

Solihull College & University Centre
and Stratford-upon-Avon College

STRATEGIC PLAN 2022-2025

Impact and Progress

Update 5

January to July 2025



Solihull College
& University Centre

Stratford-upon-Avon
College





Contents

Foreword	04
6-Month Review	05
Strategic Ambition 1	06
Strategic Ambition 2	08
Strategic Ambition 3	09
Strategic Ambition 4	10
Strategic Ambition 5	12
Building Our Reputation Regionally and Nationally	14



Foreword

As we reflect on the first half of 2025 at Solihull College & University Centre, we are proud to share the progress made in delivering our 2022–2025 Strategic Plan. This period has been marked by innovation, collaboration, and a deepened commitment to inclusion, sustainability, and excellence across all areas of college life.

We are delighted to welcome Paul Assinder as Chair of Governors, following Barbara Hughes' retirement at the end of 2024. Paul brings a wealth of experience and a strong commitment to the College's mission, and we look forward to working together to build on the strong foundations laid during Barbara's tenure.

From January to July, our learners and staff have continued to shine. We've celebrated national recognition for our inclusive practices, hosted high-profile events such as the FutureHER conference and the inaugural Apprenticeship Impact Awards, and secured prestigious accolades including double wins at the National Quality Professionals Awards. These achievements reflect the talent, dedication, and ambition that define our college community.

Our strategic ambitions have been brought to life through impactful initiatives: the launch of the Ready, Respect, Safe framework, the expansion of our adult skills provision, and the development of cutting-edge facilities including immersive classrooms and green technology centres. We've also taken significant steps toward our net zero goal, with sustainability embedded across curriculum, estates, and culture.

As we approach the final phase of our current Strategic Plan, we remain focused on delivering meaningful change. Whether through enhancing student induction, refining our employer engagement, or progressing our sustainability strategy, our aim is clear: to be a college that empowers every individual to succeed and thrive.

Together, we continue to shape a future where Solihull College & University Centre is recognised not only for what we do, but for how we do it - with purpose, integrity, and ambition.



Dr Rebecca Gater
Principal & Chief Executive



Paul Assinder
Chair of Governors

6-Month Review

**JAN
2025**



College named as finalist for 'Creative and Cultural Activator' at Coventry and Warwickshire Chamber of Commerce Awards.

**FEB
2025**



Shakila Koser, a British Sign Language (BSL) tutor was honoured by the Mayor of Birmingham for her exceptional contributions to the local community.

**MAR
2025**



College finalist and 'highly commended' as 'Inclusive Employer of the Year' at WorldSkills EDI Heroes awards.

**JUN
2025**



College success at National Quality Professionals Awards – Winning Quality Professional of the Year, and Quality Collaboration of the Year with our West Midlands colleagues.

**MAY
2025**



Leaders Unlocked Commission for Racial Justice Summit - Students and senior managers met to review and discuss survey results and generate a set of actions for the College to implement over the 25/26 academic year.

**APR
2025**



Student Voice President organised the 'FutureHER' conference, bringing together students, industry leaders, and guest speakers for an empowering day focussed on diversity and inclusion in STEM.

Strategic Ambition 1

Deliver a high-quality curriculum that enhances the life opportunities of our learners, the inclusive growth of our communities, and the productivity of the employers with which we work.



Over the past 6 months we have:

