

# BRIDGWATER & TAUNTON COLLEGE ACCOUNTABILITY STATEMENT & LOCAL NEEDS DUTY 2024-25

Transforming lives and communities  
through innovative learning  
and partnerships



BRIDGWATER  
& TAUNTON  
COLLEGE

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## Statement of Purpose

Bridgwater & Taunton College launched a new five-year strategic plan in September 2022.

Our Vision and Mission statements have evolved to more clearly articulate our strategic direction and purpose.

Our four overarching strategic aims have been developed in response to the current context and our overall Vision. In addition, the framework identifies three cross cutting themes that will influence our response to the climate emergency, digital transformation, and our continued work to strengthen equality, diversity, and inclusion for all.

The safe delivery of inspirational teaching, learning and assessment will remain our core priority. We will continue to inspire all our students to achieve their full potential, through delivering a high- quality inspirational experience. As an anchor organisation embedded into our community, we commit to working in partnership with all our stakeholders to deliver our Vision.



## CROSS CUTTING THEMES

The three key themes are:



DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION



OUR RESPONSE TO THE CLIMATE CRISIS



EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

## MISSION STATEMENT

As a leading college of further and higher education, we will:

- Deliver inspirational teaching, learning and skills development
- Maintain a culture that promotes a supportive, inclusive, and safe environment
- Build highly effective partnerships that positively impact our students
- Positively influence the educational landscape.

## OUR VALUES

Together, we are:

- Passionate and excited about learning
- Inclusive and supportive
- Responsive to student, employer, and community needs
- Always aspiring to the highest standards
- Professional and enterprising
- Innovative and creative
- Friendly and welcoming

## Context and Place

Bridgwater & Taunton College (BTC) is a large tertiary college providing education, skills, and training to 22 008 students across all provision types in 2022/23.

The College occupies three main sites: Bridgwater, Taunton, and Cannington, including the National College for Nuclear (NCfN) (Southern Hub). The college is a cornerstone skills hub within Somerset delivering upon LEP/LSIP regional skills initiatives, as well as maintaining a prominent role in the delivery of nationally influential projects. BTC fulfils the role as an anchor organisation in terms of education and skills development across the campus sites, and also within the national framework for key industries.

BTC provides outstanding provision built upon the vision statement, 'Transforming lives and communities through innovative learning and partnerships'. The ethos of this is reflected and embodied through the quality of partnerships, skills development, and position of the college as a springboard for high quality destinations and development of the student community.

The College offers high quality courses in all 15 subject sector areas, designed to engage and develop the knowledge, skills and behaviours from Pre-Entry to Post-Graduate level. The campus offerings reflect the specialist provision, with Land Based Studies based in Cannington, A Levels based in Bridgwater and IB and majority of T levels at Taunton (the college was an early adopter of T levels). The majority of study programmes for all other disciplines, except Land Based, are offered across the Bridgwater and Taunton Campus sites. The Cannington campus also has student accommodation, which was graded outstanding by Ofsted in autumn 2022. In addition to the Land Based provision, the Cannington Campus maintains a dedicated civil engineering department (CSIC) and the National College for Nuclear (NCfN).

The volume of students engaged in adult learning (adult education budget) activity totalled 12,185, including; a large and highly successful distance learning programme, and active community learning. Class-based adult education made up 50% of the total learner numbers. In addition, 5067 adults engaged in full cost learning programmes, meeting local industry skills needs through bespoke packages, supporting key local infrastructure projects and regional businesses. This represented 21% of the student population as a whole.

The growth in apprenticeships has seen the college deliver to over 3000 apprentices in 22/23 with the volume representing the highest volume of levy funded apprenticeships provided by an FE college. Apprenticeships represent 13% of the total learners, now 0.6% higher than the volume of EPYP students (based on headcount). Additional, there has been an increase in the volume of high quality degree apprenticeships delivered for the NHS and nuclear industry enhancing the contribution of highly skilled individuals to the region and demonstrating the development of partnerships in key skills shortage areas.

In 2022/23 there were 2992 students on education for young people programmes from entry level to level 3, including 304 High Needs students. Of these high needs students, 179 followed bespoke programmes, whilst 125 engaged in cross-college courses, with each student benefitting from an appropriate and ambitious college programme. EPYP students receive their education programmes across all three campus sites, with a curriculum offering that reflects the local community, for example in Taunton, T levels, IB and L3 vocational courses are offered, whilst A level provision is concentrated on the Bridgwater site.

The student demographic as produced by 'MIDES 16-19 Learners Deprivation by Course Character' illustrates that overall BTC students studying in 22/23 were disproportionately from bands 4 to 6 (on a 10-point scale, where 10 is the least deprived). In our A level students, there was an even higher percentage of students from bands 2,4,5 and 6, with twice as many students as a college average drawn from band 4, and 3% more from band 2 when compared to other college averages.

