



ACCOUNTABILITY AGREEMENT & LOCAL NEEDS DUTY

2026-2027



THE **LEARNING** DESTINATION OF CHOICE



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City College Plymouth is the city's anchor institution for skills, delivering high-quality further and higher education from pre-entry to degree level for young people and adults across all curriculum sectors.

Our purpose is to transform lives and support inclusive economic growth by connecting learners to real-world opportunities, meeting employer needs and strengthening the skills base of Plymouth and the wider region. This is delivered through our eight strategic objectives - transforming futures; maritime, manufacturing, construction and the built environment; health and active wellbeing; developing people; digital innovation; finance; estates and assets; and opportunities.



Since the College's strategic plan was created, several material developments have strengthened our reputation. The College was graded **Good by Ofsted in 2024** and, **in April 2026**, was designated with the prestigious **Defence Technical Excellence College status**, reinforcing our importance to the city, regional economy and national defence skills pipeline.



We have further strengthened our leadership role across the local and regional skills system through active engagement as Skills Workstream Lead for Team Plymouth and Skills Pillar Lead for the Local Authority. We also maintain a strong presence on the Plymouth Growth Board, contribute to devolved regional skills structures, and play an active role in the Local Skills Improvement Plan and Fund, as well as the Devon Colleges Group. These partnerships ensure that curriculum planning, Apprenticeships and investment decisions remain closely aligned to labour market intelligence, employer demand and community need.



Our strategic plan sets the College's longer-term vision and strategic actions, while the **annual accountability statement** translates that vision into a focused annual delivery framework. The accountability statement therefore provides the annual expression of the strategic plan, identifying the priority actions, measures and partnerships through which the College will respond to current and emerging needs.

This approach demonstrates clear alignment with the **Local Needs Duty**. The College's longer-term strategic outcomes are shaped by sustained engagement with employers, civic leaders, regional colleges and devolved authorities. As a result, we are able to align our provision to local skills priorities, particularly in health and social care, marine and defence, advanced manufacturing, construction, digital, sciences and other growth sectors, while also supporting productivity, social mobility and wider community wellbeing across Plymouth and the surrounding region.



CONTEXT

Plymouth is an ambitious city with huge growth potential.

With a growing population approaching 272,000, a real economic output of £6.97 billion and a workforce of 118,000, Plymouth is the most significant urban area on the South West peninsula. A further 100,000 people live within the city's travel-to-work area.

Population (2025) 272,544



Age Cohort	2025 Population	2025 Percent
Under 16 years	45,719	16.8%
16 to 34 years	73,894	27.1%
35 to 54 years	67,568	24.8%
55 to 74 years	59,457	21.8%
75 years and over	25,906	9.5%



Millennials

Plymouth has 54,580 millennials (ages 25-39). The national average for an area this size is 55,279.



Retiring Soon

Retirement risk is about average in Plymouth. The national average for an area this size is 89,728 people 55 or older, while there are 87,794 here.

