



Accountability Statement

May 2023

Purpose

West Herts College Group Vision

Our vision is to transform life chances and create a better everyday life for many people.

Mission

Our Mission is to provide high-quality education and training in a safe, respectful and inclusive environment that prepares people for success in work and life and builds a foundation for lifelong learning.

Public Value Statement

We will provide a broad range of provision and services to meet the needs, interests and aspirations of the communities we serve.

The College

- Will inspire interest in lifelong learning, working with employers to develop the skills needed for success in life and at work. We commit to this in the knowledge that:
 - Professional skills are central to individual earning power and the collective productivity of our local, regional and national economies
 - English, Maths and Digital skills are essential to accessing opportunities
 - The aspirations of many in our communities are challenged by economic, health and social pressures
- We will engage with as many people and organisations as possible, working in partnership to maximise benefits across our communities, with the views of stakeholders represented at College Board level.
- We recognise our responsibilities as a community asset for the people we serve, understanding community issues and making a meaningful contribution to providing solutions to these challenges.
- We will maintain a thorough understanding of local labour markets and facilitate positive relationships between employers and prospective employees.
- We value community well-being and are fully committed to providing lifelong learning opportunities through a range of courses.

- We ensure the College secures and develops a workforce that is able to provide the skills and experiences required to deliver provision of the highest quality.
- We will be professional in all undertakings and accessible wherever possible, providing a safe and welcoming place for people to gather and engage in learning and recreational activities
- We will take responsible decisions, utilising public funds appropriately and always seeking to prioritise expenditure and investment to benefit local people.
- We will play our part in the net zero economy – taking action to reduce our climate impact, calculating our emissions annually and taking action to reduce them.

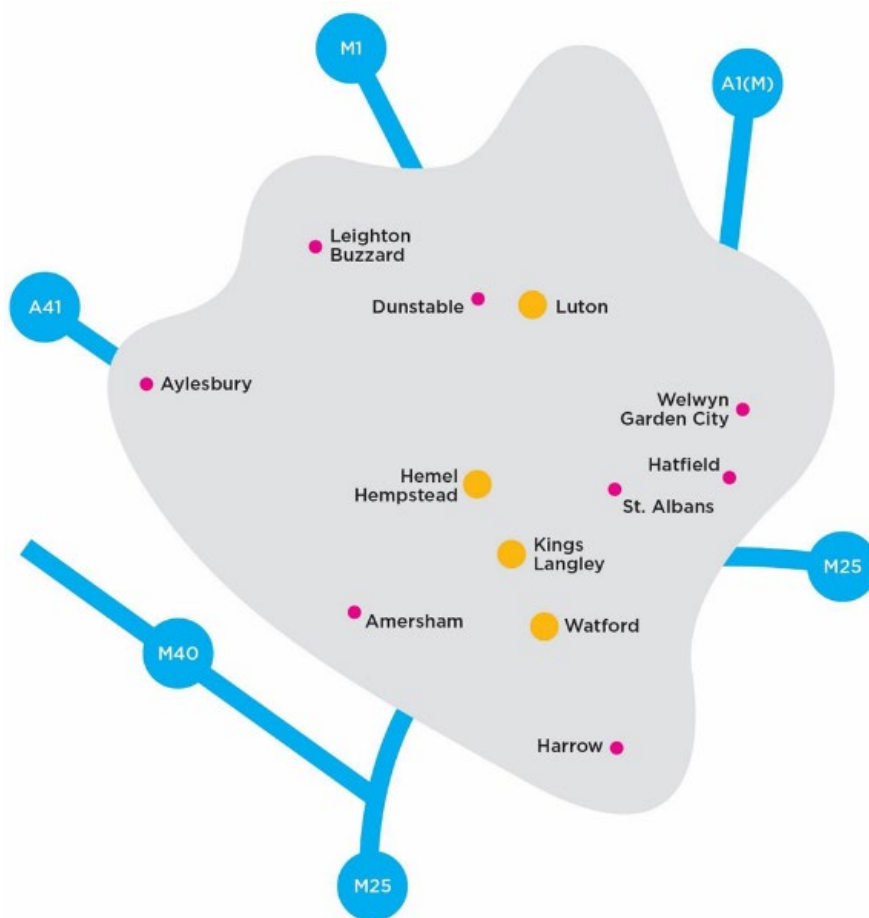
Context and Place

The College

West Herts College Group is a large, general Further Education college comprising West Herts College, with campuses in Watford and Hemel Hempstead, and Barnfield College, with two campuses in Luton. Annually, we deliver a broad range of full- and part-time courses to around 6,900 16-18 year-olds and 3,700 adults.

