



YOUR FUTURE OUR FOCUS

ACCOUNTABILITY STATEMENT
2025-26

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The annual accountability agreement and the statutory duty (exists) to review how well the education and training providers in scope provision meets local needs, and to consider what actions may be taken to better meet those needs. The Local Needs Duty is the statutory duty set out in Section 52B of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992, as amended by the Skills and Post-16 Education Act 2022, which came into force 28 June 2022.

Meeting Skills Needs - Guidance DfE January 2025

1

INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

Sandwell College (the entity) is the largest General Further Education College for delivery to 16-19 year-olds in the West Midlands. We have three Colleges that make up The Sandwell Colleges; Sandwell College and Central St Michael's sixth form in West Bromwich and Cadbury College in Kings Norton, Birmingham. Through our three Colleges and Learning Campuses we deliver academic, vocational, and technical education to over 13,000 learners including young people, adults and apprentices.

As an anchor organisation we play an important role in boosting educational outcomes, in supporting growth and regeneration in Sandwell, Birmingham and the West Midlands, and by contributing to the pipeline of skills that are needed in key sectors we can help ensure more prosperous communities and thriving local economies. We have an important role to play to promote inclusion and social mobility through breaking down barriers to learning in the areas we serve. Our relentless focus on progression is at every level from essential skills to academic and higher-level skills for individuals.

We are a major employer in the area with over 950 staff and with a turnover in 2024/25 of c£64 million. As an organisation that operates at the centre of the communities we serve, we pride ourselves on our three Colleges and Learning Campuses where learners are at the heart of everything we do. We are 'One Team', with our talented and professional team working together to deliver an excellent standard of academic education and inspired skills training across the full range of levels to Level 5.

We are a true collaborator with industry, developing partnerships that provide the opportunity for our learners to achieve their ambitions and progress further. Our curriculum has been designed in conjunction with employers and partners to be engaging, responsive and tailored to their needs, creating opportunities for people entering the world of work as well as those looking to reskill and upskill. At a time when there is both significant challenge and opportunity in our regional and national economy, our future-focused education and skills is more important than ever.



Our new strategic plan 'Your Future Our Focus' 2025-28 builds on the success of our 16-19 year-olds Study Programme, placing our emphasis on the development of academic education and inspired skills training to meet local, regional and national priorities. With our investments into our new Learning Campuses, our growth in T Levels, our diversification of our offer for adults and our focus on progression, the College is ensuring that its curriculum offer is meeting current and future skills challenges. In partnership with key organisations, including Sandwell Council, Birmingham City Council, West Midlands Combined Authority, DWP, the voluntary sector, local schools, West Midlands College Consortium and Skills West Midlands & Warwickshire, our offer is transformational and will help tackle inequalities, improve opportunities for life and work and drive-up meaningful employment.

SECTOR HIGHLIGHTS IN 2024/25 AGAINST PREVIOUS PLAN

- Expanded our T Level offer to support over 400 students across 10 pathways
- Launched and expanded our Mechanical & Engineering Centre, providing qualifications from up to Level 3 for Young People, Adults and Apprentices
- Developed employer partnerships in Care, Construction, Digital & Engineering that are influencing the design of the curriculum, creating opportunities for work experience and providing our learners with a greater understanding of industry
- Supported over 150 people into sustained employment through Sector Work Academy Programmes (SWAPs)
- Achieved a 98% positive destination for those completing apprenticeships and 'green' accountability framework
- Implemented DfE incentives for teachers to be retained and trained
- Delivered capital projects and facilities worth in excess of £32m
- Commitment to delivering work placements, with over 90% of learners aged 16-18 starting work placements in year by May 2025

Our work on the LSIP last year and plans for this year are a key aspect of our strategy, set against the local authority plans for economic and skills growth in Sandwell and Birmingham. We have become a key partner of the Growth Company and Economic Development Vehicle (EDV) and will be working with the WMCA on the West Midlands Futures Growth Plan.



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OUR CORE MISSION AND PURPOSE

MISSION

Achieving Ambitions. Progressing Further.

Achieving excellent outcomes for all learners ensuring successful futures for everyone.

VISION

The Sandwell Colleges are recognised as leading and transformative colleges in the heart of Sandwell, Greater Birmingham and the West Midlands. Our education and skills training changes lives. It has tangible and lasting impact on individual learners, communities, places and regional prosperity. We are driven by incredible people who work as One Team. We never give up. We are creating brighter and successful futures every day.

OUR VALUES

We listen to every voice, we support and challenge, we collaborate, inspire and celebrate. We break down barriers. We never give up on our learners.

We CARE



CONNECT AND COLLABORATE

Together is better. We form strong, effective and thoughtful connections enabling and maximising collective impact.



AMBITIOUS

We aim high, work hard and focus on our goals. We are aspirational, committed to realising the maximum potential of ourselves and others.



RESPECT

We take time to listen and celebrate our rich diversity. We are considerate, inclusive and we take pride in all we do. We take responsibility for our actions.



EMPOWER

We nurture and support, and we are determined and strong. We encourage each other to be inspiring, resilient and bold. We create opportunities for change and growth, enabling ownership, trust, and lasting impact.

The mnemonic CARE was developed by our learners, colleagues and governors.

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OUR STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

We are ambitious for all of our learners.

Our Accountability Statement is focused on some key ambitions and activities that will be taken in line with the College strategy and ensure that we continue to create brighter and successful futures every day.

Through our ethos of 'we never give up' we will continue to deliver life-changing outcomes for the learners we support. Through collaboration and partnership, we will expand our reach, to increase opportunities and ensure that our offer is meeting the targets of local authorities, the Combined Authority and the Mayor's Youth Plan.

ALWAYS AMBITIOUS FOR OUR LEARNERS

Work towards 100% progression of learners in all our Colleges to positive choices, higher-level skills and successful careers.

FUTURE FOCUSED CAREERS AND SKILLS

Engage local and West Midlands employers in co-creating industry standard curriculum, teaching and learning that provides a pipeline of skills for now and for the future. Grow our Skills Hubs and Learning Campuses in sector priority areas such as Health and Social Care, Engineering, Construction and Digital.

POWERFUL PARTNERSHIPS

Create powerful partnerships with civic, community, employer and education partners that deliver tangible impact for our learners and support growth and reach of our provision in Sandwell, Birmingham and the West Midlands.

