

**Northern
College**



Accountability Statement 2023-24

Inspiring positive change through adult education



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Our Values

Always Be Ambitious
Have People at our Heart
Make Things Happen

Our Strategic Priorities

Sustainability
Profile
Quality

The College is currently reviewing its Strategic Priorities and will be launching a new strategy for 2023-2026 in preparation for the 2023-24 academic year.

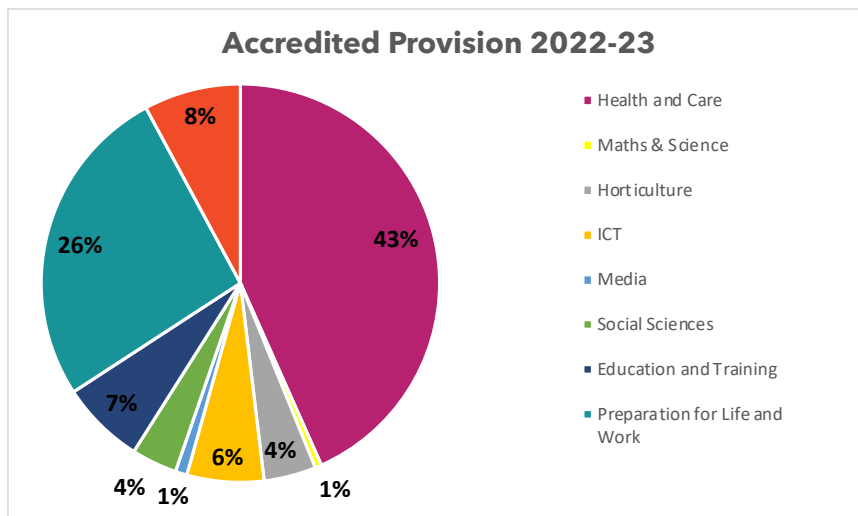
Context and Place

Northern College for Residential Adult Education is based at Wentworth Castle, Stainborough, Barnsley. Founded in 1978, the College is a regional provider, offering a range of provision for adults on a residential and non-residential basis across South and West Yorkshire. Northern College is a relatively small College circa 3,500 enrolments per year and this creates a strong community feel. The College also holds a non-devolved AEB funding allocation. The College prepares adults to re-enter education, gain employment or to make career changes through an immersive residential learning and support experience. The College is set in acres of National Trust gardens and parkland that students can access as part of their studies at Northern College.

Northern College is the only adult residential College in the region and as such has a unique role in contributing to meeting local skills needs. Through residential education Northern College can offer a transformative learning experience, we accelerate personal growth, facilitate networking, and provide opportunities for specialised and immersive learning.

In March 2023, the College was inspected by Ofsted and judged Good across all areas and as making a reasonable contribution to the skills agenda.

The College offers a range of courses for adults from entry to higher level programmes (in partnership with the University of Huddersfield and Sheffield Hallam University) enabling adults to succeed in line with their goals and ambitions. The College specifically supports skills growth in the key sectors of Health and Social Care, Business and Management and Education.



Enabling inclusive growth is at the heart of the West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA) and South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (SYMCA) Adult Education Budget (AEB) commissioning strategies, as well as the individual Local Authority skills strategies, and is a central pillar of the Northern College curriculum. Providing adults with an opportunity to learn and raising the aspirations of some of the nation’s most disadvantaged communities is vital if the UK is to bridge the current skills and productivity gap which evidence shows is holding back the economy. The College is focused on reaching these adults. According to NOMIS data (May 2022), Yorkshire and Humber continue to lag behind national averages for working age population qualified to level 2, level 3, and level 4 and above with the gap widening at each level point, to a 5% point difference at Level 4 and above, (only 31% of the working age population are qualified to this level). This is compounded by higher rates of unemployment and long-term sickness. Labour market inactivity rates are a key regional issue with 137,900 adults categorised as long-term sick within the region. Yet of these people, 87,700 are recorded as wanting to work, creating a large pool of people who require support and skills to move into work.