Quality and Curriculum

- Entered 130 students across all three campuses into the MEI Maths Challenge, showcasing problem-solving and critical-thinking skills in a competitive environment.
- Been selected as WorldSkills UK Endorsed Trainer- Katie Miller was one of only 14 people nationally selected as a WorldSkills UK Endorsed Trainer and completed training in January 2025. Since then, Katie has delivered bespoke 'Competence to Excellence' training to Personal Development Coaches, Work Placement Coordinators, the Sports Team, the Quality Team, and the Apprenticeship Team, embedding WorldSkills competition pedagogy into teaching practice through CPD.
- Been shortlisted as WorldSkills UK 'Apprentice of the Year' in February 2025 with Veterinary Nursing Apprentice Sarah Green – a fantastic achievement and profile-raising recognition for our college.
- Taken part in the inaugural West Midlands Colleges Inter-College competition for Animal Care and secured first place in every category.
- Hosted the regional final of the MEI Maths challenge at Blossomfield Campus with nine local colleges taking part across three levels. Stratford College won two categories and placed 2nd in the third. Blossomfield secured two 2nd places and a 3rd place. Following the success of the event, the College is proudly hosting the first ever National MEI Maths Challenge Final at Blossomfield in April 2026, with colleges from across the country attending.
- Celebrated and promoted the College's commitment to ensuring equality, valuing diversity and promoting inclusion at our March CPD day– The 'Inclusion in Action Day' sessions included how to meet students' needs in the neurodiverse classroom, Lived Experiences to increase awareness and empathy and an introduction to BSL.
- Increased the number of Pass grades in January series of vocational exams, compared to last academic year. A large number of schools also showed an increase in the number of High Grades achievement.
- Launched the West Midlands Colleges Inter-College Competition Network in collaboration with Dudley College and South Staffordshire College – this group will expand to 10 colleges next year. Each college is hosting competitions, providing 20+ competition opportunities for students across the region. The collaboration was recognised nationally with the Quality Collaboration Award at the Quality Professional Awards 2024, shared with South Staffordshire and Dudley Colleges.





- Launched the Ready, Respect Safe Initiative to all staff reflecting the College's trauma-informed approach to helping learners overcome barriers to learning. This initiative emphasises being 'ready' for learning, being 'respectful' by valuing others, and being 'safe' by contributing to a secure and positive environment.

Partnerships and Outreach

- Been honoured by the Mayor of Birmingham for exceptional contributions to the local community. Shakila Koser, a British Sign Language (BSL) tutor was presented with a prestigious award in recognition of her commitment to promoting inclusion and accessibility and for helping hundreds of people learn BSL.
- Joined a partnership with BCU and five colleges in a research project based around enhancement in College Based Higher Education.
- Developed a new pathway within the College's Community Learning programme for the hardest to reach learners, in partnership with SMBC and other stakeholders with the focus to re-engage individuals who have become disengaged from education and the workforce. This collaboration involves a comprehensive programme aimed at reintegrating these individuals into the workforce and providing them with the necessary skills to succeed.

Reputation

- Been named as finalist for 'Creative and Cultural Activator' at Coventry and Warwickshire Chamber of Commerce Awards- based on creative bootcamp provision and its impact on skills development in the sector.

Priorities for the next 6 months:

- Implement an inspiring induction programme for all new learners upon joining the College to ensure their active participation and commitment to their studies.
- Embed the Ready, Respect Safe initiative with a clear trauma informed approach to supporting learners.
- Undertake effective At-Risk process with a view to increasing retention of learners.



Strategic Ambition 2

Secure the future of our organisation in a fast-changing sector through careful and appropriate income diversification and growth.



Over the past 6 months we have:

Quality and Curriculum

- Undertaken effective Business Planning processes to review the curriculum offered and explore new opportunities e.g. introduction of new Hybrid Motor Vehicle courses and Teaching Apprenticeships.
- Achieved growth within the Adult Skills Provision and secured excellent achievement rates across the Digital, Business, Care and Life Science Sectors.

Partnerships and Outreach

- Completed the LSIF Project.
- Secured additional £800K of community funding grant from the WMCA to work more closely with economically inactive residents.
- Delivered into-employment and upskill programs to over 400 adults through our new adult skills department.
- Won the IWRAP project delivering neurodiversity training to colleges and employers across the region to help students with low level mental health conditions to find a work placement.

Finance and Resources

- Delivered a new Power, Electronics, Motors and Drivers (PEMD) Lab and Immersive room at Woodlands, AI Suite at Blossomfield, and Heat Pump Centre in Stratford with mobile IT classroom in use across the borough, using LSIF funds.

