

Annual Accountability Statement

2025 – 2026





**Top three in general further education colleges - ref National Achievement Rates Tables (NARTs) 2023/24, published March 2025*

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Section 1

Purpose



Purpose: Defining futures

Vision: To be a leading education provider,
committed to excellence.

Empowering learners of
Wolverhampton and beyond with
skills, knowledge and positivity
needed to thrive and succeed in
current and future opportunities.





Section 2

Context and place



The College

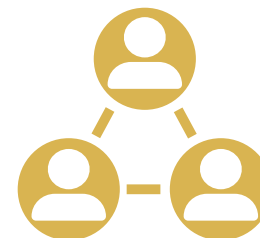
City of Wolverhampton College is a leading provider of further education and training in the West Midlands region. Formed in September 1999 from the merger of Wulfrun College and Bilston Community College, we adopted our current name after Wolverhampton gained city status in December 2000.

Our curriculum offer includes education programmes for young people aged 16-19, apprenticeships including those at higher level (level 4 and above), higher education, adult education, employability programmes, skills bootcamps, into employment programmes, education to those who speak English as a second language, programmes for those with special



Amount of students and apprentices we serve

c.8,000



Staff we have employed

c.520



Annual turnover

£40m



OfSTED achievement
(Jan 2023)

Good

Data as per 2024/25

Three years ago, the college embarked on a major campus transformation project to improve the learning environment for students and apprentices and the working environment for staff.

The college has also benefitted from City of Wolverhampton Council's transformational City

Phase two of the CLQ vision is the construction of a new college campus in Wolverhampton city centre which is due to open to students on 4 November, 2025. The state-of-the-art four-storey site will provide a range of training equipment and facilities including science labs, digital areas and professional broadcast,



music, photography and performing arts studios, as well as modern classrooms with interactive teaching and learning technology, and informal learning spaces. The campus will also have a commercial hair and beauty salon, performance theatre and Careers and Skills Hub which will all be open to the public.

The opening of the new campus will see the transfer of subjects from the existing Paget Road site which opened in the 1960s and has been identified for much-needed housing.

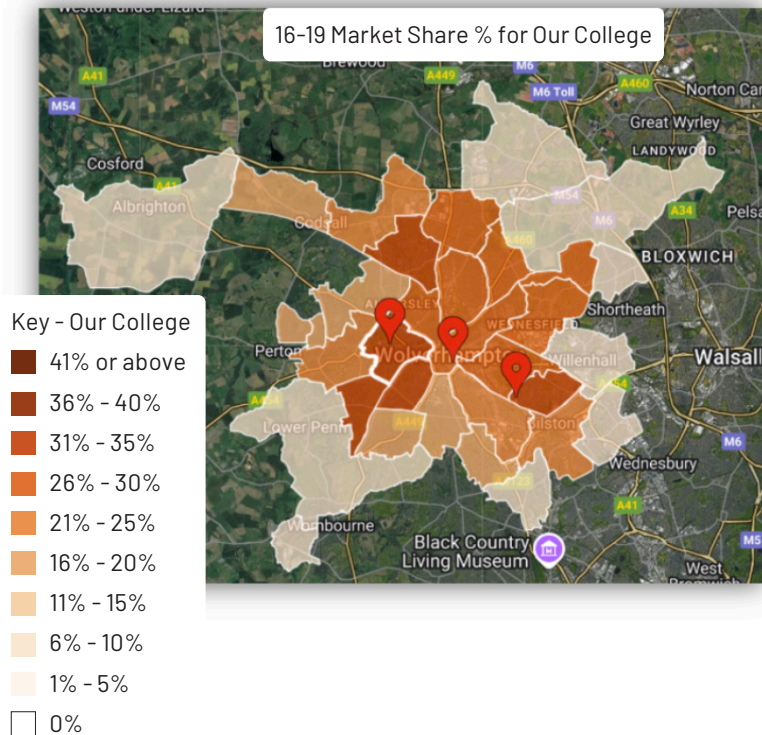
Our college also has a specialist autism base at the Wellington Road campus and number of specialised training centres such as the Electric Vehicle and Green Technologies Training Centre in Wednesfield, the Polymer Training and Innovation Centre in Telford, and the Transport, Rail and Infrastructure Academy with locations at the Wellington Road campus and sites in Aston, Dudley and Coventry.