Geographical area

The college group falls into two LSIP areas: Hertfordshire, and the South East Midlands. The main geographical areas served by the group are Dacorum District including Hemel Hempstead, Watford, the wider Hertfordshire area, North London, Luton, Dunstable, and the wider South-East Midlands. This diagram shows the areas within one hour's travel of our campuses by public transport.



West Herts College: local area

Hertfordshire is a mix of semi-rural areas and towns. Its businesses are predominantly

SMEs: there are some large but few medium-sized businesses. Stevenage has the third-largest cell and gene therapy cluster globally; the enterprise zone in Hemel Hempstead is a centre for agri-tech, construction, and digital technologies; and the UK's film industry is based the south-west of the county. Although Hertfordshire ranks 135 of 151 upper-tier local authorities in England on indices of multiple deprivation, some parts of Hertfordshire rank more highly for neighbourhood deprivation. Hertfordshire is a county characterised by inequality, with 45 wards in the bottom 3 percentiles of deprivation in England in 2019.

The creative industries are a significant source of employment and growth in West Hertfordshire. TV and film production is of particular importance in this region: key employers include Warner Bros based in Leavesdon, Sky and BBC studios in Elstree Studio, and the new Sunset Studios in Broxbourne.

Watford is the smallest of the College's three main boroughs, with its eight square miles dominated by the town centre and surrounding mixed-use areas. Stakeholders' focus, led by the Council, is to modernise the town centre offer, with a shift away from a dependence on retail to a broader focus on leisure and culture alongside a regenerated business district around Watford Junction station. Since the Covid-19 pandemic and its impact on town centres, the focus on revitalising Watford town centre has intensified due to the loss of John Lewis and Debenhams, its flagship retailers, and the wider impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The civic agenda in Hemel Hempstead and Dacorum continues to focus in the medium-term on the regeneration of the Maylands Business Park and plans for the neighbouring Enterprise Zone (which spans in the M1, in partnership with St Albans Council).

Longer term, the requirement from central government for unprecedented housing development had led to the development of a 25-year plan of building and infrastructure expansion which potentially includes developing Hemel Hempstead into a Garden City.

Barnfield College: local area

The South-East Midlands is an innovative area with cutting-edge high-tech industry. It is located between Oxford, Cambridge, and London, with excellent transport links and a major airport at Luton. It has experienced rapid growth in recent years, and the population is also growing quickly. The South-East Midlands has 111 Lower Layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs) ranking in the top 20% most deprived against the indices of multiple deprivation. This is 10% of the area's LSOAs.