Priorities for the next 6 months:

- Refine our adult skills and apprenticeship offer to increase learner numbers and meet local skills needs whilst meeting college contribution thresholds.
- Continue to bid for new income streams that allow for growth and outreach such as OFS, and other sustainable construction projects.
- Develop our esports courses with greater stakeholder support from British Esports Association, WMCA and SMBC.
- Coordinate and refine our Employer Advisory Boards to standardise agendas, gather feedback and allow for meaningful dialogue across all Schools.
- Input a CRM and develop a more systematised of working with employers.
- Create a more corporate brand to attract employers to our training courses so that we are more competitive regionally.

Strategic Ambition 3

Create a high-performing culture that attracts and retains the best people, is fully inclusive, and produces a happy and proud workforce.



Over the past 6 months we have:

People and Culture

- Been shortlisted and 'highly commended' as 'Inclusive Employer of the Year' at the WorldSkills EDI Heroes awards.
- Been shortlisted for the Solihull Chamber of Commerce awards for 'Workplace Champion'.
- Delivered a successful DigiDay inviting internal and external skills sharing of Digital.
- Held a Whole College Development Day event in March with a focus on Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).
- Held an Iftar event for staff during Ramadan.
- Introduced a staff wellbeing day, where colleagues were encouraged to spend the day off campus, undertaking leisure and wellbeing activities.
- Re-introduced the Team Briefing process to ensure consistent, timely communication across all levels, helping staff feel informed, engaged, and aligned with the College's priorities.
- Conduct a HSE stress and wellbeing survey for staff.
- Delivered unconscious bias training to 200 teaching staff.

Finance and Resources

- Reviewed our staff pay scales to ensure all staff are paid above the national living wage.

Priorities for the next 6 months:

- Move to teams as our preferred communication method where face to face conversations are not appropriate or possible.
- Share, consult and act on the results of the HSE workplace stress survey that staff undertook in July 2025, with a particular focus on how digital technologies can benefit workload.
- Introduce a total No Smoking/Vaping policy across all our sites, providing smoking cessation support to staff and students.
- Further focus on digital learning to ensure all staff are able to fully enjoy the benefits of new and emerging technologies in their roles.



**WE'RE JOINING
THE BODY COACH
MOVEMENT HOUR**



5TH MARCH 3PM - 4PM



Strategic Ambition 4

Deliver a considered but ambitious programme of investment underpinned by financial stability



Over the past 6 months we have:

Finance and Resources

- Completed Heat Pump and Electronic Vehicle (EV) buildings on the Stratford Campus.





Finance and Resources continued...

- Appointed a contractor to install barriers and new access control systems at the Woodlands Campus.
- Commenced work on remodelling and additional accommodation at Woodlands and Stratford Campuses to accommodate STEM growth.
- Commissioned boiler replacement at the Stratford Campus.
- Completed the first phase of LED lighting installations.
- Implemented immersive classroom hardware and training programme at Woodlands.
- Upgraded the Network infrastructure (WIFI/Wired/Firewall) at the Stratford Campus.
- Introduced a standard timetabling grid and reviewed classrooms to ensure they are fit for purpose to support improved room utilisation.

Priorities for the next 6 months:

Finance and Resources

- Continue to progress with new modular buildings and extensions at Woodlands and Stratford Campuses to accommodate growth in STEM learners.
- Commence strategic estates work to deliver longer term accommodation needs.
- Install barriers, access control and register marking systems, working effectively at the Woodlands Campus.
- Continue with our project to improve room utilisation.
- Complete new boiler installation at Stratford.
- Commence works planning for 2025/26, ensuring curriculum forecasts for land and building requirements are shared alongside building condition priorities supported by the DfE grant.
- Update hybrid enrolment process to be introduced including face to face touch point meetings with new learners.
- Approve a new Information Strategy and complete the first phase of the rollout of updated dashboards using Power BI.
- Review our 365 24/7 cyber response services.

Strategic Ambition 5

Be net zero by 2030.



Over the past 6 months we have:

Quality and Curriculum

- Launched the pilot of our Green Pioneer Awards, with four schools undertaking the programme, two of which were awarded bronze status, one silver, at the July staff awards ceremony.