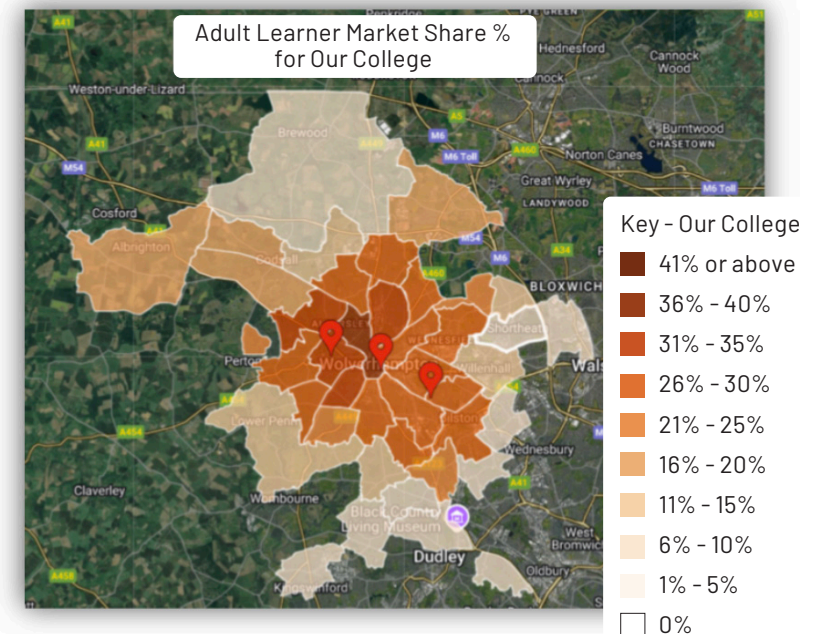
Our Learners

The provided maps highlight each of our campuses (both new and existing) and demonstrates how we are serving the local communities.



Our market share for adults in Wolverhampton is currently 30%, making us the largest provider in the city. With a broader reach for adults, our market share in the Black Country is 11%, positioning the College as the second largest provider in the region. Other colleges hold 49% of the market, while private training providers account for 26%.

Our market share of 16-19 students in Wolverhampton is currently 27%, and it has been increasing year on year. School Sixth Forms hold 44% of the market, while other colleges account for 22%.



The City of Wolverhampton

Population

Wolverhampton spans 26.81 square miles and comprises twenty wards. The population has been growing in recent years and now exceeds 270,000, with projections indicating it will rise to 296,102 by 2043. The 15-19 age group is expected to increase until it surpasses 30% in 2030.

Ethnicity

Wolverhampton is ethnically diverse, with 45% of residents being of non-White British heritage. Additionally, 23% of the population (in 2021) were born outside the UK.

Deprivation

Wolverhampton ranks among the top 20 local authorities for child poverty, with 35.7% of children living in low-income families, compared to the national rate of 22%. Furthermore, 21% of residents live in the top 10% most deprived areas, placing the city 24th in the national Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2019.

Economy

Since the early 1970s, the local economy has shifted from manufacturing to a service-based economy. Despite this shift, Wolverhampton still has a larger manufacturing to a service-based economy. Despite this shift, Wolverhampton still has a larger manufacturing sector than most UK cities and relies heavily on jobs in the public and health sectors. The hourly weekly wage of residents is lower than that of all workers in Wolverhampton, indicating that many high-paid roles in the city are not filled by local residents.

