



**South  
Hampshire**  
College Group

# Strategic Plan 2023-2026

CREATING BETTER FUTURES

**Addendum update 2024**

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# Context

In September 2023 the Corporation approved the first South Hampshire College Group Strategic Plan. Over the course of the academic year, the Strategic Plan 2023-2026: Creating Better Futures set out a clear organisational purpose which has become well embedded and understood within, and beyond, the college group.

This purpose, along with a focused mission statement and a clearly defined vision, has helped to steer the Corporation's actions in the first year since merger.

Our stated vision at that time was:

- We will lead a better distributed, accessible, and collaborative group of South Hampshire Colleges.
- Through this, and with the commitment of our highly-valued people, we will provide excellence in professional and technical education and training across a wide community of students and employers in the Solent region.
- Our work will support the skills needs of employers and improve regional productivity, economic development and social mobility.
- We will be an agile organisation, constantly developing and improving.

- We will be responsive to policy and reforms in further education, and be adaptive to the changing needs of the region's employers.
- We will be a financially resilient and sustainable Further Education college, valuing the need to invest in its people and infrastructure.

The corporation agreed three measurable strategic objectives

1. Provide outstanding education, training and support
2. Benefit employers' skills needs
3. Be sustainable, agile and resilient

And, two cross-cutting themes:

- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
- Sustainability Goals

In May 2024 the Corporation reviewed progress made against the Strategic Plan and its on-going relevance to the current context in which the college group now operates.

It concluded that the strategic plan, in its current form, continues to provide clear direction for near-term merger consolidation, systems integration, and people development. The plan has the relevant emphasis on prioritising delivery of high-quality education, outstanding support for students and meeting employers' skills needs. In this first year of merger, the Corporation has been able to focus in detail on the three core strategic objectives. The Corporation resolved to better consider the two cross-cutting themes of diversity, equity, and inclusion, and the college group's sustainability goals.

As such, the Corporation is content to continue to adopt the current three-year strategic plan but considers it appropriate to include additional 'horizon scanning' to aid strategic thinking over a longer period and develop our response to the cross-cutting themes by way of governor-led task and finish groups.

# Updated Rear View Mirror – 2023/24

On 1st August 2023, South Hampshire College Group formed through the merger of City College Southampton, Eastleigh College and Fareham College. This group structure of three local Further Education (FE) colleges into a new regional college group came about through a Department for Education (DfE) review of post-16 provision in the local area. This review produced a strong evidence base to conclude that bringing together these three colleges would ensure a comprehensive, coherent, and accessible FE and Skills offer is available to meet the needs of the local area in a financially resilient and sustainable structure.

At the heart of the South Hampshire College Group purpose is the benefit to students, apprentices and our region's businesses. South Hampshire College Group provides high-quality further education provision where it's needed most and attracts inward investment for skills. The coming together of the colleges has supported improvements in learning and teaching, improved facilities and learning resources, provided greater resilience in the wider support services students require and offered improved opportunities for a more enriched learning experience. South Hampshire College Group helps 'create better futures' for the diverse communities of students it serves.

In the first year of merger South Hampshire College Group successfully built on the foundational strengths of its three component colleges with ambition and clarity of purpose.

The success of the college merger was closely monitored, with clear KPIs, SMART targets, a robust approach to risk through DfE oversight, and good governance. Throughout the academic year, the college was supported by a DfE Post-Intervention Monitoring and Support (PIMS) plan. The actions in this PIMS plan have been met or exceeded in the large majority of areas.

An Ofsted monitoring visit in May 2024 helped to fully validate the work invested in the merger, with significant progress found to have been made in all four themes inspected.

In the first year of merger the college group opened new facilities at CEMAST as part of the South Coast Institute of Technology investment. The merger also presented an opportunity to carry out a substantial programme of minor works across Southampton and Eastleigh Colleges, and update the IT infrastructure across the group. During the year, a significant estates strategy and implementation plan was developed for investment in the college group's Centres of Excellence programme. These Centres of Excellence will see curriculum consolidated between Southampton and Eastleigh from September 2024, with capital funding used to refurbish and resource outstanding learning environments.

Apprenticeship recruitment was better than planned and rapid improvements in apprenticeship quality were brought about following implementation of new structures and processes. Adult learning enrolments have also been better than planned and the college group's online learning programme has shown good levels of growth whilst continuing to deliver high-quality accessible training on-demand.

Another area of growth has been in increasing enrolments in the college group's provision for English for Speaker of Other Languages (ESOL). This education provision is particularly needed to meet the needs of the communities in the city of Southampton, and, as a result, the largest increase has been at Southampton College and to a lesser extent at Eastleigh College.

As noted in the Ofsted monitoring report, the merger has enabled much improved quality of education at Southampton College, through better professional development for existing teachers and an improved induction process for new teachers. The college now has lower turnover and vacancy rates which have previously compromised teaching quality.

New T Levels were introduced at Fareham College and Eastleigh College for the start of the academic year, with further courses being planned for across the group in the next academic year. Applications for these courses look



good but the knowledge and understanding of T Levels by parents and teachers is still limited compared to their familiarity with A Levels. Department for Education qualification reforms continue to present a challenge, particularly at Level 3 in the context of the removal of some applied general learning aims from public funding.

The College was successful in securing further funding through the Local Skills Improvement Fund, and, as the lead in this DfE funded programme, coordinated four regional collaborative projects, building upon prior success in two rounds of DfE Strategic Development Funding. These projects have provided impactful capital and revenue funding into the Solent region, and helped develop meaningful collaboration between colleges, training providers, the Hampshire Chamber of Commerce, the Local Authorities and regional employers.

Representatives of governing bodies from colleges across the Solent region met as a collaborative 'Meeting Local Needs Forum' to discuss a regional response to meeting employers' skills needs. This event successfully engaged governors and leaders in planning for future actions taken together to plan curriculum, meet skills needs and collaborate on future developmental activities.

As we come to the end of the first year of the college merger, we have secured consistency in approach across the group and also continued to ensure a response to local needs and community interests at each of the college group's campuses. Alongside this work, the leadership team has undertaken significant work to right-size the organisation and align our structures. Consistency in the application of policy, adoption of working practices, quality of learning and teaching, access to professional development and equity of working conditions is very much in progress.

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ROAD CAMPUS**

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