EMPOWER OUR PEOPLE

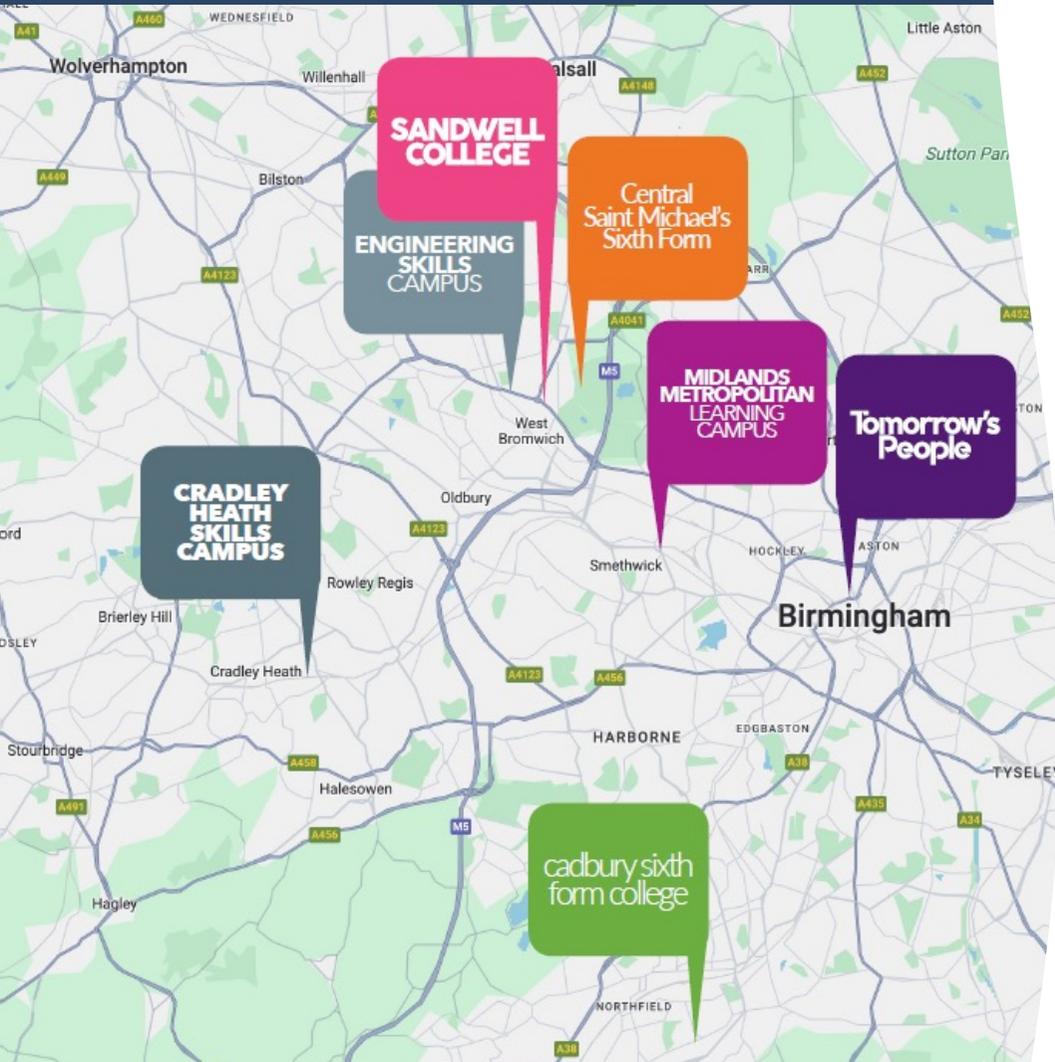
Empower our teams; invest in our 'Sandwellness' well-being plan; grow professionally; deliver and enjoy our impact and success as One Team.

FINANCIAL RESILIENCE AND SUSTAINABLE COLLEGES

Strengthen our business model and strategic resilience (financial, digital, estates) to ensure ongoing success and relevance to communities and skills. Expand market share and income (16-18, adult, apprenticeships), develop the estate, and pursue net zero by 2030.

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CONTEXT AND PLACE



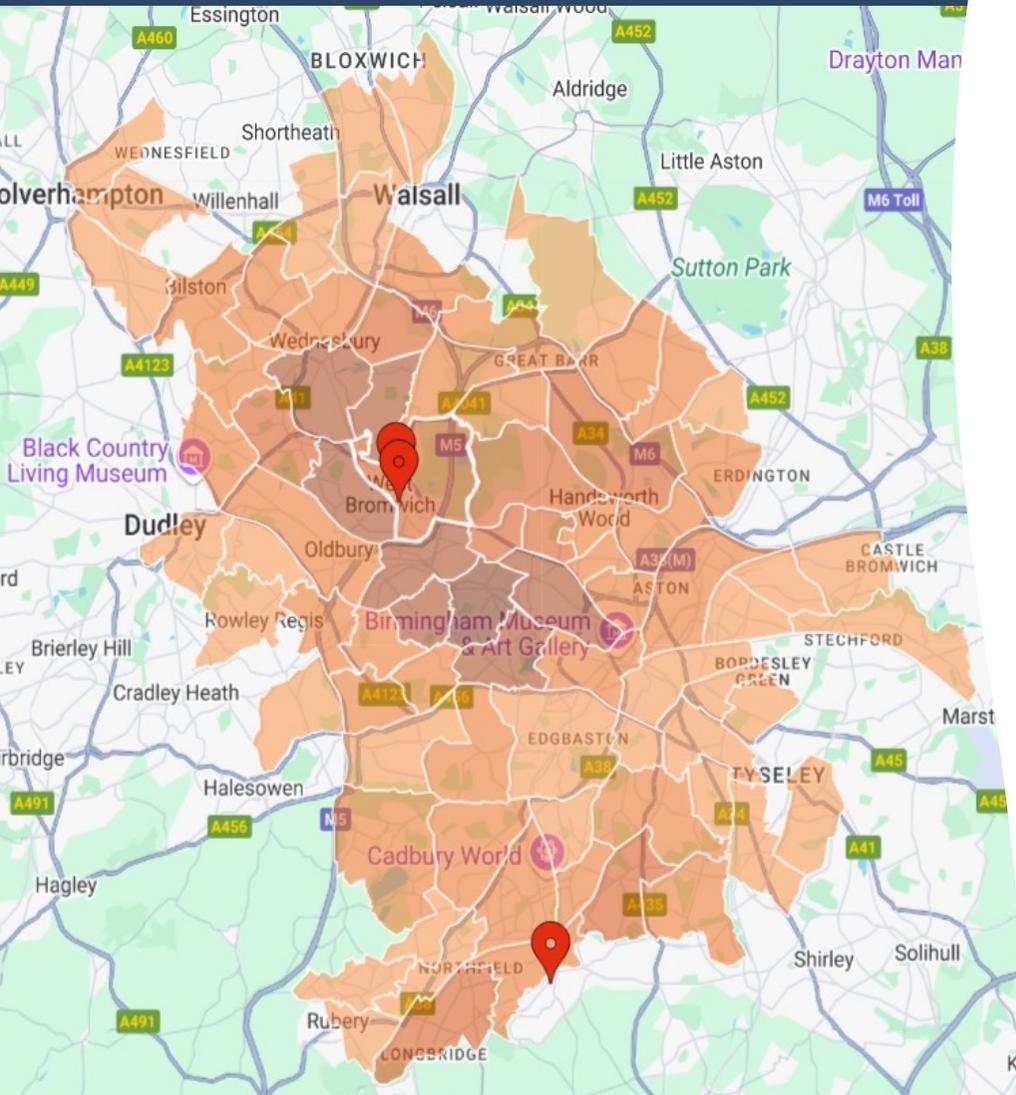
Sandwell is made up of six towns and is a fast-growing large borough of 347,551 population. It has persistently elevated levels of deprivation across all wards, maintaining its position as one of the most deprived areas in England with many children and young people living in poverty. Large areas such as the towns of Smethwick, Tipton, Wednesbury and West Bromwich are heavily deprived.

