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## **1. Purpose**

### **The College's Vision is to:**

- Consistently be recognised as a national leading vocational centre dedicated to delivering outstanding teaching & learning.
- Deliver courses that continue to reflect local and regional industry needs and be in fields where we have a proven track record.
- Train and educate learners who will be seen as the first choice by employers.

### **The College's Mission is:**

We empower young people and adults with outstanding education, training, and learning experiences. Through powerful partnerships, we unlock potential, fuel ambition, and drive success - for individuals and the wider community alike.

The College's provision is important in helping to resolve short term skills shortages, in providing unique specialist training and, probably most importantly, in developing a talent pipeline of young people who will have not only the transferable skills required for modern jobs which cannot yet be envisaged, but the strong behaviours for employment that are demanded in every sector.

The College's expressed **intent** is to achieve this by:

#### **1. Working closely with stakeholders in the design of the College's provision, and shaping its delivery, so that skills priorities are reflected strongly in our offer.**

Although it is not always possible for stakeholders to influence either the design of qualifications, or the selection of programmes which receive public funding, the College leadership and its Governors use their influence in National employer groups, with awarding bodies, education collaborations and with local skills networks to establish and preserve a curriculum which meets the region's skills needs.

In the Curriculum Areas, leaders engage as frequently and as widely as possible to involve stakeholders in the delivery of programmes and ensure that their needs are reflected in their decisions over assessment design, resource planning and delivery of both qualifications and of additional work-related enrichment and training.

**2. Providing, where appropriate, specialist courses and bespoke provision to respond to the needs of stakeholder groups, such that skills gaps are effectively addressed.**

Where we have a good or better track record in a specialism, and can attract and retain sufficient high calibre staff, and if we can offer value for money, the College seeks to provide education and training programmes (e.g. short courses or tailored delivery patterns) which respond to local employer and community skills needs. The College also seeks to develop innovative provision to meet emerging skills needs in subjects where our expertise can be diversified and expanded, and we will test the feasibility of programmes which respond to new curriculum and industry developments. Where this is not possible, leaders actively engage and collaborate with regional skills providers to help establish an effective provision in the region (e.g. through referrals or support to other providers, or collaborative delivery such as our DET Level 3 programme).

**3. Continuously enhancing programmes of study to reflect the wider transferable and employability skills needs of stakeholders, resulting in learner progression and destinations which are strong.**

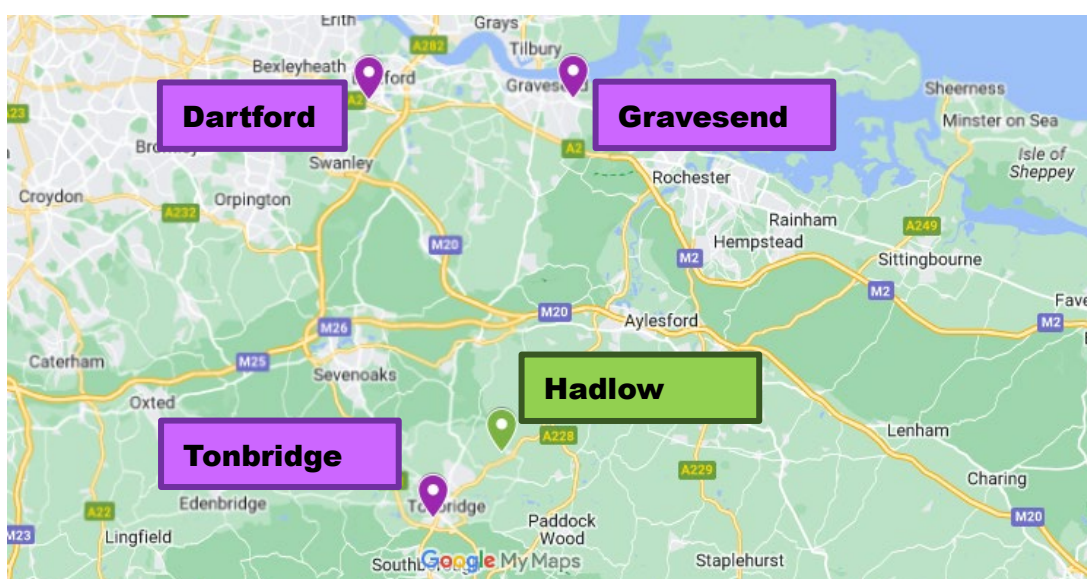
We recognise that, since by far the largest areas of our provision are in education programmes for young people, our biggest impact in meeting skills needs can be: a) the extent to which learners who leave North Kent College have the specific knowledge and skills the region needs; b) to what extent they exhibit the general behaviours they need for employment and/or to make a positive contribution to their community, and c) our capacity to develop students who can master the wider transferable skills that they need to be adaptable to changes in the employment landscape. This is reflected by our leavers in very high rates of either employment/voluntary work, or in progression to meaningful next steps in education.