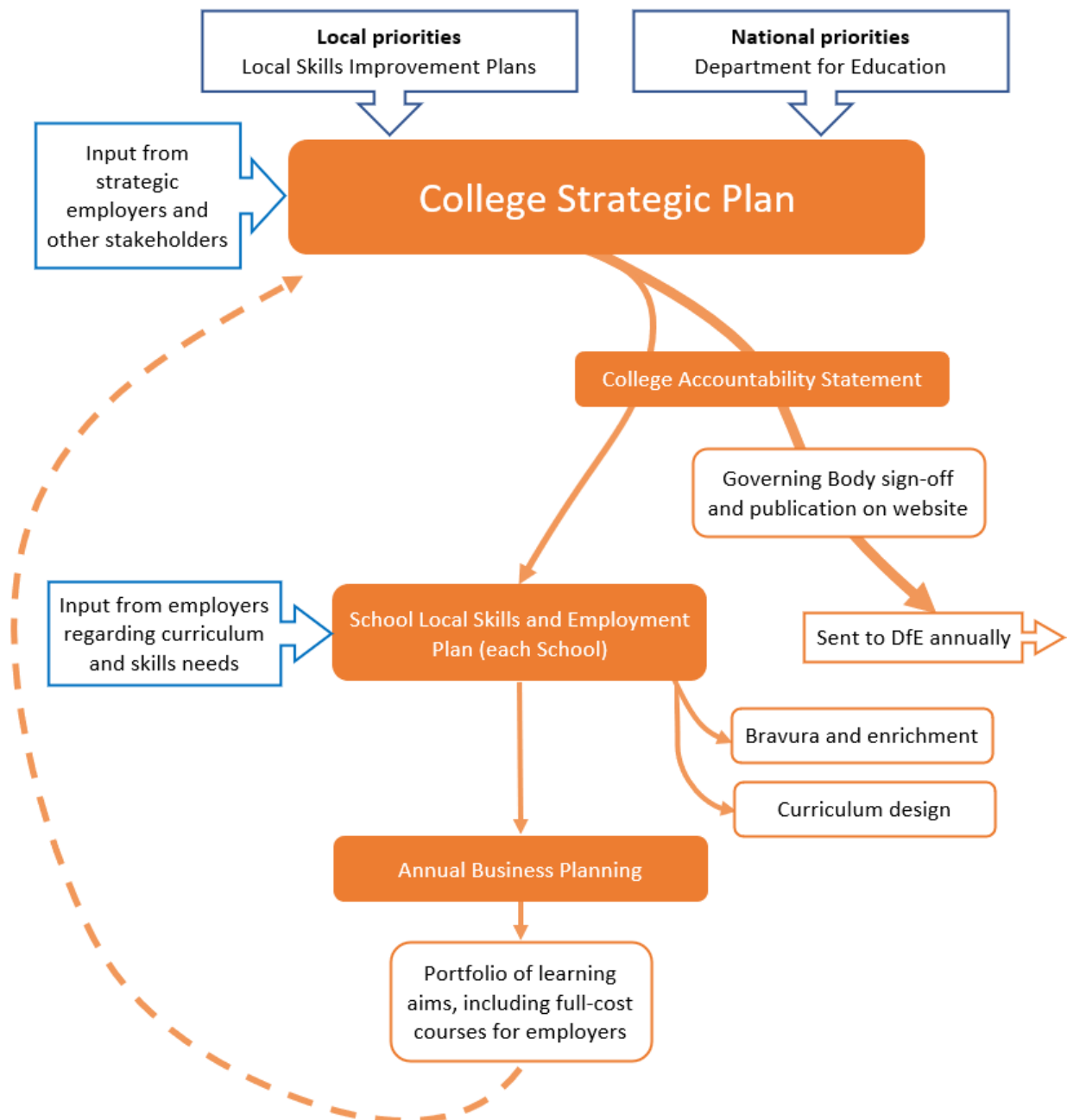
Addressing poverty is a key focus of Luton Borough Council. The town has significant areas of deprivation. One-third of those living in Luton were born outside the UK and double the UK percentage hold qualifications not recognised in the UK.

The airport is a major employer in Luton, owned by the Council who have plans for substantial development. Another key employer in this area is the Vauxhall vehicle manufacturing plant.

Approach to developing annual accountability statement

Meeting skills needs

We undertake annual business planning to evaluate and develop our response to national and local priorities. This process is shown here:



The business planning process takes into account a range of intelligence on skills and training needs. Staff at all levels are involved, and input is sought from stakeholders and employers to inform curriculum portfolio planning, curriculum design, and enrichment. Each School prepares a 'Skills and Employment Plan' which highlights national sector-specific skills priorities for the curriculum area. These are live documents which record new information throughout the year. This process informs decisions about the courses we offer as well as the content of these courses plus additional skills delivery, and guides planning for the future.

Although a formal annual activity, our business planning is an iterative process. Employer input is secured through the preparation of Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs), our own strategic engagement, forums and consultations, and ongoing dialogue with the large number of employers with whom we have sustained relationships, as well as through informal conversations, such as with employers seeking assistance with recruitment or enquiring about commercial training. For example, we work with local leisure centres to provide our sports learners with the National Pool Lifeguard Qualification to enable them to work in hard-to-fill vacancies for these businesses; we have an ongoing relationship with an innovative construction company who supports training our carpentry learners in modern methods of construction.

We deliver a formal programme of work-related skills for our full-time learners, which provides skills that extend beyond the core content of technical and vocational qualifications. It also includes English and maths skills informed by what employers in different sectors have told us are important in the workplace. Through this project, which we call 'Bravura', learners complete activities to gain a set of skills and knowledge related to their chosen occupational pathway. These are shaped by employer input and other priorities (such as digital skills needs and English and maths development), and they are designed to help learners close the gap between completion of their main learning aim and readiness for work.

