

## **Worcester Sixth Form College: Meeting the Local Skills Need**

### **Background**

The Skills Reform legislation aims to:

- Give people the skills they need to get good jobs to boost productivity and build back better;
- Increase the flexibility and accessibility of provision to support lifelong learning;
- Put employers at the heart of the system, building on the success of apprenticeships;
- Increase the prestige and quality of technical education for those who do not go to university;
- Simplify adult funding for providers to give them more control and flexibility and to focus accountability on outcomes.

The Worcestershire Local Skills Report 2022 identified the following as Worcestershire's key sectors of employment:

- Health and Social Care (Health & Social Care; Health & Safety; Counselling & Psychology)
- Agri-tech (Agriculture)
- Advanced manufacturing (Engineering and Manufacturing)
- Construction (Construction (general); Electrical and Electronic Technology; Plumbing, Heating & Gas; Bricklaying; Stonemasonry)
- Cyber-security, Defence and IT (ICT Practitioners)
- Business and Professional Services (Marketing & Sales; Management; Administration; Accounting & Finance)

The Report identified the following priorities for employers in the county:

- Creating a skilled workforce with IT, job specific and technical skills
- Increasing demand for health and care skills to meet the needs of an ageing population
- Increasing levels of employment in the digital sector
- Developing individuals with leadership and management skills
- Filling significant existing vacancies in engineering, manufacturing and adult social care

Worcestershire's Skills Action Plan identified priorities of which the below are relevant to the College:

- To aim for all educational establishments to annually meet all 8 Gatsby Benchmarks with a particular focus on the Worcestershire economy
- To create an education and training provision eco-system that meets local needs and the future trend's of Worcestershire's economy
- To increase the number of graduates and skilled young people who spend a significant part of their economic life in Worcestershire

## **Review of Worcester Sixth Form College Provision**

At the Governors' Annual Conference in October 2022, members of the Local Governing Body reviewed the Local Skills Report for Worcestershire, identified priorities and how the College was currently meeting this need or the additional steps that could be taken. The Local Governing Body subsequently considered the questions within the guidance when conducting a review of how the College is responding to local need.

The Local Governing Body determined that:

1. The College's broad curriculum has many subjects which provide students with qualifications and skills that allows them to seek employment in the areas identified locally. The following subjects link directly to the gaps in skills demand identified locally:
  - Accounting A Level
  - Business A Level and Applied Level 3
  - Computer Science A Level
  - Engineering Applied Level 3
  - Food, Science & Nutrition Applied Level 3
  - Health and Social Care Applied Level 3
  - IT Applied Level 3
  - Psychology A Level Applied Level 3

Through extensive participation in additional qualifications (e.g. EPQ, Core Maths) and enrichment such (e.g. Ambition Programme, Student Union), the College also develops students skills to enable them to become more rounded individuals prepared for higher education or to enter the workplace. In any given week, 50% of students take part in some form of enrichment. The skills and qualities developed as part of these additional things are inherent of those identified in the Local Skills Report.

2. The College is actively encouraging students to be aspirational about their progression choices and this is being supported by curriculum areas. Through applying to Russell or Sutton group universities or for higher apprenticeships, this is preparing students to be able to apply for higher paid roles in the future. The College is introducing a T Level in Education and Childcare from September 2023 with the Health T Level to be introduced from September 2024. This indicates that the College's approach to its curriculum is responsive to increasing the employment rates and salaries of learners when they complete their studies.
3. Through strengthening the College's collaboration with local employers, it is anticipated that this will create more work experience and volunteering opportunities for its students. This in turn, will engage students in the key sectors of employment identified locally and consequently respond to the skills need. The College would willingly promote any incentives offered by local employers aimed at encouraging well-qualified young people to seek employment locally after securing higher level qualifications or training e.g. sponsorship, internships.

4. The College has a Foundation Year programme enables learners studying below level 3 to make sufficient progress. Students are able to complete Level 2 courses with the aim that they are qualified for progression at College on Level 3 courses or elsewhere. The progress of these students is monitored in the same way as those on level 3 programmes with the same high expectations around attendance and attitudes to study.
5. The county is well catered for and there is little duplication of provision with the local FE provider who withdrew their A Level offering a number of years ago and focus predominately on the truly vocational subjects e.g. automotive, construction etc. A decision to withdraw the Uniformed Protective Service course (final completion summer 2022) had no negative impact on local capacity to meet needs in this area as the course is offered at a local provider.
6. Current learners have been adversely affected by the pandemic – lost learning and lack of socialisation. The College is taking appropriate measures to address this to ensure learners are well prepared to seek and be suitable for employment. The College addresses this through encouraging all students to participate in enrichment to develop social skills and through supporting students to be successful in their outcomes and aspirational about their progression options. The College will review whether it could introduce some aspect of Office 365 proficiency to respond directly to skills identified as lacking in the Local Skills Report.
7. The College is responding to the technical skills agenda and considering how delivery of these courses aligns with local skills needs. It will deliver the Education and Childcare T Level from September 2023 with plans to introduce the Health T Level (and others) from 2024 onwards.
8. The College supports the Local Authority in meeting its duty in relation to young people at risk of becoming NEET. The College's Foundation Year programme for those learners not qualified for Level 3 programmes clearly prevents some young people becoming NEET as does the introduction of a T Level which will suit some learners who otherwise might not continue in education.
9. The College is effective in meeting the needs of learners with special educational needs and disabilities. The College has a large Learning Support team to meet the needs of students with more complex learning needs providing in class support, one to one support, help with exam access arrangements.
10. In relation to the College, a high proportion of students progress to higher education and apprenticeships demonstrating the impact of the curriculum and success in ensuring students leave College with strong outcomes.
11. Through its curriculum, the College prepares learners to seek employment in 4 of the 6 key sectors of employment identified. Many of our students have local part-time employment and are prepared through academic study and personal development to be well equipped to seek future local employment.

12. The Heart of Worcestershire College and other FE providers in the county deliver qualifications in agriculture and construction addressing those areas of local need that the College is unable to respond to.
13. The College's offering of 34 A Level subjects, a range of Applied courses and the planned introduction of a T Level ensures there are no gaps in the curriculum offer.

The Local Governing Body has identified the following actions for the College in relation to further responding to the local skills need:

- Develop strategies aimed at making student progression aims more aspirational to increase the numbers applying to university, in particular, Russell/Sutton universities and those securing degree level apprenticeships.
- Increase the number of students participating in organised work experience/volunteering.
- Continue to review the level 2 curriculum to ensure appropriate progression routes.
- Consider whether there is scope to develop student proficiency in Office 365.
- Monitor and review other suitable qualifications to respond to the defunding of applied courses to ensure there are no gaps in the curriculum and that there are suitable progression routes for students who would otherwise have studied applied courses.
- Ensure that the College is represented on the LSIP and engages with any recommendations or initiatives.