



2026/27

ANNUAL
ACCOUNTABILITY
STATEMENT

College Mission and Purpose

At USP College, our mission is to develop learners with the knowledge, skills, behaviours and mindset to thrive in a rapidly evolving world of work.

As part of our 2026–2031 strategy, we are transforming our curriculum and delivery model to create “Super Agency” enabling students and staff to think critically, act independently, and adapt confidently to technological and economic change.

We are moving beyond traditional education models to deliver a future-focused, digitally enabled curriculum, where learning is immersive, flexible and aligned to real industry challenges. Our approach ensures that learners are not only qualified, but equipped with the meta-skills, emotional intelligence and digital fluency increasingly required by employers.

We continue to strengthen our partnerships with key stakeholders and employers, including through our strategic alliance with Coventry University, which will enhance opportunities for collaborative delivery, higher-level pathways, and progression for our learners and staff.

USP College is proactively preparing for national qualification reform through strategic curriculum transition planning, ensuring our provision remains responsive to the introduction of V Levels, the continued growth of T Levels, and the evolving future qualifications landscape. Through collaboration with employers, stakeholders, and education partners, the College is developing agile and future-focused curriculum pathways that align with workforce demands and national policy direction.

We are also investing significantly in our estate, digital infrastructure and learning environments, ensuring our facilities remain at the cutting edge of the sector. This investment enables our learners to access high-quality, industry-relevant teaching spaces and technologies that support their education, training and future progression.

As an anchor institution within Greater Essex, we play a central role in contributing to a joined-up, employer-led skills system, aligned with the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) and regional growth strategies.

Executive Summary

USP College’s strategic aims reflect our commitment to delivering high-quality, future-focused education and skills provision that is fully aligned to national, regional, and local priorities. Through our refreshed strategy, the College continues to respond proactively to the evolving workforce and economic needs identified within national skills policy, IS8, the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP), and the Essex Skills Plan. Our approach places strong emphasis on digital innovation, inclusion and belonging, employer engagement, curriculum reform, sustainability, and the development of technical and professional skills that support both learners and industry.

Each strategic aim forms the foundation of this commitment, ensuring that USP College remains responsive, ambitious, and impactful in meeting workforce demands across Essex and beyond. Through strong employer partnerships, collaboration with industry and education partners, leadership within major regional initiatives such as the Freeport project, and investment in innovative learning environments and emerging technologies, the College continues to play a leading role in driving regional economic growth, opportunity, and social mobility for the communities we serve.

Central to this is our commitment to developing meta-skills and emotional intelligence (EQ) across our learners and wider College community, enabling individuals to think critically, adapt to change, work collaboratively and demonstrate resilience. Alongside this, we place a strong emphasis on digital fluency and confidence, ensuring all learners are equipped to operate effectively in increasingly technology-driven environments and contribute positively to the local and regional economy.

The communities we serve are located within the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) area incorporating Essex, Southend-on-Sea, and Thurrock. USP College serves the local community and works collaboratively with other providers to meet local stakeholder needs, as well as both local and national priority area.

Strategic Aims

1. Deliver an Employer-led, future focused curriculum
2. Embed digital Innovation and AI to transform learning
3. Develop Future-Ready learners through Meta-Skills, EQ and Employability
4. Strengthen English & Maths as foundational skills for learners success
5. Drive Inclusion, Access and Progression for all learners
6. Build a highly skilled, agile workforce
7. Strengthen Partnerships and contribute to a joined-up skills system
8. National Leadership, collaboration and system influence
9. Expand flexible, lifelong learning and workforce development

Context & Place: Communities we serve

The region is experiencing significant economic growth, driven by:

- Major infrastructure and housing developments
- Expansion of key sectors including digital, health, construction and logistics
- Increasing demand for higher-level and technical skills

However, the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) identifies critical challenges, including:

- Skills shortages across growth sectors
- Demand for AI, digital and data skills
- A need for more flexible, modular training
- Gaps in essential and work-ready behaviours

In response, USP College is repositioning its curriculum and delivery to ensure it:

- Is responsive, agile and employer-led
- Supports inclusive access and progression
- Contributes to a coherent, place-based skills system

This aligns with the FEDEC manifesto ambition to create a system that is:

- Joined-up
- Inclusive
- Employer-driven
- Focused on essential skills and behaviours

USP College is a major provider of post-16 FE, HE and a small provider for Adult education. It has three sites in Essex connected via the A13. The two larger campuses are the Seevic campus in Benfleet and the Palmer's campus in Grays. A third, smaller site (the Xtend Digital campus) in Canvey Island is now a well-established provider of digital education and research development across the education sector, working with Colleges nationally and key digital employers. This is excellent grounding for Apprenticeship development with state-of-the-art industry standard facilities. Our Xtend Digital Campus focuses on state-of-the-art digital technologies and virtual and augmented reality. All three campuses deliver to specific student cohorts from the respective surrounding areas. The vast majority of learners are local to the specific campus they study at with some using College funded and public transport to attend.

We have approximately 4,396 students from a range of socio-economic backgrounds, including 4,031 students aged 16-19. A moderate number of students have an Educational Health Care Plan (270) and a considerable number require Exam Access Arrangements and/or Additional Learning support (1,089). The number of High Needs students is 109, which represents 2.1% of the College total with the split being 47 (43%) within the discreet programmes and 62 (57%) on mainstream programmes. The College has a growing Higher Education offer with a combination of in house and Partnership provision.

We employ approximately 500 staff across our campuses alongside our sub-contracting offer.