Somerset is a region long characterised by its dispersed rural geography and lack of major cities or traditional university campuses. Perceived as relatively affluent, it is nevertheless home to pockets of deprivation that are among the worst in the country with 47,000 of its residents living within the 20% most deprived areas of England, including the worst performing area for social mobility in the entire country. This, combined with an ageing population and a high percentage of young people who leave the county to pursue education and career aspirations elsewhere, means that skills at Level 4 and above are in short supply and overall productivity low.

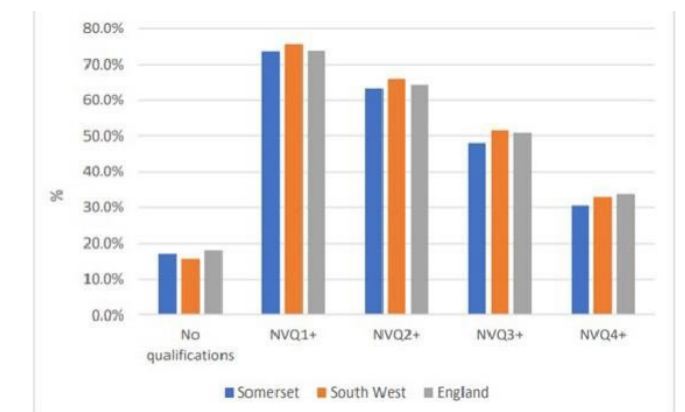


Figure 1 Highest level of qualification by area (%): (Source: Census 2021)

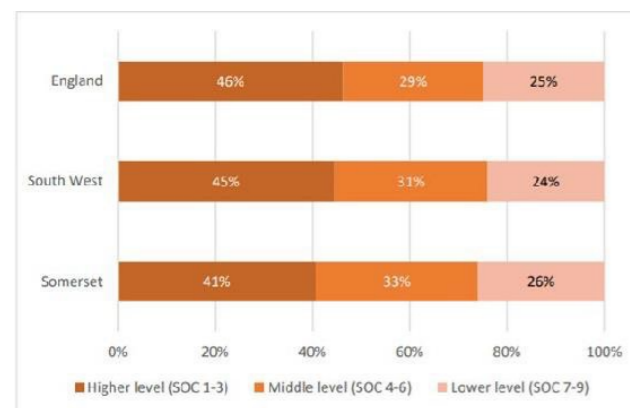


Figure 2 Resident occupations by Skills Level (Source: Census 2021)

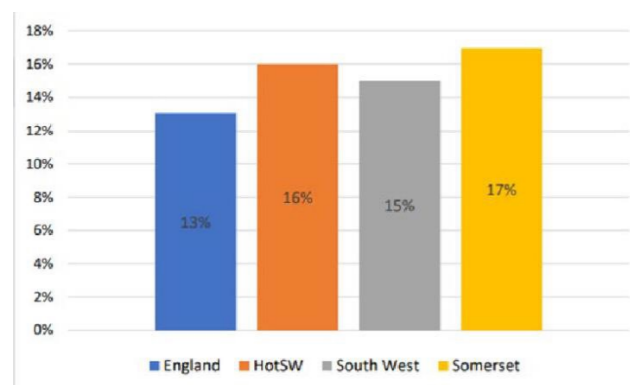


Figure 3 Percentage of businesses with staff not fully proficient (Source: UK Employers Skills Survey 2019)

### Key Characteristics

- Somerset has lower levels of minimum attainment in all NVQ categories compared to the South-West region and England;
- A higher proportion of Somerset’s resident workforce are employed in lower skilled occupations than both the South-West and England;
- A lower proportion of Somerset’s resident workforce are employed in higher skilled occupations than the South-West and England;
- Somerset has a higher proportion of employees that are not appropriately skilled for their job compared to the South-West, HotSW LEP area and England.

Bridgwater & Taunton College serves a wide geographic area spanning as shown in Figure 4 below, which combined in April 2023 into one unitary Somerset Council.

With three campuses located throughout Somerset in Bridgwater, Cannington and Taunton and national coverage for many of our courses, our work benefits not only our students but also the wider community.

The College has invested in University Centre Somerset (UCS) in line with our strategic objectives enabling BTC to offer degrees and degree apprenticeships in many curriculum areas at Somerset’s only university, widening participation in HE (Higher Education) to local residents.

In 2022/23 1,261 students enrolled in total on HE and higher-level technical programmes (identified as those at level 4 and above) in 2022-23. Of this total, 1094 students enrolled on University or Pearson-validated programmes at level 4 and above in 2022-23. The College has seen significant growth in degree and higher apprenticeships with 507 HE students designated as apprentices. There



Figure 4 The four district authorities of Somerset

were also an additional 167 students who had enrolled on a Professional course.