OUR APPROACH:

- Adult Provision for employability skills including essential skills and language acquisition
- Provision for Home Educated, Young Carers, Care Leavers
- 16-19 ESOL Foundation programmes
- Tutoring for GCSE re-sits through Get Further initiative
- SWAP don't DROP at start of year and roll-on approach
- Re-sit strategy yields high performing results

In Birmingham deprivation is heavily clustered around the city-centre area and is close to the Sandwell border.

- Sandwell ranks as the 12th most deprived local authority out of 317 in England
- It has persistently high unemployment, with 8,600 people being recognised as unemployed, representing 5.6% of the community (in comparison to a national average of 3.9%)
- 60% of Sandwell residents live in the most deprived 20% of households in England
- 28% of the residents are economically inactive (compared to 21.4% nationally)
- 13,000 residents are actively looking for employment
- 48% are black or ethnic minority heritage (compared to 26% nationally)
- Health indicators are poor with life expectancy being 74.9 years for men and 80.7 years for women, which is below the average age in England
- Income deprivation is the second most deprived in England.



Our full-time 16-18 year olds Travel to Learn Pattern

CONTEXT AND PLACE Continued

Cadbury College and Tomorrow's People training hub serves the City of Birmingham alongside Sandwell College.

The Kings Norton Ward (Cadbury College location) ranks within the top 1% of deprived neighbourhoods nationally, with 11,580 residents at the last census;

- 17th most deprived ward in Birmingham (69 wards in total) and has persistent high unemployment, with 498 people being recognised as unemployed representing 7.2% of the community (in comparison to a national average of 3.9%).
- 32% of the residents are economically inactive (compared to 21.4% nationally).
- 2,261 residents actively looking for employment.

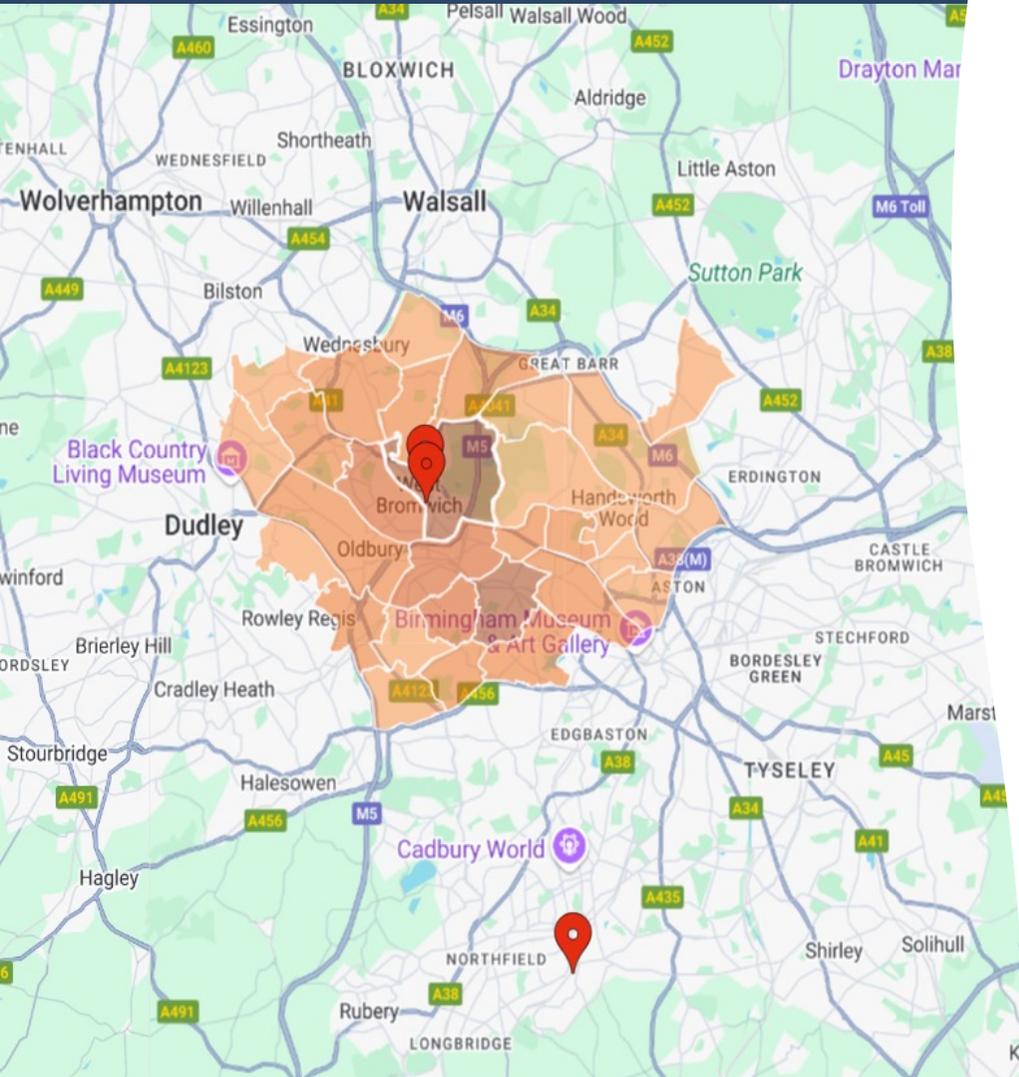
In **Birmingham City**, data from the Indices of Multiple Deprivation, shows that;

- 60% of the population live in the top 3 decile groups (ranked against a basket of deprivation indices such as income, employment, education, skills, health, crime and housing).
- 41% living in the most deprived decile group.
- Education attainment reflects the catchment areas' socio-economic challenges.



Our vision for Birmingham is a city that has a thriving economy, tackles inequality, where all communities can enjoy greater opportunities and the wellbeing that brings.

