

**Riverside
College**
Widnes & Runcorn



Annual Accountability Statement for **Riverside College** 2023 to 2024 Academic Year

April 2023

College Mission and Purpose

Our Vision

Through the excellence of the education we provide, we will enhance and transform lives.

We strive to be sector-leading in everything we do.

Our Values

1. Teaching and Learning is our priority and the needs and safety of our students always come first.
2. As members of the College, we are partners in the success of the organisation, and we are all accountable for our outcomes.
3. High standards are at the heart of all that we do. In our pursuit of excellence, we recognise that individually and collectively we can always improve.
4. Within our college community we treat each other with respect, trust, openness, care and consideration. We celebrate student and staff success.
5. We are an inclusive college where we promote and protect equality and diversity.
6. We work in partnership with employers and other stakeholders so that we can make a positive contribution to local, regional and national economic development.



Strategic Aims and Objectives

Riverside College has one main strategic document. The Strategic Plan is updated annually and contains our main strategic priorities for the year ahead. These priorities are contributed to and reviewed by the Governing Body each year.

In addition to the Strategic Plan the College has a short-term strategic sub document called the QEG (Quality, Efficiency and Growth), which is an ongoing document to ensure that we are meeting the priorities we have set out whilst responding appropriately to changes within the sector in the immediate and long-term sense. This second document reviews quality of curriculum, student growth, property strategy and financial indicators. The strategic aims outlined below have been taken from the Strategic Plan 22-23.

Our Strategic Aims

1. To achieve high **quality** outcomes for our students by prioritising teaching, learning and progression.
2. To continue to improve levels of **efficiency** and remain in outstanding financial health.
3. To maximise opportunities for **growth**.

- 1 To achieve high **quality** outcomes for our students by prioritising teaching, learning and progression.

We will do this by:

- 1.1 Prioritising the delivery of outstanding **quality** in terms of teaching, learning and assessment and the student experience so that all our students progress and reach their potential.
 - 1.2 Striving to create a college community with core values at its heart.
 - 1.3 Nurturing our students and staff so that we have high levels of morale and wellbeing, together with creativity, innovation and excellence.
 - 1.4 Providing exceptional levels of student care with an emphasis on good citizenship, employability skills and positive progression outcomes.
 - 1.5 Investing in our staff to sustain high quality provision through outstanding staff development activities.
 - 1.6 Developing leadership and management skills at all levels within the organisation through the Leadership Development Programme.
 - 1.7 Implementing a recovery programme to identify gaps in knowledge and skills due to the pandemic and building on the digital skills learnt in lockdown.
- 2 To continue to improve levels of **efficiency** and remain in outstanding financial health.

We will do this by:

- 2.1 Maintaining financial stability through effective cost control and creating funds to grow.
- 2.2 Investing in and modernising our centres to meet local and regional priorities and addressing the needs of green technology and the low carbon economy.

To maximise opportunities for **growth**.

We will do this by:

- 3.1 Promoting growth areas, particularly 16-18, Higher Education, apprenticeships, full cost recovery courses and the new opportunities for adults.
- 3.2 Prioritising the needs of the people of Halton and the Liverpool City Region (LCR).
- 3.3 Continuing to be the first choice for school leavers, adult learners and employers while maintaining a market-led, regionally responsive college with an exciting and engaging curriculum.
- 3.4 Working in partnership to engage those who traditionally do not participate in education and training.
- 3.5 Working with employers and Employer Representative Bodies (ERBs) to develop a responsive curriculum to close the skills gap and provide a highly skilled local workforce.

[Strategic Plan 2022 2023 FINAL.pdf](#)

Context and Place

The Communities We Serve

The College is located within the Borough of Halton which is part of the Liverpool City Region. Geographic location means it sits on the edge of the LCR and so also serves the communities of Cheshire, Warrington and Greater Manchester.