The HE curriculum areas include: The National College for Nuclear Southern Hub offering Nuclear Engineering, plus further UCS courses offered across the campuses in Mechanical and Electrical Engineering, Motorsport, Construction and the Built Environment and Civil Engineering, Computing, Sports, Public Services and Criminology, Early Childhood Education and Care, Adult and Mental Health Nursing, Trainee Nurse Associate, Teacher Training, Business, Creative Arts, Animal Management and Wildlife Conservation and Agricultural Management. The curriculum offer as approved at Academic Planning and Curriculum Development is aligned to the skills opportunities in the local and regional area. The College has also responded positively to the growth in HTQs with eight programmes on offer in 2024/25.

In contrast to the national Higher Education picture, BTC/ UCS attracts significantly more students from POLAR4 Quintiles 1 and 2 than those from Quintile 5. Using ILR data, on average over the last six years 39% of full time first year Higher Education (HE) students came from Quintiles 1 & 2. This is in comparison to 14% from Quintile 5.

The inward investment and employment opportunities arising from the new nuclear power station at Hinkley Point C (HPC) in Bridgwater has greatly boosted the local economy. As the primary training provider, we have introduced and delivered programmes supported by all funding streams.

The increasing use of technology has meant that BTC serves people and businesses across the UK and wider region, and this is particularly true of our curriculum focused on adult students. However, most students and businesses remain within a commuting distance of less than an hour from the College.

Historically the Heart of the South- West Local Enterprise Partnership (HoSW LEP) has coordinated the region’s skills response. HoSW LEP have managed and distributed the FE (Further Education) capital funds and more recently established the Skills Advisory Panel (SAP). As part of the response The Heart of the South-West produced a Local Industrial Strategy (‘LIS’) and Local Skills Launchpad report 2022-2024. This document sets out a shared ambition to transform the local economy through clean and inclusive growth.

The College’s strategic priorities and purpose have been informed by the growth ambitions shared.

### Key economic features and challenges include:

- Mix geography - and most diverse encompassing, significant rural and coastal areas, alongside core urban centres
- Low productivity, overall, but significant diversity across the Southwest geography
- A small business, self-employed economy
- A shrinking working age population
- Larger low value sectors and lower proportions of people undertaking higher level roles.

- A mixture of qualifications and education capacity
- Significant clusters of localised deprivation, which includes West Somerset
- High levels of overall economic activity and employment, but low levels of average pay
- Difference in physical financial and virtual access to learning

### Key strengths and skill needs

- High-tech specialisms in aerospace, photonics and marine, but restricted by digital skills
- Opportunities in advanced engineering and manufacturing
- Significant demand for skills in health and social care
- High levels of employment dependence on hospitality and tourism
- Transition to net zero and a low carbon future
- Skills demand for the south-west can be summarised into three areas:
  - Sectors within an ongoing and cyclical recruitment and skills need bracket some exacerbated by the pandemic. These include the skills trades care sector, leisure sector and across the generic service sector.
  - Growth sectors with expanding future demand for which skills will need to be developed. These are a mixture of vocational, creative, and academic skills in occupations corresponding with health and social work, professional services, accommodation and food, construction, and support services Sectors, restaurants bracket chefs, management bracket
  - Localised gaps within specialised occupations. These include demand within professional occupations, transport and storage information and communications construction, manufacture and production, and specialist health and social care work roles within the heart of the Southwest.

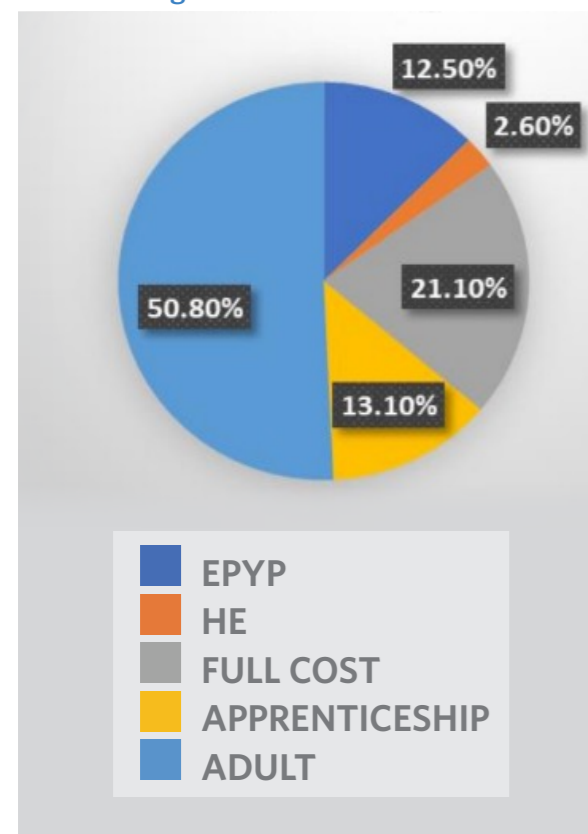
Focusing upon sectoral demand, it is currently anticipated that the following sectors will remain areas of specific heightened need as well as skills and labour demand into the medium term.