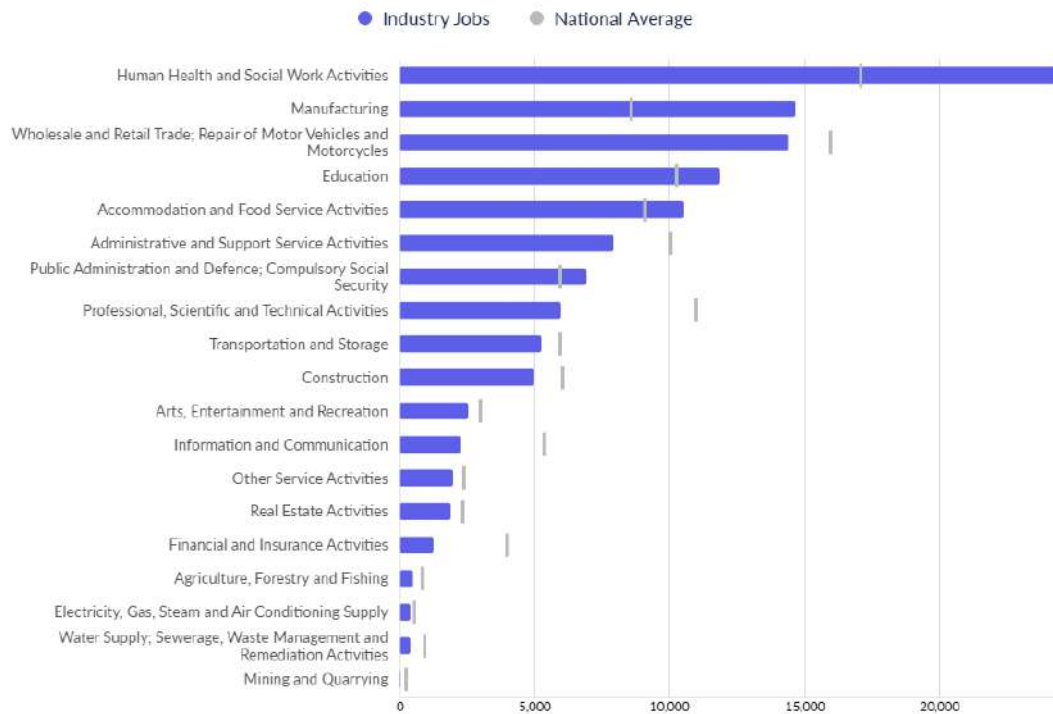


Racial Diversity

Racial diversity is low in Plymouth. The national average for an area this size is 61,268 racially diverse people, while there are 25,090 here.

Home to the largest naval base in Western Europe, servicing the UK's Continuous at Sea Nuclear Deterrent (CASD) - and with the National Centre for Marine Autonomy and a rapidly expanding industrial base supporting this - the marine and defence sector accounts for 20% of the city's GVA, 18.1% of total employment and over 19,000 jobs. With the Team Plymouth initiative, the £4.4b being invested in the Dockyard and a £50m national Defence Growth Deal, this sector - and the requirement for skills and talent - is projected to grow significantly over the next ten years. With the College designated a Defence Technical Excellence College this is a particular focus in the coming year.

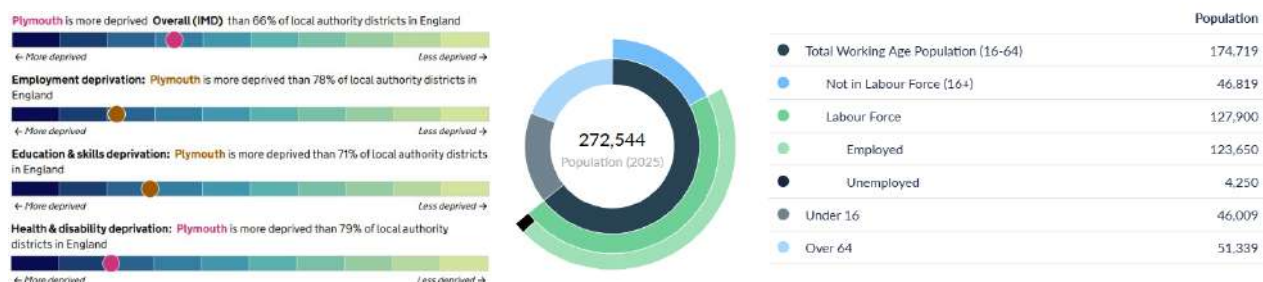




The city also hosts a range of other significant industries with substantial skills needs, including health, advanced manufacturing, where Plymouth has the highest concentration of manufacturing employment on the south coast of Britain. Over 14.6% of jobs in the city are in manufacturing, significantly higher than the national average of 8.3%.

