



Buckinghamshire
College Group

Beyond Ambition

Partnerships and Engagement

Introduction

Partnerships and Engagement

Buckinghamshire is an affluent county however this overall picture masks significant variations in outcomes across the county, with some areas experiencing substantial hardship. Across multiple indices of deprivation and inequality¹, the wards experiencing the poorest outcomes within High Wycombe and Aylesbury areas are served by the College. 22% of Bucks residents are identified as ‘urban adversity and financially stretched’ according to Acorn² household segmentation data and there is a life expectancy³ difference of 8 years for a woman and 6 years for a man depending on where you live in Buckinghamshire.

Official data⁴ suggests that Buckinghamshire’s economy is slightly more productive than the national (UK) average, although it has lost ground in recent years. In 2010, Buckinghamshire was ranked 4th highest of the 38 LEP areas in terms of productivity but by 2020 had slipped to 9th position. When the housing element is stripped out, Buckinghamshire has below national average levels of productivity, and sits mid-table of all LEP areas. Buckinghamshire’s economy supports a predominance of small businesses with levels of self-employment second highest of all 38 LEP areas, particularly within the County’s creative and construction sectors. The county boasts world-class economic assets and strong growth potential in the areas of film and TV, high-performance engineering, space and medtech with one of the least ‘self-contained’ labour markets in England (high levels of commuting into London and to other nearby large towns and cities).

The Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) has identified the following key sectors as priority areas for future skills development:

- Construction
- Film and Television
- Health and Social Care
- Digital
- Engineering

1. MHCLG Indices of Deprivation 2019

2. CACI Acorn geodemographic segmentation data (2022)

3. ONS Life expectancy at birth (2019)

4. Subregional productivity: labour productivity indices by economic enterprise region - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk)



The LSIP also identified key cross cutting themes highlighted as areas for development across all priority sectors:

- Work readiness including digital literacy - For a lot of employers, work readiness ranked higher than technical skills and key to their business performance and growth. The majority of employers gave the view that it is the basic attitudes to work that is often missing.
- Green skills – net zero - The need for the workforce to have a greater awareness of net-zero and their own contribution to this has been reported across all the priority sectors. However, this demand is more acute in the construction and engineering sectors.
- This strategy outlines our approach to engagement and partnership working and sets out clear aims for the future.

Our vision is that:

We will operate at the heart of Buckinghamshire’s skills community developing strong employer and stakeholder partnerships to contribute positively to improving community cohesion and productivity



Approach to Partnership Working and Engagement

This plan sets out our clear intent to grow the impact that we have in the local and regional community by operating at the heart of Buckinghamshire's skills community and developing strong employer and community partnerships with a reputation for excellence. All employer and partner relationships will be overseen by the Employer Engagement team. Our engagement model outlines our approach to developing collaborative, mutually beneficial relationships with key partners:

- Strategic Partners – partners with whom we share aligned vision, aims and values and work together to collaborate on common strategic agendas.
- Employer Partners – partners who we support to achieve their workforce aims by designing and delivering skills training and development solutions.
- Curriculum Partners – partners who work with us to shape our curriculum offer, supporting curriculum co-design and co-delivery, staff industry updating and providing industry placement and work experience opportunities for our students to develop and apply work readiness skills.
- Community Partners – partners with whom we work to add value to the local and regional community.
- Education Partners – universities, schools and training providers with whom we collaborate to raise aspirations, provide meaningful and inclusive career pathways and provide comprehensive and accessible education, skills and training throughout the region.



Key Aims

We have set the following key aims for our goal to grow our impact in the local and regional economy and enhance our reputation:

1.

To drive sustainable growth across our provision, ensuring that our curriculum offer meets the needs of the Buckinghamshire economy both now and into the future



2.

To contribute positively to the economic development and prosperity of Buckinghamshire



3.

To be seen as a sector leader within the local community actively shaping and driving the skills agenda through collaboration





Aim One

To drive sustainable growth across our provision, ensuring that our curriculum offer meets the needs of the Buckinghamshire economy both now and into the future

We will:

- Establish a stakeholder relationship management approach across the entire organisation with key Executive team responsibility for strategic partners
- Collaborate with strategic partners across a range of education and skills sectors for mutual benefit and impact. This could include strategic subcontractors with whom we work to widen participation and better meet local and regional needs.
- Work with local employers to develop meaningful work experience and industry placements for all of our study programme learners.
- Broaden our adult and apprenticeship offer to incorporate all priority sectors, e.g. Health and Social Care, Business Management and Engineering whilst achieving high quality.
- Collaborate with our school and university partners to establish strong career and skills pathways through to meaningful careers.

The impact will be:

- Reduction in skills shortage areas
- Increased numbers of adults and apprentices studying with us
- High proportion of students progressing to positive destinations





Aim Two

To contribute positively to the economic development and prosperity of Buckinghamshire

We will:

- Raise aspirations and support inclusive progression of young people and adults into meaningful, sustainable careers.
- Support our students with SEND to gain more independence and contribute positively to
- Support inward investment into Buckinghamshire by providing a talent pipeline of well qualified employees
- Strengthen our relationships in sectors of strategic importance to meeting employers' recruitment and workforce development needs
- Provide programmes for adults wishing to upskill and reskill enabling them to re-enter the workforce and progress in their careers

The impact will be:

- Reduction in numbers of those classed as NEET
- Positive contribution to Buckinghamshire productivity drive

Aim Three

To be seen as a sector leader within the local community actively shaping and driving the skills agenda through collaboration

We will:

- Shape education and skills strategies and plans at local and regional level to benefit Buckinghamshire communities
- Build strong relationships with the voluntary and community sector and training providers to promote inclusion and address social mobility issues through locally delivered provision.
- Create positive social change in our local communities and develop the 'cultural capital' of our students through youth and student engagement in community-based initiatives.
- Champion the profile and benefits of technical education throughout our local communities

The impact will be:

- Increased profile of technical and vocational skills-based education
- Students and staff will develop a strong sense of belonging as part of their local communities

Implementation and monitoring

This Plan is strategically led by the Vice Principal Commercial and Partnerships. The Plan is overseen and monitored by the CLT Employer Engagement Steering Group and the Corporation Curriculum, Quality and Students Committee