- Health and social work are currently predicted to create more new jobs than any other sets are locally over the next 10 years,
- Professional support services and digital technology are predicted to be the key source of job growth locally over the next 10 years and depending on demand for a range of mainly high skilled occupations
- Farming and food production agricultural vacancies in 2021 we nearly double the rate for 2019 and food manufacturing job vacancies having increased 20% over the same period of time.
- 13% of Construction Organisations in the heart of the South West had vacancies in 2019 compared to 9% in England
- Production, manufacturing and science technology engineering and math-based employment (STEM) is currently expected to be an area of significant replacement demand

## Meeting Local, Regional, and National Skills

Our curriculum offer is designed in collaboration with industry and employers and in response to the points highlighted in the Skills Launchpad 2022-2024. It provides a clear path for our students to progress from FE at Bridgwater & Taunton College to HE at University Centre Somerset and further into employment in industry. Our unique BTC Advantage sets us apart from other FE providers and gives our learners the best chance of success.

### Whole College Head Count



**Figure 5** Student numbers by provision type for Bridgwater & Taunton College 2021/22

The above clearly shows the diverse nature of the Bridgwater & Taunton College provision. There is a high volume of learners overall, including a very high proportion of adult students. Due to the nature and scope of the industry led provision, full cost training and development make up the second largest provision type, which demonstrates the context within which the college operates meeting the needs of the industry both locally and regionally through working with the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and nationally.

BTC is clear of the significant changes going forward in local and regional changes to facilitate regional skills developments. The class-based provision for 16-18-year-olds (navy in the table above) is highly important representing 13% of all college provision type and in a tertiary system provides the 16 plus offer for local students. Apprenticeships represent 13% of all provision, illustrating the rapid growth over the last few academic years and the

importance of this provision. Adult provision remains the largest provision at 50.8% with excellent outcomes.

BTC as a 2020 T Level provider continues to grow and strengthen the position of this new government flagship qualification. As numbers and pathways increase our young people are benefitting from a high-quality experience, strong industry links and positive progression into careers and higher education.

The College has a strong track record of early engagement and bespoke training delivery for major infrastructure projects and local employers. For example, Morrisons, Hinckley Point C, Mulberry, and the NHS. Forthcoming opportunities include the potential Gravity Project. BTC plays a leading role in developing and implementing coordinated, multi-provider, regional and national responses focused on the development of new curricula and training methodologies to support employers.

BTC works effectively with a wide range of employers of all sizes covering most key industry sectors, engaging with them to understand the skills needs and working with them to design and implement a relevant and effective curriculum offer. The offer supports employers and stakeholders on local, regional, and national levels to meet identified skills gaps and offer progression opportunities into – or within – employment.

Since the apprenticeship reforms in 2015 the college has worked in close partnership with employers to implement apprenticeship standards that link to a wide range of job roles. Supporting employers with the transition to standards has resulted in many employers developing apprenticeship schemes that seek applications from college students on an annual basis. The impact of this activity is seen in the volume and growth of the college's Apprenticeship and Industry Placements, that are available to support students' employment aspirations.

In 2022/23 Bridgwater & Taunton College was the largest provider of levy funded apprenticeships nationally.

To support our strategic direction and address local, regional, and national skills needs the College has identified several priority areas. These align to the LSIP three areas of significant growth opportunities for the Region over the next two decades: Engineering Futures; Digital Futures; and Energy Futures.

In addition, the Local Skills Report also identifies core sectors that will be areas of specific heightened regional need / demand into the medium term. These are crucial to our region's economy and require a discrete focus:

- Health and social work are currently predicted to create more 'new' jobs than any other sector.
- Accommodation and food, arts, and entertainment, along with other services and wholesale and retail trade
- Agri-Tech and Food and Drink Production
- Construction both at professional and associate professional and managerial level and construction trades
- Professional and support services and information technology

- Production, manufacturing and Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) will have a significant replacement demand.

The College is working closely with both Devon and Plymouth Chamber of Commerce and Somerset Chamber of Commerce to support a targeted and innovative response to the Heart of the South West Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP).

The College adopted the position of Lead Applicant on behalf of the Devon and Somerset region, collating and developing the expression of interest and formal application on behalf of the partner colleges. Post award, The College upheld the position of Project Lead for all Somerset based projects; directing the 3 Somerset Colleges. This role has built upon our strong relationships with stakeholders such as Local Authority, Employers and Employer Networks (including Large, SME and Micro businesses) to support skills across the county.

The College has promoted and encouraged an innovative response to the HotSWLSIP and developed themes in the following areas:

**Digital for All:** the development of everyday digital skills across all curriculum areas. Digital upskilling is an LSIP priority and must be adopted across all industries as we head into a more connected future.

**Inclusivity:** Ensuring that the local employment market are informed and educated on access to technology that supports individuals into sustained and meaningful employment, growing their recruitment pool and supporting rapid development of their employees.

**Energy:** Introducing and revising focus across all curriculum areas on their energy responsibility through digital transformation, new and advancing technology and energy waste.