Birmingham City Council's Corporate Plan: Shaping Birmingham's Future Together for 2035



Our full-time & part-time Adult (aged 19+) Travel to Learn Pattern

CONTEXT AND PLACE Continued

Indicators across the areas we serve:

- Only 31.2% of Sandwell's working-age population and 24.8% of Kings Norton hold qualifications at NVQ Level 4 or higher, compared to the national average of 47.3%.
- 11.8% of Sandwell's working-age population have no formal qualifications, significantly above the national average of 6.5%. 25.8% of Kings Norton working age-population hold no formal qualifications.
- 34.6% of Sandwell learners and 32.2% of Kings Norton learners leave school without a GCSE pass in English or Maths, compared to 27.6% nationally.
- Although the overall number of young people classified as Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) in Sandwell is low at 2.7%, the number of those young people who are engaged with Care (44.6%) and have special educational needs (8.4%) is high.
- 6.2% of 16-18 years olds in Birmingham City are either NEET or Not Known, compared to West Midlands 5.4% and England 5.3%.
- Young people who are engaged with Care (32.5%) and have special educational needs (11.2%) are significantly higher in Sandwell compared to West Midlands where those engaged with care is (22.4%) and those who have special educational needs (9.7%).
- In 2023-2024 the College supported 316 Looked After Children (LAC), out of 846 LAC in the Sandwell borough.



CONTEXT AND PLACE Continued

West Midland Combined Authority area indicators

- Sandwell is the largest College for 16-19 yrs. in the WMCA.
- In-work poverty in the West Midlands is the highest rate nationally, with 22% of employed individuals classified as working but living below the poverty line, with in-work child poverty standing at 33%.
- Around 1 in 10 adults in the region have no formal qualifications, while just three-fifths are qualified to at least level 3, compared with two-thirds nationally.
- The impact of these statistics is felt heavily by employers, with around half of all vacancies in 2023 classed as 'hard to fill' and 35% vacant because of a lack of skills, qualifications, or experience among applicants.
- The problem continues to persist with the latest employment data, showing there remains over 70,000 vacancies in the West Midlands, despite the high number of people unemployed.



Our ambition is to develop a more integrated employment and skills ecosystem for the region through which we can stimulate economic growth, deliver better outcomes for residents and businesses, and create healthier thriving communities.

WMCA Employment and Skills Strategy

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HOW WE ARE DEVELOPING THE ANNUAL ACCOUNTABILITY STATEMENT - COLLABORATION

Collaboration and Powerful Partnerships is part of our new strategic plan 'Your Future Our Focus'.

The development of our new strategic plan 2025-2028 and consultation process with partners and our priorities for the Accountability Statement have led to a large number of linkages, partnerships, and discussions about joined up working across the local authorities, schools, colleges and employers. Our collaborative work through our membership of Skills West Midlands and Warwickshire and Colleges West Midlands on skills priorities means that we are well placed to develop and deliver a relevant and dynamic curriculum with employers and partners.

EXAMPLES INCLUDE:

- Being a Founder member of National Employability Week in Birmingham with Employability UK.
- Joint working with AoC, DfE, WMCA and other West Midlands colleges on the Industrial Strategy and new national Technical Colleges.
- Midland Metropolitan University Hospital Learning Campus developments and new programmes.
- Employer Forums in key sector areas.
- Engagement in areas of skills needs such as Rowley Regis through our new Cradley Heath Skills Campus.
- Board member of Sandwell Story Place initiative.
- Member of Growth Company (EDV) and Chambers of Commerce for Black Country and Greater Birmingham.

The College works with a range of Civic, Community, Employer and Education Partners to ensure our curriculum is developing the skills needed for now and for future industry and business needs.

COLLABORATION STRATEGIES – CIVIC, COMMUNITY, EMPLOYERS AND EDUCATION PARTNERS

- **Sandwell Local Authority** - Strengthening Skills & Employment Strategy 2024-2030
- **West Midlands Combined Authority** - Employment & Skills Strategy 2024-2027 and Green Paper on West Midlands Future
- **West Midlands & Warwickshire Local Skills Improvement Plan (May 2023)**
- **Department for Work & Pensions** - Place based plan (updated quarterly), Roundtable on Getting Britain Working, and initiatives for job coaches training and presence on site to fill vacancies
- **Black Country Integrated Healthcare Board** - Termly forum and strategic event for senior NHS stakeholders
- **Skills West Midlands & Warwickshire** - Whitecap Report (2025)
- **West Midlands College Consortium** - Various working groups focused on key priorities including Construction, Engineering, Digital and Green Skills
- **Greater Birmingham Chambers** - member and sponsor of new initiative in innovation
- **Black Country Chambers** - employer award sponsorship, patron and focus on SMEs
- **Growth Company** - signed up member to provide skills for major infrastructure Projects
- **Birmingham Hospice** - sponsorship of Bulls in the City and WEX and enrichment for HSC
- **Employers** - over 40 key employers deeply influencing design of the curriculum and 2,000 engaged in WEX and other initiatives
- **Higher Education** - working with University of Worcester around curriculum design and progression pathways and University of Wolverhampton on Access
- **Voluntary & Community Sector** - key partners engaged locally to influence the offer for young people and adults, including Sandwell Community & Voluntary Organisation, Rowley Regis Family Hub, Barnardo's and Cradley Heath Food Bank
- **Extended sports offer** - partnerships with West Bromwich Albion FC, Warwickshire Cricket and Edgbaston and Wolves FC on e-sports
- **Armed Forces West Midlands** - to support Public Services and enrichment
- **ETF** - corporate partner for our leading teachers programme
- **AoC** - membership body and policy development
- **Governance network and Just One Thing** engagement
- **Sandwell BID** - member and partner for business engagement and community cohesion
- **West Midlands Police** - community cohesion and close working for safeguarding, SafeHaven project
- **Ambassador for Sandwell Story Place initiative**
- **Post 16 Board Birmingham City**
- **Careers and Enterprise Company** - pilot for Gatsby benchmarks
- **KWP** CPD collaboration member
- **Safeguarding and Prevent Board**
- **Headteacher Forums**
- **Colleges West Midlands and Skills West Midlands and Warwickshire**



CASE STUDY

The Sandwell Colleges have developed a collaborative partnership with hydraPower dynamics, an international engineering company based in Sandwell.

The project has set a benchmark for employer-led skills development, providing over 20 Sandwell College students with industry placements, leading to six securing full-time employment as engineers in its first year of operation. Their continued commitment includes expanding opportunities for 60 new Engineering T Level students from April, as well as supporting BTEC Engineering and Construction and Business and Marketing learners through work experience.

hydraPower Dynamics won the Employer Recognition Award at the one-year anniversary celebration of Skills West Midlands & Warwickshire (SkillsWM+W). This accolade highlights the company's outstanding contributions to skills development, student progression, and workforce growth in the region.