The College is a medium sized general further education college generating £33 million income. This has increased by 40% predominantly through the growth in 16-18 numbers and apprenticeships increasing to over 500 in 2023.

The College operates out of three campuses, the Kingsway Centre, the Cronton Sixth Form Centre and Foundation Studies Centre. All are located within a 3-mile radius of each other but serve different learner groups allowing us to meet the diverse needs of the community whilst ensuring we meet the skills needs of the area.



The College offers the following types of provision: 16-18 study programmes, including T Levels; adult learning programmes; apprenticeships; provision for learners with high needs; Higher Education (HE) and full cost recovery courses. The College was rated **OUTSTANDING** by Ofsted in June of 2020 and has remained in **OUTSTANDING** financial health (ESFA) since 2013.

The College has made a significant contribution to the improvements in education in the Borough in recent years and recruits a large proportion of learners from areas of high social and economic deprivation. The College is the only post-16 provider in the Borough, apart from Ormiston Bollingbroke Academy which is the only school with a sixth form. The College has greatly contributed to NEET numbers which currently sit at 4% compared to the England national rate of 5.5%.



The Kingsway Centre

At this centre the College offers both 16-18 and adult programmes that range from Entry to HE. HE programmes are growing in numbers and are offered in partnership with Staffordshire University. Most apprenticeship programmes are based at this site and have grown in numbers whilst delivering strong collaborative models at local, regional and national level. There is a strong skills and STEM focus alongside a highly inclusive provision that supports young people and adults from all communities, and particularly those most disadvantaged to progress and develop new skills. The College is the leading provider of construction and advanced manufacturing training, operating from this centre, and is working with major employers to develop new programmes connected to Hydrogen. Additional growth in bespoke employer programmes, which are mainly based at this centre.



The Cronton Sixth Form Centre

At this centre the College offers a 16-18 model that primary focusses on Level 3 with some small pockets at Level 2. Courses on offer range from A Levels, Vocational qualifications such as BTEC & UAL and the newly introduced, T Level. The College continues its focus on STEM areas at the centre with the creation of the IDEA Centre (innovation, design, engineering, applications) and newly built Health, Well Being & Sport Centre. The curriculum on offer is wide ranging and aligned to the needs of the Liverpool City Region and regional demands for Engineering, Mathematics, Health, Science, Creative and Digital skills.



The Foundation Studies Centre

At this centre the College offers programmes that support learners with a range of mild to moderate learning difficulties and disabilities. Programmes are either qualification or RARPA based and created to meet the skills needs in the area with a strong focus on employment and links to the Pathway to Adulthood. To ensure that programmes are vocationally challenging, links with the Kingsway Centre are strongly maintained and programmes ensure learners have access to industry level workshops, kitchen and facilities.

Halton And The Liverpool City Region

Halton



The Borough of Halton is comprised of the towns of Widnes and Runcorn, which have a combined population of 128,577. However, the College does recruit learners from across the Liverpool City Region and into nearby Cheshire and Warrington postcodes. 30% of the population within Halton is reported to live within high deprivation areas. The ethnic demographic of Halton is reported at 96.5% white with only 4.8% born outside the UK. 19.1% is the Universal Credit rate for Halton and is the second highest within the LCR. 30.4% of adults are qualified to Level 4 and above the lowest in the LCR.

The Liverpool City Region (LCR)

The Liverpool City Region is a combined authority region of England, incorporating Liverpool and neighbouring Local Authority Boroughs of Halton, Knowsley, Sefton, St Helens, and Wirral. Since April 2014 the six local authorities in the area, constituting the combined authority, have pooled together powers over economic development, regeneration and transport policy.

The Liverpool City Region is strongly established as an important driving force in the economy of Northern England and as a strategic sea and air gateway to the European Union. The city region provides some 741,000 jobs, generating GVA of £33 billion.

