



**West Thames College**  
**Accountability Statement 2023-24**



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## Introduction

Welcome to West Thames College from Tracy Aust, CEO and Principal and Stuart McGeoch, Chair of Governors. We are very proud at West Thames of being a local inclusive college, serving the needs of our very diverse communities. We work collaboratively with a range of partners to ensure that we meet local, regional and national skills needs, contributing to economic prosperity and social inclusion.

In producing this Accountability Statement for the period 2023-24, we have set out how we contribute and will continue to contribute to the skills agenda, addressing the priority sectors as outlined in the draft London LSIP and the West London sub-regional annex.

Key areas of focus for 2023-24 include:

- Curriculum development and implementation in priority sectors (across all provision types – Education Programmes for Young People, Adults, Higher Education, and provision for students with SEND), working closely with employers
- Implementation of T levels in two key sectors – digital and health
- Growth in apprenticeships in identified priority sectors, addressing skills needs in these sectors and cross-cutting skills in green and digital
- The embedding of sustainability and green skills across the organisation
- Further development of transferable skills and entrepreneurial skills through our enhanced skills framework
- Continued development of digital skills across the organisation
- Positive student destination, ensuring appropriate careers education is provided, enabling all students to make informed choices and better understand their career options

Tracy Aust  
CEO & Principal

Stuart McGeoch  
Chair of Governors

## College Vision and Purpose



Our purpose is to provide inclusive and accessible education that raises the ambitions of our students and enables them to succeed in their chosen pathway, whilst ensuring the curriculum we deliver is clearly linked to skills priorities at national, regional and local level. We do this by working in collaboration with our partners.

Our 3 Year Strategic Plan for the period 2022-25 is rooted in ambition and clearly sets out the key goals that we are committed to deliver.

- An outstanding learning experience for all of our students through an ambitious employer led curriculum offer which successfully meets the needs of the diverse communities which we serve and is aligned to national, regional and local priorities.
- A high quality and inclusive provision enabling all students to reach their full potential and fulfil their career aspirations.
- A professional, dedicated and healthy workforce through continued investment in our staff.
- Excellent resources and facilities through investment in our estate and technology.
- Outstanding financial health.
- An education and skills offer that is built on strong partnerships and collaboration.
- An organisation which is environmentally, economically and socially sustainable.

Our Strategic Plan was approved by our Governing Body on 12<sup>th</sup> October 2022 and the link for this and other relevant supporting documentation can be found on page 13 of this document.

## **The Communities We Serve**

West Thames is a successful vibrant College of Further & Higher Education, situated in the London Borough of Hounslow. We are a medium sized college with two campuses. Our main campus is in Isleworth and our second, smaller campus, just a few miles away is in Feltham, which is home to our Skills + Logistics Centre. West Thames is a local inclusive college serving the needs of a diverse community. We are the only Further Education college within the borough and have a strong, established reputation for providing high quality, inclusive education and training.

We offer an extensive range of vocational programmes and apprenticeships for young people and adults, with an annual intake of 6,000 students per year. Our provision ranges from entry level through to level 6, with a mixture of full-time and part-time study. Our curriculum provision is closely aligned to local and regional priorities and we are very well embedded with our community.

Our students come from a very diverse catchment area, speaking over 30 different languages. We have a significant number of students who are asylum seekers or refugees and a relatively high proportion of Looked After Children and young people with SEND.

In addition to this, a significant proportion of 16-19-year olds on Study Programmes (44%) do not have GCSE 4-9 grades in both English and maths at the start of their programme. This is significantly higher (+21%) than the General Further Education (GFE) national rate where only 23% of 16-19 students would have neither. This means that 44% of our students have to study both English and maths GCSEs alongside their main vocational qualification, and hence have a much lower starting point than the average 16-19 GFE student.

The College was inspected by Ofsted in September 2021 and was graded Good with Outstanding features.

We play a key role within the local community, contributing to economic recovery and prosperity as well as social inclusion. This includes working with local stakeholders ranging from employers, local authorities, local community groups and local residents. Our collaborative approach enables us to steer and shape local provision, meeting the needs of our range of stakeholders.

We work closely with a range of partners, some of whom are co-located with us, including Ambitious about Autism, the West London Chamber of Commerce and Woodbridge Park Education Services. Our strong links with key strategic partners including governmental and business groups, as well as schools, other colleges and HE institutions, means we are very well placed to meet both local and regional needs.