Wolverhampton is one of the UK's top ten areas of economic growth, with £4.4 billion of private and public sector investment either on site or planned. The city's revival is underpinned by three strategic economic regeneration zones (1) Northern Growth Corridor: Home to i54, the UK's most successful enterprise zone, providing 4,000 high-quality jobs, (2) City Centre: Receiving £1 billion of investment and a new commission to reimagine its future use where our

new campus will be situated and (3) Bilston: Home to our Wellington Road campus, is undergoing major regeneration including 500 new homes and new open spaces.

Employment

Wolverhampton has one of the highest unemployment rates in England, with Universal Credit claimant levels at 7.7%, above the 5% West Midlands average, and youth unemployment is particularly significant.

Education and Skills

The City of Wolverhampton is working to improve educational attainment, as historically a significant proportion of students did not meet national GCSE benchmarks. However, there has been notable progress in GCSE achievement at Key Stage 4, with skill levels steadily rising and a record number of local residents now securing higher-level qualifications. Despite these improvements, challenges remain.



The Black Country



Home to 1.2 million people across the four local authority areas of Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton. Proud of its industrial past and technological future the region embraces its demographic diversity as a key component of its character and strength.

Each local authority in the Black Country has severe pockets of deprivation, with Sandwell being the most deprived area, ranked 12th in the country. All four

authorities are within the poorest performing half of England for this indicator. The region's employment rate is 70.4%, below the national rate of 76.0%, with an unemployment rate of 5.8%, higher than the national rate of 4.0%

The proportion of residents with no qualifications is 17%, significantly higher than the England levels of 6%. Those holding degree-level qualifications stand at 25%, lower than the national average of 47%.

The West Midlands

The West Midlands is globally significant economy with vast economic potential. While facing labour market challenges – high unemployment (especially amongst young people and those most disadvantaged through ill health, disability and inequality), low qualification levels and skills shortages. The persistent challenges include high youth unemployment and economic inactivity largely due to ill health, with overall poorer outcomes for women, disabled people, ethnic

minorities and our young people, which vary across our diverse localities.

The latest data shows the employment rate for the West Midlands region is currently 73.6% (December 2024 to February 2025), this is behind the UK employment rate at 75.1%. This equates to around 2,929,000 people in employment, 0.1% down from this time last year.

The unemployment rate across region is 4.4% and equates to around 135,000 people. The West Midlands has the joint 5th highest unemployment rate of the 12 UK regions. The economic inactivity rate is currently at 22.9%. It equates to around 869,000 people of working age.

Across most measures of the labour market the WMCA area lags behind the national average.

The West Midlands, whilst one of the youngest and most diverse populations in Europe, has nearly double-digit rates of young Universal Credit claimants (aged 18-24) against the English average at 9.3% (in Nov 2024), with it especially pronounced in Birmingham (10.4%), Sandwell (10.1%), Walsall (10.5%) and Wolverhampton (11.5%).

Qualifications attained	WMCA	England	Comparison
No qualifications	9%	6%	+
Level 1	3%	3%	=
Level 2	21%	19%	+
Level 3	19%	21%	-
Level 4	42%	47%	-
Other	7%	5%	+

Section 3

Meeting national, regional and local needs >>>>



National Priorities

Take into account the Skills England report, Industrial Strategy Priorities and Plan for Change and are areas with high volumes of vacancies which are expected to increase; long-term structural barriers to recruitment, retention and progression issues; and are important in providing opportunities for employment in key growth areas such as green jobs² and net zero, creative industries and science and technology (including AI and quantum computing). Sectors are:

- advanced manufacturing
- clean energy industries
- construction
- creative industries
- defence
- digital and technologies
- financial services
- health
- life sciences
- professional and business services

Regional Priorities

Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIP) are regional research reports identifying skills gaps, available provision and local employability landscapes which detail how local areas aim to fill their skills gaps. The West Midlands and Warwickshire LSIP sets out the key priorities and changes needed in a local area to make post-16 technical education and training more responsive and closely aligned to local labour market needs.

