SHORT REPORT

REPORT CATEGORY	**Reserved**	**APPENDICES**
COMMITTEE	Corporation Board	- **Annual Accountability Agreement 2025-26**
AUTHOR	Deputy Principal / Deputy CEO	- **Meeting Skills Needs Guidance on Accountability Agreements 2025-26 and the Local Skills Needs Duty**
DATE	**19th June 2025**	

REPORT TITLE – ANNUAL ACCOUNTABILITY AGREEMENT 2025-26

1. Recommendations

1.1. The Board of Governors is asked to:

- ***Note*** the Annual Accountability Agreement has been prepared in-line with the Department for Education's (DfE) Meeting Skills Needs Guidance on Accountability Agreements 2025 to 2026 and the Local Skills Needs Duty (published January 2025).
- ***Approve*** the College's Annual Accountability Agreement for 2025-26.

2. Purpose

2.1. The purpose of this report is to provide the Board with some background on the statutory requirement for all colleges and designated institutions to produce an annual Accountability Agreement for submission to the Department for Education (DfE) by 30 June 2025.

3. Background and Key Points

3.1. The DfE has reviewed and updated their guidance on annual Accountability Agreements and the Local Needs Duty for the 2025-26 academic year. As such, the statutory duty to review how well an institution's education and training meets local need should now be contained within their annual Accountability Agreement. This removes the need for providers to publish two separate documents, enabling them to fulfil both requirements of the annual Accountability Agreement and Local Needs Duty in one single return. This agreement also forms part of the contractual relationship the College has with the DfE in return for funding in the 2025-26 academic year. This is made up of two parts:

- **Part one is the accountability framework.** This sets out national skills priorities and the essential terms and conditions that providers need to meet in return for funds. It will also be used by the DfE to assure the use of public funds by an institution and for the protection of learners. This will be issued to the College for signing in July 2025.

- **Part two, is the annual accountability statement.** This is owned by the College and can be used in a range of discussions with external partners such as Combined Authorities and national bodies, such as Ofsted. The agreement should set out a small number of strategic objectives for areas within the curriculum that are planned for delivery in the coming year. It should also link to the findings of relevant local skills improvement plans (LSIPs).

3.2. The DfE has provided guidance on how the Accountability Agreement should be set out, which we have followed, and this guidance can be found within the appendices. The agreement we have produced is a positive document, outlining how our curriculum offer aligns with national, regional, and local skills priorities. It also captures our main strategic objectives for areas within the curriculum for 2025-26, forming part of our overall strategic plan moving forward.

3.3. The delivery of the Accountability Agreement will be monitored alongside our other strategic priorities and objectives throughout 2025-26 by the Governing Body and the DfE.

4. Contribution to the Strategic Plan, Priorities, Aims and KPIs

4.1. The Annual Accountability Agreement for 2025-26 is deeply embedded within the College's mission, vision, and strategic priorities, reinforcing our dedication to shaping the future and transforming lives through the delivery of high-quality education and training. By aligning curriculum plans with national and regional skills priorities, the agreement ensures that learners receive relevant, future-focused education that enhances employability and contributes to the economy. The inclusion of strategic objectives within the agreement enables the College to continuously innovate, foster inclusivity, and maintain excellence in teaching and learning, ultimately advancing its long-term educational goals.

4.2. Furthermore, the agreement supports the College's commitment to leadership, governance, curriculum quality, and engagement. The structured framework integrates the Local Skills Needs Duty, fostering collaboration with external stakeholders such as Combined Authorities and national regulatory bodies to address regional workforce demands. By embedding a culture of continuous improvement and responsiveness to local skills improvement plans, the College is strengthening its reputation as a trusted provider that actively contributes to the region's growth, economic prosperity, and learners' success.

5. Summary of Principle Risks

5.1. The commentary below provides a summary of risk against the relevant principal risk categories and risk appetite statements:

- **Leadership and Governance (Low Tolerance)**
  Any misalignment with national, regional, and local priorities could lead to scrutiny from a range of stakeholders, and the College's reputation with learners, employers, and funding bodies could be affected.

- **Legal, Regulatory and Compliance (Zero Tolerance)**
  Failure to submit the Accountability Agreement by 30 June 2025 could result in non-compliance with statutory duties and the potential for loss of funding. Misrepresentation or gaps within the agreement could lead to regulatory challenges from the DfE.

- **Partnership and Collaboration (Moderate Tolerance)**
  The accountability statement is used for discussions with external partners - misalignment with Combined Authorities or national bodies could negatively impact on relationships.

Derwentside College

Annual Accountability Agreement

2025-26













Our Mission

To provide high quality education and training that shapes the future and transforms lives

Our Vision

To be an outstanding college that is highly valued by our learners and partners

Our Values

Trust | Respect | Excellence | Enjoyment | Enterprise

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1 Purpose

Introduction

Derwentside College has developed an excellent reputation for offering a broad and responsive curriculum that enables our learners to develop the knowledge and skills that are highly sought across the region. The College's current strategic plan identifies three overarching priorities covering Leadership & Governance, Curriculum & Quality, and Engagement, with these priorities underpinning everything we do to provide the best possible outcomes for learners.

The College recognises the significant skills challenges faced in sectors such as health, advanced manufacturing and digital; including those identified within the Local Skills Improvement Plans. As such, we are extremely proactive in designing a curriculum that meets both local and regional need, as well as national areas of priority. This is clearly evidenced through the latest published data in the FE Provider Dashboard which confirms Derwentside College's provision is 18% higher than the national comparison in meeting the identified areas of national priority.

Durham Learning Alliance

To further support meeting skills priorities, the four Durham FE Colleges, through the establishment of the Durham Learning Alliance, have engaged in reviewing their curriculum to ensure full coverage of the region's priorities and to identify any skills and qualification gaps. The colleges' provision has been mapped against the LSIP priorities, the North East Local Growth Plan and the County Durham Economic Strategy with the aim of providing an overview of LMI statistics, future requirements, and provision gaps.

Strategic Priorities

Leadership & Governance

Curriculum & Quality

Engagement

Link to Strategic Plan

A new strategic plan is currently under development, with the plan due to launch in 2026 in line with the termination of the existing plan. Many of the College's current key strategic priorities also form part of our Annual Accountability Agreement and Quality Improvement Plan. These strategic priorities and resulting objectives are monitored and regularly reviewed by the Corporation Board, and the College's Quality and Standards Committee, to ensure successful implementation of the College's goals.

Our Provision

Apprenticeships

The College's apprenticeship curriculum is highly relevant to both regional and national skills priorities. We deliver across 34 apprenticeship Standards to over 2,000 apprentices, mainly across the North East and Tees Valley but also in the Yorkshire and the Humber region, with the College delivering all 10 of the most popular standards delivered across the North East region. The College's apprenticeship provision covers 5 vocational areas, from Level 2 to Level 5, with the largest area of provision residing in the sector subject area of Health, Public Services and Care.

Adult Learning Programmes

The College delivers a range of skilfully designed programmes in areas of regional or national priority which have had a profound impact across the region in terms of learners progressing into jobs and further learning. Almost uniquely for a Further Education College, most of our provision is employer-led delivered through a range of sector based work academies and via an outstanding partnership with Jobcentre Plus across districts. This partnership enables the College to continually align its programmes to meet job vacancy trends and the needs of employers.

Education Programmes for Young People

Provision across our Education Programmes for Young People continues to grow year-on-year and is highly valued within the local community. This provision covers 8 different curriculum areas, with 400 learners on roll, and with a small number of adult learners in-filling. In 2024-25, the College rolled out T Level provision across 5 different routes, building on from one routeway in the year prior. The College also delivers the King's Trust programme, through a long-standing collaboration, with the learners engaged significantly valuing from the nurturing environment to restart their life chances.







2
Context and Place

Geography and the Communities We Serve

Derwentside College operates from a single campus in the semi-rural location of Consett, County Durham, and is not typical of a traditional further education college. Whilst relatively small in comparison with other FE colleges, with a turnover of around £11 million and a workforce of 170, the College has developed a distinctive specialism in apprenticeships, which represents 50% of its provision.

The communities and employers we serve across our apprenticeship and adult learning provision are vast; with most of our provision in the North East, but also Tees Valley and the Yorkshire and the Humber region as demonstrated by our learner numbers. Additionally, due to the unique nature of our adult learning programmes which are almost entirely employer-led, this provision is geographically spread at a range of venues throughout the region. In terms of regional devolution, the College has held an adult skills contract with the Tees Valley Mayoral Combined Authority since its inception in 2019, and we commenced delivery across the newly devolved North East Combined Authority region from 2024.

Our provision across Education Programmes for Young People is relatively small compared to other colleges in the North East. Whilst the population of County Durham has increased, albeit at a lesser rate when compared to the North East region, 16-18 demographics have remained broadly static. Geographically, we recruit learners from the two main towns of Consett and Stanley, with local authority data confirming that we continue to increase our market share of 16-year-olds which ties in with our extensive work with local schools. Both the towns of Consett and Stanley have significant levels of deprivation and multi-generational unemployment, with many of our young learners often having little experience outside of the local area. As a result, the College plays a significant role in broadening their horizons and developing their aspirations.







Demographics

County Durham has a population of 532,000, whilst Consett and the immediate surrounding area has a population of around 40,000, and Stanley a population of around 35,000. All evidence suggests County Durham is aging, with an increase between 2011 and 2023 of 24.2% in those aged 65+ (115,000 people) and an increase of 25.1% of those aged 85 and over (13,700 people) compared to 21.2% across England. Whilst the number of children aged 0-15 has remained relatively static at around 88,000 over the same period.

County Durham is ranked as the 48th most deprived local authority area from 151 nationally, with County Durham ranked 58th for Educational Performance.

Learner Numbers by Region

	Apprentice	Adult	Aged 16 to 18	All Learners
North East	1509	903	404	2816
Tees Valley	201	144		345
Yorkshire and the Humber	267	15		282
Other Regions	93	10		103
All Regions	2070	1072	404	3546



3
Approach to developing the Accountability Statement

In developing our Annual Accountability Statement, we have taken a detailed account of the national priorities as identified by the Department of Education, the College's own Duty to Review, alongside our ongoing review of curriculum, with the outcomes helping to identify our key priorities and shape our future provision. We have also paid significant consideration to the North East Local Growth Plan and the Employment and Skills Strategy as well as the priorities identified within the Local Skills Improvement Plans. Additionally, we have worked closely with a wide range of strategic stakeholders and employer partners to develop our plan and ensure our curriculum is fully aligned to local and regional priorities with clear progression pathways.

Derwentside College has played a very active role in engaging with the region's ERB (Employer Representative Body) and in the development of the NELSIP at all levels across the organisation, from the research stage to implementation. Additionally, the findings from the final report have featured prominently throughout the College's curriculum planning process as we work towards responding to the challenges identified within the regional LSIP.

NELSIP Priority Sectors:

- Digital
- Advanced Manufacturing
- Construction
- Health and Health Science
- Transport & Logistics







Stakeholder Engagement

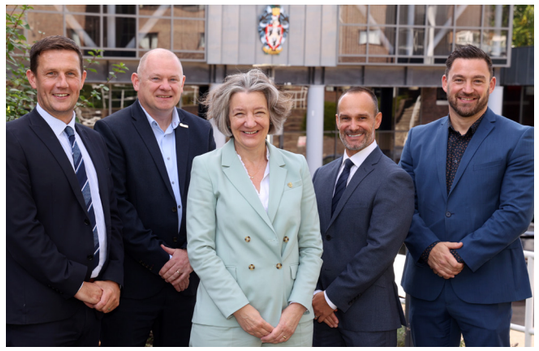
The College has a broad range of stakeholders and has established a culture where stakeholders are central to the implementation of its work, in continually improving the relevance of our offer to both learners and employers. We actively engage with a broad range of stakeholders ranging from NHS Trusts, Jobcentre partnerships, to SMEs to provide learners with the best possible experiences and opportunities for their future. Our work also supports the development of longer-term engagement to gather high-quality intelligence which supports the achievement of our priorities.

Strategic Stakeholders and Consultation

We have consulted widely to meet skills needs and achieve our priorities by using a multifaceted approach to engagement in our work with strategic stakeholders. This represents an extremely important aspect of our work in driving forward the College's mission and ensuring we remain responsive to the needs of our stakeholders and to the broader community. We work closely with the North East Combined Authority to align our educational programmes with regional economic goals, ensuring the College actively contributes to this agenda. Whilst we participate in national discussions through the Association of Colleges advocating for the needs of further education within our region. Our partnership with the Durham Learning Alliance enables us to collaborate with the other Durham colleges and Durham University to expand educational opportunities across the region. Additionally, engagement with the new 'North East Colleges Group' will ensure a unified approach to addressing regional skills challenges and opportunities moving forward.

Curriculum Collaboration

Recently, we have engaged, alongside the three other County Durham Colleges, in a curriculum mapping exercise aimed at reviewing how we address priority skills coverage across the county, with the aim of identifying potential gaps and shaping our future curriculum. Initially, we have focused our analysis on six priority sector subject areas with the maps identifying progression pathways across levels, as well as our provision across Education and Training, Apprenticeships, and Higher Education. Additionally, we have produced a Skills Insight report to identify the top skills sought by industry across the County.





College Stakeholders

The College groups its main stakeholders under the five categories of Learners, Employers, Communities, Strategic Stakeholders, and Key Stakeholders.

Learners	• Current Learners • Prospective Learners • Alumni
Employers	• SMEs • Large Levy Paying Employers • Public Bodies • Sector Skills Bodies
Communities	• Community Groups • Durham Constabulary • Derwent Valley Area Action Partnership • Councillors
Strategic Stakeholders	• North East Combined Authority • Department for Education • Association of Colleges • Durham Learning Alliance • North East Colleges • Corporation Board • Further Education Commissioner's Office • Local Politicians - Liz Twist MP
Key Stakeholders	• Parents, Carers, and Social Workers • Schools and Academies • Tees Valley Combined Authority • North East Chamber of Commerce • Job Centre Plus • North East Automotive Alliance • Delta North • Universities • External Awarding Bodies • Durham County Council • Alternative Provision Providers



4
Contribution to National, Regional and Local Priorities



National Skills Priorities

The College makes a major contribution to many of the national skills priority sectors agreed across Government, as areas with high volumes of vacancies that are expected to increase, by continuing to grow its provision across key sectors of strategic importance. The College also understands its role as a local and regional anchor institution in supporting the development of skills and raising aspirations and is making a significant contribution to the six priorities identified in the North East's newly developed Employment and Skills Strategy.

National Priority Sectors:

- Construction
- Advanced Manufacturing
- Health
- Digital and Technologies
- Professional and Business Services
- Creative Industries
- Defence
- Financial Services
- Life Sciences
- Clean Energy Industries

The College's contribution to national, regional, and local priorities is detailed across the following pages in terms of our current provision and plans for future growth.



Construction

The opportunities in the Construction sector are vast and will become even more so following the Government's investment of more than £600 million over the next four years to help train and inspire the next generation of builders. As such it is critical that young talent is attracted into the industry to support the nation's economic growth.

The College is extremely proud to be working with some major industry players across our region. A key focus within our curriculum is on 'Bridging the gap in Green Skills' and hence we have introduced modules across the whole curriculum in Environmental Sustainability, Green Jobs, and Understanding Decarbonisation. Additionally, following our most recent Industry Employer Forum in early 2025 we have agreed a further adaptation of our construction curriculum to include, Business Improvement Modelling, and understanding Solar Thermal Technology to meet emerging trends in modern construction.

Apprenticeships

In the area of apprenticeships, we continue to offer 7 Standards across a range of trades up to Level 3, with the College's overall achievement rate for Construction 15.6% above the national rate in 2023-24. We also continue to work extensively with local authorities across the region from North to South to deliver the Highways Maintenance Skilled Operative and Groundworker Standards due to continuous growing demand. Additionally, we remain the only provider across our region to deliver the Floorlayer Standard.

Education Programmes for Young People

The College's full-time Construction curriculum matches local priorities extremely well. At a local level, a significant development of new homes has commenced within one mile of the College's locality. Construction also remains as one of the top employment sectors within County Durham and the demand from young people remains extremely high which has led us to widen our curriculum offer further. Additionally, 40 pupils from Consett Academy are currently studying a technical qualification in Construction as part of their Key Stage 4 Curriculum.





Advanced Manufacturing

Our delivery of an Advanced Manufacturing curriculum aligns extremely well in meeting the requirements of the local area, as well as the regional skills priorities outlined within the LSIP, and the national priorities identified by Government. Advanced Manufacturing and Precision Engineering is a key employment sector across County Durham employing around 80,000 people, and the College's Manufacturing curriculum is vitally important in servicing the acute shortage of Level 3 Technicians required across our region.

The College's workshops have been further enhanced to create a state-of-the-art training environment following our T Level Capital Build. Our facilities are large and well-resourced and cover a variety of specialisms that replicate as close as possible the industries we support. Through significant collaboration in the development of the LSIP, the College was able to purchase 7 bespoke Programmable Logic Control Rigs (PLCs) which has enabled us to further advance our curriculum and teach highly automated processes. Additionally, all theoretical training is supported by a range of industry leading software to enable our learners to understand more complex systems such as electrical circuits and hydraulic systems.

Apprenticeships

From 2025-26, the College will deliver across 10 Standards in a broad range of manufacturing and engineering disciplines through an offer which is market-led and clearly linked to local and regional priorities. Most of our offer is at Level 3, with many of our employers having a long-standing tradition of investing in apprenticeship provision. Following our introduction of a dedicated Machining Technician Standard to support local manufacturing organisations in filling skills gaps; we are now set to introduce a Level 4 Engineering Manufacturing Technician Standard from 2025-26 to further support employer demand.

Education Programmes for Young People

The College's full-time curriculum is offered from Level 1 to Level 3 and provides learners with a range of industry recognised qualifications and essential skills, including health & safety and hand skills through to a wide range of theoretical processes. This provision significantly supports our learners to offer employers a highly relevant skill set and enter a wide range of hard to fill vacancies in County Durham and further afield, such as production operative roles as well as leading to progression to line leaders and supervisors.



Health

The College is a major provider of Health and Social Care provision working with a range of leading employers across the region and beyond, including numerous NHS Trusts and many residential care establishments. As a result of the national prominence directed towards the sector in recent years, the College is continuing to prioritise its delivery in providing the vital skills required for the sector's current and future workforce. As the only Further Education College in the region to deliver a full suite of apprenticeship Standards including clinical provision, we are both supporting the significant demand for qualified healthcare professionals across the North East; as well as supporting one of the Government's key missions in building an NHS fit for the future.

Apprenticeships

In the area of apprenticeships, the College delivers training across 6 different Standards up to Level 5, with all Standards delivered having achievement rates above the national average. The demand for clinical apprenticeships continues to grow across the region's trusts and we are delighted to be attracting vastly experienced sector professionals to teach on our provision and pass on their knowledge and skills. Further, current vacancies in Health and Social Care are significantly high across the County when compared to other roles and the College is extremely well placed to support this important area of recruitment via its apprenticeship training.

Education Programmes for Young People

The College's full-time Health and Social Care curriculum continues to grow in-line with Health and Social Care featuring as one of the top employment sectors within County Durham and the North East region. There are also significant job vacancies available locally with the College having a fundamental role to play in providing young people with the knowledge and skills to progress in the workplace and to higher education. Additionally, from September 2024, we successfully rolled out the T Level in Health rapidly securing high-profile opportunities for the placement element of the programme as a result of our extremely strong employer links.



Digital and Technologies

The opportunities for digital technical experts are vast; but there is also a significant need nationally to provide the essential digital skills required by all learners at the right level. This is also mirrored across our region with digital and technology skills becoming increasingly sought-after by a wide range of employers, and with the regional LSIP identifying essential and advanced digital skills as critical priorities for the region. As part of the recent curriculum mapping collaboration between the four Durham Colleges, current Digital skills in demand have been highlighted as data analytics, software development, cybersecurity, and IT infrastructure, with local education pathways currently limited. As a result, the colleges intend to collaborate to review and strengthen IT-based learning and digital skills programmes, aligning local curricula with employer demand.

Education Programmes for Young People

The College's full-time Digital provision offers learners a range of programmes at Level 2 and 3 to prepare them to meet the many advancements in technologies as well as the crucial reliance on computer-based systems for every aspect of life and work. Additionally, Digital skills are embedded across all full-time programmes, and we also integrate our lowest ability Foundation learners into this curriculum to develop their skills using ICT. In September 2024, we successfully rolled out the T Level in Digital Production and Design to ensure our learners progress to employment, to apprenticeships, and to higher education to support the regional digital skills deficits identified.

Professional and Business Services

In line with the Government's strategic focus on Professional and Business Services as a sector of national priority, the College continues to deliver a robust and responsive apprenticeship offer that directly supports workforce development and economic growth. Our provision spans a wide range of occupational areas including business administration, customer service, HR support, team leading, and operations management - each designed to meet the evolving needs of employers and the wider economy. Our programmes have also been developed in consultation with both regional and national employers to ensure they are current, relevant, and aligned with national occupational standards.

Apprenticeships

We deliver 6 Standards across our Professional and Business Services provision, with an overall achievement rate of 76.6% in 2023-24, 15.5% above the national average and with achievement expected to be over 80% in 2024-25. Additionally, some individual Standards also achieved more than 20% and 30% above the national average, with many learners achieving high grades. Employer satisfaction remains extremely high, with these outcomes reflecting our commitment to quality, employer engagement, and learner success. By embedding these principles into our apprenticeship strategy, the College is actively contributing to the development of a skilled, adaptable, and future-ready workforce supporting both regional productivity and the Government's broader skills agenda.



Contribution to Regional Priorities

How we are contributing to the emerging North East Employment and Skills Strategy Priorities



		Derwentside College's Contribution
Priority 1	**Build a bigger, better skilled, and more diverse workforce**	**Inclusive and flexible learning programmes** are delivered in areas defined as regional or national skills priorities and have a profound impact on adult learners and young people progressing into jobs and further learning. **High quality vocational and technical education programmes** have been selected to inspire ambition and confidence and provide learners with current industry knowledge that aligns with the latest standards. **Access to high quality apprenticeship programmes** enables learners to progress within their careers providing them with a strong foundation for their future.
Priority 2	**Creating career pathways that enable employers to recruit and retain skilled staff**	**Co-designed curriculum** with a significant focus placed on working with employers to create and design programmes that are specific to skills in high demand, ensuring learners gain industry-relevant skills and qualifications. **Employability skills and career progression planning** is effectively integrated into programmes to build resilience and prepare learners for employment and further study. **Partnerships with Jobcentre Plus and local employers** align training with real job opportunities to ensure programmes are highly relevant taking account of the latest job vacancy trends. **Labour Market Intelligence,** employer voice, and local and regional priorities informs curriculum planning ensuring the College can respond quickly to emerging skills gaps.
Priority 3	**Targeted support to improve employment rates for all residents**	**Personalised targeted support** is provided to disadvantaged learners and those at-risk of disengaging to raise aspirations and reduce NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) rates. **Inclusive learning environments** across the College's provision ensures that learners with health conditions or disabilities are supported through tailored learning plans, accessible facilities, and assistive technologies. **Strong Partnerships with the NHS and health providers enables** the College to effectively integrate wellbeing into education and employment pathways, supporting learners to adopt healthier lives.
Priority 4	**Tackling barriers that prevent residents getting into and getting on at work**	**Comprehensive Wraparound Services** are provided to remove barriers to participation and support learner progression including services such as financial advice, to support in the classroom, to mental health support. **Flexible learning options** support learners with caring responsibilities or transport barriers to access education; whilst the College has expanded its online training offer through the implementation of a new learning platform. **Participation in regional partnerships** is an important aspect of the College's work, with the College actively involved in several regional collaborations, including with local authorities to improve access to childcare, transport, and digital infrastructure.

Contributing to the Government's Five Missions

The new Government has committed to being mission led; and at the heart of this approach are five key missions to inform policy making and funding decisions.

Derwentside College has a key role to play in all five missions



Derwentside College's Contribution

1 **Kickstart economic growth to secure the highest sustained growth in the G7 – with good jobs and productivity growth in every part of the country making everyone, not just a few, better off.**

This mission prioritises driving economic growth that is both robust and equitable, focusing on innovation, productivity, and inclusive opportunities. Derwentside College contributes to this goal through its provision of high-quality vocational and technical education. Our Accountability Agreement demonstrates our alignment and prioritisation of the skills needed in our economy, with the College playing a pivotal role in enhancing regional productivity and supporting the wider economic growth agenda.

2 **Make Britain a clean energy superpower to cut bills, create jobs and deliver security with cheaper, zerocarbon electricity by 2030, accelerating to net zero.**

Investing in green technologies, modernising infrastructure, and building a low-carbon economy is vital. Derwentside College contributes to this agenda through its significant construction provision, which incorporates sustainability and net zero objectives. By embedding green skills into our construction provision and fostering innovation in areas such as energy efficiency, the College equips learners for emerging sector demands. As a local employer, the College also leads by example in embedding sustainable practices within its operations.

Derwentside College's Contribution

3 **Take back our streets by halving serious violent crime and raising confidence in the police and criminal justice system to its highest levels.**

Labour's vision for safer communities encompasses preventative measures, investment in youth services, and opportunities for meaningful engagement. Derwentside College's commitment to holistic education and wellbeing provision fosters a culture of respect, belonging, and personal development. By offering robust pastoral support and programmes that promote community engagement, the College contributes by helping to build confident, positive citizens who play active roles in their communities.

4 **Break down barriers to opportunity by reforming our childcare and education systems, to make sure there is no class ceiling on the ambitions of young people in Britain.**

This mission underpins Labour's wider agenda of social mobility and levelling up by addressing inequalities in education and employment. Derwentside College's ethos is closely aligned with this goal through its inclusive and supportive approach, targeting local NEET young people and providing clear pathways to employment or further study. Through comprehensive support services, enrichment opportunities, and a culture that inspires ambition, Derwentside College encourages its learners to raise their aspirations and realise their full potential.

5 **Build an NHS fit for the future that is there when people need it, with fewer lives lost to the biggest killers, in a fairer Britain, where everyone lives well for longer.**

Labour's mission to revitalise the NHS focuses on expanding capacity and investing in workforce development. Derwentside College contributes to this priority through its significant apprenticeship provision in the health and care sector, ensuring that learners gain real-world experience and the practical skills needed to support the evolving needs of the NHS. The College's extensive network and strong relationships with NHS employers enables it to deliver programmes that are responsive to workforce demands and directly align to priorities.

Strategic Objectives

Strategic Priority	Strategic Objective	Contribution to meeting national, regional, and local priorities	Targets/Impact Measurement
Curriculum & Quality	• Stimulate demand for Level 3 technical provision in priority sectors across engineering, digital, health, and childcare collaborating with employers to provide high quality experiences. • Collaborate with local schools to raise awareness and increase participation in Level 3 technical provision in priority sectors in 2026-27.	All Level 3 technical provision will be delivered in areas that are recognised as national, regional, and local priorities providing positive futures for young people and supporting future economic growth.	Increased numbers of learners on Level 3 provision in 2025-26.
Curriculum & Quality	Deliver growth in Education Programmes for Young People, reducing the number of NEETs in the local area and capitalising on our excellent relationships with stakeholders to ensure we recruit the right learners to the right programmes.	Growth in 16 to 18 learner numbers will support the flow of qualified young people into priority sectors of employment across the North East.	Increase the recruitment achieved in 2024-25 across our Education Programmes for Young People. This will significantly exceed the 2025-26 allocation positioning the College strongly for future years.
Curriculum & Quality	Deliver continued growth in Apprenticeship provision, focusing the curriculum offer on high quality, high impact provision, aligned to national, regional, and local priorities, whilst exploring the potential of offering new Foundation Apprenticeships in Health and Construction.	Our apprenticeship offer is fully aligned with employer need and national, regional, and local skills priorities enabling us to support employers effectively in meeting their skills deficits.	Delivery of high quality apprenticeship provision which exceeds the College's budgeted income target.

Strategic Objectives

Strategic Priority	Strategic Objective	Contribution to meeting national, regional, and local priorities	Targets/Impact Measurement
Curriculum & Quality	Deliver to our devolved contract allocations for the North East and Tees Valley ensuring any potential growth opportunities are capitalised on in-year in line with performance.	Our adult learning curriculum is market leading and purposeful aligned to labour market demand and clearly linked to regional and local priorities.	Delivery of high quality adult learning programmes in collaboration with employers to meet contract allocations.
Curriculum & Quality	Increase achievement rates across all provision types.	Increasing achievement outcomes in skilled priority areas will ensure more learners progress to higher levels of learning and enter the jobs market in high priority sectors across the region.	**Apprenticeship** provision exceeds 5% above the national average rate. **16-18 classroom** provision meets 90% overall achievement. **19+ classroom** provision meets 88% overall achievement.
Curriculum & Quality	Further explore the potential to offer Higher Education provision from September 2026 onwards.	Delivery of Higher Education provision will support the employment and skills sector to deliver against higher level skills deficits supporting the nation's economic growth.	Proposals to be presented to the Executive Team and Corporation Board in December 2025.
Engagement	Further cement our partnership with the Durham Learning Alliance to address any potential provision gaps; whilst working in collaboration to address the over-supply of young people across provision, contributing to reducing NEET numbers across the County. Continue to play an active Role in the formation of the 'North East Colleges Group'.	Stronger collaboration across the colleges will support across a range of areas including the College's ongoing Duty to Review as well as contributing to the region's wider skills priorities.	Stakeholder engagement and the impact of activity will be presented to the Corporation Board annually.

5
Local Needs Duty

Section 52B of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 and as later amended by the Skills and Post-16 Education Act 2022 outlines the statutory requirement of the Governing Body to regularly review how well their education and training provision meets local needs, with Governors considering what actions may be taken to better serve local needs. The Local Needs Duty is now integrated into the Annual Accountability Agreement, streamlining reporting and aligning this with national and regional skills priorities.

Summary of Provision in 2025-26

We intend to continue growing our apprenticeship provision across all areas currently delivered, with only minimal adjustments to the existing offer. This follows a significant overhaul of our apprenticeship provision in recent years, from which we now consider our apprenticeship offer to remain fully fit for purpose as well as being highly relevant to the skills priorities identified in the North East Local Skills Improvement Plan. We do, however, intend to introduce two new Standards to meet emerging employer demand; a Level 4 Engineering Manufacturing Technician Standard; as well as the introduction of the newly approved Assistant Administrator Standard at Level 2. We will also explore the potential for offering the new Foundation Apprenticeships.

In the area of Adult Programmes, we intend to meet our Devolved contract allocations in full for both the North East and Tees Valley. Changes have been made to curriculum design to support the adult skills priorities identified through a number of national and regional sources, including Skills England, themes emerging from the Local Skills Improvement Plans for the North East and Tees Valley, as well as the North East Employment and Skills Strategy. As such our Curriculum Plan will centre around four aspects of provision; Sector Based Work Academies, Employer Upskilling, Classroom and Community Learning, and Online Flexible Learning.

Our Provision across Education Programmes for Young People continues to grow year-on-year, and we are planning for significant unfunded growth in 2025-26 as a result of the lagged funding methodology. Our anticipated growth centres around the first year of rolling-out both year 1 and year 2 T Level provision across 5 different routeways. We are also at an advanced stage of planning in taking over the Further Education provision through a long-standing partnership where we anticipate growth in delivering the King's Trust programme. This will further support disadvantaged learners and reduce NEET rates providing positive futures for young people.



Currently, the College does not deliver higher education provision, other than a full-cost HNC in Engineering, and this is an area of potential opportunity given the significant experience of board members, and our expertise in apprenticeship delivery at Level 5. Initial meetings have been held with a North East college to explore opportunities around partnering on the validated Degrees they deliver in the areas of Engineering, Health, Computing, and Business from September 2026. This will be further explored as part of the curriculum planning cycle in the early part of 2025-26.



Review of Local Needs

The Governing Body regularly reviews how well Derwentside College is meeting local, regional, and national skills needs through a range of mechanisms to support long-term strategic planning and short-term operational objectives. Key methods include the College's annual curriculum planning cycle which ensures alignment to priority sectors and labour market demand, with final approval signed off by the Corporation Board annually. The ongoing review of the Strategic Plan is also considered regularly including at Board Away Days and takes an outward-looking approach to position the College at the forefront of changing skills needs. Currently, a new strategic plan is under development, with the plan due to launch in 2026. Additionally, the Governing Body has also taken account of the relevant findings from the College's most recent Ofsted report, as well as the latest themes emerging from annual strategic conversations to inform its actions in better meeting local needs.

As detailed in our Accountability Agreement, and together with the processes of review outlined, this enables regular scrutiny of how well Derwentside College serves its communities by filling skills gaps, avoiding duplication, and collaborating with a wide range of partners. Consequently, we conclude Derwentside College makes a significant contribution in fulfilling its Local Duty of Need. However, the Governing Body recognise that ongoing collaboration remains crucial, and as such the College is continuing to work with key local education partners who have a presence across our local area and region to review and refine our collective offer and ensure the College's curriculum remains agile, responsive, and future focused.

Collaboration and Partnerships

The College continues to work collaboratively with local colleges and universities throughout the region. These partnerships are aimed at addressing skills shortages; pooling resources; sharing expertise; and collaboratively developing specialised programmes. Moving forward into 2025-26 we are set to develop our partnerships further, particularly within the Durham locality, supporting our 'duty to review' and ensuring that our curriculum offer continues to meet the needs of our diverse range of customers and stakeholders.



Most recently, the four Durham FE Colleges, through the establishment of the Durham Learning Alliance, have engaged in reviewing their curriculum to ensure full coverage of the region's priorities and to identify any skills and qualification gaps. The colleges' provision has been mapped against the LSIP priorities, the North East Local Growth Plan and the County Durham Economic Strategy with the aim of providing an overview of LMI statistics, future requirements, and provision gaps. This work will contribute towards Derwentside College's Vision to become an Outstanding College that is highly valued by our learners and partners.

6
Corporation Statement

On behalf of Derwentside College Corporation, it is hereby confirmed that the Corporation conducts reviews in line with the Local Needs Duty, as such resulting in this plan.

The Annual Accountability Agreement sets out an agreed statement of purpose, aims and objectives as approved by the Corporation at their meeting on 19 June 2025.

The plan will be published on the College's website within three months of the start of the new academic year.

Access to the Annual Accountability Agreement -
www.derwentside.ac.uk/about-us/key-college-documents





David Allsop
Corporation Chair

Chris Todd
Principal and Chief Executive

Dated: 19 June 2025

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Supporting Documentation

Derwentside College Strategic Plan

Ofsted Inspection Report

NELSIP

North East Local Growth Plan

Draft North East Employment and Skills Strategy - (New Deal for North East Workers)







Derwentside College, Front Street, Consett, County Durham, DH8 5EE

Department for Education

Meeting skills needs

Guidance on annual accountability agreements 2025 to 2026 and the Local Needs Duty

January 2025

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Summary

This guidance is to support in the creation and submission of your annual accountability Statement for 2025 to 2026. The guidance aligns to and simplifies the requirements for the annual accountability agreement and the statutory duty to review how well the education and training providers in scope (see table below) provide meets local needs, and to consider what actions may be taken to better meet those needs. The Local Needs Duty is the statutory duty set out in Section 52B of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992, as amended by the Skills and Post-16 Education Act 2022, which came into force 28 June 2022.

Your annual accountability statement should focus on what provision you will deliver in the year ahead to support local, regional, and national needs and (for those institutions within scope) the actions and outcomes from the Local Needs Duty.

For those providers in scope of the Local Needs Duty, the review should be undertaken every three years, sooner if there are substantial changes in circumstances. We expect the annual accountability statement to include a short summative statement outlining the type of provision being offered and the quantity, the key conclusions, and outcomes from your review of how well the education or training provided meets local needs including any specific actions arising.

Colleges and designated institutions in scope of the Local Needs Duty are encouraged to demonstrate how they have collaborated with other local providers in the area when reviewing provision and identify any collective actions planned to better meet local needs. This will ensure they are using the skills funds available in an area effectively.

Who this publication is for

Providers in scope are:

Institution Type	Annual Accountability Agreements	Statutory Local Needs Duty
All further education colleges	Yes	Yes
All sixth-form colleges	Yes	Yes
Designated institutions	Yes	Yes
Local authorities delivering post-16 provision in excess of £1m from ESFA	Yes	No

This guidance may also be of interest to other provider types and stakeholders such as mayoral combined authorities (MCAs) and designated employer representative bodies (ERBs) leading on local skills improvement plans (LSIPs), alongside all those that have an interest in education and training in an area.

Providers must submit their next annual accountability statement by 30 June 2025. For colleges and designated institutions in scope for the Local Needs Duty (every three years, sooner if there are substantial changes in circumstances) this should include details of the full review if undertaken or a short summative statement if still within the three-year period.

Changes since the guidance was previously published

We have updated the national skills priorities taking account of the Skills England report, Industrial Strategy and Plan for Change.

We have made it clearer that the accountability statement will be used by the Department for Education as part of the discussions at Annual Strategic Conversation where applicable.

We have made it clearer that for colleges and designated institutions in scope of the Local Needs Duty you must undertake the review every three years, sooner if there are substantial changes in circumstances. The annual statement must include a short summative statement of the review. If a full review has taken place this return should report on how well the education and training, they provide meets local needs and what actions they and other providers can take to meet those needs better, in particular to better ensure learners have the skills needed to secure suitable employment.

We have removed the suggestion for large or geographically spread college groups to submit plans for each college in their structure.

We have included information on how to use the further education (FE) provider dashboard to support the accountability agreements where applicable, alongside other data sources. The FE provider dashboard brings together published performance data on learner outcomes for colleges and larger local authority FE providers to support planning, reviews, and strategic conversations. It is being piloted this year with providers in scope of this guidance.

Background and policy overview

Both the Local Needs Duty and annual accountability agreements form part of the wider set of programmes to support young people and adults to develop the skills they need to get a good job and ensuring a clearer focus on the delivery outcomes.

The Local Needs Duty is a statutory requirement for all governing bodies in scope. Governing bodies are required to periodically review (undertaken every three years, sooner if there are substantial changes in circumstances) how well the education and training they provide meets local needs and consider what actions they might take to meet those needs better (whether alone or in conjunction with one or more other educational institution). This is a strategic review that looks further ahead than just the next academic year, with an expectation that individual institutions will consider their role in the wider context of other local providers.

Accountability Agreements were introduced for the first time in the 2023 to 2024 academic year and consist of a 2-part document setting the overall expectations of providers (including local authorities delivering more than £1 million of post-16 provision) in return for funding. The agreement focusses on what colleges, designated institutions and local authorities deliver in the year ahead and how they intend to support local, regional, and national needs. These annual statements should in all cases be informed by providers' longer term strategic plans and ambitions and (for those institutions within scope) the actions from the Local Needs Duty.

Statutory guidance for the Local Needs Duty

This section of the guidance is statutory and governing bodies of institutions with the further education sector must comply with their duty under section 52B of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 to review provision in relation to local needs, as introduced in the Skills and Post-16 Education Act 2022. Governing bodies of institutions within the further education sector (as defined under section 91(3) of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992) must have regard to this guidance when discharging the duty to review how well the education or training provided by the institution meets local needs.

The legislation requires governing bodies to consider, in light of the review, what actions might be taken (including action in conjunction with other governing bodies) to better meet local needs. These actions could include, for example, decisions to expand the curriculum offer to respond to emerging needs relating to securing local employment, or to collaborate with other providers to strengthen the quality and resilience of local provision. It is for governing bodies to determine the feasibility of these actions.

We expect the review to be undertaken every three years, sooner if there are substantial changes in circumstances. Where a review has been undertaken, full details of the review must be included in the statement. However, if circumstances have not changed

substantially, we expect the annual statement to include a short summative statement of the existing review.

Governing bodies should engage at an early stage with the DfE place-based team and the Further Education Commissioner if any of the agreed actions following on from the review could lead to significant structural changes such as mergers.

The review conclusions and associated accountability agreements alongside LSIPs will be part of the ongoing DfE place-based team and Further Education Commissioner discussions with governing bodies and will be discussed as part of the annual strategic conversations.

We have set out some guidance on what you can include in your Local Needs Duty in the section 'Guide to drafting your annual Accountability Statement'.

Annual Accountability Agreement

The agreement sets out both the overall expectations, and what colleges, designated institutions and local authorities in scope will deliver, in return for the department's funding.

Part 1 of the agreement the 'accountability framework' replaces the previous, annual, grant funding agreement. We are using it to set out national skills priorities as well as the essential terms and conditions that providers need to meet in return for funds. Part 1 is shorter than the previous funding agreement but retains the required levers to ensure the effective management and assurance of public funds, the protection of learners as well as requiring sound governance.

Part 2, the 'annual accountability statement' is a provider[1] document that is owned by you and should set out a small number of outcome targets for areas of your curriculum that you are planning to grow for the coming year. These targets reflect how you are contributing to priorities outlined in local skills improvement plans (LSIPs), being led by employer representative bodies (ERBs) working with employers, providers and local stakeholders including MCAs, local authorities, and other agencies and to national skills priorities listed below. We also expect you to reflect on the previous year's performance against outcome targets. Providers with a tailored learning allocation should make reference to their tailored learning provision, particularly where this meets local skills needs.

The introduction of annual accountability agreements signals a shift in the relationship between us and those providers in receipt of grant funding. It provides a simpler set of expectations and requirements. Completion and receipt of your annual accountability

[1] By provider we mean college/sixth form college/local authority learning organisation and designated institutions

statement is a requirement of funding and (for providers in scope) should be used as the vehicle for reflecting and publishing the outcome of the Local Needs Duty.

We do not expect you to include all your planned changes or all your provision in your annual accountability statement unless you think this is relevant (for example the statement is not intended to duplicate delivery plans that are commonly required by devolved authorities). All further education provision at any level is in scope including apprenticeships and non-qualification bearing provision. The annual accountability statement should be a relatively concise public statement setting out the key aims, targets, and outcomes for the year ahead with a particular focus on the changes you will make. Therefore, it is for you to highlight to us what elements from your offer that you believe constitute your main aims to meet skills needs in the coming year. We have set out some guidance on what you can include in the section 'Guide to drafting your annual Accountability Statement.'

National Skills Priorities

As you prepare your accountability statement for the 2025 to 2026 academic year, we would like you to set out how you are contributing to national skills priorities. These national skills 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 jobs[2] and net zero, creative industries and science and technology (including AI and quantum computing).

These sectors are:

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

We would like you to prioritise delivery of these national priorities, where practical, through a small number of high-quality priority programmes that have been co-designed

[2] The Office for National Statistics defines a green job as 'Employment in an activity that contributes to protecting or restoring the environment, including those that mitigate or adapt to climate change'

with employers and have a strong track record of delivering good outcomes for learners. These programmes are T Levels, apprenticeships, Free courses for jobs, Skills Bootcamps, and Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQs).

While you retain autonomy to deliver provision that meets the needs of your organisation, when setting out your objectives and targets we would like you to give a clear indication of the scale of provision in subjects and programmes linked to national skills priorities in 2025 to 2026 academic year and the extent of growth compared with the current year (2024 to 2025).

We recognise that some providers, such as sixth-form colleges, are more focused on academic provision, and therefore do not deliver some of these more vocational focused programmes, but we would still like to see how these providers plan to support both local and national skills priorities (that is, providing an offer that enables learners to progress in priority areas).

These priorities are focused on sectors and priority programmes, but we still want providers to offer more essential skills up to and including Level 2 in English and Mathematics and up to and including Level 1 for Digital. These are statutory entitlements to full funding for adults who need them, so they apply even in mayoral combined authorities. Participation has dropped in recent years, and we want to reverse this decline to support improved outcomes and take-up of priority programmes.

We appreciate that not all learners will be able to access these priority programmes immediately, and that some providers, such as local authority learning organisations offer a lot of support to upskill and prepare learners. This work to develop progression routes is important for longer-term uptake and success of national priorities.

We will review this list annually, but these priorities reflect a long-term focus and making frequent changes will limit impact.

How the annual Accountability Agreement will be used

The accountability framework (part 1) will be used by the Department and the Education and Skills Funding Agency to assure the use of public funds and protection of the learner.

The Department will discuss your accountability statement (part 2) at your annual strategic conversation (where applicable) to ensure it meets the requirements in this guidance and review progress against outcomes referenced in the previous year, the impact of the current statement and your plans for future curriculum.

We expect that you will want to use your annual accountability statement (part 2) in a range of discussions with local partners (such as employer representative bodies, mayoral combined authorities, and local authorities) and national bodies (such as Ofsted). It will also form a useful reference point in strategic conversations between you

and us. Your annual accountability statement will need to be reviewed, updated, and returned annually.

Deadline for submission

You must return your annual accountability statement by 30 June 2025, so it is received and available to link to Part 1 (the accountability framework) which will be issued for signing in June/July 2025 for the 2025 to 2026 academic and funding year.

Submission of your annual accountability statement is a contractual requirement. For those providers in scope of the Local Needs Duty, the review of provision and publication of the review is a statutory requirement.

Where statements are not submitted on time, and an extension has not previously been agreed, you should expect to be contacted by us to discuss the reasons for the delay. Non-compliance could lead to further conversations with the Further Education Commissioner's team and/or your DfE place-based team.

Guide to drafting your annual Accountability Statement

The annual accountability statement is owned by you and can include all types of further education provision at any learning level. It should clearly focus on national, regional, and local priorities.

Your annual accountability statement must be signed off by your governing body or equivalent prior to submission.