## **Environment & Economic Context**

### **Hounslow**

West Thames sits within the London Borough of Hounslow which is a richly diverse borough. It is home to 288,000 residents with 117,000 born outside the UK and 188 languages spoken. 86,000 residents are under-25. As a borough, there are approximately 14,775 businesses of which 88% are micro businesses/SMEs. Alongside these, there are also a number of large multinational businesses, many located on the Great West Road, just 1.5 miles from our Isleworth campus. The large employers based there include Sky, GSK and JC Decaux.

As a borough, the key business sectors are: information and communication, professional, scientific and technical, transportation and storage; wholesale and retail trade; administrative and support services; manufacturing and construction. There is also a thriving creative economy.

In the years running up to the pandemic, Hounslow was in a strong economic position and was the second fastest growing economy in London. However, the pandemic coupled with Brexit, put a significant strain on the local economy. There has been a significant increase in the number of unemployed, a rise in the number of residents in poverty (1 in 5 children), while it is recognised that there is a notable disparity in opportunities for ethnic and socio-economic communities/residents with relatively low qualifications and insecure employment; Hounslow has lower median resident wages than most of London and the third lowest proportion of people in skilled work. The pandemic also highlighted the reliance on Heathrow Airport and its supply chain, the distribution and accommodation sector, the information and communication sector as well as the relatively low level of high value, professional services. The local authority, working with its key partners, like the College has produced its One Hounslow Plan which serves to begin to address this.

### **West London**

Hounslow forms part of the sub-region of West London. This sub-region comprises of the seven boroughs of Barnet, Brent, Ealing, Hammersmith & Fulham, Harrow, Hillingdon and Hounslow. West London, like Hounslow, was disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. In response to this, West London, in collaboration with partners including West Thames produced their Build & Recover Plan. Both the local and sub-regional recovery plans are closely aligned with the London Mayor's priorities.

As a college, we are very cognisant of the ever changing political, economic and environmental landscape in which we are working. At a time of such uncertainty, the need to collaborate is paramount. As the local college, we play a pivotal strategic role within the borough as well as more broadly across the wider West London region in local economic development, business innovation and skills delivery.

A core strand of our strategy is our partnership work. We work very closely with our local, sub-regional and regional partners to address the key priorities driving both economic recovery and growth. As a college, we lead on a number of local and sub-regional partnerships and collaborative projects. These include chairing the 14-25 Hounslow Strategic Group, chairing the West London Principals' Group and Chairing the West London Principals and Vice Chancellors Further Education and Higher Education Steering Group. We are a key partner in the West London Skills' Academies in Health, Green Skills and Creative as well being a core partner in the Green Skills Strategic Development Fund. We work closely with sub-regional local authorities, for example, West London Alliance and with Employer Groups, such as West London Business.

The aftermath of COVID-19 as well as Brexit has led to an even greater need to work together to meet the challenges ahead in terms of providing a highly skilled workforce, addressing skills shortage areas and meeting the changing needs of industries. For us, this means responding with agility to the skills challenges, focusing on the key growth sectors of health/care, green, digital and creative/cultural in West London and London. We are working with partners in Higher Education and Further Education to increase collaboration, building on the existing good work that is already well underway thus positioning us well to equip our residents with skills for jobs of the future. We are absolutely committed to the local communities which we serve and our strategic plan sets out our ambitions and approach to achieving this.

## Meeting National, Regional, and Local Needs

### London LSIP (draft headlines)

The priorities in the draft London LSIP closely align to the skills needs identified by the Mayor of London. His priority sectors were identified as part of the London Recovery Programme's "Helping Londoners into Good Work" mission.

The four sectors identified were: Construction, Creative, Health and Social Care, and Hospitality. Each had a substantial and/or growing number of vacancies, with employers reporting acute skills challenges that were inhibiting their recovery and growth. They had identified skills needs at level 3 and below (therefore corresponding to Adult Education Budget provision) and had potential to improve diversity and representation, both for those who were disproportionately affected by the pandemic and faced pre-existing barriers to learning and work.

In addition to these sectors, the LSIP identified four cross cutting themes, again aligned to the priorities identified by the Mayor and also the findings from Business LDN's Skills Commission. These were digital skills, green skills, transferable skills, and labour market inclusion.