The region is largely monocentric with Liverpool as the dominant employment centre, however economic activity is widely spread across the six districts. Broadly speaking, Liverpool is the commercial, cultural and transport hub of the region, with Sefton as the base of Seaforth Dock and tourist resort of Southport, Halton as the location for chemical, science, technology, logistics and distribution companies, and Knowsley, St Helens and Wirral providing key manufacturing and logistics for the area.

The City Region generates significant output through manufacturing, particularly in Halton and Knowsley (contributing 36% of all GVA). Other sectors, including health, retail and education, 1 LCR Office for National Statistics, NOMIS September 2021 also play a key role in the LCR economy and continue to add economic and social value.

Within the Region there are six Higher Education Institutions and 12 Further Education Colleges. Education levels in the city region are lower than national averages with 39.4% educated to NVQ Level 4 or higher compared to the national average of 43.6%. The educational performance of young people within Liverpool City Region has been an issue of concern for many years. The proportion of pupils at Key Stage 4 achieving Grade 5+ (Inc English & Maths) is 5% lower in the City Region than across England.

Liverpool City Region has a combined population of approximately 1.6 million, 979,500 of whom are of working age. The unemployment rate in the Region is currently 3.9%.

Over the coming decades, the city region plans to deliver some of the UK's largest and most ambitious development and infrastructure schemes, representing a development value in excess of £30bn.

“An outstanding and effective skills system that meets the needs of employers, individuals of all ages and communities and drives high aspirations and attainment, to create a truly global and competitive City Region at the heart of the Northern Powerhouse.”

The strategic priorities identified by the St Helen's Chamber for across the Liverpool City Region are the following priority sectors:

- Construction (All Areas)
- Manufacturing (All Areas)
- Logistics and Warehousing (St Helens and Halton)
- Professional Business Services
- Visitor Economy

The geographical centres for the priority growth sectors are illustrated in the map below¹².



Strengths of the Area

- The LCR is home to the UK's largest westward facing port and, combined with the recently announced freeport and growing manufacturing and logistics sectors, can drive local and national export-led recovery.
- Liverpool is a key international gateway for trade, and people, into the North-West. There are several nationally significant infrastructure assets in the City Region including the Port of Liverpool, Liverpool John Lennon Airport, and extensive transport network, which includes the 120km Mersey rail network. This helps people access employment, amenities and services quickly. It takes significantly less time, on average, for people to travel to work in the City Region than other places in the country. Public transport is the next focus to ensure all employment sites have the accessibility they need as current systems are not yet strong enough.
- Over the past decade, the LCR labour force underwent a shift, with LCR residents now increasingly more likely to be in employment and less likely to be in economic inactivity or unemployment. Between 2009 and 2020, the proportion of residents economically inactive fell from 28% to 24%, and the employment rate rose from 64% to 73%. This increased employment was contributing to significant improvements in economic performance.
- Recent years have seen a significant improvement in LCR's qualifications profile. Since 2004, the number of people with no qualifications has more than halved, while LCR has seen the third fastest growth in the number of residents with at least degree level qualifications.