The College's skills self-assessment evaluates the contribution it makes to meeting the skills needs of the local and regional economy. This has been reviewed by the Governing Body, which continues to conclude that this aspect is a **strong** feature of the College's provision.

## 2. Context and Place

North Kent College ('NKC') is one of three general further education (GFE) Colleges in Kent, sitting at the centre of three distinct geographies: London, North and West Kent, and the Thames Gateway.

We have four main operational locations - three large GFE campuses at Dartford, Gravesend, and Tonbridge, together with the Land-based College at Hadlow. In addition to this there are small specialist facilities at Thameside (Maritime), and at the Bluewater retail park (The Learning Shop).



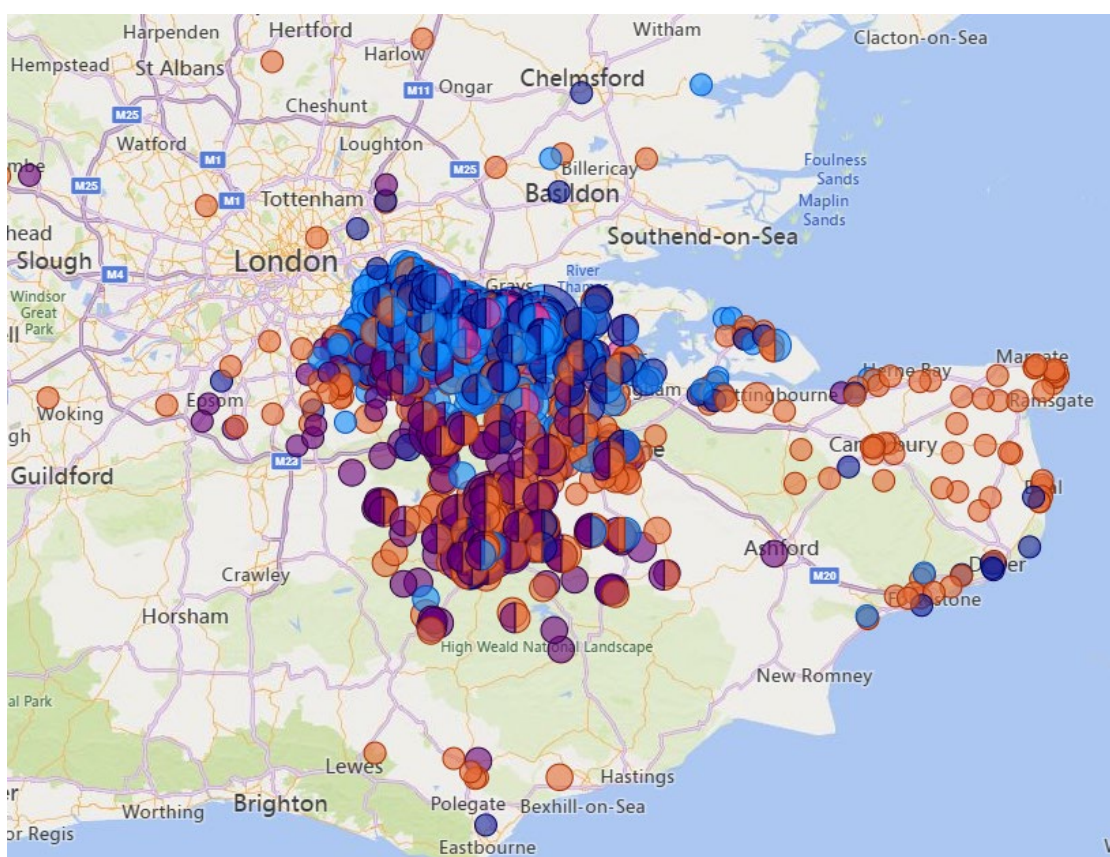
At the start of 2025, the college had around 4,500 learners aged 16 to 18, 200 adult learners and 275 apprentices. Of these around 350 learners have special educational needs requiring additional learning support, with approximately 250 in receipt of high needs funding. Courses are offered from entry level to degree level with a range of full and part-time courses.

In **Gravesend**, we offer specialist training with our National Maritime Training Centre, a firefighting facility, and Hall Training Centre for specialist Refrigeration and Airconditioning courses. As one of a handful of colleges offering Maritime provision in the UK, the College draws its learners from both national and international locations. We also have one of only a few City & Guilds approved specialist refrigeration training centres in the UK. At **Dartford** we have an exceptional reputation for our Arts specialism areas, particularly in Performing Arts and with the Miskin Performance and Creative centre that opened in March 2022, we continue to build upon this. **Tonbridge** offers a mixed GFE provision with a substantial Business and Computing offer, T-Levels in Construction,

Early years and newly for Health in 25/26, and a strong Arts provision. **Hadlow College** is Kent's only Land Based College which includes a beef herd, sheep farm, horticultural production, a large animal management centre, equine centre, a fisheries lake, and machinery and land-based technology facilities. The site also hosts Construction and Motor Vehicle provision, with specialist Motorcycle and Motorsport provision.

