



**South
Hampshire**
College Group

Strategic Plan 2023-2026

CREATING BETTER FUTURES

Addendum update 2025

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Addendum to the Strategic Plan

- South Hampshire College Group formed by merger in August 2023. At the point of merger, the Corporation adopted a three-year strategic plan; 'Creating Better Futures'. This plan set out our purpose, mission and vision as:

Purpose

(Our reason for being)

- Creating Better Futures

Mission

(Our actions)

- To enable all our students and apprentices, and our region's businesses to be successful in their future, achieving their highest aspirations and standards, through exemplary technical and professional education and training.



Vision

(Our future aspirations)

- 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.

Addendum to the Strategic Plan

July 2025

The Corporation undertakes to review the strategic plan annually, in the context of the college's progress against the agreed strategic objectives and key performance indicators, and in response to changes in external factors of influence to the college group.

The Corporation undertook its second review of the three-year strategic plan in May 2025, and agreed to maintain the existing strategy for its third and final year before a new strategic plan is developed in 2026. The Corporation was content that the purpose, mission, vision and values still fully represent the college's role in the region, its ambitions and its organisational culture.

The strategic plan has so far provided a secure focus on priorities which balance the significant work required to fully embed a complex three-way merger of three standalone colleges, into a fully-integrated college group, whilst, at the same time, ensuring a clear focus on quality improvement, meeting employers' needs, securing financial resilience and enabling student success.

The following points of note and update were agreed in the Corporation's review of the strategic plan.



➤ Rear view mirror 2024/25

The second year of merger has seen the three previous colleges become fully integrated into a single organisation. IT and MI systems have been aligned, staff have been able to access new contracts with standardised terms and conditions, policies have been updated and agreed with trade unions, governance arrangements have strengthened, staff development has been expanded and the quality of teaching, learning and assessment improved and standardised.

Our recruitment of full-time students has been strong, and better than planned in the merger business plan. We have achieved a 5% growth year-on-year for the first two years of merger and expect to exceed this in the next academic year. Apprenticeship recruitment is also strong, and we have made full use of our Adult Skills Fund allocation.

➤ Governance

The Board has come together well over the last year, providing highly effective scrutiny and oversight of the executive. Risk management and audit assurance is strong; a mature Board Assurance Framework is in place, along with well-tracked corporate and strategic key performance indicators (KPIs). The Board is undertaking an External Board Review to support its future work. This review is

conducted with an aim to identify best practice, and consider development points for further improvement. The Board has now secured a new Chair to take on the work of the previous Chair, a National Leader of Governance, who played a vital role in establishing the Board during its transition through merger.



> Ofsted

South Hampshire College Group was inspected by Ofsted in May 2025. This was a full inspection under the Enhanced Inspection Framework, and followed a monitoring visit carried out twelve months earlier where the college was judged to have made significant progress in all four themes inspected. It is normal practice for a newly-merged college to be inspected within three years of a merger. Given the requirement also for all colleges to be inspected in the current inspection framework cycle, before its replacement from September 2025, the inspection of South Hampshire College Group was, in the event, less than two years since merger.

The outcome of the inspection was an overall effectiveness judgement of 'good'; all provision types, and key judgements areas were also graded as 'good'. Additionally, the college group was judged to be making a 'strong' contribution to meeting

skills needs. This skills contribution judgement is an excellent recognition of the regional leadership of collaborative funded skills programmes, and the deeply embedded employer engagement across the college group.

The Ofsted report represents a hugely important milestone for the college group, recognising the hard work of all colleagues in securing the benefits of merger, and, at the same time, improving the quality of education.

As we look ahead now, we have clear focus on the areas we need to make further improvement in the quality of education, and those areas where greater levels of consistency are required. These will be incorporated into our 2025/26 Quality Improvement Planning (QIP) cycle.



➤ PIMS

At the point of merger, oversight of the agreed key performance indicators set out in the merger plan, was provided by the Department for Education (DfE) through Post-Intervention Monitoring and Support (PIMS). In the two years since merger, we have demonstrated consistent progress in achieving these targets and have provided good governance in the

oversight of these with the Corporation and with the DfE.

We expect the process of PIMS to conclude in this academic year, now all the merger KPIs have been successfully achieved.



The national context

Since the initial strategic plan was written, and since the first review, there has been a change of government, and with it a series of new and emerging policy shifts.

Whilst some of these are potentially significant, and the impact of many policy areas as yet undetermined, it is considered that the effect of these changes does not yet fundamentally alter the purpose, mission and vision of the college as set out in the strategic plan.

As the policy landscape develops over the next few months, we will need to ensure we are responsive and agile to the opportunities and risks as they arise. Our strategic plan states *'we will be responsive to policy and reforms in further education, and be adaptive to the changing needs of the region's employers.'*

We have updated our Accountability Statement in line with updated national skills priorities, including defence which is an area we have significant existing employer links, and in response to updated priorities in the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP).

The construction industry remains a national skills priority and government has prioritised this area for additional investment through funding targeted at construction skills training, including investment in Construction Technical Excellence Colleges.

There are clear challenges ahead for Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), given the limitations of home student fee income covering rising costs, along with a decline in the enrolment of international students. The impact of this has some indirect consequence to our college strategy, and in response to the financial viability of HE we will look to consolidate our HE provision to core programmes linked to local skills needs and the South Coast Institute of Technology (IoT).

A new Post-16 Education and Skills is currently under development by the DfE and will be eagerly awaited by the sector. The content and sentiment of this whitepaper will inform our own strategic direction and potentially influence the future coordination and collaboration of the skills system in the region. Our current strategic plan positions us to be responsive

to changes in policy, agile and adaptable, and willing to collaborate and coordinate across the region.