The first priority is to target key sectors crucial to the growth of the region as set out by the West Midlands Combined Authority, through the promotion of training and education provision but also to invest in new facilities and courses where appropriate. Key sectors are:

- construction
- engineering & manufacturing
- ICT & digital
- logistics & distribution

The second priority is the provision of excellent, flexible leadership and management training in both specific and general topics to help facilitate business growth. The plan also responds to employer requests for greater levels of essential skills for work and workplace digital skills.

This WMCA Employment and Skills Strategy 2024-2027 is to develop a more integrated employment and skills ecosystem for the region through which we can stimulate economic growth, deliver better outcomes for residents and businesses and create healthier thriving communities. There is focus on four key pillars:

- building strong and inclusive communities
- providing a good education up to Level 2
- meeting future skills needs at Level 3 and above through upskilling and reskilling
- supporting residents into-employment and supporting career progression

The WMCA will invest in the development of an effective regional ecosystem for employment and skills, building the leadership capacity and capability to transform outcomes for residents, businesses and the region.

Local Priorities

The City of Wolverhampton Council has identified a pioneering business community in the city, including very high levels of female-led firms (6th highest of all local authorities in the UK), ethnic-minority owned businesses and social enterprises. These organisations form part of a diverse business ecosystem with major strategic companies, fledgling start-ups, scaleups and innovators.

Attracting more of these high value companies to start up, stay and grow in the city is central to the council's growth approach. Currently, however, businesses face persistent and serious challenges linked to the cost of doing business, with high energy prices and interest rates, as well as structural challenges related to skills gaps, infrastructure and access to finance.

There is a challenging balance required, between supporting business survival in the here and now, and strategically supporting a more productive, innovative and successful business base for the long-term. To achieve the latter, there is focus on growing sector strengths, while also diversifying the business base and wider economy. There are major future opportunities to be harnessed for local economic growth as part of a more mixed economy. Core economic

strengths and opportunity sit in four cluster areas:

- Green Economy, especially energy storage, waste and recycling including circular economy; and decarbonisation
- Logistics, Transport and E-commerce, including freight and warehousing opportunities
- Manufacturing & Materials, especially automotive and metals/materials supply chains, including rail and aerospace
- Sustainable Construction, including brownfield remediation especially

A set of enabling clusters remain important to the local economy:

- Business Services, including strengths in finance, recruitment and other business support services such as agency market, and creative services such as media, publishing and printing
- Health and Wellbeing
- Leisure, Tourism and Hospitality
- Public Sector and Education
- Retail and Wholesale



Process

City of Wolverhampton College has a strong commitment to positively define futures and change lives through excellence in education. To fulfil this vision, our curriculum is constantly evolving and tailored to address the latest labour market trends, providing learners with viable pathways to sustainable and meaningful employment.

Our approach is collaborative and continuously reviewed, working closely with stakeholders to ensure that our offering is always in tune with the needs of our community.

We are proud to offer clear pathways, ranging from entry level to university level, which are supported by our investment in learner support and work ready skills and pastoral care. Our approach is founded on continued investment in our staff, facilities and capabilities, allowing the College to continuously serve changing markets and evolving priorities.

Central to this is our commitment to align our curriculum with the reforms outlined in the Skills



Act, and to ensure that our provision aligns with local employment needs. To achieve this, our curriculum planning system provides a direct link between our chosen curricula and the local demand, while also incorporating labour market intelligence data and data on the progress and destinations of our learners.

Our Accountability Statement is also designed to reflect our focus on local, regional and national demand, allowing the College to remain responsive and aligned with the evolving needs of our community. This process has also supported our decision not to offer some curriculum areas due to other local colleges serving the skills needed such as animal care and agriculture.

College Curriculum

Our curriculum is carefully planned and reflective of the skills challenges and priorities nationally, regionally and locally.