### Communities we serve

The college draws its learner population primarily from the districts of Bexley, Bromley, Dartford, Sevenoaks, Gravesham and Tonbridge & Malling. We also have significant pockets of full-time learners who travel from Medway, Swale and Tunbridge Wells, with apprentices employed further into East Kent. A current postcode "heatmap" for learners active in the 24/25 academic year is illustrated below.



The communities we serve fall almost exclusively into the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) region of Kent and Medway. This was an LSIP trailblazer region, in which Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce leads as the Employer Representative Body.

The latest (2023) LSIP for Kent and Medway, along with a progress report published in 2024 are available here [Kent & Medway Local Skills Improvement Plan - Local Skills Improvement Plan](#)

Key characteristics of the areas served by the college are summarised below:

- Working age population growth was 15% between 2010 and 2020, compared to 11% nationally, and is projected to grow significantly faster than the rest of the country over the decade between 2020 and 2030 (4% growth in Kent & Medway vs 2% Nationally).
- Relatively high economic activity rates, with unemployment rates slightly lower than national average, leading to a tight labour market with skills in short supply in some sectors.
- Attainment of skills qualifications at level 3 and in particular at Level 4 in Kent and Medway lags the UK national rate.
- Concentrations of employment are widely dispersed across the region, with a small majority concentrated into the areas which North Kent College primarily serves.
- By sector, the employment base is diverse, with the largest overall sectors in Health and social care, education, retail, and business administration, but the College campuses are located close to important clusters in construction, and in professional, scientific, and technical services.
- Construction, Agriculture, Retail and Motor Trades are over-represented sectors compared to the national profile.
- ‘Replacement demand’ is a key consideration as well as economic growth, with some sectors such as Manufacturing experiencing high demand due to an ageing workforce. Given the skilled labour supply shortage, there is increased demand for digitalisation and automation as a result.
- There are pockets of deprivation (LSOA’s in top 10% for national Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019) in communities we serve in Dartford and Gravesham, and more significantly in the south-east London boroughs and Medway towns.

This points to a picture of diverse employment opportunities, widely geographically spread, and with few large employers (98% of Kent Businesses are SME’s with less than 50 employees). There is a need for upskilling the existing workforce and preparing the new workforce for higher level technical jobs where skills are in high demand.



### **3. Approach to developing the annual accountability Statement**

In preparing a set of strategic and operational objectives to meet local and regional skills needs, we engage frequently and collaborate with a wide range of relevant stakeholders to understand these needs and ensure the curriculum is planned accordingly.

This includes working closely with Kent County Council (KCC) and Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce (KICC - the appointed Employer Representative Body (ERB) for the Kent & Medway LSIP, and Kent Further Education (KFE), a collaboration of all three college groups in Kent, to ensure that the priority local skills-needs of the region are reflected strongly in the College's strategic curriculum planning.

The College's leaders have been very active members of research and economic development groups (e.g., Greater North Kent Partnership, Kent and Medway Economic Partnership, Gravesham and Dartford Borough Councils and the West Kent Partnership) which developed, through the Kent Employment Taskforce (a collaboration spawned post-COVID and which continues to date), the Kent & Medway Workforce Skills Evidence Base 2022 and paved the foundations of the LSIP trailblazer for Kent.

Through continued close collaboration between KFE and KICC, the College ensures that current gaps in skills provision are identified and that the latest LSIP priorities for Kent & Medway are addressed in our plans to develop new resources and provision, and to attract investment for the Department for Education (previously funded through the Skills-accelerator Development Funds – SDF and SDF2, and most recently the Local Skills Improvement Fund - LSIF). We are actively represented in the overall LSIP solutions panel, and in the LSIP specialist sector networks (for instance KMFG and KCFG, the Kent Focus Group's for Manufacturing and Construction respectively).

In addition to Civic and Local Government bodies and (naturally) a wide range of employers, the College engages with the relevant professional sector representative bodies, skills councils, qualification awarding organisations, professional institutions, and training boards to ensure that its curriculum is relevant and current, and to develop its action plans.

In order to evaluate gaps in provision, and better understand progression pathways for learners, we engage widely with education establishments such as secondary schools via the Kent Association of Leaders in Education and the KCC sponsored Pathways-for-All initiative, through membership of the Kent Schools Funding Forum, and the local Higher Education Institutions (University of Greenwich, Canterbury Christchurch University and University of Kent), and with independent training providers (via Kent Association of Training Organisations and the LSIP Solutions panels).