The Becky Francis Curriculum and Assessment Review (CAR) is currently in progress and the outcomes of this will influence our future curriculum offer. In the meantime, the Corporation has taken the opportunity to consider alternative Level 3 options in the context of the successes and limitations of T Levels. The college remains committed to a technical and vocational curriculum, which enables progression from Level 1 to 3, and higher in some areas, and with destinations to apprenticeship, university or employment. Our vision currently states *'we will provide excellence in professional and technical education and training across a wide community of students and employers in the Solent region.'*

As the outcomes of the CAR become clearer, we will adapt and respond, as set out in our strategic plan vision statement of *'we will be an agile organisation, constantly developing and improving'*.

Amongst the many challenges communities face are increasing levels of youth unemployment. The rates of young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) are stubbornly high. The college group is well placed to support those who are NEET and will continue to work with the local authority on response provision that supports people back into education or work.

Similarly, we are well-placed to provide English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), in order to support the communities we work in.

The college group is actively engaged in the planning for devolution, and is considering now its future response to the risks and opportunities presented by devolution of the Adult Skills Fund (ASF). We are reducing our subcontracted values year-on-year, and prioritising our ASF to the Hampshire region.

As the county works towards a devolution deal, there is concurrent work on a Hampshire led skills plan and the development of a combined Local Skills Improvement Plan. We are actively engaged in the development of both of these important but potentially overlapping pieces of work.

Regional FE configuration

Our vision, as set out in the strategic plan in 2023, describes our ambition to *'lead a better distributed, accessible, and collaborative group of South Hampshire Colleges'*. Many of the factors that influenced the merger of the Fareham, Eastleigh and Southampton Colleges persist in the region. There are a large number of relatively small colleges with overlapping travel to learn patterns and duplication in provision, this puts pressure on the systemic challenges of FE teacher recruitment, and securing best value for money within limited public funds available. In this context, the college group will consider any future opportunity that may arise for further merger or consolidation of FE provision in the region.

We have had past success in regional FE systems leadership through our coordinating role in the Strategic Development Funds (SDF), Local Skills Improvement Fund (LSIF) and Institute of Technology (IoT). The LSIF has now come to the end of its funding period, but the collaboration and projects will continue to have impact in a coordinated regional response to skills needs. The future of the IoT programme is somewhat uncertain, with relicensing of IoTs only being extended for a three-year period. We will work with the IoT Board to consider what the future of the South Coast IoT may be.

The rhetoric from government indicates a continued focus on regional collaboration, which we are well-placed to lead, as highlighted in the statement below from Baroness Jacqui Smith, Minister of State for Skills.

"We will shift from a fragmented skills system to a coherent one, moving from a system that focuses on unproductive competition to one based on coordination. We will create a framework of local coordination between providers, responding to local skills needs, informed by national skills priorities."

Our group structure is highly effective in ensuring the colleges which comprise the group are responsive to their local communities, have devolved accountability for their curriculum and quality, but draw upon centralised corporate services for finance, marketing, estates, health and safety, and management information and IT systems. This ensures localised responsiveness of the curriculum with economies of scale, resilience and consistent practice in the operations of the college.





➤ SO1: Provide outstanding education, training and support

Following the Ofsted inspection, and the feedback received, we will continue to pursue this strategic objective with an enhanced focus on further improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. We will seek to further develop our

teachers through targeted CPD. We will continue to develop our tutorial and enrichment programmes, and widen our participation in work experience for all students.

➤ SO2: Benefit employers' skills needs

Our apprenticeship and adult skills provision are judged to be 'good' by Ofsted, and have improved significantly since merger. Being recognised by Ofsted as making a 'strong' contribution to meeting skills needs is an excellent endorsement of our strategic plan vision of *'our work will support the skills needs of employers and improve regional productivity, economic development and social mobility.'*

As we develop the next stages of the curriculum plan, we will capitalise on our strengths in apprenticeships, and adult skills, and build on already strong relationships with employers. Our strengths here will place us in a strong position for fulfilling the region's skills needs under devolved

public funding arrangements. To do so, we will further develop our strategic relationship with the future Strategic Authority.

Given the significant challenges Higher Education Institutions are facing with recruitment, and the increasing difficulty in delivering HE in FE in a financially viable structure, we will look to consolidate our HE provision to a core offer that meets local needs and links directly to the targets of the South Coast IoT. As such, we will no longer aim to meet the stated expectation in our strategic plan of *'our Higher Education provision will double over the duration of the strategic plan'*.

➤ SO3: Be sustainable, agile and resilient

The success of the merger was predicated on ensuring financial resilience within a two-year timeframe. Since merger, the college group has invested significantly in capital improvement of the facilities, and, in doing so, has consolidated to smaller, higher-quality, more efficient estate.

At the same time, and with substantial reorganisation of structures and employment contracts, the college has improved its pay to income ratio, financial health

score and EBDITDA. The financial turnaround of the college group has been significant, and we have still maintained the ability to provide year-on-year cost of living linked pay increases for all staff. A further annual pay award is planned for 2025/26. In doing so, we seek to fulfil our vision statement of *'we will be a financially resilient and sustainable Further Education College, valuing the need to invest in its people and infrastructure'*.

➤ Creating Better Futures

Our core purpose still binds us as a college group. There are numerous examples of the social impact of the college group. The success and development of our students is our reason for being, and their success is a result of a hard-working and committed

workforce. As we go into the third-year post-merger, we have achieved the formation of a single college group, secure in its financial standing and able to provide high-quality education, training and support for the communities its colleges serve.



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