 50</p>	<p>Target for 16-19 cohort = 3250</p> <p>Target for Apprenticeships = 800</p> <p>Target for Adults:</p> <p>Level 2 Team Leading = 50</p> <p>Level 3 ILM = 40</p> <p>Level 5 ILM = 20</p> <p>Short course in communication, problem solving and time management = 180</p>	July 2024

### Aim 3:

**Continue to develop digital skills for industry, especially advanced digital skills**

### Objectives:

1. Introduce new 16-19 study programme provision around Social Media for Marketing
2. Embed Microsoft Applications within 16-19 mainstream curriculum at Level 2 and Level 3
3. Develop Website Updating and Development as part of the current Digital curriculum
4. Continue to develop digital T-Level pathways
5. Increase the number of Adult students undertaking digital qualifications including ICT courses at Level 3 and above

#### Link to National, Regional and Local Priorities

Digital skills have been identified by the Norfolk and Suffolk LSIP as an area that employers believe requires improvement, especially in social media marketing, general Microsoft applications, website updating and development to more advanced digital skills using virtual and augmented reality technologies. The College has already started working with businesses to develop the advanced skills they require within a state of the art facility with an Extended Reality Lab (XR Lab). The College is also at the centre of developing digital skills for teachers through the Computing Hub.

The Computing Hub aims to transform the way computing is taught in schools across the region – and enable more young people to benefit from studying this important subject. Through this, we believe that their skills and career opportunities will be enhanced.

Computing Hubs are led nationally by The National Centre for Computing Education (NCCE) and are funded by the Department for Education.

As with other aspects of the Norfolk and Suffolk LSIP, these skills have been identified as a local need; however, improving digital skills will also help address the UK's Digital Strategy.

Current Performance /Numbers	Target Performance /Numbers	Deadline Date
Digital T-Level = 16 Essential Digital Skills = 74 Level 2 Award in Digital and IT Skills = 74 Level 2 Digital Marketing = 26 Level 3 Digital = 0 Computing Hub engagement = 195	Targets for 16-19 cohort: Digital T-Level Target = 24 Social Media and Journalism 16-19 Study Programme Target = 15 Targets for Adults: Essential Digital Skills Target = 150 Level 2 Award in Digital and IT skills = 100 Level 2 Digital Marketing = 50 Level 3 Digital = 20 Level 3 ICT Target = 20 Computing Hub engagement Target = 250 Higher Level Digital Skills through the XR Lab Target = 25	July 2024

## Aim 4:

**Continue expanding and refining our renewable skills offer to meet the Net Zero and sustainability agenda both locally and nationally**

## Objectives:

1. Embed sustainability into the existing 16-19 study programmes at Level 2 and Level 3
2. Introduce Maintenance of Electric and Hybrid Vehicles into the 16-19 Automotive study programme and offer as full cost provision for businesses
3. Introduce Installation and Commissioning of Electric Vehicle Charging Equipment in Domestic, Commercial and Industrial Locations as a commercial short course for businesses and adults who wish to upskill
4. Introduce an apprenticeship for Heat Pump Operatives
5. Increase the number of adult students undertaking sustainability courses including the up-skilling of adults wishing to retrain in Heat Pump technology

### Link to National, Regional and Local Priorities

While skills around Net Zero have been identified by the Norfolk and Suffolk LSIP as an area that employers believe requires improvement, there is a more general requirement to upskill individuals with knowledge around sustainability overall. Improving knowledge and skills in this area will help to support the climate change agenda.

Current Performance /Numbers	Target Performance /Numbers	Deadline Date
There are currently no students studying Installation and Commissioning of Electric Vehicle Charging Equipment in Domestic, Commercial and Industrial Locations or students and apprentices studying Heat Pump Operatives.	Maintenance of Electric and Hybrid Vehicles Target = 20 enrolments (2024/25) Introduce Heat Pump Operative Apprenticeship Targets for Adults: Installation and Commissioning of Electric Vehicle Charging Equipment in Domestic, Commercial and Industrial Locations Target = 16 enrolments (2024/25) Level 2 sustainability / Climate Change Target = 100 Sustainability in Industry Target = 100 Level 4 IEMA Target = 50 Level 2 Safe Maintenance of Electric Vehicles Target = 20 Heat Pump Operative (retraining) Target = 20	November 2023 for Awarding Organisation approval for new provision December 2023 Applications open for new provision September 2024 Delivery of new provision

## Aim 5:

**Provide additional provision to support the Agri-Tech / Food industry**

## Objectives:

1. Increase the number of learners enrolling on programmes linked to the Agri-Tech sector

Link to National, Regional and Local Priorities	Current Performance / Numbers	Target Performance / Numbers	Deadline Date
Provision within the Agri-Tech and Food industry is mainly supported by colleges within Norfolk and Suffolk who have land based provision; however, the Norfolk and Suffolk LSIP have identified a skills gap which require some specialist provision. The Agri-Tech and food industry rely on much more than just farm/food direct skills and are heavily supported by wider sectors such as engineering and construction, all contributing to ensuring food security.	We currently train approximately 400 engineers, 600 construction trades every year across the 16-19 cohort, Apprenticeships and Higher Education.	Engineering Target (across all cohorts) = 500 Construction Target (across all cohorts) = 700	September 2023 June 2025

## Aim 6:

### Continue to improve Maths outcomes for 16-19 students

## Objectives:

1. Review the curriculum offer at Level 2 and establish if Functional Skills are the correct offer
2. Introduce Century Tech to support student development of maths in a targeted approach
3. Work with local feeder schools to establish strong links with the Heads of Maths departments, so that students' strengths and weaknesses can be identified early, to help prepare students for re-sits in November

Link to National, Regional and Local Priorities	Current Performance /Numbers	Target Performance /Numbers	Deadline Date
Good mathematical foundations are essential for the development of businesses across the country and are a basic skill that all individuals need in modern society. Improving maths outcomes for young people will not only benefit individuals, but they will also benefit the country as a whole.	Currently only 30% of students achieve a Level 2 Functional Skill and 23% 4 – 9 GCSE	Level 2 Functional Skill Target = 5% above the National Rate GCSE aspirational Target = 10% above the National Rate	August 2024

## Aim 7:

### Increase adults studying on higher level courses to address the low levels of higher skills

## Objectives:

1. Introduce Higher Technical Qualifications in Digital and Health Professions

Link to National, Regional and Local Priorities	Current Performance / Numbers	Target Performance /Numbers	Deadline Date
Work commissioned by Norfolk and Suffolk County Councils identified that comparatively few students (nationally and locally) are taking courses at Levels 4 and 5, compared to the number taking courses at Levels 3 and 6, resulting in employers and businesses lacking some of the higher-level skills required to meet demand. There is demand for Higher Level Qualifications especially in Health, which would help to support the staffing needs of the NHS.	Currently there are no HTQs/ HNC/HND in Health or Digital	HTQ /HNC/HND Health Target = 20 HTQ/HNC/HND Digital Target = 20	October 2023



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