COLLABORATION STRATEGIES Continued

NEETS: we have worked with Sandwell Council to inform a new rolling programme of NEET engagement activities across an academic year, including access to first-rung engagement and more structured pathways like pre-apprenticeship programmes.

Community Cohesion: we have important and effective relations with bodies engaged in West Bromwich and Kings Norton - such as SafeHaven project which offers after-college pastoral activities engaging college students and work with local schools on community safety and cohesion.

Sandwell Colleges Employer Skills Pledge: our pledge promotes employers who have invested in skills and where we have deep relationships in shaping curriculum and supporting learners through placements, apprenticeships and guest lectures.

Skills and specialisms: our 'skills grids' and specialisms ensure we can build deep partnerships with employers such as with hydraPower dynamics for manufacturing and engineering, Doocey Group in construction, Dental Apprentices, Armed Forces, Warwickshire Cricket Club and West Bromwich Albion FC and foundation.

Supported Internships: our internships are designed to support young people with learning difficulties or disabilities aged 16-24 yrs. to gain work experience and to progress from education into paid employment.

Programme Achievement Managers and Attendance: our PAMs supporting students' academic progress and overall success; providing tailored support, removing barriers to achievement, and collaborating with teaching staff.

Sandwell and West Birmingham NHS Trust and Midland Metropolitan University Hospital, Towns Fund and WMCA: our new £18m Learning Campus, based on the largest new Hospital in England, will see us teach on site at Level 3 and above and support adults in the community to engage in employability and progress to jobs.

Adult Skills Campus: our new campus funded through the Towns Fund will engage local adults and young people in engaging in skills to support progression to employment.

DWP: strategic Sandwell and Black Country partnerships are focused on client groups seeing us working out of Job centres and developing programmes for inactive residents and with employers such as engineering to fill vacancies and skills gaps.

Sandwell Council Adult and Place: Sandwell Story and adult campaign, Place based team, Employment and Skills Partnership and higher-level strategic conversation with WMCA/DWP/College/Sandwell Council.

Collaboration with other providers: Skills West Midlands & Warwickshire, Colleges West Midlands, schools and universities.



To have the greatest impact on employment and skills within the Sandwell Borough and to maintain a clear focus, there is a need for a shared ambition across key partners to realise change.

Sandwell Skills and Employment Strategy: Strengthening Skills and Employment for a Thriving Economy

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CONTRIBUTION TO NATIONAL, REGIONAL AND LOCAL PRIORITIES



At the heart of the UK's most dynamic region, Sandwell and Birmingham drive a multi-billion-pound economy, home to 1.5 million people. With strengths in advanced manufacturing, automotive technologies, digital innovation and emerging sectors such as green energy and health, this is a critical moment for innovation and advancing skills to support growth and investment.

OUR COLLEGES WILL:

- Play a crucial part in the wider skill system providing essential pathways for academic and technical success, personal growth and progression to much needed higher-level skills at Level 3 and 4 and above.
- Create opportunities by connecting learners with real-world experiences and industry insight which supports them to achieve their career ambitions.
- Work in partnership with employers to shape our curriculum and ensure that our learners have industry-ready knowledge, skills and behaviours including essential 'softer' skills.
- Connect with partners to ensure adult learners can access critical basic skills and higher-level vocational qualifications to re-skill and up-skill, aligned with local priorities to achieve good jobs.
- Indirectly support other West Midlands Futures goals such as leadership and management for business, housing, health equity, poverty and life chances.



We must ensure that residents are well skilled and supported to make the most of these opportunities, whilst recognising the importance of working with partners to deliver more good jobs for the region.

WMCA Employment and Skills Strategy

MEETING SKILLS NEEDS - LOCAL, REGIONAL AND NATIONAL

NATIONAL PRIORITIES	REGIONAL PRIORITIES	LOCAL PRIORITIES
Advanced Manufacturing	New Manufacturing	Engineering and Adv.Manufacturing
Creative Industries	Creative Industries	Construction and green skills
Digital Technologies	Digital Technologies	Health and Social Care
Defence	Electric Vehicles	Digital and technologies
Financial Services	Environmental Technologies	Creative Industries
Life Sciences	Medical & Life Sciences	Business and Professional services
Professional & Business Services	Industries related to HS2	Transport and Logistics
Clean Energy Industries		
Construction		
Health		

Source: DfE

Sources: WMCA Employment & Skills Strategy 2024-2027

Source: LSIP 2024/25 and Local Authority Plans



FUTURE SKILLS IN THE WEST MIDLANDS

SECTOR	INVESTMENT FOCUS & HIGHLIGHTS
Engineering & Advanced Manufacturing	13% of all businesses operating in Sandwell are from the Advanced Manufacturing sector, with increased demand for skills in advanced manufacturing, electronics and robotics reflecting the Colleges' curriculum 2030. Our Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering Hub works with employers to ensure skills are relevant and needed by employers. A £5.5bn Investment Zone in automotive, aerospace, and battery tech in Sandwell and an electric vehicle and robotics hub in Birmingham provide further opportunities for learners to progress to good jobs and help employers move up the 'value chain'.
Digital & Tech	With over 2,000 unfilled digital roles in the West Midlands there is an essential need for future skills. Birmingham is a global Tech Hub, attracting international employers for tech in energy, advanced mobility, healthcare and life sciences. Through our offer in Digital, Creative Industries, Cyber, Networking and Communication we will help to tackle the skills shortages and propel young people in to cutting-edge careers.
Green Economy & Net Zero	Low carbon industries employ over 100,000 people in the region, contributing to an economy worth over £12bn. In Sandwell the Kelvin Waste-to-Energy Plant will power 95,000 homes, driving the towns towards net zero. Green Skills are embedded throughout our curriculum provision, linked to modern construction methods, hybrid and electric vehicle and renewable energy, enabling progression in green jobs and industries.
Healthcare & Life Sciences	Our innovative public sector partnership with the NHS Trust and Midland Metropolitan University Hospital will create the pipeline of skills needed by the NHS. The collaborative Learning Campus at MMUH will see new pathways in health occupations open up to young people and adults from entry levels through to Higher Education. Our partnerships with the Black Country Integrated Care Board and Sandwell & West Birmingham NHS Trust will expand our work placements, industry-standard curriculum and expert teaching.
Building for the Future	Over 125,000 new homes are needed in Birmingham by 2040 and will contribute to the regeneration of the built environment. Alongside significant infrastructure projects including HS2, the Big City Plan and the West Midlands Metro Tram Extension and Sandwell-Dudley corridor, the need to create skilled construction workers and civil engineers has never been greater. We will expand programmes in the trades such as brickwork, joinery and plumbing, and higher level skills such as digital surveying and advanced engineering.