- Been shortlisted as finalists for the Environmental Association of Colleges & Universities (EAUC) Green Gown Awards in the Next Generation Learning and Skills category – this is in recognition of our work in embedding sustainability in curriculum areas.
- Launched the Supply Chain Sustainability School resources for the School of Construction to give access to resources including: sustainable construction, offsite, retrofit, carbon reduction, social value, facilities management, waste to tutors and learners and our supply chains.
- Positioned the College so we are ready to commence delivery Air Source Heat Pump courses at our Stratford-upon-Avon College campus.



- Extended our Motor Vehicle accommodation at Stratford to enable delivery of a dedicated EV curriculum.
- Delivered Sustainability sessions to curriculum staff as part of the College Development fortnight, including sustainable storytelling and Carbon Literacy Training.

Partnerships and Outreach

- Initiated a project to create a bespoke Eco-classroom and enhanced biodiversity at our Blossomfield campus, to include outdoor learning provision, exploring partnership through funding opportunities (e.g Severn Trent, nPower).
- Engaged with Warwickshire Wildlife Trust and SOS UK regarding development of a nature friendly campus and commissioned a specialist tree survey and topographical report for the wooded / pond area at Blossomfield.
- Engaged with the Colleges West Midlands (CWM) Green Skills Roadmap project workstreams to collaborate on the emerging green skills and green jobs agenda.

People and Culture

- Participated in the SDG Teach-In and held a Sustainability Fair as part of our Student Enrichment Sustainable March campaign.
- Published a comprehensive newsletter to staff and students with input from the Sustainability Steering Group.
- Introduced a new staff award for Sustainable Innovation.



- Published an updated college Travel Plan.
- Provided sustainability awareness and training sessions to the Sustainable Link Governor and wider Corporation including.

Finance and Resources

- Retendered and awarded a new contract for waste and recycling arrangements to comply with UK legislation and invested in internal and external bins to establish a segregated '3 waste stream' system to improve recycling and reduce waste arisings.
- Installed BMS system upgrades for ambient temperature control.
- Made good progress with the District Heat Network team, including completion of pipework installation at Blossomfield campus.

Priorities for the next 6 months:

Quality and Curriculum

- On-board all schools on to the Green Pioneer Awards programme and continue to work with pilot schools to support transition through the bronze, silver, gold accreditation stages.
- Roll-out Carbon Literacy training to curriculum and business support staff.
- Consider our own position in relation to the CWM Green Skills Road Map toolkit and develop a college action plan.

Partnerships and Outreach

- Commence the two-year Nature Friendly Grounds pilot project with SOS-UK in Oct 2025.
- Search for other potential funding opportunities for sustainable projects and partnership working.

People and Culture

- Progress the Eco-classroom and Biodiversity Outdoor Learning Zone projects for consideration and funding approval.
- Install visuals of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) on campus to raise awareness.

Finance and Resources

- Review of the College's Sustainability Strategy and embed sustainability principles across all the ambitions of the new Strategic Plan.
- Progress to 'go live' operational stages of the District Heat Network which will replace gas usage at Blossomfield with a low carbon alternative provision.
- Train key staff on the new single BMS management and monitoring system to reduce carbon emissions from internal heating and cooling across all campuses.
- Engage with students and staff to raise awareness of the new '3 waste stream' system to promote recycling and food waste energy recovery and to monitor and report on improvements in performance.
- Ensuring further building decarbonisation (e.g. LED lighting and heating system improvements) are incorporated in estates plans and seek opportunities to align estates and sustainability strategies and work plans.