★ Offer currently available ☑ Consideration for expansion	College	City	WMCA	LSIP	National Skills Priorities
Health, Public Services and Care	☑	☑	☑		☑
Science and Mathematics	☑				☑
Agriculture, Horticulture & Animal Care					
Engineering & Manufacturing Technologies	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑
Construction, Planning & the Built Environment	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑
Digital Technology	☑		☑	☑	☑
Retail & Commercial Enterprise	☑ ★	☑	☑ ★	★	
Leisure, Travel & Tourism	☑				
Arts, Media & Publishing	☑		☑		☑
History, Philosophy & Theology	☑				
Social Sciences	☑				
Languages, Literature & Culture					
Education & Training	☑	☑			
Preparation for Life & Work	☑		☑	☑	
Business, Administration & Law	☑	☑	☑ ★		★

Stakeholders

There is a wide range of stakeholders who support and work with City of Wolverhampton College to ensure our Accountability Statement and process remains pertinent, valid, comprehensive and aligned to employer demand. They include:

Staff and Learners

We gather information from and continuously review and act upon information from learners through our Learner Voice activities. We also regularly consult with staff, ensures staff renew their industry knowledge/experience and gather information through surveys and communication processes.

Partners

We maintain a select group of partners who deliver adult programmes in skilled professions. The College partners only with providers in sector areas that contribute to local, regional and national priorities.

For example, to support the rail sector, we have established the Transport, Rail, and Infrastructure Academy (TRIA) in partnership with a leading provider of training in the rail, civil engineering and utilities industries. This initiative aims to increase employment opportunities for local people and meet the demand for skilled operatives in the construction and maintenance of train lines, tram routes and stations across the region.

Additionally, we have created an Electric Vehicle and Green Technologies Training Centre to train technicians to work on electric and hybrid vehicles, equipping local residents with the necessary knowledge, skills and qualifications.

Other examples include addressing the demand in social media and marketing, where we partner with a provider to deliver digital bootcamps.

Employers

We work with over c.750 employers across the region including small, medium and large employers. We also work with bodies representing employers, such as Black Country Chamber of Commerce, and host curriculum specific employer events to specifically advise on curriculum areas on pertinent sector developments and requirements.

West Midlands Combined Authority

Leaders maintain strong engagement with the WMCA, resulting in increased funding through successful initiatives that yield positive employment and progression outcomes for residents.

Wolverhampton Anchor Network

City of Wolverhampton College is a founding member alongside City of Wolverhampton Council, Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust, University of Wolverhampton and Wolverhampton Homes. This coalition is committed to spending more within the city and collaborating with businesses, communities and the voluntary sector to retain local wealth, create new jobs and provide opportunities for residents.

The City of Wolverhampton Council

We participate in various forums such as the Education, Skills, and Employment Board, Schools Forum, Children and Families Board, SEN Partnership Board and other task and finish groups such as 16-24 Engagement.

Department of Work and Pensions

We consult extensively with the DWP and work with Jobcentre Plus (JCP) to offer services that help individuals gain or change employment through specific work-enabling programmes.

Skills West Midlands and Warwickshire

This is a collaborative partnership between local employers and further education providers working to improve access to technical skills provision.

Black Country Health Partnership

We have formed a collaboration with other Black Country colleges to work together to mutual benefit in the areas of student recruitment and course development for those wishing to study further and/or higher, whilst also engaging with the aims of key strategic partners.

Colleges West Midlands

We are part of this formal strategic partnership, which includes all colleges within the WMCA area. This partnership supports skills development across the region, responding collectively to initiatives and government reforms. The collaborative approach promotes the offer to all West Midlands residents through a centralised prospectus, contributing to increased economic prosperity, social cohesion and inward investment.

Education establishments

We engage with local high school partners, parents and carers to promote progression opportunities and improve school leaver participation. The College has an established partnership with the University of Wolverhampton and aims to develop a curriculum that widens participation and supports progression.

Below, are a number of outcomes for the year ahead which reflects how we are responding to national, regional and local priorities and skills needs. Each outcome is aligned back to our College Strategy.