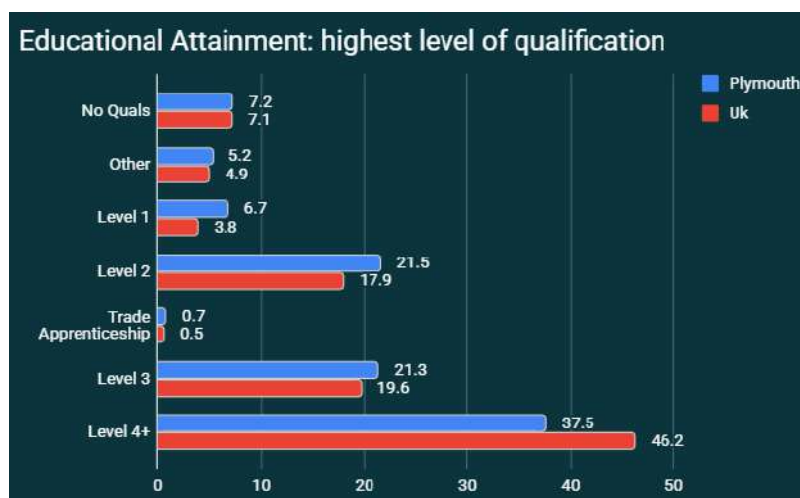
The construction sector similarly presents major demand, with a strong pipeline of around 10,000 jobs and significant skills requirements driven by multi-billion-pound developments at HMNB Devonport Dockyard and Derriford Hospital, alongside a commitment to deliver over 10,000 new homes across the city.

The city is also home to a significant volume of health and social care employment, representing the largest workforce concentration across any sector. This includes substantial employment within the NHS, Livewell Southwest, and a wide-ranging care sector spanning both private providers and the third sector.



However, alongside these opportunities Plymouth also has a number of challenges which focus and frame College activities. The city has 17 areas in the 2025 Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD25) sitting within the 10% most deprived nationally with the St Peter and the Waterfront ward in the 1% most deprived nationally. Employment, education, and health and disability disadvantage metrics are of significant concern.

Aligned to this, the city has 46,000 economically inactive residents (24.4%), which is higher than the national rate of 21%. It also has 14,000 workless households (16% compared with the national average of 13.9%) and a higher proportion of part-time to full-time employment (35% and 65% respectively, compared with 31% and 69% nationally). As a result, the average annual wage of £33.4k is also £5.5k lower than the national average of £38.9k.



Educational attainment is also a concern. In Plymouth, 19.1% of residents are qualified to level 1 as their highest level of attainment, compared with 15.8% nationally. At higher levels, only 37.5% of residents hold a higher education qualification, which is 8.7% below the national average of 46.2%.

APPROACH

Alignment with local and regional skills needs.

As the anchor institution for skills for Plymouth, and as a leading educational provider, City College Plymouth is committed to ensuring that our curriculum aligns with the evolving needs of local, regional, and national employers.



The College sits at the intersection of the non-devolved Plymouth Local Authority, and the devolved areas of Cornwall & the Isles of Scilly (CloS) combined authority, and Devon & Torbay combined authority. We also sit across two LSIPs; one for CloS and another for Devon & Somerset.

In our approach to meeting the priority skills needs set out in the respective growth plans, strategic skills plans, and LSIPs, we have ensured extensive engagement and consultation across all initiatives.

There is clear alignment across all five initiatives, with consistent themes reflected throughout our Accountability Statements.