- Liverpool City Region has made significant progress in meeting its decarbonisation targets in recent years, but there is more to be done. Since 2005, LCR has made good progress and its carbon footprint has decreased by around 40%. Per capita, emissions stand at 4.4 kilotonnes in LCR, one of the lowest footprints in the country, and significantly lower than the 5.0 nationally.
- The Liverpool City Region has several significant natural capital resources which provide a good opportunity to create cleaner, renewable energy, which can support national decarbonisation objectives. The proximity of Liverpool Bay and the Irish Sea are significant advantages and through its offshore wind sector, LCR has secured £4.3bn of private sector investment in recent years. Alongside this, the Mersey Tidal project has the potential to make a substantial contribution to the UK's energy infrastructure and support it to compete internationally.
- There had been a dramatic rise in the number of economically active residents, particularly since 2014, and the unemployment rate had reduced from 10% to less than 4%.
- Digitally, Liverpool City Region is one of the most connected places in the UK. Rollout of high-speed broadband infrastructure has continued at pace, with 70% of premises having gigabit capability, the fifth highest of all LEPs. There is a correlation between connectivity and city performance, making improvement to digital infrastructure a necessity, as it will increasingly drive improvements in economic growth, productivity and quality of life.
- LCR's natural assets, including the waterfront and coastline, alongside its wide array of heritage buildings, theatres, museums and galleries contribute to a cultural offer that is global in reach and central to the development of a brand that attracts profile and investment. In 2018, LCR attracted 67 million visitors, and visitor spend generated an estimated £5bn boost to the economy and supported 55,000 jobs. In fact, Liverpool City Region has the highest density of arts, entertainment and recreation jobs outside of London.
- The 2016 Northern Powerhouse Independent Economic Review identified four 'prime capabilities' where the north of England has existing highly productive sectoral strengths and R&D assets which are, or have the potential to be, internationally significant: advanced materials and manufacturing, health innovation, energy, and digital industries. The LCR has the capabilities for all these sectors, including the ones highlighted within the table below.

Figure 6: Example sectoral strengths and specialisms in the north-west

| | Cheshire & Warrington (C&W) | Cumbria | Greater Manchester (GM) | Lancashire | Liverpool City Region (LCR) |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|--|---|--|
| Manufacturing | Adv engineering, esp automotive | Adv manufacturing, inc nuclear submarines | Adv manufacturing - inc. engineering, materials textiles, food/drink | Adv manufacturing, esp aerospace and automotive | Adv manufacturing, inc. automotive, food/drink, glass and shipbuilding |
| | Chemicals | | | Chemicals | Chemicals |
| Health innovation | Life sciences, inc. pharmaceuticals | Biopharma manufacturing | Life sciences, inc. pharma, biotech, cancer | | Life sciences |
| | | | Health system reform inc. clinical trials, analytics, devices | | Digital Health Systems |
| | | | Health and biomedical academic and clinical research | | Health research - inc. infectious and pancreatic disease and paediatrics |
| Energy | Energy, inc. nuclear | Nuclear power | Nuclear (research) | Nuclear | Nuclear |
| | | Offshore wind | Low carbon goods and services | Offshore wind | Offshore wind and tidal |
| | | | | | Hydrogen |
| Digital | | | Creative industries | | Advertising and marketing |
| | | | Digital and ICT | | Digital and ICT |
| Other | Financial & professional services | Tourism | Financial & prof services, inc. legal, accounting, consulting, finance | Legal and accounting | Port activity - freight, logistics, maritime |
| | Agri-tech and food | Agri-Food | | Tourism | Legal, maritime insurance & wealth management |

Source: Adapted from Transport for the North (2016).

Challenges of the Area

- Liverpool City Region still has a high proportion of residents with no qualifications, 9% compared to 6% nationally, and a low proportion of residents with at least degree level qualifications, 38% compared to 43% nationally. These gaps point to a less flexible labour market that acts as a drag on economic performance. Those with low or no qualifications are more likely to be economically inactive, while the relative lack of highly qualified workers, can lead to skills shortages among higher productivity firms.
- COVID-19 has had a large negative impact on the LCR economy, and whilst it has started to recover as of the summer of 2021 it was estimated to be 3% smaller than it had been at turn of the year. However, the employment rate is up 4.4%, standing at 73.6% and just under the England rate of 74.9%. It remains the case that too many people of working age continue to be not in employment, and more than a quarter of people still do not participate in the labour force as result of long-term sickness.

Health remains a significant barrier to work and a barrier to increasing overall productivity.