- 55% of jobs in WMCA need skills Level 4+ by 2035.
- Level 3 is critical to skills ladder for areas we serve.
- The skills of Birmingham residents don't match employer demand, making finding skills and getting jobs harder.
- By 2030 Sandwell Council aims to increase 18-24 year olds in work by 1,253.

(Shaping Birmingham's Future Together to 2030, West Midlands Future Green Paper 2025, Sandwell Skills and Employment Strategy 2024-30)

Our Skills Hubs and Learning Campuses reach across all of our Colleges and respond to the skills needs and economic drivers of Sandwell, Birmingham and the West Midlands.

1

**ADVANCED
MANUFACTURING
ENGINEERING
AND STEM**

2

**HEALTH AND
SOCIAL CARE**

3

**DIGITAL AND
CREATIVE
INDUSTRIES**

4

**CONSTRUCTION
AND GREEN
SKILLS**

We also deliver specialist and academic career-focused programmes including:

A range of technical and vocational qualifications, Apprenticeships, A Levels and T Levels.

Business and Professional, IT, Arts & Media, English, Maths, ESOL, Foundation Learning, Preparation for Life and Work, Adult and Community Learning, Animal Care, Travel and Tourism, Hair and Beauty, Sports, Education and Early Years, Construction Trades, Health and Social Care, Engineering and Digital.

Over 50 qualifications in A Levels and T Levels across a range of subjects including Health, STEM, Arts, Humanities, Languages, Business and Professions, Digital, Construction and Engineering, combined vocational and academic courses through our Young Professional Academies that supports progression to Higher Education.

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UNDERSTANDING EMPLOYER DEMAND AND SKILLS NEEDS

The Sandwell Colleges utilise the annual curriculum planning process to ensure the offer is meeting local, regional and national needs. Heads of Section follow a 3-year curriculum plan that builds on a range of data sets to inform their choices and planning and this is supported through engagement with key employers and stakeholders. The offer is scrutinised by the senior leadership team with key conversations taking place with the DfE, WMCA, DWP and Sandwell Local Authority and Post 16 Board for Birmingham to ensure the planned curriculum is meeting current and future needs.

Our curriculum is structured around our strategic objective of being a 'Careers College' and having 'Future Focused Careers and Skills'. We pride ourselves on supporting learners to progress between levels as well as taking the next steps to employment or higher education. We utilise data through Vector, engagement with schools, and market trends, to ensure our offer is engaging and viable and that curriculum planning influences the business planning process, to ensure that the Colleges are able to provide the quality of skills, expertise and resources to ensure the learner experience is tailored towards progression.

Our Insight work:

Skills England previously Future Skills Unit	Chambers of Commerce for Black Country and Greater Birmingham, Growth Company, Multicultural Apprenticeships body
LightCast, Vector and other LMI and data from WMCA data unit and local authorities and DWP	Employer Forums and professional associations, community and civic organisations West Midlands Lieutenancy
Skills West Midlands White Cap report, Colleges West Midlands projects ETF and AOC on sector trends and policy	Stakeholder, employer and learner surveys

Collaboration with employer bodies and associations and the engagement of employers through our industry boards are ensuring the offer is aligned to in-demand careers. Within Automotive the Head of Section, employers and the Institute for the Motor Industry (IMI) are working on a programme to develop welding skills for adults, that will be proposed to WMCA to become a funded offer for 2025/26 that address challenges being faced by employers across Birmingham in the development of skills linked to body repair. The qualification is designed to provide up-skilling and re-skilling opportunities and will lead to progression into the Automotive industry that currently employs over 14,000 people.

MEETING SKILLS PRIORITIES

The curriculum across Sandwell Colleges is diverse and is designed to meet local, regional and national priorities. The College has developed pathways for Young People, Adults and Apprenticeships to include industry recognised qualifications in Care, Construction, Digital, Engineering, Manufacturing and Science and to reflect local service and cultural industries such as creative industries, sports and tourism. The colleges do not yet offer specific programmes in logistics or defence but does have programmes that support entry to those industries and at a range of levels.

The Colleges have a broad qualification base including A Level and T Level, and vocational, technical and professional qualifications from Entry to Level 3, and has provision in conjunction with local Universities to deliver Level 4 and Level 5. The College has developed its Leadership and Management qualifications which are a priority for WMCA, to include courses from Level 3 to Level 7.

SECTOR	24/25 ENROLMENT	25/26 ENROLMENT TARGET
Care	1165	1300
Construction	397	450
Digital	668	770
Engineering	282	370
Science	2000	2100

T Levels

We are one of the largest providers of T Levels in the West Midlands, growing our provision to over 400 learners enrolled across 8 T Level pathways. Our T Level offer is designed in conjunction with employers, placing Industrial Placements as the key element to an engaging and meaningful student experience and progression opportunities.

Apprenticeships

Sandwell College's apprenticeship provision is a growing part of the new strategic plan, providing opportunities for young people to access local opportunities and engaging with employers to provide upskilling and reskilling for their employees. Although the College currently has a small contract for Apprenticeships (£1.3m in the 2024/25 contract year), engagement with employers is increasing, with a revised apprenticeship strategy in place that meets local, regional and national priorities.

The College is recognised for its high quality Dental apprenticeships, providing apprenticeships across the region through a flexible delivery model that supports apprentices into long term employment. This year the College has introduced its first higher level apprenticeship, and with apprenticeships in automotive, construction, engineering and health the college has a curriculum offer that is attractive and responsive to employer needs.

Adult

Sandwell College's Adult offer is predominantly focused on developing the essential skills needed for life and work. The provision offered engages those furthest from education, providing pathways through to industry recognised skills through the development of literacy, numeracy and digital skills and qualifications. Our ESOL provision meets the needs of the community and develops language acquisition for employment skills and building skills linked to industry. In the last year the College has supported ESOL learners into qualifications in Care, Construction and Digital and is opening up pathways to employment opportunities in Engineering. The College has a vibrant offer in Hair and Beauty and Early Years for Adults and delivers a blended Access to Higher Education model that supports adults to access Universities in the West Midlands.

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LOCAL NEEDS DUTY REVIEW 2024/25

The Colleges' curriculum strategy has been developed in line with the Local Needs Duty that requires governing bodies to regularly review how well their education and training meets local needs and how this can be improved.

The Colleges' curriculum for 2025/26 has been designed in conjunction with employers, reflecting the latest market information to set an engaging and impactful curriculum that supports all students to make progress and achieve their ambitions. The curriculum planning process has been robust utilising feedback from learners and stakeholders and forms part of the Colleges' 3-year strategic plan 'Your Future Our Focus' (2025-2028).

