

BOLD FUTURES



ANNUAL ACCOUNTABILITY STATEMENT AND LOCAL NEEDS DUTY

2026/27



Solihull College
& University Centre

Stratford-upon-Avon
College





- 4** Purpose
- 5** Context and Place
- 6** Approach to Developing the 2026/27 Accountability Statement
- 7** Contribution to National, Regional and Local Priorities
- 10** Local Needs Duty
- 11** Corporation / Governing Body Statement
- 12** Appendix



Purpose

Solihull College & University Centre and Stratford-upon-Avon College exist to ignite ambition, nurture talent and empower every learner to shape their future with confidence, creativity and purpose. Our mission, vision and values define our commitment to delivering exceptional, inclusive, future-focused education that enables individuals, employers and communities across Birmingham, Solihull and Warwickshire to thrive.

This Accountability Statement sets out our strategic priorities for 2026/27, demonstrating how our provision will:

Respond to national, regional and local skills priorities, including those outlined in the West Midlands & Warwickshire LSIP.

Contribute to key growth sectors such as digital and technologies, advanced manufacturing, clean energy, construction, health, creative industries, leadership & management and life sciences; as well as regional specialisms such as Stratford-Upon-Avon's visitor economy.

Deliver the ambitions and operational pillars within our Strategic Plan 2026–2028 ('Bold Futures')—including excellence in teaching, lifelong opportunities, innovation, partnerships, sustainability and communication.

Reflect decisions and actions arising from the Local Needs Duty, noting that the College remains within the three-year review cycle and therefore this statement includes a short summative statement, rather than a full review.

This Accountability Statement also reflects the College's inspection readiness under the renewed Ofsted Further Education and Skills Inspection Framework, particularly in relation to leadership, inclusion, curriculum quality and contribution to meeting local skills needs.

Context and Place

Solihull College & University Centre and Stratford-upon-Avon College serve a diverse region that spans:

Solihull MBC, including areas of significant affluence and areas of entrenched deprivation in North Solihull.

Warwickshire, now transitioning to a Mayoral authority from 2025/26, establishing clearer regional boundaries and a distinct devolved skills strategy.

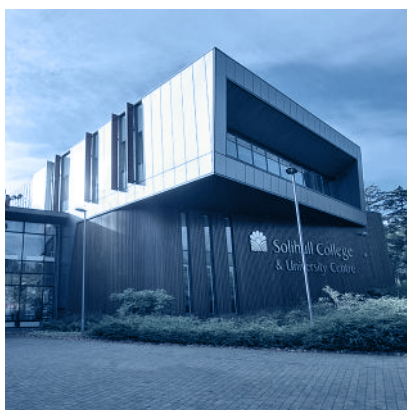
The West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) area, with strong employer clusters in digital, automotive, engineering, logistics, business services, and healthcare.

The strategic economic corridor incorporating HS2/Arden Cross, the NEC, Birmingham Airport, and the growing clean-tech and electrification sector.

Across its three campuses, the College delivers a deliberately differentiated curriculum offer aligned to both regional skills demand and local community need:

- STEM and advanced manufacturing specialisms including Aerospace, EV, Construction and Computing, Power Electronics, Machines and Drives (PEMD).
- Creative industries and media production (TV studios, theatres, immersive technologies, esports).
- Health, science, social care and early years.
- Business, management and professional programmes.
- Strong adult skills, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), community learning and widening participation offer.

Learners travel from across Birmingham, Solihull and Warwickshire, reflecting strong regional demand, clear travel-to-learn patterns, and the influence of major transport infrastructure.



Approach to Developing the 2026/27 Accountability Statement

Our priorities are shaped by extensive engagement with:

- Employer Representative Bodies (ERBs) and LSIP Partners
- Chambers of Commerce
- WMCA Employment & Skills directorates
- Warwickshire Skills Hub devolution team

This engagement ensures alignment to LSIP priority sectors: Engineering & Manufacturing, Construction, Digital/ICT, Logistics, Health, Clean Energy, and cross-cutting green & digital skills.