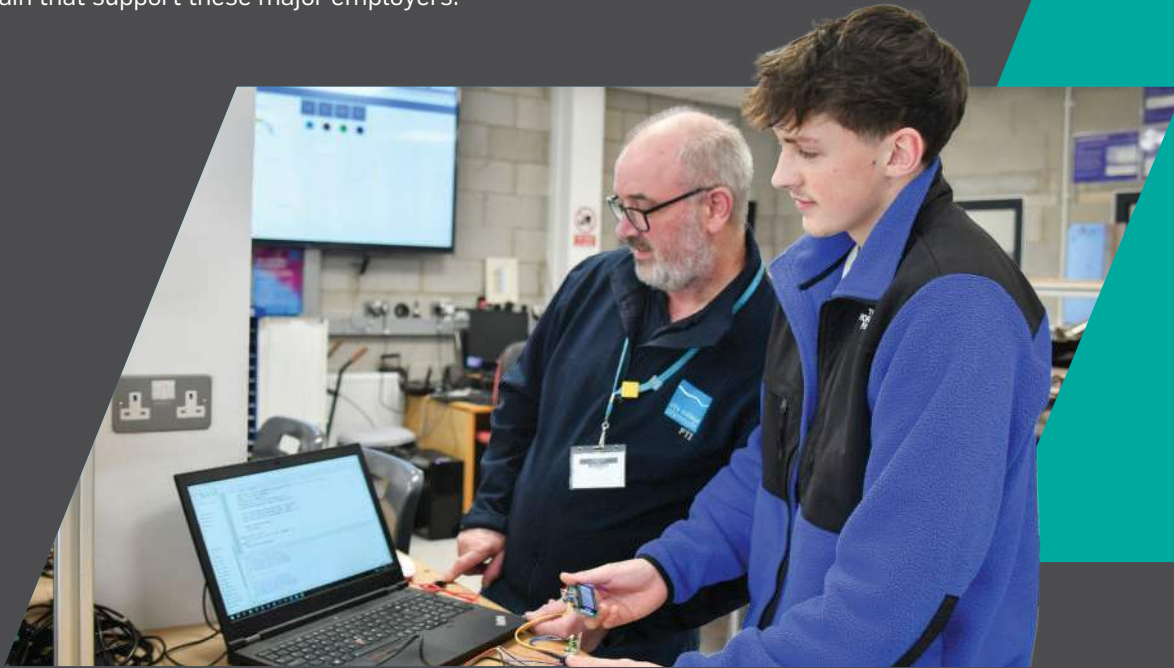
In addition to these regional bodies, we also assess skills needs through engagement with a range of organisations, including leading the Skills Workstream for Team Plymouth and the skills pillar for the city of Plymouth. We sit on the Skills Board for the Devon & Torbay Combined Authority, are a core member of the South West Institute of Technology, and actively engage with a wide variety of industry bodies across multiple sectors.

Cross Cutting themes	Clear educational pathways
	Deep industry involvement in skills
Technical skills	Adult reskilling / upskilling in priority sectors
	Inclusive growth & opportunity for all
	Defence
	Advanced Manufacturing
	Engineering
	Net Zero
	Construction
	Health

Engagement with employers

The College engages extensively with a diverse range of employers across Plymouth, Devon and Cornwall, as well as both nationally and internationally. We have built strong partnerships with tier-one companies, SMEs, strategic organisations, and community groups, ensuring a collaborative and demand-led approach to skills development. Key industry partners include Babcock International Group, Helsing, Kawasaki, University Hospitals Plymouth NHS Trust, Princess Yachts, Livewell, Plymouth Argyle Community Trust, and Kier Construction as well as the wider supply chain that support these major employers.

Employers are fully embedded in our skills planning process, which informs the development of this Accountability Agreement. Their involvement spans from the initial review of existing provision and identification of gaps, to recognising emerging skills needs and informing programme adaptations, through to the co-design and co-delivery of our skills offer. As a result, all of our courses are employer-approved and endorsed.



OUR PRIORITIES

To meet key national, regional and local priorities, and our Local Needs Duty, the College has identified key areas where we will prioritise our activities in the next year. Through these priorities we aim to have a transformational impact on the opportunities for our communities, delivering leading skills training to realise full potential and meet aspirations.



BLUE SKILLS: MARITIME, DEFENCE & ENERGY SECURITY

250M

Share of UK Defence
Industrial Strategy

Plymouth is designated as a National Defence Growth Area, securing a share of £250m through the UK Defence Industrial Strategy to transform the city into a hub for marine autonomy, advanced manufacturing, and engineering.

£4.4B

Investment in HMNB
Devonport

Driven by a £4.4b investment in HMNB Devonport, the initiative focuses on skills development, infrastructure upgrades, and technological innovation. The growth strategy intends to support 10,000 new homes, drive regeneration, and provide 50-70 years of work, transforming Plymouth's economic trajectory.

10,000

new homes



This area is a cross regional priority with Plymouth, Devon and Cornwall, and respective LSIPs recognising its local, regional and national importance.

However, this growth brings significant recruitment and skills challenges, requiring an agile and responsive training framework. City College Plymouth plays a pivotal role in addressing these needs and, as a Defence Technical Excellence College, will be at the forefront of driving forward quality, capacity, and capability to respond to rapidly evolving skills requirements.

