

# Our Strategic Ambition

## Annex B – Our Accountability Statement

## Business Environment in the Solent Region

The Hampshire and the Solent Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) area is one of the UK's most economically significant regions, characterised by high productivity, a diverse business base, and strong educational infrastructure. However, headline strength masks a more complex and evolving picture shaped by demographic change, uneven productivity, changes in recruitment activity, and skills mismatches.

In 2023, the Hampshire and the Solent area generated £72.6 billion in gross value added (GVA), accounting for 21% of the South East's total output. Labour productivity is above the national average: North Hampshire is the most productive sub-area outside of London and Rushmoor is the most productive local authority in England. That said, productivity growth has slowed since 2019, and disparities persist across the area, particularly in places such as the Isle of Wight and Gosport.

The business base is dominated by small and micro-firms, supported by a wide network of business support organisations. However, patterns of business growth and survival vary across the area, reflecting differences in sector mix, local infrastructure, and access to skills.

Employment within Hampshire and the Solent is concentrated in Local Services, followed by High-Value-Added Traded Services and Primary and Secondary Industries. The area has notable strengths in sectors such as Marine and Maritime, Aerospace and Defence, Construction, Health and Social Care, Life Sciences, and Digital and Technologies. More recent trends show growth in Health and Social Care and the Visitor Economy. Employment in computing, IT services and telecoms has contracted in recent years. However, the IS-8 creative sector has experienced strong growth relative to the regional and England averages since 2019.

Overall, employment growth across most sectors has lagged behind both national and regional averages. While Digital and Technologies is identified nationally as a priority growth sector, and employment concentration is strong in the area (especially in North Hampshire and parts of Central Hampshire), local performance has been weaker, highlighting an ongoing challenge in realising digital opportunity.

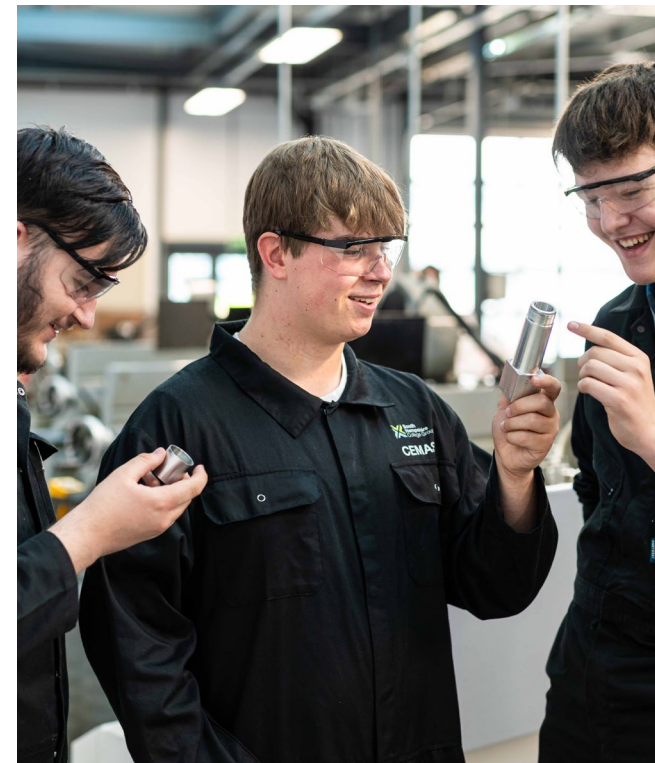
The labour market remains tight. In 2024, the Hampshire and the Solent area had a larger workforce, more people in employment, and fewer unemployed people than in 2019. The labour market, while relatively resilient compared to pre-pandemic levels, has shown signs of softening, with employment rates declining and unemployment edging upward since 2023. Economic inactivity, however, has increased in most areas, with the exception of Portsmouth, largely driven by long-term ill health and disability. Gender and age disparities persist, with lower participation among younger and older workers, and women disproportionately represented among the economically inactive. An ageing workforce is expected to place further pressure on labour supply and workforce replacement in coming years.

Labour demand (online job postings) has returned to pre-pandemic levels, following strong growth post-pandemic, with demand falling sharply in 2025. High-skilled occupations account for around a third of job demand, though this remains below national averages. Education, Health and Social Care, and Hospitality are the largest career areas by demand, with Construction and Transport and Logistics showing continued growth.

With just under half of residents holding qualifications at RQF Level 4 or above, this places the area below regional and national averages and could constrain growth in some higher value sectors. Attainment and participation also vary significantly, with parts of Gosport, Havant and the Isle of Wight lagging behind. While GCSE and post-16 attainment is strong in much of Hampshire, outcomes are weaker in Southampton and Portsmouth. Participation in further education and skills – particularly among adults – has declined.