CPD opportunities across these themes ensured that all curriculum provision (programmes for young people, apprenticeships, adults and HE) benefitted from the innovative response.

### Overview of key curriculum provision linked to skills priorities

As a strategic priority we have aligned provision to meet four of the five priority areas as identified in Implementing a new Further Education Funding and Accountability System-paragraph 136.

#### Engineering

From an initial £8m investment in an Energy Skills Centre the College has invested in ever- more sophisticated training facilities and equipment that align to new and emerging technologies in aerospace, nuclear, welding and composites. A £6m Advanced Engineering Centre (AEC), equipped with Rolls-Royce Gem engines, specialist training rigs and workshops for composites, materials testing, welding, and CNC, accommodates growth in the College's higher level engineering provision.

#### Nuclear

The Government flagship National College for Nuclear (NCfN) has been established at the College's campus. NCfN represents a joint venture between the College, EDF Energy and Bristol University to the south and Lakes College, Sellafield Ltd and the University of Cumbria to the north

BTC also proactively plays a central role in the national agenda around Green Skills by sharing knowledge, curriculum, and staff resource with the NCfN and the National Energy Skills Consortium via our participation in the National Electrification Skills Framework and Forum. Additionally, the College's partnership with the HPC MEH Alliance has strengthened, bringing together employers such as Balfour Beatty, NG Bailey, Cavendish Nuclear, Altrad and Doosan.

A Welding Centre of Excellence was designed and built-in direct response to industry demand, providing Virtual Reality simulation technology in advanced welding techniques for the training nuclear apprentices at Hinkley Point C (HPC).

#### Construction

The College's investment in 'live' workplace training environments is not confined to nuclear and engineering. Its £2m Construction Skills and Innovation Centre (CSIC) is hugely important to the regional economy. This 8-acre outdoor area, with industry-standard plant, machinery, and materials, replicates a live construction site and offers pre-employment programmes, Apprenticeships and specialist skills training in Water Utilities, Construction Plant,

Construction Operations, Scaffolding, Concrete Pouring, Form Work and Steel Fixing Operations, with a clear line of sight to employment with companies such as ByLor, Laing O'Rourke, Kier Bam, Wessex Water and Costain. The knowledge and experience gained through developing the apprenticeship programmes has enabled the College to also develop fast-track accreditation for experienced workers, and 1500 workers are expected to undertake this process for HPC alone.

#### Automotive

BTC has invested significantly in its Automotive Engineering curriculum over the last two years. A project alongside the Heart of the South West's Strategic Development Fund (SDF), for which BTC is the lead provider within a consortium of nine training providers in the South West, is allowing the college to invest further into new sustainability technology, supported by qualified staff. This is also supporting the upcoming delivery of T-Levels for Light and Electric Vehicles which commenced 2023/24.

The college has placed itself ahead of the curve in this arena for future training needs. Funding has allowed us to invest in equipment that includes an Advanced Driver Assistance System (ADAS), calibration and diagnostic equipment, available at both our Bridgwater and Taunton campuses, for the benefit of our students, apprentices, and local employers. The college works closely with

the Institute of the Motor Industry (IMI) to inform our curriculum as it gives us insight into the significant skills gap within the trade. With the investments made, BTC is ready to plug this skills gap and deliver world-class education to its stakeholders with the intention of nurturing highly productive, knowledgeable students who will add value to their employer post-qualification completion.

### Land-Based

The College's Land-Based studies department offers outstanding experience to a diverse range of students and provision is intent on developing the next generation of professionals, leaders, and managers through the development of knowledge, skills and professional behaviours supporting growth and prosperity in the sector. The suite of programmes offered reflects the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) in relation to land-based employment opportunities and is enhanced by the LEP funded Environmental Living Lab project which provides students with the opportunity to engage in research to tackle environmental challenges within Somerset; a new research hub is planned for development ready for exploitation in 2023/24.

The Land-Based studies department offers a diverse range of apprenticeship standards meeting the requirements of the national, regional, and local sector. The breadth of provision also encompasses the Food and Drink industry as well as the more traditional land-based subjects and Veterinary Nursing.

The College works with a wide range of employers including levy-paying employers and SMEs. Working relationships with large national and international organisations continue to be successful and include the National Trust, Environment Agency, Canal, and River Trust, Nestle, Thatchers, Mars, and Lucozade.

### Digital

The College provides bespoke facilities designed to replicate those of industry and a real working environment, including specialist Virtual Reality (VR) equipment- an omnidirectional treadmill, a suite of high-spec computers, and cyber security simulation facilities.

BTC hosts Somerset's first Apple Authorised Training Centre for Education (AATCE), one of the first in the UK approved to deliver training in Swift coding, the powerful and intuitive programming language of iOS, iPadOS and macOS.

The College has invested £600k enabling us to provide all study programme students with portable digital devices that significantly enhance their overall learning experience whilst reinforcing our unswerving commitment to break down barriers to achievement and ensure equality of opportunity for all. There has been positive growth in T Levels in this area with the significant majority of students progressing into higher study or apprenticeships, or employment.