This includes supporting the immediate needs of HMNB Devonport Dockyard, the marine autonomy sector, and the wider regional defence sector, while also addressing skills needs across the broader maritime industries, including marine technology, luxury boat production, tourism, leisure, and conservation.

Priorities for the coming year include mechanical and electrical engineers, welders, and systems and process engineers. A key objective is also to increase the number of entrants to level 4 and 5 provision, through both direct entry and progression routes.

Target: To ensure continued growth and sustainability, the College is committed to expanding course provision in welding, science, marine, defence, manufacturing, and the visitor economy by 5% in 2026/27.



GREEN SKILLS FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

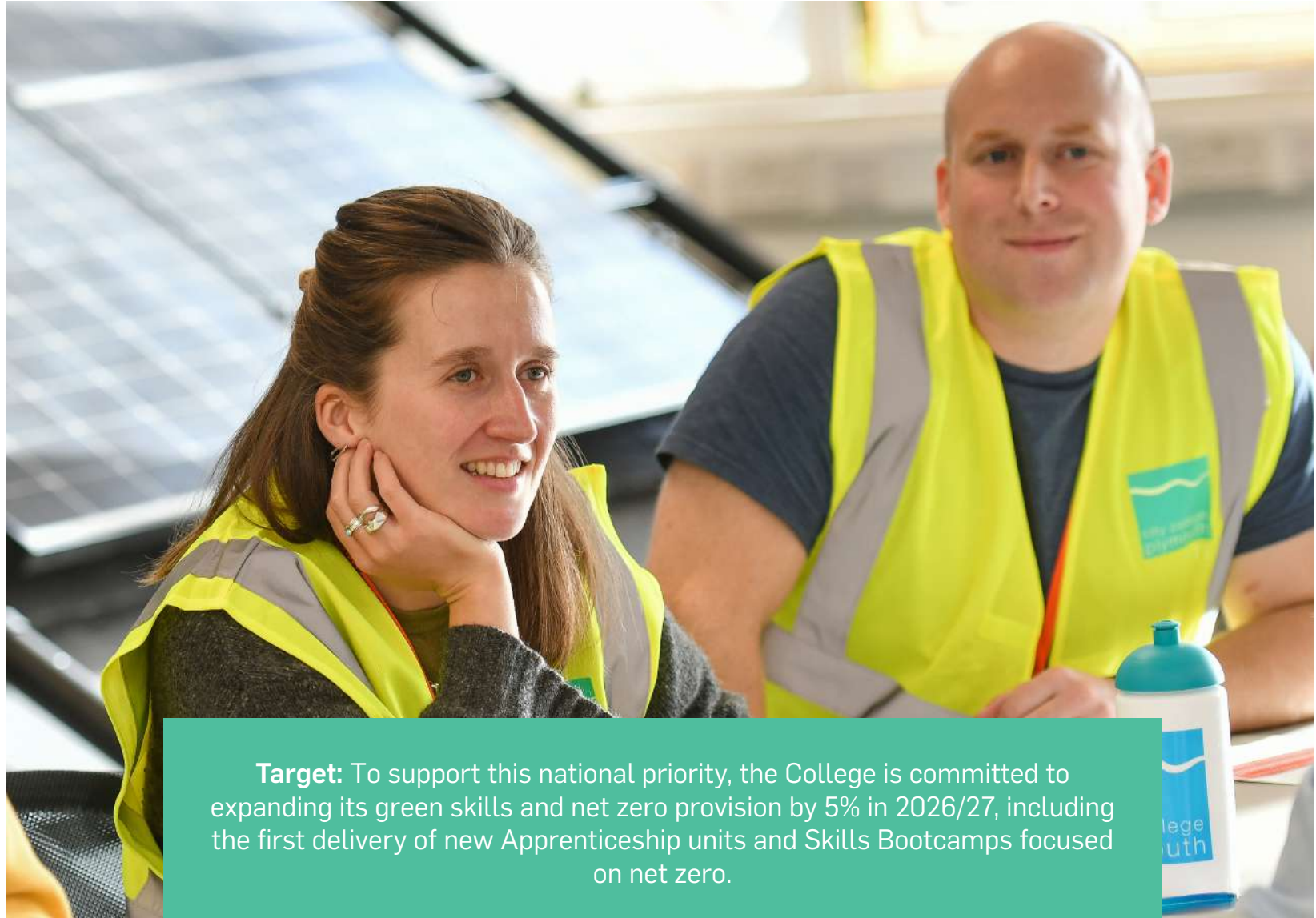
Nationally, this is a priority area with significant growth potential. The Department for Energy Security & Net Zero estimates that one in five jobs will experience a shift in skills demand through the transition to net zero, with around three million workers requiring some form of reskilling.