Skills shortages remain widespread, particularly in Health and Care, Education and Construction. Around a third of vacancies are reported as hard-to-fill due to skills shortages, while skills gaps affect around one in five employers. At the same time, skills underutilisation is common, with a substantial proportion of employers reporting staff with qualifications above those required for their roles.

The area is relatively prosperous, with over half of working-age residents employed in higher-skilled occupations. However, strong commuting links to London and other high-wage areas create challenges for local employers in attracting and retaining skilled workers. Pockets of deprivation persist, particularly among lower- and mid-skilled residents and those in sectors more exposed to automation and technological change. The increasing use of artificial intelligence is expected to reshape skills demand, particularly in graduate-entry roles, with future job growth projected to be modest and driven largely by replacement demand rather than expansion.



## Summary of Our Contribution to National, Regional and Local Priorities in 2025-2026

- **Co-develop 5 new courses with employers and wider stakeholders in local and/or national priority sectors.**  
**Progress:** 14 new courses co-developed with employers to meet regional and national skills demands across Engineering, Civil Engineering, Construction, Project Management, Cyber Security, Maritime Leadership and entry to employment.
- **Introduce short courses in Green Construction Skills in line with regional and national needs.**  
**Progress:** South Hampshire College Group have just secured approval with DfE to run apprenticeship units, this includes PV and EV installation, we are now in the process of creating delivery plans to roll these out.
- **Embed industry relevant Sustainability principles across all courses through our tutorial model and contextualised embedding into the curriculum.**  
**Progress:** Sustainability is being embedded into tutorial content throughout all of our programmes, this will be further developed in 2026-2027 to include more formalised and contextualised modules.
- **10% growth in adult ESOL provision.**  
**Progress:** 17.3% growth achieved across all ESOL learning aims.



- **10% growth in adult literacy, numeracy, and digital skills.**  
**Progress:** 13% growth achieved across these learning aims.
- **Increase our SWAP programmes by introducing at least 2 additional pathways through close collaboration with LAs and DWP.**  
**Progress:** South Hampshire College Group now run "get site ready", plus SWAPs in Catering, Hospitality and Tourism plus general work preparations. Will continue to provide updates of any further new SWAPs that may arise from demand of DWP.
- **Embed digital literacy, including AI where relevant across all full-time and apprenticeship programmes.**  
**Progress:** Digital and AI skills are being naturally developed through all provisions and subjects. Our college group digital strategy has now been developed and will emphasise our commitment to digital and AI literacy in our students and workforce.
- **Work in partnership with the NHS to deliver tailored learning pathways that support recruitment and retention in the Health Care sector.**  
**Progress:** Modular healthcare assistant pathway developed and delivered for the NHS this year, in addition to assessor's qualifications and functional skills.
- **Create a further 10 employer partnerships that provide new high quality industry placements, apprenticeship opportunities, and tailored learning pathways in priority sectors.**  
**Progress:** South Hampshire College Group far exceeded this target to provide new placement and apprenticeship opportunities.
- **Further expand our participation in Industry Boards to cover Creative, Hair and Beauty, and Education and Early Years Sectors.**  
**Progress:** Industry Boards continue to progress across all sector areas, supporting our contribution to skills agenda and curriculum co-design. These will continue to take place in 2026-2027, ensuring momentum is kept.
- **Support 50 SMEs to grow their business through providing tailored support and solutions (collaborative projects via the Further Education Innovation Fund).**  
**Progress:** Over 157 businesses overall were supported by the FEIF project by the time the project closed at the end of March.
- **Ensure our destination and outcomes data capture covers at least 80% of our full-time, Apprenticeships and Adult Skills cohorts.**  
**Progress:** 51% of destinations were captured for 2024-2025 leavers across adults, HE and 16-19 provision, with no apprenticeships destinations captured as of yet. Whilst qualitative data capture has improved, engagement requires improvement for 2025-2026 data capture.
- **Reduce our reliance on subcontracted provision by 28% (less than 20% of our entire ASF Allocation).**  
**Progress:** We reduced our subcontracting provision to 18% of our overall allocation this year.
- **Increase the number of online students undertaking qualifications within the region by 10%.**  
**Progress:** 32% of online enrolments are now in the Hampshire area, with only Hampshire enrolments taking place from April onwards.

## Approach to Developing the Annual Accountability Statement

The South Hampshire College Group strategic plan sets out a clear vision of ensuring a cohesive response to local, regional, and national skills priorities in collaboration with other education and training providers.