The majority of students progress from 53 schools within 9 local authority areas with a small number from other local authorities in Essex and Greater London. The respective catchment areas have a higher number of people with no academic, vocational, or professional qualifications and a lower percentage of adults with Level 2, Level 3 and Level 4 qualifications and bootcamps compared with the regional and national average, impacting student aspirations.

The Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) area comprises approximately 77,000 enterprises, with 99.7% classified as small or medium-sized businesses, supporting around 592,000 jobs across Greater Essex. The regional economy continues to be shaped by significant growth and investment opportunities linked to major infrastructure and regeneration projects including the Lower Thames Crossing, Thames Freeport, Freeport East and Bradwell B, alongside continued expansion within health, digital, professional services, engineering, construction, logistics and green technologies.

Vacancies across Essex continue to reflect both sector growth and ongoing labour market shortages. Analysis of vacancy data across Greater Essex highlights sustained demand within business administration, health and social care, education, logistics and warehousing, construction, customer service and professional services. Employers increasingly seek individuals with strong transferable and technical skills including communication, leadership, planning, problem solving, customer service, digital capability, project management and team working. The LSIP also identifies the growing importance of higher-level technical skills, digital innovation, AI and emerging technologies, sustainability and green skills, alongside employability and meta-skills which support workforce adaptability.

The area is served by twelve local authorities and two unitary authorities, with a collaborative education landscape comprising eight Further Education Colleges and three universities. This provides significant opportunities for strategic partnership working, curriculum alignment and progression pathways across Further Education, Higher Education and employment. In response to the priorities identified through the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP), USP College continues to align and evolve its curriculum offer, employer partnerships and progression routes to support regional economic growth, future workforce needs and inclusive opportunities for learners across Essex and the wider region.

The curriculum is designed to meet the needs of the wide range of learners, communities and employers that access our College. Every aspect of our curriculum is focused on learners reaching their aspirations and career goals, preparing our learners for the jobs of the future, and supporting them on the next steps of their journey. Learners and employers are at the heart of our curriculum, and it is their views which shape curriculum development based on their future ambitions and aspirations.

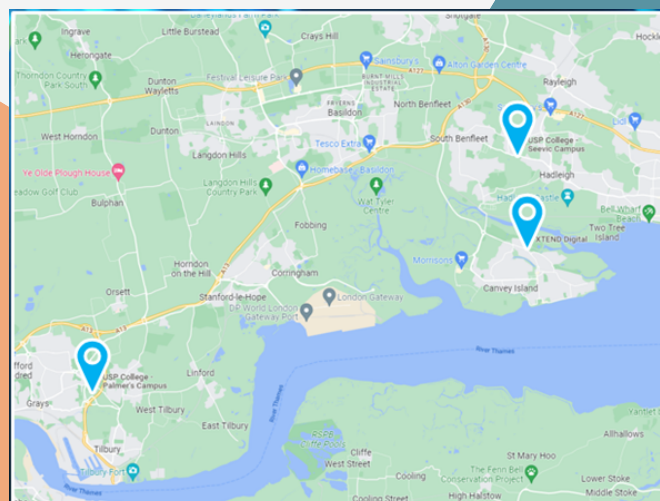
Our research-based approach has led to the development of four specific sector areas: Creative Industries; Financial & Professional Services; Medical Technologies & Life Sciences, and Sport & Healthcare Professionals. These are sector areas that are in line with areas of priority and growth within the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) and Industrial Strategy 8 (IS8), and nationally, as well as being areas the College specialises in, and where our learners progress into employment. The College's diverse curriculum from entry levels, Levels 1 to 6 is organised within these four sector areas. The provision does not however seek to duplicate provision in the nearby GFE College which specialises in construction and service industries.

Our career focused curriculum is designed to ensure all learners gain the skills needed to get the competitive edge for their next steps, whether this be preparing them for employment, Higher Education, or an Apprenticeship. The curriculum is based upon meeting the local, regional, and national skills priorities, developing technical, industry specific skills as well as essential digital and "soft" employability skills required to successfully enter the workplace.

The vast majority of learners study at Level 3 completing either a technical or vocational qualification or alternatively a cluster of 3 A Levels all with a focus on supporting a specific career pathway. The College has a wide range of A Level or Applied subjects to choose from. The vast majority of students (83%) progress to a positive destination. 30% of the College's learners progress into Higher Education with 9% moving onto a relevant Apprenticeship or Traineeship. Of those applying to university, 100% were accepted onto a course in 2024-25.

We are further strengthening our position through our strategic alliance with Coventry University, which brings significant opportunities for the College, our staff and our students. This partnership enables the co-design and co-delivery of curriculum, particularly at higher levels, creating clearer progression pathways into Higher Education, Apprenticeships and employment. It also provides opportunities for shared expertise, collaborative teaching and access to specialist resources, enhancing both the student experience and staff development. Through this alliance, we are extending our reach, increasing the relevance of our provision, and ensuring our learners benefit from a broader, more connected education offer aligned to regional and national skills priorities.