Further conclusions include:

- Three-quarters of firms (77%) are reporting open vacancies and of those two-thirds (65%) are struggling to fill them.
- Reported vacancies span all types of roles, with specialist, skilled and managerial jobs the toughest to recruit.
- Skills most in demand in the survey are sector-specific technical skills, transferable skills, such as negotiation, and basic digital skills, with the latter expected to be most prized in the future.
- Firms are reporting they are finding it hard to recruit at all skills levels: almost half report challenges finding highly skilled specialists (49%), followed by technical and skilled support roles (43%), managers (35%), skilled trades (30%) and sales and customer service roles (26%).
- The most reported challenge to recruitment is a low number of suitable applicants with the required skills, cited as a problem by 57% of firms.
- While two-thirds of firms (66%) say their existing workforce has the right skills and capabilities to meet their business's needs, the remainder report gaps.
- In the next two to five years, digital skills are expected to be most in demand, with more than half of respondents (56%) reporting a need for advanced and a third for basic digital skills (33%).
- Sector-specific technical skills (49%), cross-cutting transferable skills, such as negotiation and resilience (31%), basic maths (29%) English (23%) and green skills (23%) are also identified as needed skillsets.

## **West London Annex**

The West London Annex to London's draft LSIP sets out "a clear articulation of employers' skills needs and the priority changes required in the local area to help ensure post-16 technical education and skills provision is more responsive and flexible in meeting local labour market skills needs."

As of February 2023, 68,165 West Londoners are claiming unemployment-related benefits, up from 39,600 in December 2019 (pre-pandemic) and yet there are tens of thousands of local vacancies.

## **West London demographics**

The demographic characteristics of West London provide important context for the LSIP. 2021 Census data shows:

- West London has a population of 2.134m, an increase of 9.2% in the decade from 2011 – 2021.
- 60% of working age residents in West London are economically active, slightly below the London average of 61%.
- Long-term unemployment (those who have never worked) was much higher in London in 2021 (35% of those unemployed compared with 26% in England; in West London this was 37%).
- 48% of West London residents were born outside of the UK and English is not the main language spoken in a high percentage of households.
- In contrast to other London sub-regions, West London saw the percentage of residents with no qualifications rise by 0.7% in the decade to 2021.

## **Employment overview by sector**

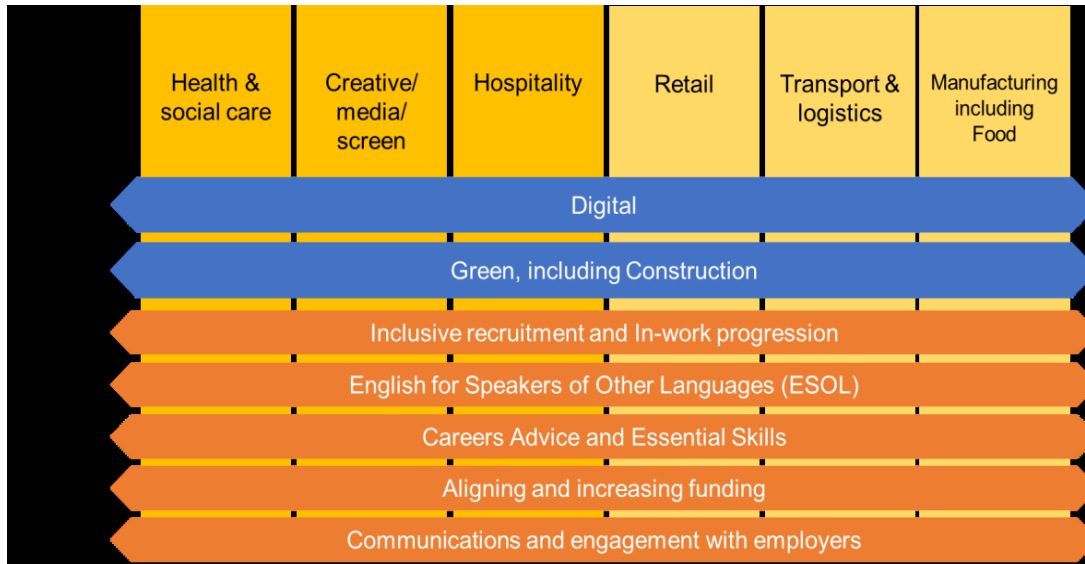
- The transportation and storage sector is twice as large in West London as in the region or country as a whole, accounting for just over 10% of all employees. This is largely due to Heathrow (the UK's largest single employment location), but also the sizeable logistics sector employment in Brent and Ealing.
- The wholesale and retail sector is also larger in West London than in London or Great Britain, accounting for 17% of all employees, while construction and manufacturing are larger in West London than in London, but smaller than in Great Britain, accounting for five per cent and four per cent of all employees respectively.