We have reviewed the Hampshire and Solent Local Skills Improvement Plan, which prioritises the following emerging themes:

- **Priority 1:** Improve awareness, navigation and access to the skills ecosystem
- **Priority 2:** Strengthen employer participation
- **Priority 3:** Build a responsive and inclusive ecosystem
- **Priority 4:** Support pathways, progression and workforce transitions

### Emerging priority sectors for Hampshire and Solent LSIP:

- > Advanced Manufacturing
- > The Creative Sector
- > Digital and Technology
- > Health and Social Care
- > Marine and Maritime
- > Hospitality and the Visitor Economy
- > Agri-Tech and Rural Industries
- > Low Carbon Technologies
- > Defence and Aerospace
- > Construction
- > Logistics and Distribution
- > Professional and Services Sector

South Hampshire College Group engaged with a wide range of stakeholders to inform the overarching college strategic plan and the college accountability statement. The following activities have enabled the college to tailor its approach towards meeting local, regional, and national skills priorities:

- LMI (Labour Market Intelligence) gathered directly from employers through business development activities, civic links, and sector related industry boards;
- LMI published via Vector and Nomis used to inform objectives and curriculum intent;
- Skills priorities identified in recently published [Hampshire Skills Strategy 2025](#), [Southampton 2035 City Plan](#), [Portsmouth Skills and Labour Market Strategy 2026–2030](#), [Get Solent Working Plan](#), [Get Hampshire Working Plan](#), [Get Britain Working White Paper](#), [Get Solent Working Plan](#) and [The UK's Modern Industrial Strategy \(Nov 2025\)](#);
- Established partnerships with local and county councils, and the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to ascertain priorities across the region;
- Feedback gathered from employer representative bodies such as the Solent Growth Partnership, Maritime Solent UK, Business South, and Shaping Portsmouth;
- Ongoing engagement with the Hampshire Chamber of Commerce, who are leading the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) for Hampshire and Solent;
- Projects funded through the Further Education Innovation Fund and the Institute of Technology, which have identified skills gaps across the region and fostered collaborative working with FE providers and HEIs across the Solent region;
- Early collaboration with Technical Excellence Colleges;
- Gained governor feedback and approval of our strategic ambition and the objectives set out in the accountability statement;
- The College has responded to the following national skills priorities, identified by the Government, and published within the ESFA accountability statement guidance document for 2026-2027, noting that they all overlap with the priority sectors in the Hampshire and Solent region LSIP:
  - > Advanced Manufacturing
  - > Creative Industries
  - > Defence
  - > Digital and Technologies
  - > Financial Services
  - > Life Sciences
  - > Professional and Business Services
  - > Clean Energy Industries
  - > Construction
  - > Health



## Contribution to National, Regional and Local Priorities in 2026-2027

To deliver these priorities, South Hampshire College Group has set a focused set of strategic objectives that translate national policy, regional priorities, and local need into clear, measurable actions. These objectives are designed to strengthen employer-led provision, increase participation and progression, and ensure our curriculum remains responsive to the evolving skills needs nationally, regionally, and locally.

| # | Strategic Ambition                         | Objective                                                   | Impact / Contribution                                                                                                                                                                        | Skills, Growth and Inclusion Priorities (LSIP + Hampshire + Portsmouth + Southampton)                                      |
|---|--------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | Students; Employers and Economic Growth    | Deliver employer-led curriculum aligned to priority sectors | a) All curriculum areas will co-design their curriculum with employers<br>b) Ensure ≥90% of Level 3 study programme students complete external work experience                               | Employer-led skills system; alignment to priority sectors; improved employer participation and responsiveness of provision |
| 2 | Employers and Economic Growth; Communities | Lead green skills and ESG integration                       | a) Introduce low-carbon / green skills provision<br>b) Embed sustainability across all curriculum areas                                                                                      | Net zero transition; green skills for growth sectors; responsive provision supporting low-carbon economy                   |
| 3 | Communities; Employers and Economic Growth | Grow adult participation and workforce reskilling           | a) We will increase direct delivery of adult funded provision by 10% across identified LSIP priority sectors<br>b) Improve adult progression into employment through targeted provision +10% | Lifelong learning; workforce reskilling; reducing economic inactivity; flexible pathways into employment                   |
| 4 | Students; Communities                      | Strengthen inclusive pathways and social mobility           | a) Increase participation from IMD areas +10%<br>b) Close disadvantage achievement gap to <5%                                                                                                | Inclusion and social mobility; reducing NEET; widening access; clear progression pathways into work                        |