Through the Kent Further Education (KFE) Colleges' forum, we have exceptionally strong relationships with the other Kent FE providers (East Kent College group and Mid Kent College). Our Chief Executive and Deputy Principals have formal termly meetings with their counterparts, and there are strategic work streams for Teaching and Learning, Senior NHS Collaborative Development, Adult High Needs, Safeguarding, Universities, Staff Recruitment, and Efficiency, Finance & Procurement. Our collaborations through the Strategic Development Fund included: in a Mental Health Project, extensive developments in Decarbonisation in Agriculture, Home Energy and Vehicle Technology, a Digital Skills Curriculum and Immersive Technology rooms on all Kent College campuses. As part of an overall £5M+ project funded through the LSIF, the KFE Colleges developed collaborative provision and invested in latest equipment for a) Construction Retrofit and Micro-Energy-Generation, b) Assistive Healthcare Technologies, and c) Automation and Robotics in Manufacturing and Engineering. These projects are enhancing the impact of Business and Education partnerships through use of technology, improving the use of existing resources with a common approach across all Colleges, and jointly upskilling teachers and curriculum content. The KFE group has been the lead education provider voice in the LSIP and has helped established sector-based solutions panels on which the College works with employers and training providers across Kent to provide innovative solutions to the region's skills needs (for example the Sector Based Work Academy in Food & Drink sector piloted in April 2023, and the launch of the Kent & Medway Industry 4 Council, led by North Kent College).

We work closely with stakeholders such as the Department for Work and Pensions, the local Maritime Sector and the region's building services sector to deliver bespoke, highly specialised programmes to meet their skills needs. These include:

- Retail and Construction specific Sector Based Work Academies in partnership with DWP from The Learning Shop at Bluewater which leads to high rates of employment within these sectors.
- A successful provision for Refrigeration and Air Conditioning installation and maintenance, and the development of full-time programmes for learners leading to employment in low carbon heating and cooling technologies. This provision is not available elsewhere in Kent.
- Apprenticeships and bespoke training in maritime safety, operations, and engineering for local businesses on The River Thames and national logistics and passenger ship operators. This aligns strongly with sector skills needs priorities in Transport & Logistics and for the Thames Maritime region with the establishment of 2 new Freeports in the areas we serve.

Curriculum Leaders involve stakeholders to plan ambitious programmes of study for young people and adults. These effectively develop the wider skills and behaviours that learners need to progress well in education and become the employees of choice for local and national employers, or to become positive contributors to the community. Current industry practice is reflected in many areas through teachers who also practise in their field.

Programme leaders and teachers use stakeholder intelligence to ensure that learners can identify personalised targets to meet the specific skills demands of the industry sector they have chosen, and to develop the wider skills and behaviours expected by all employers.

The College has very high expectations in discipline, work ready attitude, and behaviours which are pre-requisites for learners to progress to the next level of their study. This impact of this was recognised recently by Ofsted in an Outstanding judgment for Behaviours and Attitudes.

The Governing Body has a wide representation across the industry sectors that are important to the College, and it continues to actively recruit to widen this. Expert Governors provide intelligence in their sectors, and through strong links with regional economic development networks, they effectively challenge whether our contribution to meeting skills needs is sufficient.



#### **4. Contribution to National, Regional and Local Priorities**

Through the collaborative work we have engaged in to-date as part of the LSIP development, and through engagements with key employers and other stakeholders in the region, North Kent College has developed a set of strategic skills priorities which address the LSIP priorities. These focus on the Construction, Manufacturing, Health and Social Care, Food Production and Agri-tech sectors, with cross cutting themes of Decarbonisation, enhancing Digital Skills, and workforce readiness through Employability skills. The shortage of skilled trainers, teachers and lecturers in Education is also addressed through collaborations between providers and with industry.

The College continues to prioritise provision to address **National Skills Priorities**, and the table below illustrates the scale of provision in the applicable sectors identified in the DfE guidance for accountability statements.