USP College's Strategic Plan can be viewed here: <https://www.uspcollege.ac.uk/media/3062/240224-updated-strategy.pdf>



Meeting National, Regional & Local Needs

Employer engagement and involvement is at the heart of the College strategy. It is crucial that this is a mutually beneficial relationship whereby the College futureproofs employers' needs whilst employers futureproof the College's curriculum offer, and therefore student experience. The curriculum, and wider curriculum has and will continue to be designed in collaboration with employers developing the skills and knowledge required to be successful in industry both now and in the future. The curriculum will be designed to support all students in progressing to their desired next steps. The College's intent is therefore for all students to leave with not just their qualifications but a range of essential employability and transferable skills and relevant work experience which ensures they are prepared for the world of work. The College will support employers by working collaboratively on developing qualifications at Level 4-6 which provide opportunities for employee upskilling or reskilling to reflect the changing skills required in industry. USP College students will have the edge to succeed, be able to transition smoothly and successfully into the workforce, fulfilling the needs of our local employer partners. The college's strategy ensures a high-quality careers education following the Gatsby Benchmarks. Aside from this, all delivery staff engage in annual industry upskilling ensuring they remain current in their understanding of relevant industry skills, job opportunities and priorities. Many of these placements are with employer partners within the College's key sector areas and where employer-led provision such as T Levels exist. College staff are also exposed to employers and industry expertise via the Student Continuous Professional Development (CPD) Days where between 60-70 employers facilitate knowledge and skill-based sessions with students focusing on a specific sector area or career pathway.

USP College is developing flexible and modular learning pathways to support Lifelong Learning, workforce retraining and adult progression aligned to the introduction of the Lifelong Learning Entitlement.

USP College plays a significant role beyond its local context, demonstrating leadership in national collaboration, system development and sector innovation. Through strong partnerships with further education Colleges, universities and key stakeholders, the College is actively contributing to the design and delivery of future-focused education that responds to both regional and national skills priorities. This includes working collaboratively to share best practice, co-develop curriculum models and create progression pathways that support learners to move seamlessly between education and employment.

A key aspect of this leadership is the College's role in driving collaborative initiatives such as the A Level Cluster, where USP leads a network of partner Colleges to enhance the quality, breadth and accessibility of A Level provision. This model enables shared expertise, innovative teaching approaches and improved learner experiences, ensuring students benefit from a broader and more enriched curriculum offer. In parallel, the College continues to strengthen its partnerships with university providers, supporting progression into higher education and the development of higher-level skills aligned to workforce demand.

USP College also plays a pivotal role in regional economic development as the lead college for the Freeport Skills initiative. Through this work, the College is supporting workforce development aligned to major infrastructure and growth projects, ensuring that local people are equipped with the skills required to access emerging employment opportunities. This leadership position enables the College to contribute directly to addressing skills shortages, supporting economic growth and shaping a more responsive and integrated skills system.

Collectively, these activities position USP College as a recognised leader within the sector, strengthening its reputation as an innovative and forward-thinking provider. Learners benefit from enhanced opportunities, access to specialist expertise and improved progression pathways, while staff engage in meaningful collaboration that drives continuous improvement. Through its national and regional influence, the College is playing a key role in shaping a more connected, agile and employer-responsive education and skills system. The curriculum is designed around four specific sectors: Creative Industries; & Professional Services; Medical Technologies & Life Sciences, and Sport & Healthcare Professionals. Each of these sector areas is overseen by a sector board (employer advisory board). Employer partners collaborate in shaping the curriculum and wider curriculum offer helping the College to identify and impart the necessary skills and knowledge that support the local economy. The College reviews its curriculum annually considering this employer feedback selecting specific qualifications and topics/modules/units within qualifications which better develop relevant skills and knowledge for the sector. The skills gaps identified are targeted for development within the delivery of the curriculum via live project briefs provided by employer partners, via the College's Student CPD Days and through enrichment and tutorial. This process will directly shape and continuously review the focus and aims of our Accountability agreement, ensuring it remains aligned to local demand.

Many of these employers directly support the College's strategy via direct involvement in the curriculum providing placements, masterclasses, trips/visits, and live project briefs for learners. The College has a strong entry level offer which supports learners, social and personal development as well as giving skills-based learning to enable learners to access job placements or work experience and to achieve their long term goal of paid employment. In addition to the well planned and detailed educational offer for our entry level learners we invest in student support and pastoral care which ensures a well developed wrap around care programme. There is a strong focus on positive wellbeing in the workplace ensuring students also prioritise their own self-care, an essential skill itself. The College will continue to invest in specialist staff, industry standard facilities and digital technologies to respond to employers' needs and ensure an equitable and high-quality learner experience at each campus.

USP College actively seeks partnerships to expand educational opportunities for adults within the local community, tailoring delivery models to meet the needs of working individuals and families. We continue to enhance our remote and distance learning offer, including the development of additional Access to Higher Education pathways to support progression and lifelong learning. Building on the successful first year of delivery, the College has further strengthened its Skills Bootcamp provision through partnership working, providing targeted learning and employment support for unemployed and adult learners within the community. The programme is now running successfully and continues to support individuals in developing industry-relevant skills, progressing into employment, and improving career opportunities aligned to local and regional workforce needs.

Inclusive Mainstream Fund Commitment

USP College is committed to placing inclusion at the heart of its educational provision, ensuring all learners can access, participate and achieve in an ambitious and supportive environment. Through the Department for Education Inclusive Fund, the College will strengthen its whole College approach to inclusive practice, focusing on early intervention, workforce development and the removal of barriers to learning

This investment will support the College to enhance staff capability, develop inclusive learning environments, strengthen transition and induction arrangements, and provide targeted support for learners with additional needs and vulnerabilities. The funding will also support strategic planning and the development of adaptive teaching practices to ensure inclusion is embedded across curriculum delivery and learner support services. Alongside this, the College is actively exploring collaborative projects with local Colleges through the Federation of Essex Colleges (FEDEC) to strengthen and innovate inclusive practice, enabling shared learning, greater specialist expertise and improved outcomes for learners across the wider region.