Meeting Needs		Contribution Outcomes
Strategic Goal Deliver extraordinary teaching and learning experience	Local To reduce levels of unemployment within Wolverhampton	a. 90% of students (youth) and 85% adults will move onto a positive destination
	Regional Respond to employer requests for greater levels of essential skills for work and workplace digital skills	b. Achievement of students (youth) in L3 priority sector areas - Health 90% (91% 23:24), Engineering 85% (68% 23:24), Construction 87% (85% 23:24), Creative 90% (90% 23:24) and Digital 92% (97% 23:24)
	National Improve levels of attainment in priority sectors at L3 to support employment	c. 92% of students (youth) to undertake the new CORE skills programme
		d. 90% of L3 students (youth) to undertake minimum work experience hours
		e. All students (youth) to have at least two encounters with employers
		f. 92% or more students are happy with the teaching and learning, and that course is meeting their needs (94% 24:25)
		g. 65% of apprentices to achieve (51.1% 23:24)
		h. Achieve 2.5 or higher rating in employer and apprentice feedback

<p>Strategic Goal</p> <p>Create a people focused place to work and progress</p>	<p>Regional</p> <p>Actively seek, recruit and train staff who will in turn support in addressing the priority sector skills gaps</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. All teaching staff to engage in a type of industrial upskilling b. Maintain staff turnover within a 15-20% range (18.14% 23:24) c. Overall staff absence rates will be less than 4.5% (4.98% 23:24) d. 90% or more of staff agree with the staff satisfaction survey question "I am proud to be a member of staff at the College" (91% 23:24) e. Reduce the time taken to recruit teaching staff to 14 weeks (18 weeks 23:24)
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<p>Strategic Goal</p> <p>Offer a responsive and innovative curriculum</p>	<p>Local</p> <p>To reduce levels of unemployment within Wolverhampton</p> <p>Regional</p> <p>Respond to employer requests for greater levels of essential skills for work and workplace digital skills</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Increase volume of all students in priority sector areas of Health 270 (267 23:24), Engineering 155 (145 23:24), Construction 620 (708 23:24), Creative 240 (233 23:24), Digital 220 (212 23:24) and Leadership & Management 25 b. 165 students to study T Levels though an offer that is in line with priority sectors c. 300 SEN students to study an offer that focuses on preparation for adulthood and access employment d. 1,600 adult learners to complete employment programmes, such as Bootcamps aligned to local and regional needs e. Further development of a responsive curriculum that provides appropriate pathways aligned to meet industry needs f. Each curriculum is endorsed by at least one named employer who contributes to curriculum development g. Explore and launch an offer of Pathways to Apprenticeships
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Section 4

Corporation sign off >>>

Duty to review provision in relation to local needs

We are committed to complying with our duty under a new section 52B of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 to review provision in relation to local needs, as proposed in the Skills and Post-16 Education Bill 2022. We will look to hold a review at least every three years to identify how well we are meeting local needs associated with securing suitable employment. We will publish a report on our main website following this review. We will factor in any actions from this report into our Accountability Agreement planning.

Corporation statement

On behalf of the City of Wolverhampton College Corporation, it is hereby confirmed that the college plan as set out above reflects an agreed statement of purpose, aims and outcomes as approved by the corporation at their meeting on 12 June 2025.



Louise Fall
Principal and Chief Executive



The plan will be published on City of Wolverhampton College website and can be accessed from the link <https://www.wolvcoll.ac.uk/he/support/college-documents-policies/>.



Mike Hastings
Chair of Governors



Section 5

Supporting documentation >>>

City of Wolverhampton College [2023 OfSTED Report](#)

City of Wolverhampton Council [Our City: Our Plan](#)

[WVInsight](#)

[West Midlands and Warwickshire Local Skills Improvement Plan](#)

GOV.UK [Level 2 and 3 attainment age 16 to 25](#)

GOV.UK [Children in low income families: local area statistics, financial year ending 2024](#)

[Active Black Country](#)

[WMCA - Research and Insights Data](#)

[WMCA - Employment and Skills Strategy 2024 - 2027](#)