### Health and Social Care

The Colleges unique achievements mean that individuals of all ages and abilities – some already employed in the sector – can now access a raft of career pathways into healthcare that can take them from an Internship, Level 2 transition programme or Access to HE qualification, via Level 3 programmes that include a T-Level in Health, right through to qualifications at Levels 4, 5 and now a locally owned and managed BSc, that are wholly delivered on their doorstep.

The college's partnership with NHS Somerset represents a system-wide 'home grown' approach that links learner numbers to workforce plans and ensures that local talent is retained within Somerset, whilst also reducing reliance on expensive external and international recruitment.

### Nursing

Health and Social Care is the second largest sector in the South-West economy, and although health outcomes are good and life expectancy high, too many people develop avoidable long-term multiple conditions which affect both the quality of their lives and their ability to work. Within Somerset there is an acute need for trained nurses, arising from a combination of an ageing workforce, the demise of nursing bursaries, a dearth of university provision, the migration of young people and an organisational structure within the NHS that limits progression from junior roles.

Our successful and long-standing partnership with the NHS in Somerset has developed further in recent years and together we have designed programmes that meet a range of future skills needs, most notably direct delivered Nursing degree apprenticeships that address the acute regional and national shortage of trained nurses. The College is also working with the NHS to understand their digital strategy for the coming years and design roles which will address their future needs.

The college has invested £3.2m in new facilities, including a fully equipped Clinical Skills & Simulation Suite. The College was also awarded a Queen's Anniversary Prize for its nursing provision in 2024. This area remains the largest and most likely to grow in response to skills needs, with new courses related to Allied Health professionals in development

### Hospitality

The College's work across the Food and Drink Sector continues to strengthen which includes the Food and Drink Skills Network UK hosted by the College and designed to engage local and national employers across the sector in discussions on critical topics and challenges in their industry.

The surge of business coming into Somerset brings with it a raft of opportunities for training in support functions, and the College's work with facilities management consortiums and other umbrella organisations is supporting the growth of provision in this area.

A £1m refurbishment of this full-scale restaurant and commercial kitchen has resulted in an outstanding training facility for Hospitality and Catering students who, by opening to the public on a regular basis, acquire the teamwork, communication, and people skills that employers and customers expect.

### Sport & Uniformed Public Services

BTC is the first college to work in partnership with a national governing body for sport. Since 2016 we have held the national contract with British Gymnastics to deliver Apprenticeships that enable aspiring gymnasts and those nearing the end of their career to be redeployed as coaches and instructors in gymnastics clubs throughout the UK. In addition, we work closely with a wealth of SMEs under the British Gymnastics banner to offer coaching apprenticeships at Levels 2, 3 and 4.

The curriculum offer provides progression opportunities from level 2 to level 6 in Sports Exercise Science and Criminology. This enables strong progression into HE, careers and uniformed services.

The College works in collaboration with The Fire Service regionally to deliver high quality apprenticeships.

### Creative Arts

Through our work in the creative arts sector, Bridgwater & Taunton College is having a highly positive impact on local employment and local enterprise. A long association with luxury leather goods manufacturer Mulberry is a key example of meeting employer needs.

Other achievements in Creative Arts include the McMillan Theatre, our state-of-the-art, multi-million-pound theatre and teaching facility that has pride of place in the community in Bridgwater and is open to the public.

## Approach to Developing the Plan and Stakeholders

At the heart of this agreement is a strong approach to strategic planning underpinned by robust mechanisms for monitoring and high expectations.

The Governing Body has continued to strengthen with the addition of the introduction of new members of the board, from key strategic positions from our stakeholders, securing the diverse skills base, experience and links to local business and community. The composition of board members has continued to evolve and incorporate the skills and experience required across a broad range of disciplines to further enhance a highly effective board with an excellent mix of skills and experience. The governors take a lead in setting a clear strategic vision, which is articulated through a robust annual strategic planning process, involving consultation with teams across the College. The governing body play an active role in The Association of Colleges, which provides a link into the local, regional and national FE sector.

As the lead for the Devon and Somerset Skills Development Fund, the College has responded to and enabled a collaborative approach to developing new provision designed to meet the needs of the local and regional economy. The Skills Development Fund provides a centralised framework for a co-ordinated response to skills in the South West. Highly effective governance provides robust oversight, which is monitored by the respective college boards.

The College is working in close collaboration with a number of employer responsive boards to inform the future Learning Skills and Improvement Plans. These are built on a firm foundation of a collaborative and strategic partnership through local and regional skills improvement plans.

The College works closely with schools in Somerset to strategically support and strengthen educational opportunities. This includes Bridgwater & Taunton College Trust, a charitable organisation which exists with the single legal and moral purpose to advance education for public benefit. A key strategic objective is to improve and maintain high educational standards within and beyond our schools. Our work with school stakeholders underpins the core purpose and success of the tertiary system in our local area.