This commitment aligns directly with the College's Inclusion and Belonging Strategy and will contribute to improved learner engagement, retention, achievement and progression, ensuring that all learners are equipped to succeed and thrive.

Approach to Developing the Annual Accountability Statement

The College has engaged with a diverse and varied range of stakeholders to identify these key priorities and target outcomes. Specifically, the College have been working directly with the Essex Chambers of Commerce (ECoC) in development of the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP). The College has provided feedback on behalf of the 135 employer partners across our five sector boards. All feedback has been shared collaboratively with the ECoC to inform and support the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP). These employer partners have already been actively involved in shaping the College's curriculum and wider curriculum identifying skills gaps/needs, jobs of the future and work ready behaviours required in young people. Our career package has been built on national and regional career opportunities with a focus on developing the skills shortages needed for careers across the region and UK.

We continue to develop effective strategic partnerships with key stakeholders and employers across the region and beyond to future proof our career focused curriculum and maximise our learners' opportunities for progression into Higher Education, Apprenticeships, and employment and ultimately to have a positive impact in society. We have focused on building effective and purposeful working relationships with key stakeholders and employers through our employer sector boards and employer live briefs. Our employer sector boards have worked directly with our curriculum leaders to shape and inform curriculum development. Alongside this work we have also developed a pipeline for future talent forums and maximised our learner's wider skill sets with employer live briefs which are enabling a continued skills development to meet employment demands.

Engagement with Other Providers in the Area

The area incorporated within the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) is both vast and diverse. The College therefore recognises that to address the various skills needs within the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP), collaboration with other providers is both essential and ongoing. The College will continue to work collaboratively within the Federation of Essex Colleges Network (FEDEC) alongside Chelmsford College, Colchester Institute, Colchester Sixth Form College, Harlow College, New City College (Epping), South Essex College and ARU Writtle. See Appendix A for the Greater Essex- Federation of Essex Colleges Commitment Statement as approved by the Corporation 7 July 2026.

Our Contribution to National, Regional, Local Priorities

College Strategic Aims and Objectives	Impact and/or Contribution towards National, Regional and Local Priorities for Learning and Skills
Aim 1 - Deliver an Employer-Led, Future-Focused Curriculum We will continue to design and evolve our curriculum in partnership with employers and sector boards to ensure alignment with Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) priority sectors and growth industries, including digital, health, professional services, creative industries and emerging technologies. The aim positions employers, sector boards and labour market intelligence at the centre of our curriculum design, ensuring provision remains responsive to current and emerging skills needs across priority growth sectors. We will continue to roll out T level curriculum offer and implement the V Level curriculum expanding our offer. • Expand career pathway-led curriculum design, ensuring clear progression from Level 1–6 into employment, apprenticeships and HE • Continue to co-design and evolve curriculum with employers and sector boards to ensure strong alignment with Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) priority sectors and growth industries, including digital, health, professional services, creative industries and emerging technologies. • Increase responsiveness to employer demand through modular, flexible and hybrid delivery models, including bootcamps and adult provision. • Strengthen alignment to Industrial Strategy sectors (IS8) and major regional developments (e.g. infrastructure, green economy). • Expand higher technical qualifications and apprenticeship pathways to address workforce shortages and support local and regional economic growth. • This supports the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) ambition for a joined-up, employer-led skills system that responds to business need.	Essex Skills Priority 1 - developing a workforce with adaptable, transferable skills that can move across growth sectors • Developing a workforce with adaptable, transferable skills that can move across priority growth sectors. • Strengthening employer confidence in the local skills system through curriculum that reflects real labour market demand. • Supporting productivity and economic resilience across Essex’s key industries. Relevant national/regional/local priority • National priorities for an employer-led skills system that improves productivity, progression and workforce readiness. • Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) ambitions for a joined-up, responsive skills system shaped by employers and economic need. • Regional growth strategies aligned to IS8 sectors, infrastructure investment. • Local economic priorities, ensuring learners progress into high-value employment or further training that meets business demand. Impact • Curriculum is consistently aligned to employer and Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) priorities, resulting in learners gaining relevant, in-demand skills. • Improved progression rates into employment, apprenticeships and higher education across all levels. • Employers report higher satisfaction with the quality and work-readiness of learners and apprentices. • Increased uptake and success in higher technical and apprenticeship pathways, addressing local and regional skills shortages. • Greater agility in curriculum delivery enables the College to respond quickly to emerging industries and economic priorities.

Aim 2 - Embed Digital Innovation and AI to Transform Learning

Building on our digital strategy and the Super-Agency Blueprint, we will lead the Further Education sector in the innovative application of teaching, learning, and curriculum design.

Objective:

- Scale immersive technologies: Deploy bespoke XR, VR/AR, and digital twin environments to simulate industry-standard workplaces and enhance experiential learning.
- Embed AI-enabled pedagogy: Utilise AI for automated formative assessment, real-time material adaptation, and personalised learning pathways to support individual learner progress and reduce staff administrative burdens.
- Expand HyFlex delivery: Utilise our 'Hybrid Learner Wall' infrastructure to provide flexible, borderless, and inclusive access to education, actively supporting adult returners and modular learning.
- Develop Meta-Skills: Ensure learners develop advanced digital literacy, AI fluency, and vital 'USP Meta-Skills' (metacognition and emotional intelligence) across all curriculum areas.

This reflects our strategic shift from passive “technology adoption” to deploying “technology that amplifies human potential and pedagogical excellence.”