## **Employment trends**

- Between 2015 and 2021, the total number of employees in employment in West London increased by 1.6%, a much smaller increase than nationally (5.7%) or London (8.4%) over the same period.
- The main growth sectors in West London were construction, which increased by 43%, other services (which includes membership organisations, and hair and beauty) with an increase of 19%, and health and social care, which increased by 12%.
- Employment in wholesale and retail (the largest absolute sector) and transportation and storage (the largest relative sector compared with London and the UK) decreased by 3%. The pandemic undoubtedly contributed to disrupted employment patterns in both of these sectors.



**West London 'LSIP Priorities'** - six key sectors make up 52.8% of total employment in West London.



The priority sectors in the West London Annex to the London LSIP together account for 52.8% of West London's total employment:

- Health and Social Care (11.5% employment)
- Retail (16.6% employment)
- Creative (3.2% employment)
- Transport and Logistics (10.2% employment)
- Hospitality (7.5%)
- Manufacturing (3.8%)

In addition to the six priority sectors, two additional priority areas were identified for skills development as they cut across all sectors: Green skills, including Construction, and Digital skills.

## **Key Stakeholders**

West Thames College works in a highly collaborative manner with its network of partners and stakeholders to achieve its strategic objectives for the benefit of our communities. These include:

- Hounslow Local Authority, Ealing Local Authority and Achieving for Children (Richmond & Kingston)
- West London Alliance
- Job Centre Plus - Hounslow
- West London Business
- Business London
- West London Chamber
- Local MPs
- Heathrow
- Strategically important employers
- Business Networks
- Strategic Education partners
- Co-located partners
- Logistics Skills Alliance

## **Engagement with Other Providers in the Area**

As a college, we work collaboratively with a range of key partners. We work closely with our local schools as members of the Hounslow Education Partnership. Our school engagement activity includes careers support and taster activities to help students make informed choices. We provide alternative provision programmes for Year 10 and Year 11 students for Hounslow borough students and neighbouring boroughs; we provide ESOL provision for Year 10 and Year 11 students who are new arrivals to the UK; we provide school link opportunities for local special schools as well as for our co-located partners Ambitious about Autism (and the Rise Sixth form) and Woodbridge Park Education Services (Key Stage 4). We chair the 14-25 Hounslow Strategic Group and are a founding Board member of Hounslow's Creative Enterprise Zone. We are currently working with Hounslow Local Authority supporting the development and launch of the Hounslow Youth Skills and Employment Guarantee and we are committed to being one of the founding members.

We work closely with our FE partners & HE partners across the 7 West London boroughs and this includes leading on a number of local and sub-regional partnerships. These include chairing the West London Principals' Group; chairing the West London Principals and Vice Chancellors Further Education and Higher Education Steering Group and setting up the four FE/HE working groups in the priority sectors of Health & Social Care, Green, Digital and Creative. We have collaborated on a number of successful projects including the college collaboration fund, the Green Skills Strategic Development Fund and the progression agreement with our West London FE & HE partners. We are a key partner in the West London Skills' Academies in Health, Green Skills and Creative, working with employer bodies and independent training providers. Other HE partners include Kingston University for the delivery of a Foundation Degree and Canterbury Christchurch for the Teaching Degree.

We work closely with sub-regional local authorities, for example, West London Alliance and with Employer Groups, such as West London Business and West London Chamber of Commerce. We have played a very active role in the development of the LSIP and the West London Annex, which included delivery at the Skills Summit event and the hosting of a shared governance event for key college governors across the FE College institutions in West London. This building of these sector-based skills networks has allowed significantly increased strategic collaboration between education and training providers, local authorities and employers.

## Strategic Aims and Objectives 2023-24

Below we set out a number of targets for the year ahead that reflect how we are contributing to national, regional and local priorities for learning and skills.