Building Our Reputation Regionally and Nationally

Celebrating staff, student and college success at regional and national level

January 2025

- College named as finalist in Coventry & Warwickshire Chamber of Commerce awards in 'Creative and Cultural Activator' category.
- 130 students participated in the MEI Maths Challenge College Final across three campuses, showcasing problem-solving and critical-thinking skills in a competitive environment. The top two pairs from each campus will go forward to represent the College at the regional final in March.
- 'Just One Thing' Conference attended by Heather Hunt & Sam Bromwich at Hull College. Topic was AI.
- Three colleagues (Kerry Scattergood, Rachel Arnold, Rebecca Gater) authored chapters in a book titled 'Exploring Practitioner Research in Further Education: Sharing Good Practice'.
- Achieved AoC Beacon Award Commended status for 'Engagement with Employers', later announced as finalist, with results announced at House of Lords in March 2025.
- Shortlisted for Coventry and Warwickshire Chamber 'Creative and Cultural Activator' award – results announced March 2025.

February 2025

- Solihull MP Neil Shastri-Hurst visited Blossomfield Campus.
- Chair, CEO and Director of Governance invited to Mayor of Solihull's parlour.
- College hosted book launch 'Exploring practitioner research in Further Education: Sharing good practice (published by Routledge), attended by professionals from around the UK.
- Spotlight on Apprentices event at the RSC.

March 2025

- WorldSkills EDI Heroes – college 'Highly Commended' in Inclusive Employer of the Year, and student Sarah Green was a finalist in 'Student of the Year' category.
- Principal and CEO, Rebecca Gater invited to parliament to present to Education Select Committee chair, Helen Hayes MP, on leadership development.
- Rebecca Gater on 'purposeful leadership' panel at ETF Further Forward national leadership Spring conference.
- Finalist in AoC Beacon Award 'Engagement with Employers' - Assistant Principal, Sandra White, and Head of Creative, Nicky Haines, invited to House of Lords for ceremony
- Rebecca Gater spoke at AoC EDI conference about the Future Leaders project to address under-representation of ethnically diverse leaders in Further Education, in conjunction with Colleges West Midlands Racial Equality Steering group.
- Supported and attended VIP Esports stakeholder event at the NEC.

April 2025

- FutureHer Conference.

May 2025

- Rebecca Gater attended King's Garden party at Buckingham Palace, in celebration of education and skills
- Student voice president Hayaat Hussain awarded a mayor's certificate of recognition for her work on raising awareness of knife crime.
- Rachel Arnold, quality coach, presented 'what happens when the students become the experts' at a conference in Texas, USA. The US organisation was keen to understand how we in the UK support student teacher relationships, how we engage students and bridge the empathy gap.

June 2025

- Double win at Quality Professionals awards: Quality Improvement Professional of the Year Winner: Katie Miller - Katie was recognised for her work driving improvements in teaching and learning, developing active learning approaches, strengthening staff development, and embedding a strategic approach to competitions to raise learner aspirations and achievement. Quality Collaboration of the Year – FE and Skills Winners: Solihull College and University Centre, Dudley College, and South Staffordshire College - these achievements reflect the College's continued focus on quality and innovation, as well as its growing influence in sector-wide improvement initiatives.
- Hosted the College's inaugural Apprenticeship Impact Awards celebrating the apprentices, employers and assessors' dedication to apprenticeship learning. Judges from Pertemps, Solihull Chamber of Commerce and our own Governing body selected the deserving candidates. It was great to see apprentices and their family members celebrating their achievements.
- FE Commissioner Shelagh Legrave visited the Stratford campus to see impact of merger and our £14m investment in facilities and equipment.
- Hosted FE Big lunch, which was attended by Everton Burke DL.
- Presented an award to Wood Hardwick for their employer engagement with the College at The Skills West Midlands and Warwickshire regional Construction round table.





Solihull College & University Centre

Blossomfield Campus, Blossomfield Road, Solihull, B91 1SB

Solihull College & University Centre

Woodlands Campus, Auckland Drive, Smith's Wood, Solihull, B36 0NF

www.solihull.ac.uk

0121 678 7000

enquiries@solihull.ac.uk

Stratford-upon-Avon College

The Willows North, Alcester Road, Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire, CV37 9QR

www.stratford.ac.uk

01789 266 245

hello@stratford.ac.uk



**Solihull College
& University Centre**

**Stratford-upon-Avon
College**