| #  | Strategic Ambition                         | Objective                                                   | Impact / Contribution                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Skills, Growth and Inclusion Priorities (LSIP + Hampshire + Portsmouth + Southampton)                         |
|----|--------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 5  | Students                                   | Embed digital, AI and essential skills                      | a) Embed digital and AI across all programmes and provision through our enrichment, directed study and tutorial offers<br>b) Establish a programme of delivery for AI Apprenticeship Units                                        | Digital capability across all sectors; skills for productivity and innovation; future-ready workforce         |
| 6  | Employers and Economic Growth; Communities | Expand health, care, and life sciences pathways             | a) Increase the range of health and care courses across the college group (including online)<br>b) Deliver employer-led pathways with NHS and private healthcare partners                                                         | Workforce supply in key sectors (health and care); addressing labour shortages; pathways into employment      |
| 7  | Employers and Economic Growth              | Accelerate employer engagement and work-based learning      | a) Increase employer relationships +20% year-on-year<br>b) Create ≥5 new employer partnerships<br>c) Deliver apprenticeship growth (+10% trajectory) inclusive of units                                                           | Strengthened employer participation; work-based learning; co-design and co-delivery of provision              |
| 8  | Employers and Economic Growth              | Support SME workforce development and productivity          | a) Engage ≥25 SMEs in training and upskilling<br>b) Develop flexible, modular LLE provision aligned to employer need ready for 2027-2028<br>c) Design and deliver 5 additional courses in response to employer /stakeholder needs | SME growth and productivity; business support; modular and flexible skills provision                          |
| 9  | Students                                   | Improve outcomes, progression, and destinations             | a) Deliver >85% attendance and >95% retention<br>b) Achieve ≥ national achievement rates                                                                                                                                          | Strong progression into employment; improved outcomes; effective pathways supporting economic growth          |
| 10 | Communities; Employers and Economic Growth | Align provision to local delivery and devolution priorities | a) Deliver 100% ASF through local direct delivery<br>b) Remove adult skills fund subcontracting<br>c) Increase our community employability offer by 50%                                                                           | Place-based skills system; improved access and navigation; locally responsive provision aligned to devolution |

## Inclusive Mainstream Fund

South Hampshire College Group is committed to using the Inclusive Mainstream Fund (IMF) to drive sustainable, whole-organisation improvements in inclusive practice, aligned with our strategic ambition to enable every student and apprentice to achieve, belong, and progress.

This statement outlines how the College Group will deploy funding in 2026-2027 to support the transition towards the reformed SEND system, ensuring that all students and apprentices, including those who are disadvantaged or vulnerable, can thrive within high-quality mainstream provision.

1. Transition and early identification through consistent, proactive approaches across the College Group.

We will:

- implement a joined-up transition to ensure continuity of support;
- embed early identification through robust assessment and curriculum-led diagnostics;
- establish a group-wide inclusive practice framework, ensuring needs are responded to through universal teaching approaches.

2. Ensure high-quality, adaptive teaching is the foundation of all curriculum delivery.

We will:

- embed consistent inclusive teaching strategies across all areas, including scaffolding, flexible grouping, and accessible curriculum design;
- invest in staff development, building confidence and capability to adapt teaching for a wide range of needs;
- review and design curricula to remove common barriers to learning and ensure accessibility for all students and apprentices;
- develop inclusive learning environments that promote engagement, independence, and a strong sense of belonging.

3. Establish a clear and consistent pastoral offer that promotes wellbeing, engagement and attendance.

We will:

- deliver a universal pastoral entitlement, ensuring all students and apprentices can access timely and relational support;
- integrate pastoral and safeguarding systems to create a coherent, preventative model focused on early intervention;
- promote inclusive, emotionally safe environments that support behaviour, participation, and belonging;
- strengthen staff capability to respond to social, emotional, and mental health needs through training and evidence-informed practice.

## Local Needs Duty

The Local Needs Duty Meeting held on 13 May 2026 brought together further education providers, the local authority, and the Hampshire Chamber of Commerce to build on the curriculum alignment discussions of 2024, with a continued focus on preparing for devolution and local government reform (LGR). The meeting focused on the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) priorities, the Hampshire Skills Strategy, and an update on devolution and local government reorganisation with a commitment to meeting again in the autumn term of 2026.

## Corporation Statement

This accountability statement was compiled in consultation with the Corporation and approved by the board on 1 July 2026.

Signed: 

**Stephen Marston**  
Chair of the Corporation  
South Hampshire College Group

## Website Hyperlink

[South Hampshire College Group](#)

## Supporting Documentation

- > [SHCG Ofsted Inspection Report](#)
- > [SHCG Strategic Plan](#)
- > [Hampshire and Solent Local Skills Improvement Plan \(LSIP\)](#)
- > [Get Britain Working White Paper](#)
- > [Get Solent Working Plan](#)
- > [Get Hampshire Working Plan](#)
- > [Hampshire Skills Strategy 2025](#)
- > [The UK's Modern Industrial Strategy \(Nov 2025\)](#)
- > [Southampton 2035 City Plan](#)
- > [Portsmouth Skills and Labour Market Strategy 2026-2030](#)

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