Examples of Bravura activities include:

- Short welding (manufacturing) course, for engineering and construction learners
- Customer Service and Teaching Assistant courses and additional workshops, for ESOL learners
- 18th Edition Wiring Regulations, for electrical installation level 3 learners
- Safeguarding, first aid and coaching qualifications, for sports learners
- Swimming Teaching L1 instructor course, for sports learners, delivered by a local leisure centre company
- Air Cabin Crew course readiness, for travel learners
- Barista skills, for catering learners
- Mental health first aid awareness
- Digital skills passport
- Self-employment masterclasses

- Wella Salon Sustainability online course, for hairdressing learners
- Tattoo infection control L2 qualification, for art and design learners interested in a career as a tattooist
- Shure microphones masterclass on wireless transmission, for music learners

New Bravura activities to be introduced in the 2023/24 academic year will include:

- ATOL online courses, for travel and tourism learners
- Electric vehicle maintenance for motor vehicle learners, following staff upskilling
- Football Excellence Active IQ gym instructor and personal training courses, for sports learners

Work with stakeholders

The College has very strong links with regional employer groups and these have been extended through our participation in work preparing the Local Skills Employment Plans (LSIPs). We maintain situational awareness of the local and regional economy and labour market through our work with Chambers of Commerce (Bedfordshire, Northamptonshire, Hertfordshire), Local Enterprise Partnerships (Hertfordshire, South East Midlands), and local councils (Luton Borough, Watford Borough, Dacorum Borough). We also make use of labour market intelligence services such as Vector and Lightcast, and through commissioning research where appropriate. We are represented on a range of local skills panels and other groups.

We work with a wide range of other stakeholders including:

Local councils

We are supporting Luton Council in their Marmot Town project to reduce health inequalities in the town.

We chair Luton Council's Employment and Skills Partnership Board, which brings stakeholders together to operationalise the town's 2040 Vision.

Watford Borough Council established a group of core stakeholders across the town with the aim of developing a new strategy for the town that builds on its strengths and identifies areas that need to develop. The college is one of the core partners involved in this work.

Engagement in Watford Borough Council's Strategic Forum, and One Watford for Business, provides access to the town's larger and most prominent employers such as Warner Bros, Price Waterhouse Cooper, Camelot, TJX, Weatherspoon's and the Chamber of Commerce.

The Dacorum Borough Council Economic Board is also a key focus in the area local to our

Hemel Hempstead campus and the college leads its employment and skills aspect; we are also represented on the Hemel Place Board. These focus on social welfare and wellbeing projects. Through our involvement in these stakeholder groups, the college maintains an up-to-date understanding of the main issues affecting young people through briefings from uniformed services, local health services and key voluntary organisations such as those working with the homelessness.

Business groups

Partnerships with Watford's key cultural employers and organisations is strong and sustained by the Watford Together Cultural Leaders Group (Watford Palace Theatre, The Pump House Theatre, Watford Museum, Colosseum Venue, Watford Football Club, Warner Bros, Vibe FM, and Visit Watford).

In Dacorum, the central focus for sharing local business intelligence is Hemel Hempstead Business Ambassadors (HHBA), a membership organisation which brings together leading public and private sector stakeholders to exchange development insights and news of significant opportunities. The college has been a member of the board since HHBA's inception, and since April 2019 the organisation's marketing manager has been based as a college employee at our Hemel Hempstead campus.

We work with employers to ensure that our studios and workshops are kept updated to reflect industry needs. For example, we have worked with a modern methods of construction (MMC) company to install a model MMC house in the construction workshop at our Hemel Hempstead campus.

We work closely with Luton Council on issues relating to skills and employment, for example to identify opportunities to provide training for retrofit installers to contribute to the upgrading of the town's housing stock. We also work closely with two charitable organisations, Love Luton and Community Interest Luton, which bring businesses together for community purposes.

We work to support other groups in Luton: for example, we provide community provision for ESOL learners for the homeless charity Noah.

Work with the other local providers

We work with a range of local providers, including:

Universities

We provide a range of courses for University of Hertfordshire as part of our wider HE offer, and work with the university on initiatives including learner progression opportunities. We have also formed an agreement with the University of Hertfordshire to work on the development of Higher Technical Qualifications.