The College works in collaboration with local schools and teachers to understand and plan the curriculum to enable all young people to succeed. This collaboration extends to strategic planning, transition work, provision for KS3 and careers support.

We work closely with The Local Authority and County Council to align strategic priorities to support the county and its skills needs. The College sits on the board of the new Somerset Education Strategy- Great Futures, The Special Educational Needs Strategic Board and local networks.

BTC is an active participant on a number of local, regional and national forums which help inform our priorities but also assist in informing policy. These include:

- The Sixth Form Colleges Association
- Landex
- Mixed Economy Group
- Colleges Alliance
- South West Principals Group
- SW AoC Governors Group

As a member of the South West Institute of Technology, we have responded and grown provision at Level 4 and above which directly responds to employer needs. The joint strategic board of the IoT (Institute of Technologies) enables a link between the accountability agreements of those South West colleges and the region. This relationship strengthens and extends the opportunities available to the region and its students.

Close collaboration with universities, both regionally and nationally, ensures the plan and curriculum provision is enabled to respond to higher level skills needs, for example in nursing and digital higher technical qualifications. As a county without a university, the College has identified the growth of university provision as a strategic priority.

Extensive links to employers through a variety of activities has resulted in highly bespoke curriculum which enables businesses to respond and grow. These relationships underpin the strategic and curriculum plan. For example, the College has maintained successful relationships with many employers including EDF Energy, Bylor, MoD, Environment Agency, Wessex Water, UK Power Networks, Somerset NHS Foundation Trust, Somerset County Council, British Gymnastics and National Trust. In addition, the College works successfully with a high volume of SMEs to ensure their workforce needs are successfully met.



### Case Study: Example of working with employers to meet regional, national and international needs: Gravity Project.

Bridgwater & Taunton College (BTC) has been on an innovative journey with the Gravity Enterprise Zone since 2018, initially arising from its highly practised work with its local council and other key stakeholders, playing a vital role in shaping the skills landscape both locally and regionally to support the UK's Clean Growth agenda. As the country's largest Further Education Apprenticeship provider, BTC has established strong, lasting strategic partnerships with key employers to develop technical skills across various workforce levels. These collaborations include notable names like EDF Energy, Ministry of Defence, NHS and the Environment Agency.

BTC's unwavering commitment to workforce development is nationally acknowledged. Its history of training initiatives goes back to 2012 with DHL/Morrisons. This dedication continued through a 12-year partnership with EDF Energy at Hinkley Point C (HPC), leading to the latest partnerships within the Gravity Enterprise Zone.

The Gravity Smart Campus, central to the Southwest and part of the HotSW Enterprise Zone, is poised to become a hub for clean energy, with BTC as the education and skills lead by working from the beginning through the planning approval and supporting of the site owners and the planning authority to shape the "Skills Charter". Through this charter, the college is responsible for developing a skilled workforce to support international investment in decarbonising transport through battery manufacturing for electrification. This initiative will create over 4,500 new jobs in 2-5 years.

BTC's employer-centric approach emphasises positivity, commitment, and optimism. This includes the college's

unique BTC Advantage programme, which helps the future workforce develop personal, transferable skills such as resilience, communication, teamwork, community engagement, and confidence, preparing them for fulfilling and productive working lives.

In conclusion, BTC's journey with the Gravity Enterprise Zone has been characterised by proactive leadership in coordinating skills responses, developing employer-centric training plans, and preparing for the future of the UK's clean energy sector. The college's proactive engagement and customised training delivery for major infrastructure projects have positioned it as a leader in developing the necessary skills for tomorrow's workforce

The College is working closely with the Somerset Chamber of Commerce to support development of the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP).

### Progress made against last Accountability Agreement

- Flexible Learning numbers have grown by 29% in response to national and regional skills needs, with a significant increase in health and social care and digital
- Increased ESOL provision by 6% in response to a changing demographic in Somerset
- Expanded curriculum offer in adult community learning with a focus on supporting women in Somerset back into employment with 36 learners benefiting
- Free Courses for Jobs offer expanded by 28%
- New T Levels introduced in Accountancy, Digital - Cyber security and Engineering- Light Vehicle
- The number of learners progressing between levels increased by 4%
- Apprenticeships starts grew by 9.2%, with a 4.8% growth in higher apprenticeships
- Higher Education provision (apprenticeships) in nursing grew by 84%
- The College is on track to meet the national outcomes target for apprenticeships
- The College has admitted an application for Degree Awarding Powers and is awaiting notification of assessment.