<b>2025 National Skills Priorities</b>	<b>Relevant Course Areas</b>	<b>Learners 24/25</b>	<b>Planned Learners 25/26</b>	<b>Growth (decline)%</b>
advanced manufacturing	Engineering (inc. Apprenticeships)	78	88	13%
creative industries	Arts	1249	1483	19%
defence	Public Services	116	108	(7%)
digital and technologies	IT and Computing	265	261	(1%)
financial services	Accounting	25	31	1%
professional and business services	Business, Legal and Office	300	333	11%
clean energy industries	Building Services Engineering	247	250	0%
construction	Construction (exc. BSE)	217	216	0%
health	Health and Social Care	211	227	8%
<b>Total provision in subjects linked to Skills Priorities</b>		<b>2708</b>	<b>2997</b>	<b>11%</b>

The College will increase its size of provision broadly across these sectors by 11%, despite several factors working against this. The ongoing crisis in teacher recruitment has led to lack of capacity to expand in some areas where specialist tutors could not be replaced. With an ageing and increasingly retiring workforce and a tight labour market in these skills shortage sectors, it is increasingly difficult to attract new entrants to the FE sector. Initiatives to address these challenges are identified in North Kent College's key aims and objectives for meeting the local, regional, and national skills needs of the economy. These are set out in the table below:

Aims & Objectives	Target(s)	Intended Impact on Skills Priorities
<p><b>Aim 1:</b> Develop and experiment with models of co-delivery of programmes with employers at L3 and L4, and where realistic and relevant, use substantial work placements to improve employer engagement in programmes, and progression pathways for learners.</p> <p><b>Objective:</b> Expand T-Level provision and further develop L4 provision in skills gap areas for occupations with strong employer support.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Further development of the T- Level in Construction to deliver around 15 successful programme completers per year in Design, Surveying and Planning from August 2025 onwards.</li> <li>• Incorporate new Robotics and latest Industry 4.0 automated production and supply management tools at Gravesend campus, and integrate these into HNC, apprenticeships and BTEC delivery. Grow this provision back to pre-pandemic levels of around 90 learners per year. Re-establish T-Level provision in Engineering Design and Development post 26/27 if this becomes a nationally successful programme.</li> <li>• Further develop the college's level 4 provision in Computing, Engineering and in Land Based programmes. Continue the effort to introduce at least one new Higher Apprenticeship programme by Sep 2026.</li> <li>• Successfully introduce T-Level in Health and grow this provision to around 20 learners per year with support from both NHS and independent care sector employers. Introduce TOEQ's at L3 to supplement this, and provide substantial sector based work experience on the programmes in conjunction with employers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supports the LSIP priorities in Construction for increased supply of Skills in Building Information modelling (BIM), progression into Chartered Surveying and professional membership (RICS).</li> <li>• Supports skills shortages in advanced manufacturing for SME's and applies to the national priority sectors for LSIP priorities in Agri-Tech, Food &amp; Drink production and Defence.</li> <li>• Supports College strategic objective to grow apprenticeship provision and sustain HE programmes to complement the offer in universities. Contributes to national priority to increase attainment of L4/L5 qualifications for skills in shortage areas.</li> <li>• Supports national and LSIP priorities in Health and Care.</li> </ul>

Aims & Objectives	Target(s)	Intended Impact on Skills Priorities
<p><b>Aim 2:</b> Work in collaboration with KFE colleges to develop innovative use of technology and additional skills short courses in the LSIP Skills Priority areas.</p> <p><b>Objective:</b> Enable employers to access new technologies to train their own employees, and to better engage with the training of learners in colleges.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to offer skills training packages in: Industry 4.0 and Robotics, Assistive Healthcare Technology, Low Carbon Construction and Digital Skills. Promote through the KFE partnerships, the delivery of these programmes to our employer network, apprentices, and full-time learners such approx. 450 short courses per academic year continue to be completed post March 25.</li> <li>Further extend the use of our LSIF specialist resources, and the immersive classrooms, coupled with Augmented Reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR) technology, to allow more effective engagement from employers in the delivery of all areas of our curriculum at multiple campuses. Additional 8 employers engaged with curriculum and course delivery across Engineering, Construction, Health and Social care, and Creative Digital Design in 2025/26 academic year.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Contributes to LSIP priority in improving access to digital skills training for business productivity and growth.</li> <li>Supports more efficient and collaborative use of employers' technical skills to engage in delivery of FE programmes, helping to solve the crisis in the availability of technical training staff.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Aim 3:</b> Engage with projects of national importance to identify and address skills gaps.</p> <p><b>Objective:</b> NKC contributes to the development of Skills Hubs and its learners progress appropriately through relevant Bootcamps.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue work with National Highways (Lower Thames Crossing), and Ebbsfleet Development Corporation (Ebbsfleet Garden City) to develop skills partnerships and curriculum which reflects the arising skills needs – ensure that NKC curriculum offer reflects these and is included in the skills plans for each project, enabling progression from College into Skills Hubs.</li> <li>Engage in opportunities to become a Technical Excellence College around Construction and Manufacturing.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This supports these major development projects with a long-term talent pipeline, and wide engagement across all providers ensures that the Kent &amp; Medway region develops the capacity to deliver the skills required to complete them.</li> </ul>