Essex Skills Priority 2 - Closing digital skills gaps through flexible, sector-focused upskilling and workforce development

- Addressing Cross-Cutting Digital Skills Gaps: Directly supports the Essex Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) mandate to improve digital fluency across all sectors.
- Upskilling the Existing Workforce: Meets the local employer demand for flexible, bite-sized training (microcredentials) that adults can access synchronously via our HyFlex infrastructure without leaving the workplace.
- Sector-Specific Digitisation: Supports the integration of advanced digital skills in key Essex priority sectors, such as Net-Zero engineering, construction, and healthcare.

Relevant National/Regional/Local Priority

- Lifelong Learning Entitlement (LLE): Our HyFlex and digital delivery models directly facilitate the LLE by breaking down geographical and timetabling barriers for adult learners.
- UK Industrial Strategy 8 (IS8): Aligns with the national drive for increased productivity, advanced manufacturing, and AI-readiness in the workforce.
- DfE EdTech & Workload Reduction Priorities: Actively answers the DfE's call to explore how AI can be used to safely reduce teacher workload and improve assessment efficiency.

Impact

- For Learners: Increased attainment, retention, and engagement, resulting in highly employable graduates who possess the resilience, tech-fluency, and Meta-Skills required by modern industry.
- For the Regional Economy: Delivery of a 'future-ready' talent pipeline to Essex employers, drastically reducing the digital onboarding time required for new hires.
- For Adult Participation: A measurable increase in adult learner enrolment and completion rates, facilitated by the flexibility of the Hybrid Learner Wall and asynchronous XR delivery.
- For Staff (Super-Agency): A visible reduction in repetitive marking and administrative tasks through AI co-pilots, allowing educators to reclaim hours for high-impact teaching, pastoral care, and curriculum innovation.

Aim 3 - Develop Future-Ready Learners through Meta-Skills, EQ and Employability

We will place metacognition, emotional intelligence (EQ), and resilience at the heart of our curriculum to prepare learners for the future workplace, in line with national, regional employer priorities.

Objective:

- Ensuring USP Meta-Skills across all programmes, embed and focus on critical thinking, adaptability and problem solving, communication and teamwork.
- Redesign assessment approaches so that our learners can demonstrate and apply their knowledge, reflection to improve their skills and learning rather than rote knowledge.
- Strengthen employer engagement through live briefs, industry projects and work experience.
- Ensure all learners develop strong professional behaviours, emotional intelligence, resilience and communication, which will be sustained into employment apprenticeship or higher education.
- Ensure curriculum delivery reflects emerging national, regional and employer demand for higher-order skills alongside technical competence.

This aligns with strengthening employer engagement and developing the skills, behaviours and emerging competence needed to succeed in the employment landscape.

Essex Skills Priority 3 – Embedding employability (soft) skills and workplace behaviours across the skills system to improve workforce readiness and employer confidence

- Soft skills and workplace behaviours are directly developed which are identified by Essex employers as priority gaps in communication, teamwork, problem solving, creatively and adaptability.
- Ensuring Essex Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) priorities are embedded for employability skills throughout the skills system and not as a stand-alone activity which restrict transferable skills.
- Strengthening employer confidence in learners readiness for the workplace, supporting recruitment and local retention of a skilled work-force.

Relevant national/regional/local priority

- Development of transferable skills, critical thinking, problem solving, adaptability and teamwork alongside the technical competence. This will reflect the national employer demand across all sectors.
- Stronger personal development and resilience to support learners to manage transition's into work and further study, aligned with national expectations.

Impact

- Learners demonstrate greater independence, confidence and ability to apply knowledge in real-world contexts, adapt to feedback and manage challenges in a positive and constructive manner.
- Improved progression outcomes into higher education, apprenticeships and sustained employment
- Employers report learners are better prepared for the workplace, particularly in communication, teamwork, resilience, problem solving and professional behaviours.
- Learners show stronger self-reflection and resilience, leading to improved achievement, attendance and retention.

Aim 4 - Strengthen English and Maths as foundational skills for learners success

Strengthen English, Maths and core skills as foundational enablers for employability, progression and life chances, ensuring all learners develop the literacy, numeracy and communication skills required to succeed in further study, employment and society.

Objective:

- Improve achievement, high grades and progress in GCSE and functional skills English and maths.
- Embed English and Maths contextually within vocational and academic programmes so learners can confidently apply skills in real-life and occupational settings.
- Develop innovative approaches to delivery, including digital and applied learning models to increase engagement and personalisation.
- Ensure English and Maths do not act as a barrier to employment, apprenticeships or further study, particularly for disadvantaged and SEND learners.
- Build confidence and independence, by supporting learners resilience in using English and Maths in everyday, academic and workplace contexts.
- Ensure all learners leave with the core skills required for employment and life.

This supports the FE sector priority to “get the basics right” as a foundation for economic participation.

Essex Skills Priority 4 - Strengthening core skills and work-readiness to support progression and address skills shortages

- Ensuring learners have Stronge core literacy, numeracy and communication skills, which underpin productively across all growth sectors.
- Supporting and improving work-readiness, social mobility and progression for young people and adults.
- Addressing skills shortages so learners can succeed in technical, professional and vocational pathways.

Relevant national/regional/local priority

- Improving basic skills ensures the national priorities to secure higher achievement in English and maths are developed for economic levelling up.
- Priorities of a skilled, adaptable workforce which has strong transferable skills.
- Employers need for reliable literacy, numeracy, problem-solving and communication skills across all sectors.