- The high number of residents with no or low qualifications is a longstanding challenge. This starts with poor educational attainment, with 62% of LCR pupils achieving grades 4 or above in English and Maths GCSEs, compared to 65% of pupils nationally. This leads to a high proportion of young people not in employment, education or training (NEET). As of 2020, 6.1% of 16 - 17 year olds in LCR were NEET compared to 5.5% nationally.
- There are too many communities that face entrenched and widespread deprivation as more than a third of LCR's neighbourhoods are in the 10% most deprived nationally. While deprivation is common across most domains, deprivation related to health, employment and income is very prevalent across the City Region. The challenges associated with these types of deprivation prevent residents from accessing opportunities and fulfilling their potential.
- Per head of population, the LCR economy produces around £21,500 of GVA, which compares to around £30,000 nationally. This represents a 29% shortfall and reflects the lower levels of prosperity across the City Region.
- The Liverpool City Region's housing stock is typically older, lower value and less energy efficient. The quality of the Liverpool City Region's housing stock has implications for both the ability to attract and retain talent, and the quality of life of residents.
- This prosperity gap is partly driven by the relatively low density of jobs and businesses in the Liverpool City Region. LCR has the seventh lowest employment density and fourth lowest business density out of all LEPs. This represents 6,600 jobs and 550 businesses per 10,000 working age residents, compared to 7,700 and 790 nationally. While these lower levels of activity contribute to poorer economic performance, they also represent a significant opportunity for growth.
- LCR residents are still more likely to be economically inactive (24%), and less likely to be in employment (73%), compared to the rest of the country, with national rates standing at 21% and 76% respectively. These gaps are longstanding and driven by a range of complex factors including, poor health and wellbeing, poor skills, and a high prevalence of deprivation. For many residents, poor health acts as a barrier to participating in the labour market and accessing economic opportunities.
- Poor health, work-limiting illness and disability are common, with almost half of our neighbourhoods in the top 10% most deprived nationally, in terms of health deprivation
- There are still too few businesses and jobs to support strong economic performance within the LCR. There are around 550 businesses per 10,000 working age residents in LCR, which is the fourth lowest of all LEP areas. In order to reach the national average business density (790 per 10,000 working age residents), another 23,500 businesses would need to be added to the LCR business base. Improved business density would foster greater innovation, higher productivity and more resilient business base.

- A significant number of properties and businesses are threatened by the impacts of climate change – including the cost and disruption associated with more frequent and severe flooding events, and coastal erosion. This requires adaptation and mitigation, ensuring infrastructure is future-proof, and that innovative solutions to environmental challenges are developed. Ensuring Liverpool City Region is greener, cleaner, and healthier for all communities is critical.

Approach to Developing the Plan

Key Stakeholders

The College has long standing relationships with a number of local, regional and national partners in key areas. These relationships are organic in nature and ensure that the college is always evolving and adapting to provide our learners, and their future employers, with the best possible learning experiences and the skills required for next steps and employment.

Forecasts for the City Region suggest that the number of jobs will grow by some 22,200 up to the year 2025. This could increase by up to 75,000 jobs by 2025, if a series of transformational developments across the City Region go ahead. Forecasts represent net new jobs to the Liverpool City Region economy and do not take into account the jobs that will require new employees to replace those who retire or otherwise leave the workforce. This is a particular concern in advanced manufacturing and health and care within the region. Broad estimates suggest that around 26,000 jobs will need to be filled each year, on average these will far outweigh newly created employment. Meeting this replacement demand with skilled labour is a vital challenge for the City Region and a key opportunity for local residents.

As we are the only College in the Borough of Halton, we ensure our offer meets a wide range of needs from a vast pool of learners entering education at a range of ages, stages, and skills requirement. To do this we ensure our network engages with local, regional or national bodies. We have strong relationships with Halton Borough Council, The Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, the Chambers of Commerce, and a range of local stakeholders. The College is a member of the Halton Association of Head Teachers, The Halton Learning Alliance, The Runcorn Town Deal, and the Association of LCR Colleges (Principal is Chair) and as such ensures we act as lynch pin for supporting skills and education in local communities. The College's exceptional growth in income, of over 40% in the last 5 years is testament to our continued commitment to meet the skills needs within the local area.