Civic and Strategic Stakeholders

- Solihull MBC (Employment & Skills Boards, Inclusive Growth Groups, Visit Solihull, Solihull BID)
- Warwickshire County Council
- Stratford District Council
- Birmingham City Council
- DWP, NHS partners, and local place-based regeneration partnerships (e.g., North Solihull Regeneration, Arden Cross)

Education and Provider Networks

- Colleges West Midlands (CWM)
- Skills West Midlands & Warwickshire collaboration
- Greater Birmingham & Solihull Institute of Technology (lead partner)
- Local schools, academies and MATs (via schools liaison and transition activity)
- Universities (Oxford Brookes, Coventry University, Birmingham Newman University, Birmingham City University)

Employers and Sector Bodies

More than 500 employers engaged across engineering, automotive, digital, healthcare, construction, creative industries, logistics, professional services and land-based sectors through advisory panels, curriculum co-design, apprenticeships, placements and innovation projects.

Evidence and Data Sources are listed in Appendix 2

This engagement ensures that the priorities set out in this Accountability Statement reflect both current and emerging employer demand and place based skills need.

Contribution to National, Regional and Local Priorities (SMART Objectives 26/27)

Objective 1

Expand Priority Sector Technical Pathways (Digital, Engineering, Construction, Health, Clean Energy)

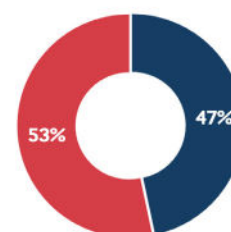
Aim: Deliver growth in Level 2–5 technical programmes co-designed with employers.

Targets:

- Increase enrolments in national priority sectors by 10%.
25/26 ALL Students baseline: 3824 (47 % priority) and 4368 (53% Non-priority). Priority sectors are: Computing, Media, Business, Built Environment, Science, Health & Social Care, Construction Trades, Engineering.
- Deliver at least 360 T-Level places across all subject disciplines.
- Launch two new courses at L4 or above by September 2027 – currently marketing HTQ Business, HNC Health and Social Care, Esports and Film and TV.

SCUC 25/26 ENROLMENTS

■ Priority ■ Non-priority



Objective 2

Strengthen Clean Energy & Sustainability Skills

Aim: Position the College as a regional clean-energy training leader.

Targets:

- Establish a Green Skills Advisory Panel with internal and external stakeholders
- Agree a strategy for green skills and retrofit at each campus:
 - » Embed retrofit skills and competence across Construction and Built Environment provision at Blossomfield, increasing brick building delivery on this campus.
 - » Deliver low carbon installation, sustainable heating and ventilation and electrification skills at Stratford-upon-Avon
 - » Embed 'fabric first' and 'retrofit safe' practices across core trades at Woodlands

Objective 3

Enhance Adult Skills, Inclusion and Lifelong Learning

Aim: Increase participation among adults, unemployed residents and those in disadvantaged wards.

Targets:

- Achieve 100% utilisation of WMCA and DfE Adult Skills Fund allocations, ensuring the following planned enrolments in the WMCA:

Levels	Enrolments as %	Enrolment #
Level X and Pre-Entry Level	22%	1190
Level 1	22%	1195
Level 2	36%	1930
ESOL	10%	520
Level 3	6%	340
Level 4+	1%	55

- Establish three community learning hubs (Physical and virtual), engaging 220+ economically inactive adults, including Shirley ward from 26/27.
- Deliver modularised LLE-aligned units (30 credits) from across Business HTQ course
- Strengthen the College's response to NEETs through the appointment of a NEETs Programme Manager and the delivery of structured re-engagement activity. Solihull's latest data reports a NEET rate of 4.3% (244 young people), with around one third (80 residents) linked to the College. In 2026/27, the College will reduce its contribution by 60%, representing 48 residents.
- Sign up to the WMCA Compact agreement delivering the key commitments. (Appendix 3)

Objective 4

Grow Apprenticeships and Employer-Responsive Provision

Aim: Strengthen employer pipelines and deliver responsive skills programmes.