Impact

- Improved achievement rates in GCSE and functional skills English and Maths, with more learners securing grade 4+ or equivalent.
- Learners demonstrate increased ability to apply English and maths skills confidently within vocational, academic and real-life contexts.
- Increased learner confidence and engagement, particularly for those who have previously struggled with English and Maths.
- Employers report learners have stronger core literacy, numeracy and communication skills, supporting workplace readiness and employment expectations.
- Reduced gaps in achievement for disadvantaged and SEND learners, supporting inclusion and social mobility.
- Increased use of digital learning platforms and apps tools, enables teachers to provide more personalised support, leading to improved learner progress and engagement in English and Maths.

Aim 5 - Drive Inclusion, Access and Progression for All Learners

We will ensure that all learners, regardless of background, ability or circumstances, can access high-quality education, achieve their full potential and progress successfully.

Objective:

- Strengthen support for SEND learners, high needs students and those requiring additional support.
- Maximise the impact of the Department for Education Inclusion Fund to enhance inclusive support, improve access and strengthen learner outcomes across the College.
- Ensure early identification of need and timely, coordinated intervention.
- Expand pathways for NEET learners, adult returners and those facing barriers to employment or education.
- Align provision with Youth Guarantee and local employment initiatives which ensure routes into education and employment.
- Embed inclusive teaching practices, supported by UDL and flexible delivery models and adaptive assessment approaches where able.

This reflects the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) and FEDEC priority to drive inclusion and widen opportunity across the region

Essex Skills Priority 5 – Promoting inclusive skills development and reducing economic inactivity by increasing access, participation, and progression for disadvantaged groups

- Increasing participation and progression among underrepresented and disadvantaged groups, strengthening the overall workforce pipeline.
- Reducing economic inactivity through improved access to education, training and employment opportunities.
- Supporting inclusive growth across the county by ensuring all residents can develop skills aligned to local labour market needs.

Relevant national/regional/local priority

- Regional Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) and FEDEC priorities to drive inclusion, widen opportunity and better connect learners to employment and progression pathways.
- National priorities to widen participation, improve outcomes for SEND and disadvantaged learners, and reduce NEET figures through the Youth Guarantee.
- Local authority and partner initiatives focused on improving access, tackling inequality and supporting social mobility across communities

Impact

- Increased participation and retention of SEND, high needs and disadvantaged learners, with more learners successfully completing their programmes.
- Improved progression into education, employment or training for NEET learners, adult returners and those facing barriers.
- Reduced gaps in achievement and outcomes between learner groups, supporting greater equity and social mobility.
- Learners benefit from more inclusive teaching approaches, resulting in higher engagement, confidence and independence.
- Stronger alignment with local initiatives leads to measurable reductions in economic inactivity and improved access to opportunities across the community.
- Proactive identification and removal of barriers enables learners to access, participate and succeed fully in learning, resulting in improved attendance, progress and achievement.

Aim 6 - Build a Highly Skilled, Agile Workforce

We will invest heavily in our people, our most valuable resource, to ensure staff are empowered, confident, and equipped to deliver the College's ambitious strategic vision and the Super-Agency Blueprint.

Objective:

- Deliver the Super-Agency Fellowship: Develop staff as "architects of change" through targeted CPD in Hybrid-Flexible (HyFlex) delivery and Universal Design for Learning (UDL).
- Embed Digital and AI Pedagogy: Utilise our R&D Hubs and AI Sandboxes to safely build staff fluency in AI, immersive technology, and new educational workflows (guided by our "Guardrails, Not Fences" policy).
- Maintain Industry Currency: Strengthen links with targeted employers and Sector Boards, integrating industry CPD days to ensure staff knowledge remains highly relevant to modern sector pathways.
- Cultivate Agile Leadership: Develop leadership capability that trusts teams, empowers decision-making at all levels, and fosters a culture of innovation, "Calculated Risk-Taking," and continuous improvement.

Essex Skills Priority 6 - Developing an industry-aligned, highly skilled FE workforce to deliver employer-relevant and future-focused technical education

- Industry-Aligned Educators: Responds directly to the Essex Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) requirement for Further Education staff to possess up-to-date, deep knowledge of local priority sectors and emerging workplace technologies.
- Capacity Building for Growth: Addresses regional skills shortages by ensuring our teaching workforce is highly proficient in the advanced digital and technical skills demanded by Essex employers, enabling us to expand capacity in critical subject areas.

Relevant National/Regional/Local Priority

- DfE Further Education Workforce Strategy: Directly supports national drives to improve recruitment, retention, and continuous professional development within the FE sector.
- Skills for Jobs White Paper: Answers the mandate for stronger employer-provider collaboration, placing employers at the heart of curriculum design through active Sector Boards and staff industry placements.
- DfE AI in Education Guidelines: Aligns with government priorities to safely and ethically build AI literacy among teaching staff, explicitly using technology to reduce administrative burnout and enhance teaching quality.

Impact:

- For the Workforce: Creation of a highly skilled, confident, and adaptable faculty proficient in next-generation digital pedagogy (AI, XR, HyFlex).
- For Organisational Resilience: Measurably improved staff retention, progression, and wellbeing as a direct result of empowering educators with "Super-Agency", using tech to reduce administrative workload and prevent burnout.
- For Learners: Increased engagement, progress, and outcomes driven by teaching that is innovative, highly personalised, and delivered by industry-current experts.
- For Employers & Sector Alignment: Stronger institutional ties with industry, ensuring teaching remains perfectly synchronised with rapid shifts in workforce needs, driving a high-performance culture of accountability across the College.

Aim 7 - Strengthen Partnerships and Contribute to a Joined-Up Skills System

We will play a leading role in shaping a coherent, collaborative skills system across Greater Essex.