The College also works with the Department of Education, Education Training Foundation, NASEN, pursuing excellence in inclusive practice for students and staff with SEND.

The College also has strong ties with local regional Colleges, local schools, universities, and Independent Training Providers. The College Chairs both the Liverpool City Region Colleges Association Principal's Group and the Deputy Principal's Group. This ensures that our combined efforts help to secure the region's required skills needs and collaborates to support across curriculum areas. The College's Principal also sits on the Halton Association of Head Teachers Group. Our latest appointment to the Board of Governors is the Chief Executive of Halton Borough Council and the Chief Executive of the Halton Chamber of Commerce. Both recent appointments demonstrate our commitment to meeting the skills of the City Region. In addition, four of the College's senior team volunteer their time on the Governing Boards of local High schools and one with the Metropolitan Police.

Community links are strong within the College as it recognises its responsibility as the sole GFE provider of the area. The diverse curriculum is supported by various organisations to ensure that learners benefit from a holistic and well-rounded experience. Examples include Suicide Awareness, Food Bank, Race for Life, College Nurse, Macmillan, Shawn Bailey

Wellness to look at mental health, Kooth, CAMHS, Channel Panel, SCOG (Contextual Safeguarding Operation Group), Mental Health in males with Halton Borough Council, Knife Crime Prevention, Gambling Awareness, Anfield Boxing, State of Mind Charity, Job Centre, Cheshire Police, Papyrus, Dementia Awareness, Andy's Man Club, Mind, The Dogs Trust, The Daniel Adamson Steamship Working Museum, Catalyst Museum, Children in Need, Save the Children, Hate Crime Awareness, Time to talk, British Heart Foundation, RSPCA, Royal British Legion, Alzheimer's society, Red Nose Day, Action for Happiness, International Day for Happiness Charity, World Aids Day Charity, Stonewall, 42nd Street, National Autistic Society, Autism Education Trust and Save the Children (Christmas Jumper Day).

Links with employers are fundamental to how the College operates, designs curriculum, and prioritisation in infrastructure and growth. This is connected across all levels, programmes and curriculum offers with lower levels focussing on more general employability skills and higher levels looking at more specific and specialised skills required for employment into specific industries. The College has invested over £20 million in funds, over the last 5 years, to ensure that these skills are practiced on industry ready equipment backed up by employer influence and input to confirm skills are up to date and relevant.

The College works with hundreds of different employers across a range of curriculum areas in local, regional and national contexts. Many of these links have been established and sustained over a long duration of time. The College prides itself on the fact that it works with large employers but also mid and SMEs. The Government's Trip Advisor Feedback rating for providers revealed that Riverside College had feedback from over 193 employers with an average 3.6 rating of Excellent. Details of employer links to specific curriculum areas can be found in the appendixes.

Duty to review provision in relation to local needs

We are committed to complying with our duty under a new section 52B of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 to review provision in relation to local needs, as proposed in the Skills and Post-16 Education Bill 2022. We will look to hold a review at least every three years to identify how well we are meeting local needs associated with securing suitable employment. We will publish a report on our main website following this review. We will factor in any actions from this report into our Accountability Agreement plan.

References to Relevant Supporting Documentation

<https://liverpoolcityregion-ca.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/LCR-Local-Skills-Report-2022-23.pdf>

<https://www.liverpoolcityregion-ca.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/Plan-for-Prosperity-Evidence-Base-Summary.pdf>

https://www.liverpoolcityregion-ca.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/LCRCA_SKILLS_STRAT.pdf

<https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/la/1946157073/report.aspx#tabearn>

<https://www.liverpoolcityregion-ca.gov.uk/growing-our-economy/plan-for-prosperity/>

<https://www.liverpoolcityregion-ca.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/Plan-for-Prosperity-Full-Evidence-Base.pdf>

<https://www3.halton.gov.uk/Pages/councildemocracy/CensusandStatistics/CensusandStatistics.aspx>