Aims & Objectives	Target(s)	Intended Impact on Skills Priorities
<p><b>Aim 4:</b> Establish and promote strong sector advisory panels and skills consortiums to promote careers opportunities in skills shortage areas and develop resources and training capacity to deliver new curriculum content.</p> <p><b>Objective:</b> Increase employer participation in the design, resourcing, and delivery of programmes in the LSIP skills priority sectors. Use remote delivery across multiple campuses and Colleges wherever possible.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build upon the successful launch of the Assistive Healthcare Technology spaces, and engagements with Kent and Medway NHS Integrated Care Partnership skills academy, and with Kings College Hospital, Tonbridge and Maidstone, and Dartford and Gravesham NHS trusts, to develop resources in preparation to deliver the T-Level in Health and Care in Sep 25.</li> <li>• Use the colleges leadership position in the Construction and Built Environment education advisory committee, and its participation on the Construction Leadership Council, to engage at least 1 new <b>employer</b> in direct delivery of T-Level construction programmes from Sep 2025 (up from 2 in 2024).</li> <li>• Further expand the Kent &amp; Medway Industry 4.0 Council, led by NKC, with advanced Manufacturing and Food &amp; Drink and Digital Construction sectors, to ensure that in 2025 at least 10 employers support the themes of Early Careers Development, Collaborative Apprenticeship Planning, and Cross Provider Industry projects.</li> <li>• Further develop industry-practitioner led delivery in skills programmes to meet the needs of the Thames Estuary Creative Production Corridor utilising our £13M SELEP funded Performing and Production Digital Arts Facility at our Dartford campus, such that enrolments in these curriculum areas grow continue to grow by 5% by Sep 26.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This addresses the acute skills need in the H&amp;SC sector by promoting career opportunities and progression.</li> <li>• Increased participation by employers in delivery of these programmes is required if the identified skills shortages are to be addressed.</li> <li>• Increased participation by employers in delivery of these programmes is required if the identified skills shortages are to be addressed.</li> <li>• This supports Thames Estuary Growth Board roadmap in its plan for the creative production corridor.</li> </ul>

Aims & Objectives	Target(s)	Intended Impact on Skills Priorities
<p><b>Aim 5:</b> Establish a curriculum which prepares learners for the introduction of new low carbon technologies, digital tech in care, and AI/Automation in production.</p> <p><b>Objective:</b> Introduce new decarbonisation technology content in the curriculum across relevant sectors.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to Develop our curriculum enrichment offer around newly acquired teaching resources for Engineering, Decarbonisation in Construction, Horticulture (the concept orchard at Hadlow, Smart Factory simulation at Gravesend, the Green Energy Centre at Tonbridge, and Assistive Healthcare Technology at Dartford and Tonbridge), continuing to increase learner numbers across these curriculum areas by 5% year-on-year.</li> <li>Engage more employers with NKC's offer in Maritime Engineering apprenticeships (plan 2<sup>nd</sup> intake and 50% volume increase for April 2026). Ensure curriculum in LMA, Engineering, Building Services and Marime Apprenticeships and reflect developments in use of Hydrogen Fuels in Thames Corridor.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This addresses the cross-cutting theme of decarbonisation in LSIP priority sectors.</li> <li>Support increased employment opportunities around the Thames and ensures that Maritime decarbonisation initiatives in transport and logistics are reflected in curriculum specific enrichment and additional learning content.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Aim 6:</b> Deliver a broad programme of employability skills development which reflect employer and local needs.</p> <p><b>Objective:</b> Improve positive progression and learner destinations, contribute to a reduced NEET rate and widen inclusivity.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure that positive learner destinations for progression to next steps in education or to employment continue to be sustained at 90%+, and occupationally relevant destinations are at least 75% in the LSIP skills priority areas.</li> <li>Embed the revised Passport to Employability programme such that 90%+ of departing learners achieve a pass grade and 25% a Merit by July 2026.</li> <li>Continue to work with the 2 Pathways for All regions to evaluate existing provision and introduce at least one novel additional pathway for learners at risk of becoming NEET by Sep 26.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This addresses the cross-cutting theme of the need for improved transferable skills and behaviours for employment identified in the LSIP.</li> <li>Further strengthens the Colleges contribution to Meeting Local Needs</li> </ul>

## **5. Local Needs Duty**

**North Kent College is committed to ensuring it plays an active and significant part in meeting local needs for education and training opportunities within Kent.**

### **Our position within the FE Sector.**

NKC represents one-third of the nationally recognised general FE providers in Kent and works extensively with Mid-Kent College and East Kent College Group, and with the LSIP team, to constantly review the offer within Kent and share best practice. Through successful LSIF applications, the three FE Colleges have invested in technologies that enable each college to excel in areas of specialisation, but to also share expertise in the delivery of core skills amongst the three colleges. With provision in every Subject Sector Area, North Kent College has comprehensive engagement across all of the local priority sectors, and the vast majority of national priority sectors. Amongst GFE colleges, we are unique in having specific provision for the maritime industry and in refrigeration, air-conditioning and heat pump technology, which makes our contribution to the clean energy and low carbon construction sectors more significant than any other generalist provider in the region.