We provide Foundation Degree courses in partnership with the University of Bedfordshire as part of our widening participation strategy in Luton.

Local schools

We run careers events for pupils and career advisors; taster sessions promoting specific occupations and skills; and events in collaboration with employers to break gender stereotypes across specific occupations.

In the South-East Midlands, strategic engagement with schools centres on the Secondary Heads Networks, where the focus is on supporting school children to transition from school to college (Luton schools do not have sixth forms) and also establishing alternative provision for 14 to 16 year-olds.

We are part of the steering group for the Hertfordshire Cultural Education Partnership, which comprises schools, the County music service, the Royal Opera House bridge, and a range of creative providers, and works for develop cultural education across the region.

Further Education colleges

We have established a routine of collaborative working with the other FE colleges in our region and have developed strong relationships between college leaders. The four Hertfordshire colleges have worked together in supporting the ERB preparing our LSIP. This collaboration included working together to support the ERB in planning their work; joint work on employer engagement; and cooperating to review and provide a response to the ERB on their draft local skills priorities. Where solutions relating to particular priorities are primarily place-based, we have collective responses (for example, the density of life sciences employers in Stevenage naturally means that North Herts College is the most involved in this sector across our region and has acted as a source of expertise to coordinate collective staff upskilling). This successful collaboration means that skills solutions are considered across the region in a way that reflects geographic characteristics, rather than in isolation with each college trying to meet all needs. We routinely support each other with referrals and guidance to employers, where another college is best placed to assist with their skills needs.

In recent years we have collaborated on staff training, which has multiplied the impact of employer links and industry upskilling taking place at each college, by disseminating this across a wider audience of staff. We worked together on the SDF project for 2022/23. This has built strong relationships between staff across all the colleges, at leadership level and also, through cascade training, between teaching staff and their managers. It has also enabled us to develop a shared platform for ongoing collaborative CPD in the form of a virtual campus. This will continue to provide collaboration opportunities for both structured staff training (such as meetings, webinars, and conferences) and more informal joint working (such as drop-in sessions, exhibitions, and shared resource libraries). Will also be working together to use the LSIF to respond to skills priorities where capacity building and curriculum development are required to work towards solutions for specific national and local skills priorities.

We also work closely with Herts Regional College through our CreativeWOW partnership, which has close links to the Hertfordshire film and television industry. Amongst other things, this work has led to our decision to apply (successfully) for endorsement from the industry body ScreenSkills; it has also enabled us to jointly meet with representatives from the studios.

West Herts College Group led on the Strategic Development Fund 2 projects in both Hertfordshire and the South-East Midlands in 2022/23.

Private training providers

We are extending our relationships with private training providers. For example, we have recently supported an organization providing training for those with learning differences and disabilities, to upskill their staff in teaching maths. We worked with a company that provides training in green skills through the Strategic Development Fund project and will seek involvement from other private training providers in the Local Skills Improvement Fund project.

Contribution to national, regional, and local priorities

Aims and target outcomes to reflect skills priorities

These short-term objectives reflect new provision or growth in the academic year 2023/4 compared to 2022/23, which have been planned to meet specific national and/or local skills priorities. This is not an exhaustive picture: the wider, ongoing work of the college also relates closely to skills priorities but is not detailed here; in addition, further work targeted at specific priorities will be developed during the course of normal college business as the academic year progresses. We will continue to recruit to a curriculum portfolio aligned to a wide range of national and local skills priorities and will deliver this to over 10,000 learners.

| | Priority | | | | Objective | Actions | Target output |
|---|-----------------|----------|-----|-------|--|---|--|
| | Skill | National | SEM | Herts | | | |
| 1 | Health and care | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Train school leavers for a career in childcare b. Deliver skills training to 16-18 year-olds on health and care programmes which gives them up-to-date industry knowledge to support their transition to this sector's workforce | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Introduce the Level 3 T Level in Education and Childcare - Early Years Educator b. Each of these learners will receive: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Developmental training using the immersive Virtual Reality course we have developed on the 'Patient Dignity' component of the national Care Certificate ii. Training on caring for those with learning disabilities and autism (Oliver McGowan training) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. One learner cohort on this new programme in 2023/4 b. This will be included in all full-time courses in health and social care for 16-18 year-olds |