We have engaged key community and civic stakeholders to ensure it is meeting national, regional and local needs. We have worked with employers across all sectors within the curriculum to look at current and future skills needs, engaging employers in the design, delivery and support of curriculum through work experience and immersive activities. On a wider level the Colleges are members of the West Midlands College Consortium, Skills West Midlands, The Growth Company, The Black Country Integrated Health Board and the Birmingham and Black Country Chambers of Commerce to ensure that specific needs are being addressed coherently across the localities and region.

- Cadbury merger – embedding and improving curriculum offer
- Continued strength in learner engagement and community cohesion (NAMMS award SafeHaven, accolade from Police)
- Implementation of Capital and curriculum to enable skills specialisms- STEM and Engineering centre and Learning Campus at MMUH
- College in Community – Cradley Heath Skills Campus
- Apprenticeships - improved and first foundation apprentices
- SWAPS partnership hard to reach – good outcomes and awards
- Engaged Purlos – track progression at scale 10,000 learners
- New Profile, Partnerships and Awards
- Adult growth and refocus on entry to Level 2 & 3 into employment – strategic partnerships DWP LAs
- New Apprenticeships in skills shortage areas – Welding, Brick, Mechatronics, Building Surveying, Sales & Marketing
- T Level expansion and achievement – Construction, Early Years, Digital, Health, Science and Sales & Marketing
- Language Acquisition – ESOL in to Care, Digital, Retail
- Green skills road map and facilities
- Study Programme Gateway Assessments pilot to help tackle curriculum reforms impact and progression
- Higher level skills L&M and plans to expand to level 4 HTQs, Access in skills areas.

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ACCOUNTABILITY ANNUAL AIMS



'YOUR FUTURE OUR FOCUS' STRATEGIC PILLAR	ANNUAL ACCOUNTABILITY OBJECTIVES	PERFORMANCE MILESTONES
<p>ALWAYS AMBITIOUS FOR OUR LEARNERS</p> <p>Through excellent education, inspired by skills training and a careers curriculum focused on inclusion and progression.</p>	<p>1. Provide opportunities for all learners to progress, through engagement with employer and stakeholder partners to ensure offer for young people, adults and apprenticeships is focused on careers including: A Levels, T Levels, Free Courses for Jobs, Higher level skills and skills initiatives.</p>	<p>Achieve >92% progression of learners transitioning to positive destinations.</p> <p>Establish formal partnerships with 2 Higher Education institutions.</p> <p>Engage key stakeholders to support adults towards sustained employment such as pathways from ESOL programmes.</p>
	<p>2. Increase the number of learners achieving a Level 3 qualification through an enhanced curriculum, a focus on achievement and progression and the development of transferable skills.</p>	<p>Expand the Colleges' T Level offer to complement the existing A Level and Btec offer for young people.</p> <p>Develop the adult offer around Engineering, Construction, Digital and Health to provide pathways to Level 3.</p> <p>Establish adult delivery partnerships to support engagement and improve progression between levels.</p> <p>Integrate literacy and numeracy throughout the curriculum to support student progress and embed the Sandwell Strategies to boost outcomes.</p>
	<p>3. Enhance and grow by introducing new skills curriculum, developing flexible, employment focused programmes, embedding ESOL language acquisition into our ESOL courses and developing SWAPs linked to local and regional priorities.</p>	<p>Provide coverage of adult provision across Sandwell to engage those furthest from education and in partnership with Sandwell Council.</p> <p>Implement adult curriculum in Motor Vehicle, Construction and Engineering with DWP to create skills linked to local vacancies.</p> <p>Engage more employers to promote employability programmes and engage key partners to launch a skills bootcamp, SWAPs or similar programme and establish first phase of the Cradley Heath Skills Campus starting January 2026.</p>

This aim relates to the following skills priorities:

Local

- Engineering and Advanced Manufacturing
- Construction and green skills
- Health and Social
- Digital and technologies
- Creative Industries
- Cross cutting 'softer' essential skills

National

- Advanced Manufacturing
- Creative Industries
- Digital Tech
- Professional & Business Services
- Clean Energy
- Construction
- Health and Life Sciences

Partners include:

- Chambers of Commerce
- DWP
- Local Authorities - adult skills
- 2 Universities - progression
- NHS Trust and Midland Metropolitan University Hospital - adults, young people progression
- Schools - transition and progression
- Employers - internships and sector work academy programmes
- AoC and ETF support initiatives

'YOUR FUTURE OUR FOCUS' STRATEGIC PILLAR	ANNUAL ACCOUNTABILITY OBJECTIVES	PERFORMANCE MILESTONES	
<p>FUTURE FOCUSED CAREERS AND SKILLS</p> <p>Through industry focused readiness and expertise, engaging employers in shaping our curriculum, immersing our colleagues and learners in industry, and ensuring progression to higher level.</p>	<p>1. Build on the curriculum strategy to increase the opportunities for young people and adults to secure apprenticeships alongside up-skilling the local and regional work force.</p>	<p>Develop the new Apprenticeship Strategy to align business growth to skills priorities and further develop specialisms such as dentistry.</p> <p>Prepare for further higher level and foundation apprenticeships.</p> <p>Apprenticeship accountability measures 'good' for 25/26.</p>	
	<p>2. Develop the T Level offer to become recognised as an industry leader in the development, implementation and outcomes associated with T Levels.</p>	<p>Develop T Levels in a further two pathways to launch in September 2026 and/or prepare for 2026/27.</p> <p>Grow the T Level offers in Engineering and Health as part of Skills Campuses developments.</p> <p>Create a network of employers who support Industrial Placements and become ambassadors for the impact placements can have on business.</p>	
	<p>3. Implement in year programmes aimed at supporting those aged 18-24 to engage and progress.</p>	<p>Prepare to launch a College King's Trust programme or similar in year.</p> <p>Develop short programmes for 18-24 yr olds to support Youth Plan in year and start to develop market.</p> <p>Expand the High Needs offer alongside the expansion of Supported Internships with key employer partners.</p>	
	<p>This aim relates to the following skills priorities:</p>		<p>Partners include:</p>
	<p>Local</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engineering and Advanced Manufacturing • Construction and green skills • Health and Social • Digital and technologies • Creative Industries • Cross cutting 'softer' essential skills 	<p>National</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advanced Manufacturing • Creative Industries • Digital Tech • Professional & Business Services • Clean Energy • Construction • Health and Life Sciences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employer partnerships through the Skills Hubs and employer networks • Chambers of Commerce • Local authorities and providers working with dis-engaged young people identified as NEET • DWP • Voluntary & Community sector • Schools – awareness raising of T Levels and pathways to vocational skills and apprenticeships • WMCA