Objective:

- Deepen collaboration with employers, universities, training providers and local authorities.
- Support delivery of the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) and regional economic priorities.
- Contribute to a joined-up skills ecosystem, reducing duplication and improving access
- Expand strategic partnerships to enhance curriculum innovation and progression pathways.

This supports the ambition for a simplified, accessible and employer-responsive skills system.

Essex Skills Priority 7 - Strengthening employer-led collaboration and creating a more joined-up, responsive local skills system

This aim directly supports Greater Essex Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) priorities by strengthening employer-led collaboration and contributing to a more coherent, joined-up local skills system. By deepening partnerships with employers, universities, training providers and local authorities, we will support delivery of regional economic priorities, reduce duplication across the system and improve access, progression and responsiveness to local labour market needs.

Relevant national/regional/local priority

This also aligns with national Skills for Jobs and Skills England priorities, which emphasise system collaboration, employer leadership and joined-up planning to maximise impact. By contributing to a simplified, accessible and employer-responsive skills ecosystem, this approach supports national expectations for providers to work collectively to improve efficiency, workforce alignment and outcomes.

Impact

- Stronger collaboration results in a more coherent and responsive skills system, better aligned to employer and regional needs.
- Increased learner access to clear progression pathways across FE, HE and employment through strengthened partnerships.
- Reduced duplication of provision, leading to more efficient use of resources and improved learner choice.
- Enhanced curriculum innovation through partnerships, ensuring provision remains relevant, future-focused and industry-informed.
- Greater contribution to regional priorities, supporting economic growth, workforce development and improved employment outcomes.

Aim 8 - National Leadership, Collaboration and System Influence

USP College plays a leading role beyond its local context, contributing to national collaboration, system leadership and sector innovation. Through strategic partnerships with Colleges, universities and key stakeholders, we are actively shaping practice, provision and progression pathways at both regional and national level.

Objective:

- Lead and contribute to national collaboration with FE Colleges and university partners, sharing best practice and co-developing innovative curriculum models.
- Drive the A Level Cluster model, working with partner Colleges to enhance quality, breadth of offer and collaborative teaching approaches.
- Act as the lead College for the Freeport Skills initiative, supporting workforce development aligned to major infrastructure and economic growth priorities.
- Expand opportunities for learners through shared delivery, progression pathways and access to specialist expertise and facilities.
- Influence sector development through innovation in digital learning, immersive technologies and future-focused curriculum design.

Essex Skills Priority 8 - Strengthening regional collaboration, employer engagement, and innovation in skills delivery to improve progression, workforce readiness, and alignment with economic priorities

- Strengthened regional collaboration across Further Education and Higher Education partnerships to support progression pathways, curriculum alignment, and workforce readiness linked to Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) priorities and the Essex Skills Plan.
- Continued leadership of the Freeport Skills initiative, supporting workforce development and skills planning aligned to major regional infrastructure projects, economic growth priorities, and emerging employment sectors.
- Supported national and regional priorities around digital transformation and future workforce skills through investment in immersive learning environments, AI integration, and innovative teaching and learning approaches.
- Increased employer engagement through sector boards, employer live briefs, and collaborative curriculum planning to ensure provision remains responsive to current and future labour market needs.
- Enhanced opportunities for learners to access industry-relevant experiences, technical skills development, and employability pathways through strategic employer and stakeholder partnerships.
- Positioned USP College as a leading and influential provider within the FE sector through active engagement in national networks, collaborative projects, and sharing of best practice in digital innovation and curriculum design.

9. Expand Flexible, Lifelong Learning and Workforce Development

We will increase opportunities for adults and employers to access education and training throughout life.

Objective:

- Grow HE adult provision, including Access to HE, bootcamps and modular learning.
- Develop flexible delivery to meet the needs of working learners and employers.
- Support reskilling and upskilling aligned to economic growth sectors.
- Strengthen pathways into employment through targeted community and employer partnerships.

This responds directly to employer demand for flexible, modular training solutions.

Essex Skills Priority 9 - Improving system access, flexibility, adult reskilling, and modular (bite-sized) provision to meet employer-led skills demand

This objective directly supports the Greater Essex Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP), which identifies system access, flexibility, adult reskilling and modular provision as critical priorities for meeting employer-led skills demand across Essex, Southend and Thurrock.

The Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) highlights persistent recruitment challenges across key growth sectors, including digital and digitech, construction and the built environment, health and care, engineering and advanced manufacturing, professional services and education. This calls for flexible, bite-sized and employer-responsive training routes to enable adults to upskill and reskill alongside work.

Relevant national/regional/local priority

This directly delivers national skills for jobs and Skills England priorities through employer-led, flexible and modular provision focused on workforce upskilling, and meets the Accountability Statements and Local Needs Duty (2026-27) requirement for providers to evidence a clear, responsive alignment between adult education technical provision, employer engagement and local labour market need.

Impact

- Increased participation in adult learning, with more individuals accessing flexible pathways to upskill and reskill.
- Improved employment outcomes for adult learners, including entry into work, career progression and higher earnings.
- Employers benefit from a more skilled and adaptable workforce, aligned to sector growth and business needs.
- Greater flexibility in delivery leads to improved engagement, retention and achievement for working learners.
- Strengthened community and employer partnerships support reduced skills gaps and increased economic participation.

The shared ambition of the group is to respond effectively to the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) priorities ensuring a greater alignment of provision across the region and the design of courses which develop appropriate skills and knowledge to better support progression into the areas of priority and growth.