Aim	Link to Strategic Ambition/ Vision	Link to Strategic Priorities	Actions	By when
Develop and grow our ASF (Adult Skills Fund) offer to meet skills needs locally, regionally and nationally, to enable adults to move into employment and improve in-work opportunities.	Deliver high quality, proactive and flexible learning programmes to support adults.	Innovate and grow our curriculum for adults in response to local, regional, and national demand.  Develop and deliver high quality re-skilling and up-skilling programmes which enable businesses and adults to thrive.  Develop and deliver courses to engage adults in learning and support well-being and community cohesion.  Continue to partner with key stakeholders in our community to ensure opportunity for all.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to grow the flexible learning offer to ensure national skills needs are met by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increasing the wages threshold</li> <li>- Fully fund SSA 1.3 Health and Social Care- national priority</li> <li>- Fully fund SSA 4 Engineering and manufacturing technologies - LSIP Priority and Agratas</li> <li>- Fully fund SSA 5.2 Building and construction - LSIP Green Priority</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Increase provision in ESOL (English Speakers of Other Languages) to support those students who are new to our community, to include new 16-18 provision in Bridgwater.</li> <li>• Increase opportunities to deliver and grow bootcamps and Sector-Based Work Academies to enable adults to enter/re-enter the labour market and progress within the workplace supporting increased productivity and economic growth in the following sectors: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Digital - data analysis and web design</li> <li>- Leadership &amp; Management</li> <li>- Health &amp; Social Care</li> <li>- Engineering - nuclear, project controls, lifting &amp; automotive</li> <li>- Construction - plant operations and highways</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Extend the curriculum offer and increase the number of adults engaging in community learning.</li> <li>• Grow the FCFJ (Free Courses for Jobs) offer to increase skills of adults in key areas such as health, leadership and management and digital.</li> </ul>	July 2025

Aim	Link to Strategic Ambition/ Vision	Link to Strategic Priorities	Actions	By when
Increase numbers of students at Level 3.	An inspirational experience for school leavers.	<p>Invest in and grow our high-quality academic programmes including A Levels and T Levels.</p> <p>Engage with our school partners to ensure students and our community can realise the full benefit of the Tertiary education system.</p> <p>Ensure all students have access to a digital device to support and energise learning.</p> <p>Deliver high quality support and personal development to develop life skills and resilience.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Introduce new T Levels in Creative, Legal and Engineering</li> <li>Increase % of students achieving high grades by 5%</li> <li>Increase the number of 16-18 choosing to study by a further 3%</li> <li>Further develop the Level 2 offer to enable students to progress to higher levels of study</li> <li>Improve further GCSE outcomes</li> <li>Increase the number of students progressing through levels</li> <li>Grow our higher education offer to enable positive progression within Somerset, supporting raising low HE participation rates- increase applications to HE by 5%</li> </ul>	July 2025
Continue to grow high quality apprenticeship and work-based provision to meet employer needs.	Transformational change for employers and apprentices.	<p>Equip apprentices with the high-quality industry knowledge, skills, and behaviors to achieve and thrive in their chosen career.</p> <p>Work in partnership with employers to provide a safe, inclusive, and supportive experience for all.</p> <p>Match businesses and future talent to unlock their potential.</p> <p>Continue to grow our apprenticeship programme in response to regional and national needs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase apprentice provision by 5% annually.</li> <li>Maintain position of provider of choice and largest FE provider of Levy funded apprenticeships.</li> <li>Work in collaboration with employers locally, regionally, and nationally to provide bespoke responses to their challenges in areas such as health, construction, engineering and digital.</li> <li>Further improve apprenticeship retention and first time EPA outcomes to exceed 70%.</li> <li>Increase employer satisfaction score to excellent.</li> <li>Increase provision in degree and higher apprenticeships linked to employer needs.</li> <li>Increase commercial portfolio to enable wider employer needs to be met.</li> </ul>	July 2025
Grow higher education numbers and offer	Transforming Somerset through University Level Education	<p>Establish UCS as the leading provider of university-level education in Somerset.</p> <p>Deliver and enhanced student experience.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Achieve degree awarding powers.</li> <li>Increase portfolio to respond to employer needs, and enable more students to access local higher education in Somerset in construction, engineering, health &amp; well-being and digital.</li> <li>Increase number of HE students in health and associated well-being subjects.</li> <li>Expand HTQ offer to include 8 programmes.</li> </ul>	July 2025

**Corporation Statement - confirmation of Governor sign-off**

**On behalf of Bridgwater & Taunton College, it is hereby confirmed that the Corporation conducts reviews in line with the local needs duty, as such resulting this plan. The Annual Accountability statement and Local Needs Duty sets out an agreed statement of purpose, aims and objectives as approved by the Corporation at their meeting 20 June 2024.**



**Derek Randall MBE  
Chair of Governors**



**Andy Berry CBE  
Principal & CEO**

**20 June 2024**

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**Associated Links**

- Bridgwater & Taunton College Ofsted Report
- Strategic Planning Framework 2022 – 27
- Skills Launchpad



## BRIDGWATER & TAUNTON COLLEGE

### **Bridgwater Campus**

Bath Road, Bridgwater  
Somerset TA6 4PZ

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### **Taunton Campus**

Wellington Road, Taunton  
Somerset TA1 5AX

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### **Cannington Campus**

Rodway, Cannington  
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BRIDGWATER  
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COLLEGE