Because of the very early engagement with LSIP trailblazers which was underpinned by KFE's work with KCC on the Employment Task Force, the extent to which Kent Colleges engage with their LSIP is recognised as a national model of good practice by the Minister for Skills in a meeting of Kent MP's and the Colleges in February 2025.

Ofsted also recognise the significant contribution the College makes in sector specific skills development and our extensive engagement with an impressive network of employers.

Despite this comprehensive offer, the college will continue, where appropriate to develop niche specialisms to serve local and wider regional skills needs.

### **Local post 16 offer.**

Through KCC's established 'Pathways for All' initiative, NKC, together with the other colleges in Kent, have taken a leading role in supporting KCC in their endeavours to map and best plan post-



16 provision in the county by bringing colleges and schools together to share, discuss and review respective offers.

NKC's curriculum offer continues grow and evolve to meet local demographic demand, and we refrain from non-productive competition with high quality providers elsewhere if there is no overall benefit to the skills provision landscape. An example of this is the decision to cease the unsuccessful A-Level offer at the Tonbridge campus, and the growth in Level 1 vocationally focussed provision at that site.

Provision for the county's NEET population remains a significant challenge for FE colleges to address. We continue to work with The Education People and the regional Pathway's for all committees to introduce initiatives aimed at reducing NEET's by improving progression from school settings on to appropriate vocational courses. Pilots for early engagement with Year 10 students are currently underway in Gravesham and will be expanded to other regions if successful. We will continue to work through these forums with the dedicated independent providers of alternative provision to plan capacity, and to evaluate programmes on offer at other FE Colleges to determine their viability and potential for success in our local context.

The College continues to improve the quality of its offer, the rates of progression to employment for its learners, and where possible to maintain or grow the breadth of its provision from Entry level to Level 4 and above, and as a result, is serving local needs to the best of its ability.

### **SEND provision.**

Kent has a wide range of Special School provision serving under-19-year-olds, and with increasing provision for 19–24-year-olds more recently. NKC works very closely with partners in both the primary subsections of its catchment area in North and West Kent.

In North Kent the college has a long-standing partnership with Ifield School (with part of Ifield's provision being delivered on the NKC site at Gravesend) which recently expanded it's 19-24 delivery and resulted in almost complete decline in demand for NKC's 19+ SEND provision. This is another good example of how NKC supports and collaborates with high-quality local providers when competition would be counterproductive.

In West Kent, this position has been replicated with Oakley Special School forming the Oaks Specialist College, in Tonbridge, to focus on 19-24 education. Demand for NKC's post-19 SEND provision in the Western part of Kent has similarly declined as a result and the College is working to forge a strong collaborative alliance here also, while differentiating its offer to complement the provision.

Within this local context of growing specialist SEND provision, NKC focusses its offer on alternative vocational courses at an accessible entry level for these learners rather than on specialist SEND provision, offering "friendly" and productive competition with Ifield and the Oaks, while partnering to provide meaningful progression routes into employment for students from both post-18 institutions.

### **Adult offer**

Volumes of adults in England's FE colleges have been falling for many years , and with adult funding continuing to decline, additional complexities added to contract management through devolved regional budgets, learners' reluctance to take-one loans in favour of more attractive apprenticeships, and a tight labour market, there has been little incentive for many adults to go back to college and retrain.

Within Kent, NKC's overall adult volumes are modest. However, with an extensive Adult Education provision offered by KCC in every town centre and large numbers of specialist private training providers, NKC has sought to carve out a niche that provides an offer not easily replicated or seen elsewhere.

Therefore, the college will continue to focus on the large volume of adult training that is delivered via our Learning Shop based at Bluewater, offering a range of pre-employment training programmes to give adults who have been out of work for some time, a supported route back into employment. With over 50,000 adults passing through its doors since it first opened in 1999, the Learning Shop offers something nationally unique that has made a real impact for our local communities. With KCC taking the lead on provision of Bootcamps in Kent, and productive partnerships being forged with local enterprises to deliver these, the College's role will be to support progression into these routes and specialist upskilling where required.