Moreover, the College pro-actively leads a 50 College national consortium developing 'VR Campus, a state-of-the-art Virtual Reality project designed to provide high-quality lessons to all learners regardless of geographical location via pre-recorded content. The College has also pioneered a national immersive learning initiative through an immersive room network addressing both the current teacher shortage problem and the impact of inequitable student experience.

The key stakeholders the college has engaged with include:

- Students of all ages, via the college's learner voice activities
- Employees of the College
- College Governors
- Local and National employers of all sizes within the college's focused sector areas
- Other local providers
- Local authorities and other government bodies
- Jobcentre Plus
- Employer representative partners such as the Essex Chambers of Commerce
- Higher Education Institutions
- Local community and charity based groups

Corporation Statement:

On behalf of the Unified Seevic Palmer's College (USP 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 Corporation meeting on 7 July 2026.

The plan will be published on the college's website within three months of the start of the new academic year and can be accessed from the following link:

Chair of Governors, Paul Wakeling:



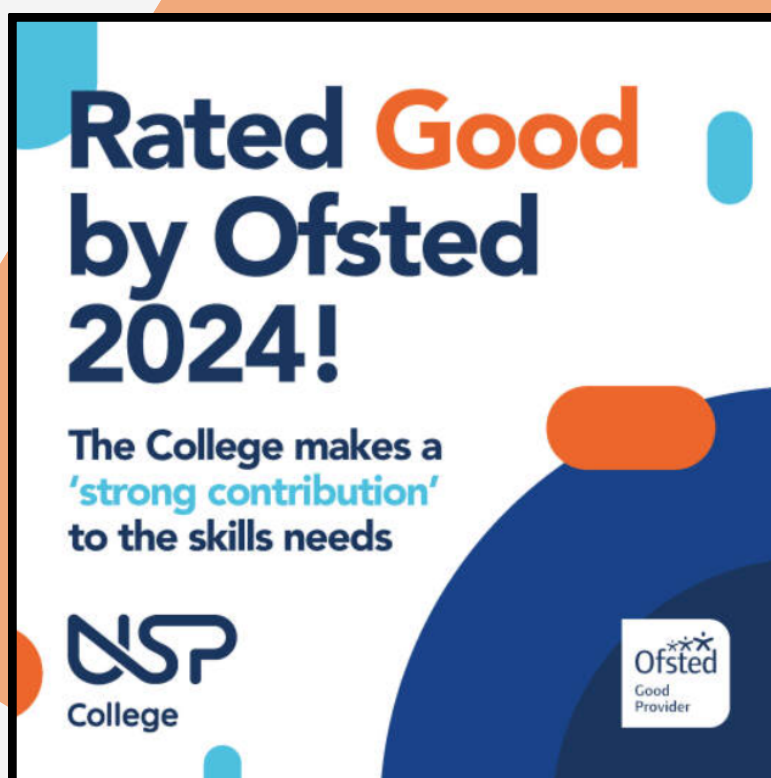
Chief Executive Officer, Dan Pearson:



Dated:

Relevant Supporting documentation:

1. [Local Skills Improvement Plans](#)
2. [Essex Skills Plan](#)
3. [College Strategic Plan](#)
4. [Ofsted Inspection Report](#)
5. [Annual Financial Statement](#)



Appendix A

Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) Commitment Statement

Greater Essex - Federation of Essex Colleges Commitment Statement:

The Federation of Essex Colleges is a well-established group within Greater Essex. We work collectively for the benefit of our Essex communities, people, businesses and employers to support high quality education, training and skills provision that meet the needs of our economy.

Mission:

To support the region's economy and drive up the prosperity of all people in Greater Essex through the transformational power of learning and skills development, whilst meeting local, regional and national skills priorities. Our partnership approach delivers relevant post-16 learning and skills for individuals and businesses.

Vision:

Empowering the Essex Engine: connecting every learner to local opportunity and every local business to world class talent, through collaboration and co-operation. All individuals, communities and businesses in Greater Essex will benefit from an inclusive, relevant and responsive post-16 further education and skills system, which empowers each person to aim high, progress in their careers, prosper in life and value their lifelong learning, addressing local and regional skills' needs of employers.

Through our Greater Essex partnership, we aim to accelerate skills levels and make Essex the place for businesses to invest in through growing the talent pool. This will be aligned to and delivered through each of the Local Skills Improvement Plan's priorities for 2026 to 2029.

Our members will be held in high esteem in their communities, will be well connected with the changing needs of individuals and industry and will attract learners and employers looking for relevant learning, upskilling and reskilling.

Through effective management of funding and resources and innovative ways to secure funding, we will make our organisations financially sustainable, well maintained and provide a compelling employment opportunity for people looking to enter and move through an education career pathway.

Our Commitment:

We believe in a systems approach through:

- Speaking as one voice to promote and raise the profile of further education and skills, including apprenticeships, adult education and higher education, to influence change for the benefit of our learners, communities, region and members.
- Collaborative planning and delivery of a cohesive regional skills offer, building on our successful models from projects such as the Local Skills Improvement Fund.
- Collaboration and sharing of experience, expertise and resources at all levels within providers, as well as growth and efficiency opportunities.
- Strategic partnerships with the Greater Essex Business Board and key stakeholders in business and government.
- Ensuring that skills is at the heart of the system and working in partnership with all political parties.
- Working together to ensure there are accessible pathways for all into employment or further study.
- Working together to address the 2026 - 2029 priorities set out in the Local Skills Improvement Plan, all linked holistically to softer and entrepreneur skills.
- Working collaboratively with the Essex Provider Network (EPN) towards these common goals.