In this context, the South West represents a significant national asset, with a range of major clean energy initiatives including Hinkley Point C, floating offshore wind, and the exploration and development of hydrogen and geothermal technologies, alongside the Gravity Gigafactory and the region's natural geography, which strongly supports net zero energy ambitions.

As a result, green skills are among the fastest-growing areas of workforce demand and are essential to both environmental sustainability and economic resilience across the South West. We are committed to playing a leading role in addressing the challenges of climate change, ensuring that individuals and businesses are equipped with the skills needed to support the transition to a net zero economy.

Our focus will align with these national and regional priorities, including specialist nuclear skills, electrical installation and maintenance, solar panel and battery technologies, and sustainable construction and civil engineering.





Target: To support this national priority, the College is committed to expanding its green skills and net zero provision by 5% in 2026/27, including the first delivery of new Apprenticeship units and Skills Bootcamps focused on net zero.

CONSTRUCTION

3.4%

Annual workforce
growth

The construction industry in the South West faces a significant recruitment challenge, with an annual workforce growth requirement of 3.4%, exceeding the UK average of 1.9%

42,400

Additional workers
by 2028

This equates to an urgent need for 8,480 new workers each year, with total demand projected to reach 42,400 additional workers by 2028.

8,480

new workers



Plymouth, in particular, has substantial skills demand, driven by a major construction pipeline that includes an ambitious housebuilding programme and multi-billion-pound redevelopments at Devonport Dockyard and Derriford Hospital.

1,500

Enrolments on
construction courses

To help meet this demand, the College has significantly expanded capacity in high-demand areas such as bricklaying, carpentry and joinery, and electrical installation. Annual enrolments on construction courses now exceed 1,500, with full-time 16-18 construction numbers more than doubling over the past four years to over 670 in 2025/26.



To create clear pathways into the industry, we have partnered with Kier Construction to deliver the Hard Hat Ready course, supporting individuals furthest from the labour market into construction careers. We have also continued our collaboration with Building Heroes to support veterans transitioning into the sector.

In the coming year, we will maintain our focus on developing work-ready individuals across key trades by expanding our full-time provision, Skills Bootcamps, Apprenticeships, and T Level programmes. We will also work closely with the South West Construction Technical Excellence College (Exeter College) to grow capacity and respond to regional demand.



Target: To address the skills needs in the sector and meet the volume of skilled workers in the sector, the College will increase the volume of construction Apprenticeship starts, including on the new Apprenticeship units, by 8% in 2026/27.

HEALTH & INCLUSION

The government recognises the close interconnection between health and skills, seeking to improve both through initiatives such as the Get Britain Working White Paper, the NHS Long Term Plan, and the establishment of Skills England, with a focus on reducing economic inactivity, supporting workforce development, and addressing skills gaps.

Plymouth has a strong focus on health and inclusion, aiming not only to meet the significant skills needs across the sector but also to directly tackle health inequalities across the city.

721.4M

(14.8% of the city
GVA)

The health and social care sector is the single largest employment sector in the city with 24,000 jobs and a GVA of £721.4m (14.8% of the city GVA) across both traditional public sector services and extensive private and third sector employers.

11,000

Major trauma centre
employment

The city has the largest specialist teaching hospital in the South West peninsula and the region's major trauma centre employing over 11,000 staff and volunteers, alongside an additional 9,000 roles/staff within the associated social care sector.

9,000

roles/staff



24.4%

Working population
inactive in the city
(41,000 people)

24.4% of the working population are economically inactive in the city (41,000 people) as compared to a national figure of 21% of which a third are excluded due to illness - making health outcomes a major issue for the city.