Targets:

- Attain a 10% increase in apprenticeship starts and secure at least one new large-cohort employer partner per Faculty.
- Ensure apprenticeship achievement rates are above national benchmarks across priority standards.
- Launch apprenticeship units for levy-paying employers

Objective 5

Expand Digital Skills, AI and Emerging Technologies

Aim: Integrate digital and AI-enabled learning across curriculum areas.

Targets:

- Increase digital upskilling for staff: 100% participation in digital CPD programme.
- Deliver digital bootcamps with minimum 180 learners and 95% progression.
- Introduce AI-enhanced learning tools across all curriculum areas. (EG Teachermatic)
- Continue to build resilience through the 'Solihull Unplugged' initiative.

Objective 6

Mainstream Inclusive SEND Provision Across Further Education

Aim: To deliver a high-quality, inclusive approach to SEND that places learners in mainstream further education provision wherever possible, strengthens transition for learners with more complex needs, and secures strong outcomes that support effective preparation for adulthood, in line with the SEND White Paper reforms and the Ofsted inspection framework.

The college operates a needs-led, inclusive model, under which almost all learners with SEND are educated within mainstream technical and academic programmes, supported through reasonable adjustments, adaptive teaching and targeted intervention. This reflects national policy expectations that mainstream settings should be the default placement for learners with SEND, enabling access to ambitious curricula and supporting long-term outcomes.

Targets:

- Ensure **100% of curriculum areas** implement inclusive teaching strategies aligned to SEND reforms, supported by staff training in universal, targeted and adaptive practice.
- Ensure **100% of learners** with EHCPs experience strengthened transitions by delivering a well-planned and structured transition process that prioritises readiness for college life and secures a positive, stable start to study.
- By the end of the 2026/27 academic year, **improve outcomes for learners** with SEND by ensuring their outcomes are at least in line with college achievement rates

This objective underpins delivery across Objectives 1 and 3, reinforcing inclusion as a whole provider responsibility.

Local Needs Duty

The College remains within the three-year Local Needs Duty review cycle. The previous full review continues to be valid and informs curriculum planning. Key conclusions from ongoing monitoring indicate:

- Strong alignment with LSIP priority sectors (Engineering, Construction, Digital, Logistics, Health, Clean Energy).
- Evidence of persistent local inequalities, particularly in North Solihull, driving continued investment in adult skills, inclusion, ESOL, and pre-employment pathways.
- Emerging employer demand in clean energy, EV, heat pumps, digital infrastructure, cybersecurity, intelligent manufacturing and creative technologies.
- Continued need for progression pathways from Entry to L5+, reflected in curriculum planning and investment.
- Ongoing cross-provider collaboration through CWM, Skills WM&W, GBSIoT, and local subcontract partners (e.g., RMF, Colebridge Trust) to meet specialist needs and widen access.

Actions arising from ongoing Local Needs Duty monitoring are embedded within the SMART objectives, curriculum development and employer partnerships set out in this statement.



Corporation / Governing Body Statement

This document has been reviewed and approved by the Corporation of Solihull College & University Centre and Stratford-upon-Avon College.

The governing body confirms that:

- This Accountability Statement meets DfE requirements for 2026/27.
- It reflects the College's contribution to local, regional and national skills needs.
- It includes a summative statement of the Local Needs Duty, as the College remains within the three-year statutory review cycle.

Chair of Governors – **Paul Assinder**



1st July 2026

Principal and Chief Executive – **Dr Rebecca Gater**



1st July 2026

www.solihull.ac.uk/about-us/policies/

Appendix 1: Review of 25/26 Accountability Statement

Aim/ Objective	Impact and/or Contribution towards National, Regional and Local Priorities for Learning and Skills	Targets	End of Year Review
1. Bootcamps	Key Activity: Co-Create with employers a suite of bootcamps across the Creative Media, Digital, Construction and Leadership and Management sectors. Impact/Contribution: Create a skilled work force for our region's employers training boot campers in skills specific to the sector. Create positive progression outcomes. This links to: Regional Priorities and Local Priorities for Learning and Skills	1) Minimum of 10 different bootcamps using £602,000 of WMCA Bootcamp allocation 2) Target 180 bootcamp learners with 95% progression rates. NB: Bootcamp timeframe is 1st April 2025 to 31st March 2026 now moving to academic year.	<i>On track £665,052 of the bootcamp funding used in current academic year.</i> <i>156 learners Sept-March 2026 with 91% progression rates</i>
2. Adult Skills, including Community Learning and Higher Education	Key Activity: Continue to grow our responsive Adult Skills Department to co-create upskill-training for the employed, into-work training for the unemployed and L3+ training for the under-employed focussing on local and regional skills needs. Amplify our Community Learning portfolio planning a bespoke series of 6 week training blocks with key input from the SMBC. Embed ESOL and adult maths & English into our adult learning programs including those delivered by our subcontract partners. In response to the introduction of the Lifelong Learning Entitlement from January 2027, we will develop modularised learning opportunities to enable students to study in smaller, more manageable units of 30 credits. Impact/Contribution: Improve outcomes for the following populations: Adults living in disadvantaged wards with low socio-economic status. Hard-to-reach individuals who may have disengaged from education or employment support services. People with low or no formal qualifications. Digitally excluded individuals with limited access to technology or digital skills. Adults with low level health conditions and/or moderate disabilities. Long-term unemployed adults. Create a flexible higher level. This links to: Local Priorities for Learning and Skills.	3) Ensure 100% of our WMCA and DFE ASF allocation is drawn down. Grow our direct delivery to reduce dependency on subcontracting partners. 4) Create a minimum of 3 hubs with community outreach workers. Engage 320 economically inactive residents per year across the North Solihull area. 5) HE - We will provide part-time, blended, and online learning options to support students with varying commitments in the Business and Animal Welfare subject areas.	<i>WMCA On track across all provision types</i> <i>No 25/26 subcontracting in Warwickshire. Adult Skills team striving to deliver ASF budget.</i> <i>First year of Tailored Learning grant with momentum building. Close working with SMBC to engage community.</i> <i>ESOL and English and maths embedded into adult skills classes and subcontract partners</i> <i>We are validated to run modules of the Animal Behaviour & Welfare course, however they won't be funded by the LLE in 2027. Leadership & Management HTQ has HN Flex applied, so we can deliver modules.</i>

Aim/ Objective	Impact and/or Contribution towards National, Regional and Local Priorities for Learning and Skills	Targets	End of Year Review
3. Curriculum Skills alignment to Priority areas curriculum reform	Key Activity: Ensure that the College's curriculum offer provides opportunity for learners to develop technical skills aligned to national and regional priority areas with recognition of local specialisms such as Animal Welfare and Hospitality: • advanced manufacturing • creative industries • defence (aerospace & cyber) • digital and technologies • financial services • life sciences • professional and business services • clean energy industries • construction • health Develop and grow the volume of T-Level provision in other subject areas where alternative L3 qualifications are defunded. Adapt and grow our apprenticeship offer and increase new start numbers across all schools. Impact/Contribution: We will develop an agile and ambitious curriculum plan that keeps pace with, local, regional and national needs whilst proactively identifying new funding opportunities that support income diversification and growth. This links to: Regional Priorities and Local Priorities for Learning and Skills.	6) Ensure our achievement and retention targets are above national average, with attendance increasing by 2%. 7) T-Level Targets: meet our plan to deliver to 218 T-Level students in 25/26. 8) Strategically analyse our apprenticeships provision to ensure that it is meeting skills needs whilst being financially stable. Gain one large employer for a whole cohort of Apprenticeships. 9) Develop a strategy for growing our 'clean energy industries' to incorporate EV and heat pump training centre investments.	<i>Multiple actions and interventions in place to improve this. See College Improvement Plan.</i> <i>Achieved: Total 270</i> <i>Atos has contracted the College to supply 28 ICT apprentices with a further 50 in the plan.</i> <i>We have clipped our offer in Media and Science where numbers are low.</i> <i>In progress: An employer roundtable has been hosted by Building Alliance organisation. Feedback is being used to develop curriculum.</i> <i>EV employer training commencing in February.</i>