| | Priority | | | Objective | Actions | Target output | |
|---|---|----------|-----|-----------|---|--|--|
| | Skill | National | SEM | | | | Herts |
| 2 | Construction, green skills, and decarbonisation | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | <p>a. Train school leavers in the skills for the installation of green technologies in construction, to support their transition to this sector's workforce</p> <p>a. Provide upskilling courses for those working in construction trades in electrical installation and plumbing to enable them to gain the qualifications they need to install green technologies</p> | <p>a. Deliver skills training to 16-18 year-olds on construction trades programmes in electrical installation and plumbing which gives them up-to-date industry knowledge of green technologies in EV charging, solar PV and heat pumps</p> <p>b. Introduce commercial courses in the installation of electric vehicle charge points, solar PV, and heat pumps</p> | <p>a. From 2023, this will be included in all full-time courses in electrical installation and plumbing for 16-18 year-olds</p> <p>b. One learner cohort on each new commercial programme in 2023/4:</p> <p>i. Air-source heat pumps</p> <p>ii. Electric vehicle charge points</p> <p>iii. Solar PV installation</p> |
| 3 | Digital (1) | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | Provide basic digital skills for employment to adult learners | Deliver Essential Digital Skills training for employment to adult English as a Second or Other Language learners, following a successful pilot | This will be a mandatory component of our full certificate ESOL courses in 23/24 (subject to initial assessment) |
| 4 | Digital (2) | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | <p>a. Deliver higher technical training in software development</p> <p>b. Create Higher Technical Qualification (HTQ) in digital learning</p> | <p>a. Deliver Level 5 software development training through Code Institute, funded through Adult Learner Loans</p> <p>b. Working with the University of Hertfordshire and other stakeholders, develop Level 5 HTQ in design and</p> | <p>a. One cohort on a new course: Level 5 software development, to finish April 2024</p> <p>b. The preparation of L5 HTQ for submission for</p> |

| | Priority | | | | Objective | Actions | Target output |
|---|--|----------|-----|-------|--|---|---|
| | Skill | National | SEM | Herts | | | |
| | | | | | | development for virtual reality training software | approval by IfATE |
| 5 | Mathematics | ✓ | ✓ | | Increase the number of adults with maths skills for employment | Increase the volume of learners developing maths skills through the Multiply programme, above the 65 places delivered to date in 22/23 | Delivery to 120 learners between now and April 2024 (subject to bid being successful) |
| 6 | Other priorities, to be confirmed | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | <p>a. Lead on the planning and delivery of the Local Skills Improvement Fund project for Hertfordshire</p> <p>b. Collaborate with the lead college on the planning and delivery of the Local Skills Improvement Fund project for the South-East Midlands</p> | <p>a. Working with the region's other FE colleges, ERBs, other stakeholders, and (where appropriate) private training providers, we will develop a plan for the Local Skills Improvement Fund project for Hertfordshire and begin implementation work, subject to our bid being successful.</p> <p>b. We will support the work of the college leading the Local Skills Improvement Fund project for the South-East Midlands</p> | <p>a. Submission of a successful bid for the Local Skills Improvement Fund project for Hertfordshire</p> <p>b. Provide support for the submission of a successful bid for the Local Skills Improvement Fund project for the South-East Midlands</p> |
| 7 | Professional skills courses for work readiness | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | Full-time learners will gain a set of skills and knowledge related to their chosen occupational pathway, informed by employer input, which will help them close the gap between completion of their main learning aim and readiness for work. | Full-time learners will complete a portfolio of Bravura activities. | Growth: more of our full-time learners will complete their Bravura portfolio. The target for completion in 2023/24 will be confirmed when we have completion figures for the academic year 2022/23. |

Corporation statement

On behalf of the West Herts College Group corporation, it is hereby confirmed that the college plan as set out above reflects an agreed statement of purpose, aims and objectives as approved by the corporation at their meeting on 8 May 2023.

The plan will be published on the college's website within three months of the start of the new academic year and can be accessed from the following link: <https://www.westherts.ac.uk/about/policies-statements>

Chair of Governors



Phil Thompson

Chief Executive and Accounting Officer



Gill Worgan

Dated: 15 May 2023

Supporting documentation

There are no published LSIPs yet for the regions we serve; these are expected to be available at the end of May.

The college was inspected by Ofsted in December 2021; the report is here:
<https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/31/130720>

West Herts College Group [Strategic Plan](#)

Contact us

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