South Yorkshire Key Local Context Consideration (as stated in the LSIP)

Key sectors in SY include healthcare, retail, manufacturing, and education. Growth sectors for the sub-region from 2020-21 include energy and water, manufacturing, construction and logistics and transport (Annual Population Survey, 2021). Areas for future growth include digital, specialised construction, low carbon, rail engineering and advanced manufacturing.

Productivity, pay and social mobility and people with no qualifications are key challenges faced by the sub-region.

SY is home to 49,020 local businesses, 9 out of 10 are micro businesses employing less than 9 people. It has a low business density and a lower-than-average business start-up rate.

SY has a lower proportion of high skilled jobs (44% compared to the England average of 48%). It faces high levels of deprivation on education, skills and training indicators. DfE Working Futures data shows there will be a sharp increase in the qualification levels needed by employees. SY has a low skills equilibrium, with an economy based on low value added, low skill and low wage jobs. Investment in skills and training will result in more prosperous lives.

Women, ethnic minorities, and disabled people face acute challenges within SY's labour market as do certain local areas. The Social Mobility Index (2020), which considers where children grow up and their opportunities in adulthood, notes Barnsley and Doncaster are 'cold spots' for social mobility.

In April 2023, the South Yorkshire Local Skills Indicative Priorities were announced with a focus specifically on Digital skills. This research identified digital skills as near-universal requirements for employment at all skill levels even among low skilled occupations. This is of specific consideration to Northern College as a College with a specialism in supporting the success of adults from disadvantaged backgrounds, those with learning difficulties / disabilities and those facing multiple barriers to education and for whom digital inclusion is a key consideration.

West Yorkshire Key Local Context Consideration (as stated in the LSIP)

Key sectors in WY include health and social care, engineering and manufacturing, financial and professional services, low carbon, digital and technology, creative industries, construction, logistics & transport / distribution and education. Within Health and Social care skills gaps are persistent. Skills to support patients with mental health conditions are in demand as are digital skills and leadership and management. Within Financial and Professional services skills, shortages in accounting are key as is reskilling linked to digital transformation and project management. Within Digital and Technology there is a need for both specialist and basic skills. A lack of foundation digital skills is a key issue. Within education the demand for FE tutors is cited as a key demand area. Alongside this upskilling is required as a consequence of the digitisation of learning.

Cross cutting themes include net zero / sustainability, transferable skills, equality and diversity, leadership and management and digitisation and automation.



Our Approach to Developing this Statement

Identifying Key Priorities

The College is working closely with its three funders, and key strategic partners including the Local Authorities in the region and the National Trust to develop the College 2023-2030 Growth and Diversification plan as part of its curriculum planning cycle. This development is grounded in detailed analysis of local, regional and national priorities taking account of the direction of policy generally and specifically for adult residential education.

From early 2021, the College has been under FE Commissioner intervention. This status was initiated by the negative financial impact of the way residential funding was drawn down alongside, reduced recruitment as a result of Covid. The College went through a full Structure and Prospects Appraisal in the Spring/Summer of 2021 and the stakeholders involved unanimously decided the College should retain its independence. In March 2023, a new Principal and Chief Executive was appointed. The Board of Governors and the Executive Leadership Team are focused on the future sustainability of the College and as such the College strategy is focused on growth and diversification.

Consultation with Stakeholders

The College is well connected to national, regional, and local skills priorities and has utilised these connections to develop its key priorities. The College has demonstrated through the Enhanced Skills Inspection that it engages successfully with a broad range of stakeholders including employers, civic, community and education partners and their involvement influences the intent and implementation of the curriculum. The College has undertaken and continues to plan for, significant curriculum change in line with stakeholder feedback from a range of stakeholders within the Skills Eco System.

The College has consulted its key funders South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority, West Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority and the Department for Education as well as relevant Local Authority partners to test its key priorities. The College is working with sector experts in labour market analysis, estates and special educational needs and disabilities to research and establish its position in the education and skills market and its future market share.

The College works with a wide range of stakeholders including; employers, voluntary & community organisations, health services, housing services and local anchor Institutions.

Working with Other Local Providers

The College is working collectively with other Adult and Community Learning providers in the region to ensure clear pathways are available and utilised as part of a place shaping approach with specific reference to the development of Community Learning.

The College is part of the South Yorkshire Colleges Collaboration ([Education, Innovation, Collaboration | South Yorkshire Colleges Partnership](#)), has partnerships with key local Universities in South and West Yorkshire and is part of a local Higher Level Skills group all of which influence and shape the development of our skills provision.

Our Contribution to National, Regional and Local Priorities

Aim & Outcome

Refocus key aspects of our Skills provision including growing the Free Courses for Jobs Offer ensuring more students can move on and into sustainable employment swiftly.

2023-24 target

- New Sector based work academies – deliver 9 programmes engaging with 90 students
- New ESOL provision including Speaking & Listening, Reading and Writing – engaging with 90 students
- Growing FCFJ provision (national and MCA flexibilities) - engaging with 100 students
- Introduction of additional Access to HE pathway in Psychology

Link to National and Local Priorities

- Areas of key focus include health and social care (including counselling), education, business and professional services in line with national and local priorities.
 - Employers will input into the curriculum intent and implementation as part of the curriculum planning process. Our existing HEI partnerships will be utilised to ensure students can access further study as appropriate either at the College directly or through partnership.
 - The College will balance modes of delivery to ensure employer and student preferences are met. This includes use of modular, residential and blended learning.
 - The College will develop programmes that provide a clear pathway for those out of work to get into, stay and then progress in work linked including through the Sector Based Work Academies programme.
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Aim & Outcome

Create a targeted programme that enables adults with SEND to continue to develop their essential skills and move into employment / volunteering.

2023-24 target

- 60 adults completing programmes

Link to National and Local Priorities

- The programme will ensure adults have the nationally recognised core transferable skills as well as the ability to continue to develop their higher level skills.
- The programme will respond directly to regional strategies to increase participation of adults with SEND within AEB and Community Learning.
- The programme will work with employers in the region to ensure sustainable opportunities can be accessed e.g access to Supported Internships.

Aim & Outcome

Further develop the Community Learning offer to ensure it clearly evidences impact across the range of funding indicators.

2023-24 target

- New Sector based work academies – deliver 9 programmes engaging with 90 students
- All Community Learning students have a recorded and clearly defined progression pathway.
 - * 15% Engaging and/or building confidence
 - * 42% Preparation for further Learning
 - * 9% Preparation for employment
 - * 16% Improving essential skills inc English, Maths & Digital
 - * 1% Equipping parents/carers to support children's learning
 - * 12% Health & wellbeing
 - * 5% Developing stronger communities

Link to National and Local Priorities

- The College is responding directly to the recommendations arising from the West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA) Adult & Community Learning (ACL) Review 2023 and any subsequent review from South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (SYMCA) ensuring it continues to reach into the most disadvantaged communities to break down barriers to engagement within the skills system.
 - Improved access to CEIAG will ensure clear progression routes are promoted to all students.
 - Students will develop strong skills across all aspects of Community Learning ensuring they are able to progress to relevant high-quality programmes, supporting the skills needs of the region.
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Aim & Outcome

Refocus the Digital curriculum, responding to the requirements identified in the regional LSIP.

2023-24 target

- 40% growth in enrolment numbers for digital programmes across AEB and Community Learning.

Link to National and Local Priorities

- The College will develop programmes that ensure employees access baseline digital skills and specific shortage skills as identified via employers.
- A key aspect of this will be ensuring the development of transferable skills.
- A key aspect of this will be ensuring adults have the ability to develop micro credentials.
- The College will balance modes of delivery to ensure employer and student preferences are met. This includes use of modular, residential and blended learning.

Reference

1. Corporation Statement

1.1. On behalf of Northern College, it is hereby confirmed that the plan as set out above reflects an agreed statement of purpose, aims and objectives as approved by the Board of Governors at its meeting on 14th June 2023.

2. Publication

2.1. This statement is published on [our website here](#).

3. Supporting Documentation

Annual Financial Statements - [Financial-Statements-2021-22](#)
Ofsted report - [Northern College Ofsted Report 2023](#)