'YOUR FUTURE OUR FOCUS' STRATEGIC PILLAR	ANNUAL ACCOUNTABILITY OBJECTIVES	PERFORMANCE MILESTONES
<p>POWERFUL PARTNERSHIPS</p> <p>Through connection, collaboration and community to benefit learners and drive</p>	<p>1. Establish at least 2 of the 4 planned Skills Hubs, creating employer panels, providing immersive experiences, shaping the curriculum and increasing number of learners engaged in work experience.</p>	<p>Establish a skills board per hub, a bespoke curriculum offer and promotion campaign.</p>
	<p>2. Continue to work with statutory and community organisations in West Bromwich and Kings Norton to support community cohesion, the role of the Colleges and support for vulnerable learners.</p>	<p>Support 6-8 employers per year to sign the Sandwell Colleges Employer Skills Pledge.</p>
		<p>Establish employer supported environments that align local and regional employers clearly to college venues.</p>
		<p>Continue to work with West Midlands Police, Sandwell BID, MPs and local council to promote positive reputation of our Colleges and learners through our community cohesion action plan.</p>
<p>This aim relates to the following skills priorities:</p> <p>Local</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engineering and Advanced Manufacturing • Construction and green skills • Health and Social • Digital and technologies • Creative Industries • Cross cutting 'softer' essential skills <p>National</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advanced Manufacturing • Creative Industries • Digital Tech • Professional & Business Services • Clean Energy • Construction • Health and Life Sciences 	<p>Partners include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Range of key employer partners engaged in the 4 Skills Hubs • Wider employer partners supporting the colleges through Skills Pledges • Key employer partners focused on the development of Green Skills and embedding these within the curriculum offer • Chambers of Commerce • Skills England • Industry hubs such as CiTB • WMCA and Sandwell LA • Black Country Integrated Healthcare Board & Midland Metropolitan University Hospital • Skills West Midlands and the West Midlands Colleges • West Midlands Police • Sandwell BID • WMCA • Sandwell Council & Birmingham City Council • Voluntary and Community sector 	
		<p>In depth work with multiple agencies on support for welfare and safeguarding for vulnerable 16-19 yrs. and continue to excel on pastoral and learner experience.</p>

'YOUR FUTURE OUR FOCUS' STRATEGIC PILLAR	ANNUAL ACCOUNTABILITY OBJECTIVES	PERFORMANCE MILESTONES
<p>EMPOWER OUR PEOPLE</p> <p>Through attracting and harnessing talent, investing in our colleagues' ambitions, and creating an environment for adaptable and innovative practice as part of our professional and skills 'One Team'</p>	<p>1. Invest in our workforce through the delivery of our 'Professional Journey', building expertise across all teams and enabling opportunities for industry immersion.</p>	<p>Develop a refreshed People and Organisation Development strategy.</p> <p>Implement new CPD framework for delivery of new strategy.</p> <p>Develop our Leading Teachers network of advanced practitioners and identify strengths and areas for development within all subject areas through the collaboration with other colleges</p> <p>Develop programmes to attract new staff to the sector with initiatives linked to teacher recruitment and skills roles.</p> <p>Embed our 'Sandwellness' well-being programme.</p> <p>Develop our use of innovative technologies including AI to enrich teaching and learning, sharing our approaches, and exposing colleagues and learners to industry technologies to prepare them for the future workforce.</p>
<p>This aim relates to the following skills priorities:</p> <p>Local</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engineering and Advanced Manufacturing • Construction and green skills • Health and Social • Digital and technologies • Creative Industries • Cross cutting 'softer' essential skills <p>National</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advanced Manufacturing • Creative Industries • Digital Tech • Professional & Business Services • Clean Energy • Construction • Health and Life Sciences 		<p>Partners include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chambers of Commerce, DWP, Local Authorities- adult skills • 2 Universities - progression • NHS Trust and Midland Metropolitan University Hospital – adults, young people progression • Schools – transition and progression • Employers - internships

'YOUR FUTURE OUR FOCUS' STRATEGIC PILLAR	ANNUAL ACCOUNTABILITY OBJECTIVES	PERFORMANCE MILESTONES
<p>FINANCIAL AND RESILIENCE AND SUSTAINABLE COLLEGES</p> <p>Through investment, growth and sustainable practice towards digital transformation and net zero.</p>	<p>1. Deliver the capital transformation projects for the Skills Campuses at Cradley Heath and Midland Metropolitan Learning Campus.</p>	<p>Completion of the Cradley Heath Skills Campus to launch January 2026 and to launch new programmes and establish early take up.</p> <p>Completion of the Midland Metropolitan Learning Campus and to launch new programmes and establish early take up.</p> <p>Publish the revised Estates Strategy for 2025 onwards.</p>
<p>This aim relates to the following skills priorities:</p> <p>Local</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engineering and Advanced Manufacturing • Construction and green skills • Health and Social • Digital and technologies • Creative Industries • Cross cutting 'softer' essential skills <p>National</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advanced Manufacturing • Creative Industries • Digital Tech • Professional & Business Services • Clean Energy • Construction • Health and Life Sciences 		<p>Partners include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WMCA • DfE • Sandwell Local Authority • Employers • DWP • Midland Metropolitan University Hospital • NHS • Community and Voluntary Sector • Key contractors

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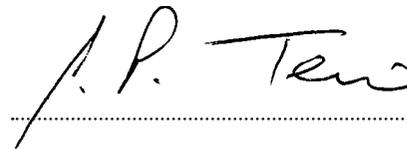
CORPORATION STATEMENT AND SIGNATORIES

On behalf of Sandwell Colleges Corporation, it is hereby confirmed that the plan as set out above reflects the agreed statement of purpose, aims and objectives as approved by the Corporation on the 30th June 2025.

Corporation statement signed by Chair of Board and CEO/Principal and Accounting Officer



CEO/Principal and Accounting Officer



Chair of Board

RELEVANT LINKS

- DfE Guidance
- Accountability Statement



SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

- The Sandwell Colleges Strategic Plan 2025-28 Your Future Our Focus
- Sandwell Council Vision 2030
- Sandwell Council Employment and Skills Strategy: Strengthening Skills and Employment for a Thriving Economy 2023-26
- Birmingham City Vision 2025
- Birmingham City Corporate Plan 2022-26
- Birmingham Skills & Employment Plan 2016 to 2026
- WMCA Green Paper West Midlands Future 2025
- WMCA Employment and Skills Strategy 2024
- Skills West Midlands & Warwickshire Employer Skills Report WhiteCap 2024
- The UK's Modern Industrial Strategy 2025
- Skills England Priorities 2025
- Get Britain Working White Paper 2025
- Sandwell College Annual Accounts 2023/24
- Sandwell College Ofsted Report 2022