Targets for 2023-24	Contribution Towards National, Regional and Local Priorities for Learning and Skills
<p>Review the curriculum offer in key priority sectors to identify and develop one new programme each for Education Programme for Young People (EPYP) and Adults in each key priority sector:</p> <p><b>EPYP:</b> Logistics, T Level Transition Programmes in Health and Digital, 14-16 ESOL provision, Low Carbon Transport programmes (green skills), Intro to Creative Foundation Learning programme</p> <p><b>Adults:</b> Low Carbon Transport courses (green skills), ESOL for asylum seekers, Maths courses for life and employment, digital skills provision for targeted groups</p> <p><b>HNS:</b> New Project Search partner</p>	<p>Continue to develop curriculum specialisms that ensure young people and adult students have the skills identified by employers to make a meaningful and sustainable contribution to their business and the economy</p> <p>Contribute to meeting the needs of the priority sectors identified in the LSIP</p> <p>SEND students have the skills identified by employers to make a meaningful and sustainable contribution to their business and the economy</p>
<p>Growth of Apprenticeships provision in priority sectors – 85 apprentices in growth areas of Green, Construction, Digital and Logistics – with a focus on the Standards identified below. Appropriate embedding of green skills in standards across the priority sectors in addition to all Construction apprenticeship standards using more sustainable materials.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• L2 Property Maintenance Operative</li> <li>• L2 Painter &amp; Decorator</li> <li>• L3 Installation Electrician and Maintenance Electrician (specific green skills modules)</li> <li>• L3 Digital Marketer</li> <li>• L3 IT Solutions Technician</li> <li>• L3 Data Technician (specific green skills modules)</li> <li>• L3 Digital Support Technician (specific green skills modules)</li> <li>• L3 International Freight Forwarding Specialist</li> <li>• L2 Express Delivery Operative (specific green skills modules)</li> </ul>	<p>Continue to develop curriculum specialist apprenticeships that meet national, regional, and local needs providing opportunities for apprentices to meet the skills gaps of employers</p> <p>Contribute to meeting the needs of the priority sectors identified in the LSIP</p> <p>Contribute to meeting the cross-cutting theme of green skills as identified in the LSIP</p>

Recruit to and deliver 2 new T Levels for September 2023 (Digital and Health) Resource and develop 2 new T levels for September 2024 to further develop and broaden our L3 technical curriculum	Continue to develop curriculum specialisms that meet national, regional, and local needs in Digital, Health, Construction and Childcare
HE provision – 5% growth in level 4 provision and above, and offer 3 new courses	Contribute to meeting specific sector and occupational needs that have been identified by employers, by the provision of higher-level skills training in Hounslow/West London. Adults will gain the skills they need to improve their job prospects and succeed in priority sectors, whilst supporting the economy
90% of students achieve a positive destination in 2023-24. To support this, we will improve students understanding of jobs and pathways available in relevant sectors, enabling them to make informed choices and better understand their career options.	Enable our students to succeed in their chosen technical and vocational programme and contribute to meeting the skills needs of West London
Increase the number of employers and partners involved in Employer Advisory Boards (EABs) by 25% and develop a calendar of activities to collaborate more effectively on curriculum development and curriculum pathways	Through partnerships with employers, ensure the college delivers training that meets specific sector and occupational needs and gives students the opportunities to develop the wider skills identified by employers as being essential to their business development
Continue to develop student skills in the following areas: 1. Transferrable skills (all students) 2. Entrepreneurial skills (identified groups) This will be achieved by implementing the enhancing the skills framework that we have in place for 2023-24	Enable our students to develop the transferable skills that employers have identified as part of EABs and as identified in the LSIP
Continue to develop students' digital skills through an increase in the proportion of curriculum delivered with the use of digital resources and e-learning content: EYPY – 70% Adults – 40% Apps – 40%	Contribute to meeting the cross-cutting theme of digital skills as identified in the LSIP. These programmes will meet the need for more flexible learning as well as building students' digital capabilities/skills
Embed sustainability education through the delivery of the curriculum strategy and develop the contribution of students, staff and external stakeholders to promote sustainable activities and initiatives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Extend the pilot of sustainability qualifications to the majority of level 2 study programmes</li> <li>Deliver appropriate carbon literacy training to staff and governors</li> </ul>	Contribute to meeting the cross-cutting theme of green skills as identified in the LSIP Future employees have a better understanding of the green economy and the skills required to meet local employment needs

### **Corporation Statement**

On behalf of the West Thames College corporation, it is hereby confirmed that the plan as set out above reflects an agreed statement of purpose, aims and objectives as approved by the Corporation at their meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> May 2023.

The plan will be published on the college's website within three months of the start of the new academic year.

Chair of Governors:     Stuart McGeoch

CEO & Principal:     Tracy Aust

Date:                     26th May 2023

Date:                     26<sup>th</sup> May 2023

### **Relevant Supporting Documentation**

[London LSIP Public Consultation](#)

[Corporate Strategy 22-25](#)

[Annual Report and Financial Statements](#)

[Ofsted inspection report 2021](#)