The city also has a significant need for additional SEND provision with places required to meet the increased volumes of learners with SEND seen across Plymouth schools. Current demand for provision at the College has seen over 800 students with SEND and EHCPs enrol in 2025.

Deprivation across the city persists with recent IMD2025 data showing three wards amongst the most deprived nationally, and persistent issues with education, health and employment.



Target: To increase opportunities, reduce inequalities, improve health and wellbeing, and enhance social cohesion, we will develop an essential skills offer that supports individuals facing challenges with their health and wellbeing - delivering wider benefits for health services, the economy, and people's personal lives. Transitioning from Shared Prosperity Funding to mainstream Adult Skills Fund (ASF) provision, we will support over 300 learners through these programmes in 2026/27.

DIGITAL FUTURES

Driving the development of digital skills is a strategic priority for both the College and the city, as well as a national imperative.

£2.6M

Industrial Strategy
employment

The Industrial Strategy highlights that in 2023 the sector employed 2.6 million people in the UK, representing 7% of total employment, with this figure expected to grow by more than half a million jobs by 2035.

7%

total employment



130,000

STEM vacancies

However, in 2022 there were approximately 130,000 STEM and 13,500 digital vacancies due to skills shortages.

13,500

digital vacancies



Across the city, digital skills underpin many of our largest industries, from Industry 4.0 and large-scale automation in advanced manufacturing to growing demand for AI, robotics, and cyber security within the defence sector. Digital health is also an increasing national priority. At the same time, many residents continue to experience low levels of digital literacy, limiting access to essential services and employment opportunities.

In response, the College has placed digital at the heart of its strategy. It achieved Google Reference College status in 2022, AWS Academy status in 2024, and was awarded the prestigious Beacon Award for Digital Technology in 2025. Our ongoing ambition is to drive greater digital inclusion, innovation, and excellence across both our curriculum and the communities we serve.



Aligned with national strategy and local demand, we have focused curriculum development on key areas such as cyber security, cloud computing, analytics, and essential digital skills. This ensures that both young people and adults are equipped not only to access the jobs of the future, but also to engage effectively in an increasingly digital world.

A particular emphasis will be placed on developing essential skills in artificial intelligence, including its application across industry, modern business operations, and everyday use. A major priority for the coming year will be the development and delivery of new AOI courses to build these capabilities at both a local and regional level.



Target: To address these essential skills in AI, the College will introduce new Apprenticeship standards into its offer, alongside delivering a new unit focused on AI strategy. During 2026/27, we will deliver 50 standards and units as part of this initiative.

DELIVERING FOR EMPLOYERS

Support for employers is a key strategic priority for the College and is consistently highlighted across local and regional growth plans and LSIPs, with success in this area being essential to the health and prosperity of our wider communities. It is also central to our Local Needs Duty.

We recognise that the LSIPs for both the Devon & Somerset and Cornwall & Isles of Scilly regions place employers firmly at the centre of defining local skills needs, and we have fully embraced this approach. Our commitment is reflected in the first five strategic priorities set out in this document, which align closely with the core LSIP themes: engineering/marine/defence, net zero, construction, health and inclusion, and digital.

In our role as one of the five national Defence Technical Excellence Colleges (DTECs), we will support employers across the defence sector and related industries such as advanced manufacturing, construction, and digital. We will ensure that new provision, alongside increased capacity and capability, is made available regionally and nationally to meet significant skills demand across these sectors.

We will also continue to work closely with employers to co-design curriculum that addresses both existing skills gaps and the need to develop new talent pipelines. To achieve this, we will maintain and strengthen partnerships with key regional employers, supporting workforce planning and tackling skills shortages through targeted curriculum initiatives, including the expansion of Skills Bootcamps and Apprenticeship provision.





Target: As part of the DTEC we will directly engage with over 200 employers in year one (2026/27) for skills delivery in this priority area.

CORPORATION ACCOUNTABILITY AGREEMENT & LOCAL NEEDS DUTY SIGN-OFF

Chair of Governors

Chief Executive / *Principal*

Dated: