

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

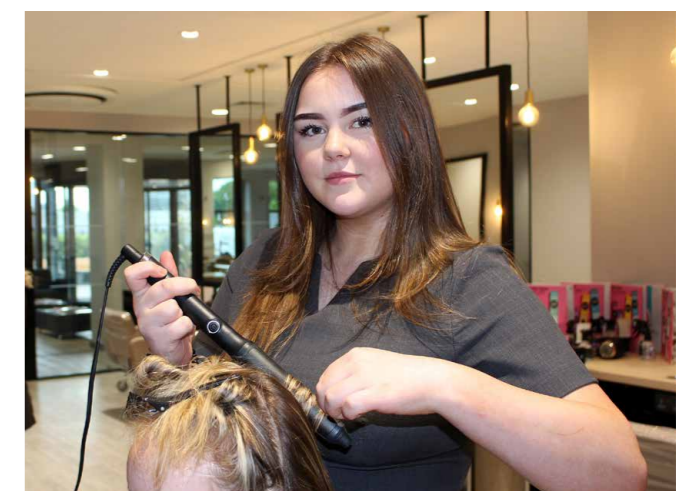
The College's apprenticeship curriculum is highly relevant to both regional and national skills priorities. We deliver across 34 apprenticeship Standards to over 2,000 apprentices, mainly across the North East and Tees Valley but also in the Yorkshire and the Humber region, with the College delivering 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.



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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



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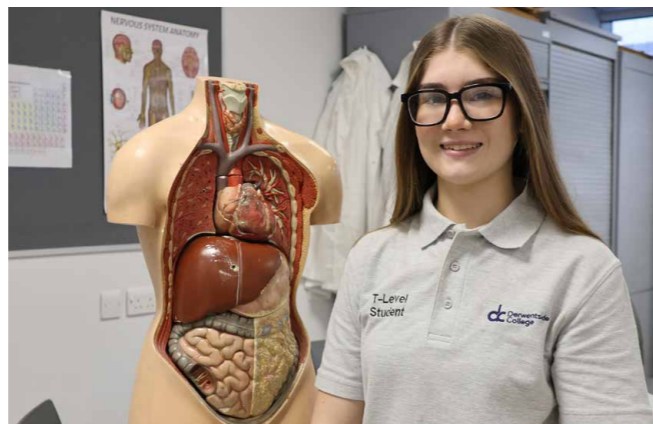
Approach to developing the Accountability Statement

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.



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.



Derwentside College's Contribution

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



Derwentside College's Contribution

3	<p>Take back our streets by halving serious violent crime and raising confidence in the police and criminal justice system to its highest levels.</p>	<p>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.</p>	
4	<p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p>	
5	<p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p>	

Strategic Objectives

Strategic Priority	Strategic Objective	Contribution to meeting national, regional, and local priorities	Targets/Impact Measurement
Curriculum & Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none">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.
	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.
	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.
	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.
	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.	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.
	Continue to play an active Role in the formation of the 'North East Colleges Group'.		

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

7

Supporting Documentation

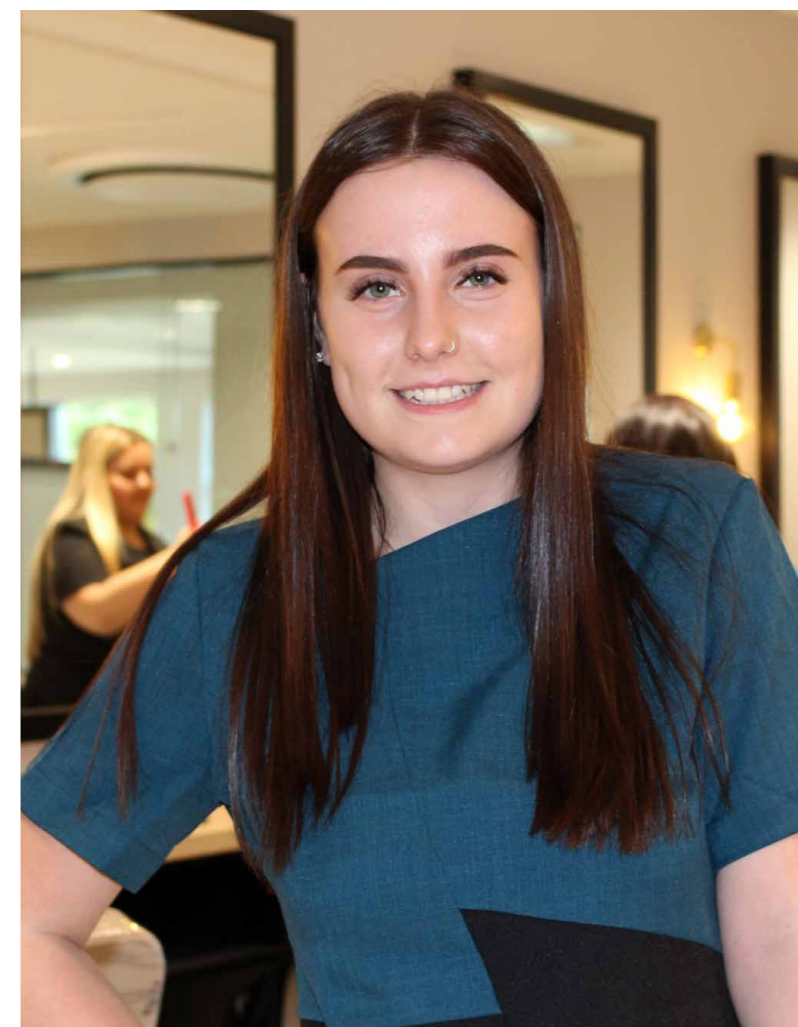
[Derwentside College Strategic Plan](#)

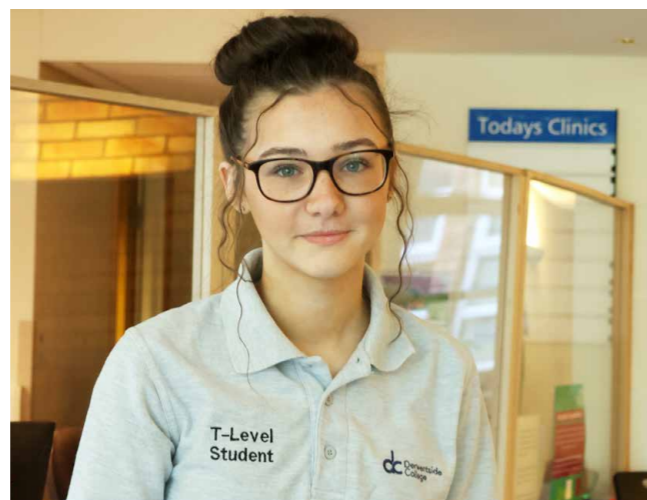
[Ofsted Inspection Report](#)

[NELSIP](#)

[North East Local Growth Plan](#)

[Draft North East Employment and Skills Strategy - \(New Deal for North East Workers\)](#)





Our Values

Trust | Respect | Excellence | Enjoyment | Enterprise