Appendix 2: Evidence and Data Sources

[The UK's Modern Industrial Strategy 2025 - GOV.UK](#)

[Get Britain Working White Paper - GOV.UK](#)

[West Midlands and Warwickshire LSIP \(May 2023\)](#) (new versions for WM and Warwickshire to be published later in 2026)

[SCUC Strategic Plan 2026-2028](#)

[Whitecap Report Skills West Midlands & Warwickshire \(March 2024\)](#)

[WMCA Employment and Skills Strategy 2024-27](#)

[2025 Annual Accountability Statement](#)

[Economic Development Scrutiny Board \(SMBC Report\)](#)

Appendix 3: College Compact Commitments

A. Co develop effective strategies and plans to widen participation	
WMCA Commitments	College Commitments
- Identify ways to maximise the contribution of colleges to support delivery of the West Midlands Growth Plan ambitions. - Through the West Midlands Growth Company, strengthen regional collaboration with business and education partners, providing sector and cluster intelligence to inform investment. - Work with colleges to understand and respond to factors affecting learner engagement, retention and completion.	- Work with Local Authorities to inspire and support local residents to engage with the wider skills system, driving increased participation and progression. - Meet employer demand by developing a responsive and relevant offer that equips residents to access emerging opportunities. - Improve progression into employment and further learning, particularly for residents in disadvantaged communities and those facing additional barriers to participation.
B. Integrated approach to planning and delivery	
WMCA Commitments	College Commitments
- Work with colleges on long term planning and develop region wide strategic planning approaches on shared priorities. - Invest in innovation and capacity building, taking a whole system approach. Identify opportunities to take advantage of economies of scale and strategic resource allocation.	- Act as co leaders in shaping regional skills strategy based on a shared understanding of wider regional planning, including working with Local Authorities and the wider skills system. - Align long term strategies with local and regional programmes, including the Youth Employment Guarantee and local employment and skills strategies.
C. Develop and invest in place based interventions	
WMCA Commitments	College Commitments
- Consult with colleges as key stakeholders in place based strategies and place based budget setting processes across a range of WMCA activities. - Enable test and learn approaches to specialise/ differentiate offer based on local strengths.	Actively participate in place-based planning with local partners like WMCA, Local Authorities and other key stakeholders - and advocating for this approach across the region. Serve local communities' specific needs while aligning with regional objectives, recognising the differing challenges learners experience in different places.
D. Share data to support joint system understanding	
WMCA Commitments	College Commitments
Share data, such as labour market insights drawn from local, national and regional sources. Develop a coordination platform and analysis and provide timely updates across partnership using	Provide relevant timely data each month on spending, outputs and outcomes for use in Multi Year Settlement performance and planning purposes Share data to help understand collective regional capacity on college capacity, learner demographics and learner progress and achievements (such as destination data and early leavers)*
E. Act as advocates for our places and region	
WMCA Commitments	College Commitments
Co develop positions on strategy and policy. Advocate nationally on behalf of the region's FE system to articulate as one voice.	Demonstrate innovation and excellence as national trailblazers, raising the profile of West Midlands FE on the national map.

*NOTE: all partners working within an agreed governance and legal frameworks for data management

BOLD FUTURES

ANNUAL ACCOUNTABILITY STATEMENT AND LOCAL NEEDS DUTY **2026/27**

**JULY
2026**

Solihull College & University Centre

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