We recognise that you will want to tailor your annual accountability statement to fit the shape and coverage of your institution. The table below sets out what we expect your annual accountability statement to cover as a minimum. The table below sets out broad headings and content that we expect you to cover.

Where appropriate, colleges should draw on actions and priorities drawn from their quality improvement processes and documents and reflect on the previous year's performance, including data on learner outcomes from the FE provider dashboard if possible and other sources.

Section	Guidance on what it should contain
Purpose	You should set out a very brief statement of your key purpose with references as appropriate to your strategic objectives as set out in your existing strategic plan. The statement of purpose should be a concise articulation of why your provision is important and the contribution it makes. The statement should reflect any material developments since your strategic plan was last updated. It may be helpful to outline the relationship between your strategic plan and the annual accountability statement. In order to fulfil the Local Needs Duty, colleges and designated institutions in scope will need to ensure this section reflects and articulates the longer-term strategic outcomes and actions arising from the Local Needs Duty.
Context and place	This part of the statement should set out: • the characteristics of your organisation • main geographical area with reference to relevant local authority and LSIP boundaries, travel to learn patterns of learners and travel to work patterns and campus/delivery locations • specific economic and social characteristics of the area served that inform skills needs

Section	Guidance on what it should contain
Approach to developing the annual Accountability Statement	Set out the overall approach you have taken to identifying your key priorities and target outcomes. Within this section you should demonstrate how you have engagement with the ERB and the LSIP and how you have engaged with employers, local providers, and other stakeholders. As part of this you should also identify: • the range of key external stakeholders you have consulted with in developing your plan • the range of other providers in the local area and how you are working with them to meet skills needs and achieve your priorities • where applicable, the data you have used to inform your key priorities and target outcomes Colleges and designated institutions in scope of the Local Needs Duty are encouraged to demonstrate how they have collaborated with other local providers in the area when reviewing provision and identify any collective actions planned to better meet local needs. This might include scope for greater curriculum collaboration that: • helps to align provision to local needs • addresses barriers to participation • reduces unhelpful duplication • promotes clearer progression pathways Collaboration should include engagement with relevant education providers outside of the statutory FE sector, such as Independent Training Providers, schools, and/or universities.

Section	Guidance on what it should contain
Contribution to national, regional, local priorities	Set out focused number of aims and target outcomes for the year ahead that reflect: • national Skills Priorities (page 7) and regional/local priorities, such as those you are taking forward as part of an LSIP • your strategic plan and relevant actions arising from the Local Needs Duty (for colleges and designated colleges in scope) • and/or address priority areas for performance improvement, reflecting data/evidence of need This section forms the core content of the plan and should typically be limited to between 5 and 10 short-term objectives. As part of these aims and targets, we would like you to include SMART objectives with clear timelines and targets that set out the planned scale of priority provision in 2025 to 2026 and demonstrate your ambition for growth by comparing planned volumes with baseline numbers for the current year (2024 to 2025).
Local Needs Duty	For colleges and designated institutions in scope, the statement should include a short summative statement outlining the type of provision being offered and the quantity, the key conclusions, and outcomes from your review of how well the education or training provided meets local needs including any specific actions arising.
Corporation / Governing Body statement	Confirmation of governance sign-off. For colleges and designated institutions in scope the statement should explicitly confirm this document as having fulfilled the statutory Local Needs Duty.
Hyperlink	A live hyperlink to your website where the annual accountability statement is located.
Supporting documentation	Provide a limited number of links as appropriate to any other key documents that are referred to or directly relevant, such as LSIPs, annual financial statements and Ofsted inspection reports.

Whilst there is no set word limit, we encourage you to keep your annual accountability statement concise and set a limited number of key priorities and objectives that focus on the year ahead.

Should you require any help and support in drafting your plan, please speak to your DfE place-based team contact or email the FEC at FE.commissioner@education.gov.uk to discuss requirements.

How to submit an annual Accountability Statement

Please return your file via the Document Exchange service. To upload your file, navigate to the 'send a new document' folder, then select document type 'accountability agreement part 2 final' and follow the instructions. Selecting this document type will help us to identify your return.

To access Document Exchange, you will need to log into DfE Sign-in. If you do not have access to DfE Sign-in or the Document Exchange service, speak to one of the DfE Sign-in Approvers within your organisation. If you are unsure who this is, speak to the head of your organisation.

If you experience any issues accessing DfE Sign-in, contact the DFE Sign-in help desk. If you have any questions about the upload or are unable to find the file in Document Exchange, contact us using our Customer Help Portal.

Publication

You are required to publish your submitted annual accountability statement including the outcomes of the Local Needs Duty (for those in scope) on your website. This should be published within 3 months of the start of the 2025 to 2026 academic year (so by 1 December 2025). Please ensure the hyperlink to the annual accountability statement's location is included on the front page of your document.

We will publish the template for the accountability framework (part 1) on GOV.UK. We will also publish the hyperlinks to all submitted annual accountability statements.

Useful resource

Skills England - GOV.UK

FE Provider Dashboard

Links to Local Skills Improvement Plans

LSIPs, led by the designated employer representative body (ERB) will set out the key priorities needed to make post-16 technical education and skills provision more responsive to the changing needs of employers and the local economy. The LSIP process enables employers and providers to work together to understand employers' skills needs and how these could be addressed through existing provision and changes to provision locally. The Skills and Post-16 Education Act (Skills Act) places a duty on relevant providers to co-operate with the ERB in the development and review of an LSIP.

The Skills Act also requires relevant providers to have regard to these plans when making decisions on post-16 technical education or training. To do this, providers should have regard to and contribute to meeting local skills priorities alongside other aspects of their provision. Providers will need to set out in their published accountability statement those elements of their activity which contribute to meeting the agreed priorities outlined in the LSIP. In taking account of the LSIP, providers will need to have regard to their other responsibilities. College corporations and designated institutions are charities. Their trustees (governors) have a duty to act in line with their charitable purposes. Compliance with other duties should be undertaken in conjunction with these fiduciary duties.

The department has published statutory guidance for the local skills improvement plans, which all relevant providers have a duty to have regard to.

Other relevant departmental advice or statutory guidance

College oversight: support and intervention: guidance sets out how the government will support and intervene to improve financial resilience and quality in colleges.

Further Education Corporations and Sixth Form Corporations: Governance Guide: Legal and regulatory requirements and recommended practice that apply to further education (FE) and sixth-form college corporations.

Local Skills Improvement Plans and designated employer representative bodies

Other departmental resources

DfE place-based teams are responsible for the oversight of the further education provider base to promote high-quality sustainable provision in each region. To get in touch, contact your local DfE place-based team lead.

To contact the office of the Further Education Commissioner, send an email to: FE.Commissioner@education.gov.uk

Department for Education

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