**Dealing with educational policy and curriculum reforms**

The DfE after a pause and review, have delayed but continued much of the programme of curriculum reform, starting at Level 3 but moving on to include Levels 1 and 2 by 2028. Some programmes which suffered from the uncertainty in policy such as Legal Secretarial which did not initially survive the process have been reincarnated in the form of apprenticeships, and alternative L3 pathways now exist which give some optimism that the historically exceptional opportunities progression rated into great career opportunities in London Law Firms can continue. While there is cause for greater optimism in many sectors that appropriate Level 3 pathways can exist, there remains significant uncertainty in reforms at Level 2 and below. The increasing shift towards generic programmes at Level one and below (rather than vocationally specific) is likely to further impact the viability of our differentiated offer for those accessing programmes with low educational attainment, and in-turn damage the prospects of meaningful progression for these learners, despite this being a local priority.

NKC will continue to focus its efforts on serving the needs of local employers and offering as many high-quality vocational progression pathways as this reform allows, taking advantage of valuable new opportunities for learners afforded by a minority of T-Level and the proposed new Level 2 occupational entry qualifications, while continuing to lobby with the help of our stakeholders for the preservation of opportunities for learners which are threatened by this reform.

**Capacity restraints**

There remain a small minority of courses that have historically been part of an FE offer, which continue to experience high demand, that are exceptionally difficult to offer due to the inability to source appropriately qualified delivery staff. Such constraints are not unique to NKC and are shared by our neighbouring Colleges. Electrical Installation is a primary example, where full-time learner volumes are capped due to staff shortages, and all of Kent's FE colleges are struggling to overcome significant challenges in running Electrical apprenticeships.

In these areas, the College has continued to engage with private training providers and employers, to ensure that alternative pathways exist for learners to become qualified in these skills-shortage subjects. We continue to work with partner institutions and employers to develop

innovative approaches to overcome teacher shortages in STEM subjects, and this is a key aim of our work on the Kent & Medway Industry 4.0 council, which was recently re-launched and expanded to include employers in Building Design and Construction with overlapping skills needs.

### **Governance Review**

The Local Needs Duty is set out Further and Higher Education Act 1992, as amended by the Skills and Post 16 Education Act 2022. In Section 52B, it sets out the Governing bodies statutory duty to review (every three years as a minimum) how the College is meeting local needs, and to consider what actions may be taken to better meet those needs. Below is a summary of the review undertaken by the Governing Body:

Governors undertook the review in March 2025, by considering Stakeholder feedback, including from the February 2024 Ofsted Inspection and from the Local Skills Improvement Plan including their documented progress report published in June 2024, and from the Colleges internal skills self-assessment.

Governors concluded that the Colleges contribution to meeting the skills needs for employers in priority sectors remains strong, and continues to develop well through extensive engagement with relevant stakeholders.

Governors recognised that a minority of stakeholders wanted to see more generic employability and low-level generic courses in the region to tackle the rising NEET population. They acknowledged the contribution of North Kent College as the county's largest provider of Level 1 vocational courses, and its success in securing the future of important provision in the region and considered that the College was doing what was reasonable to address these needs. Governors recommended that a target is included within this accountability statement within Aim 6, to continue to work with the 2 Pathways for All regions, to identify successful programmes that could provide additional pathways for learners at risk of becoming NEET, and establish through KCC the tangible demand for such programmes.

## **6. Corporation statement**

On behalf of the Corporation Board of North Kent 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 corporation at their meeting on 22nd of May 2025. This document fulfils the statutory Local Needs Duty.

**Mr David Martin**

Chair of Governors

**Mr David Gleed**

Principal/Chief Executive and Accounting Officer

Dated: 22 May 2025

This accountability statement is published on North Kent College's website at the URL below:

[North Kent College Annual Accountability Statement](#)

## **7. Supporting documentation**

KICC published the Local Skills Improvement Plan for Kent and Medway in August 23:

[Local Skills Improvement Plan - August 2023 - Local Skills Improvement Plan \(kentemployersskillsplan.org\)](https://kentemployersskillsplan.org/)

Other useful reference documents include:

The Kent and Medway Workforce Skills Evidence Base

[Workforce Skills Evidence Base 2021 - Local Skills Improvement Plan \(kentemployersskillsplan.org\)](https://kentemployersskillsplan.org/)

The Greater North Kent Workforce Skills Evidence Base

[SMRC-Report-GNKP-Workforce-Skills-Evidence-Base-FINAL-website.pdf \(greaternorthkent.gov.uk\)](https://greaternorthkent.gov.uk/SMRC-Report-GNKP-Workforce-Skills-Evidence-Base-FINAL-website.pdf)

Summary data for the Kent County Council context:

[Summary of facts and figures - Kent County Council](#)

Further information regarding deprivation in Kent:

[The Index of Multiple deprivation \(IMD2019\): Headline findings for Kent](#)

North Kent College's most recent Ofsted full inspection report refers to the contribution the College makes to local skills provision, and can be found at:

[OFSTED report 50245269 \(ofsted.gov.uk\)](https://ofsted.gov.uk/reports/report/50245269)