

**Bishop
Auckland
College**

STRATEGIC PLAN

2021 to 2024



**GET THE SKILLS,
GET THE JOB**

swdt
South West Durham Training

 **durham
gateway**

Vocational learning to create
bright futures for all



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FOREWORD

As we begin to emerge from the unique and unprecedented challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic, we are all naturally eager to move positively into the next stage of our lives.

For Bishop Auckland College, this means that we are ready and determined to play our role in post-Covid recovery for the individuals, communities and businesses who need us most.

With this in mind, I am delighted to present our Strategic Plan for 2021-2024 and looking forward to deploying all of the skills, expertise and passion within the College to really make a difference to the lives of all of our students over the years to come.

I'm often asked about what Bishop Auckland College is like. Well, we are a warm, diverse and inclusive environment in which everyone is supported to grow, develop and really flourish.

We know that everyone is different and treat each student as an individual, with their own unique talents, circumstances, challenges and aspirations.

From the moment a student is welcomed into our College community, we aim to transform their life chances and help them to progress into a fulfilling career and contribute to the productivity and prosperity of our local economy.

We can do this because we work closely with employers across sectors to ensure that our curriculum is effectively aligned to labour market demand and because we are a key partner in the regeneration of Bishop Auckland and south Durham.

This Strategic Plan takes into account key national policy developments as well as local and regional economic development agendas.

Whilst shaping our priorities for the next three years, we have: listened to stakeholders; reflected upon the regeneration agenda for Bishop Auckland; considered the Government's aspirations set out in the recent White Paper (Skills for Jobs: Lifelong Learning for Opportunity and Growth, January 2021) and thought hard about our responsibility to reduce our carbon footprint.

Our new plan draws on thinking about all areas of our work and positions the Bishop Auckland College Group at the heart of local infrastructure, driving participation, economic prosperity and aspiration.

It reflects the challenges we face and the many opportunities open to us; most of all, it provides a clear focus and direction for our future.



Principal and Chief Executive

Principal and Chief Executive
Natalie Davison-Terranova



VISION

Shaping the future

The Bishop Auckland College Group will continue to evolve by responding to individual, community and business needs with high quality specialist provision that builds prosperity for all people and catalyses local economic regeneration.

MISSION

The passion that drives us

Get the skills, get the job: High quality vocational learning that creates bright futures for all.

GROUP

The growing Bishop Auckland College

Bishop Auckland College originated in 1958 and has a long and proud history as a very successful former technical college serving the mining, engineering and manufacturing industries.

The College has evolved and diversified with the changing times in order to respond to areas of specific need with highly specialist provision. Hence, the Bishop Auckland College Group is made up of a number of specialist activities, at varying stages of development.

These are all connected by a shared mission, ethos and set of core values, and offer students exceptional opportunities for progression and employment. The Group comprises:

Bishop Auckland College

A general FE college, established originally as a technical college in 1958.

South West Durham Training

A specialist engineering and manufacturing training provider located within the Aycliffe Business Park.

Durham Gateway

Specialist alternative provision for 14-16 year olds located at the College's Spennymoor campus, offering a combined academic and vocational curriculum for young people who thrive in a nurturing and practical learning environment.

Bishop Auckland College Nursery

On-site nursery and pre-school providing up to 67 full-time places, serving external commercial clients as well as the children of College students and staff.

Auckland Academy

A joint venture initiative with The Auckland Project, providing apprenticeship and other training provision to support the economic regeneration of Bishop Auckland.



Chair of the Bishop Auckland College
Corporate Board Patrick Lonergan in the
motor vehicle workshop and training centre

ETHOS AND VALUES

Bishop Auckland College is a great place to study or work and our culture is quite distinctive. The College staff are an exceptionally tight-knit community of people who are absolutely dedicated to our students, our College and our local communities.

Most of our staff and students originate from the local area and understand our context – the challenges and the enormous opportunities – very well.

Bishop Auckland College is a unique, diverse and inclusive environment in which everyone is supported to grow, develop and really flourish. We treat each student as an individual because we know that everyone is different.

Every individual has their own unique talents, circumstances, challenges and aspirations. Every student brings something special and it is this diversity and richness of ideas that makes college life interesting, fun and vibrant.

Our culture is such that all students, staff and visitors feel welcome, safe, respected and valued, and we always stay true to our core values.

We know that positive and productive relationships are the key to unlocking the potential within each and every young person or adult learner, and ensuring that everyone has a bright future.

For this reason, our staff are absolutely dedicated to really getting to know our students - what motivates them, their career aspirations and any extra support they might need too. We can do this because our class sizes are

smaller than in some colleges and because we have a fantastic team of caring and dedicated staff.

We understand that some of our students face difficult challenges and our approach is clear: where barriers exist, we focus relentlessly on supporting students to climb high and overcome them.

For all students, our intent is always the same: from the moment they are welcomed into our College community, we aim to transform the life chances of every student, helping them to progress into fulfilling careers and contribute to the productivity and prosperity of our local economy.

Whilst we are rightly proud of our unique internal culture, Bishop Auckland College is an outward facing organisation that recognises the critical importance of collaboration in order to lead change and influence local agendas.

Through our many partnerships with employers and other stakeholders, we have established our place at the heart of our community and as a key partner in the regeneration of Bishop Auckland and south Durham.

We are entrepreneurial, ambitious and we expect excellence – from ourselves and from our students.

These are the values that guide all of our activities:

CARING

We are passionate about people and concerned for the wellbeing of all students and staff

AMBITION

We empower students to aim high and achieve their full potential

RESPECT

Regardless of our differences, everyone is valued and treated with kindness

EQUALITY

We are inclusive and enable all members of our community to thrive

EXCELLENCE

We strive for exceptional standards in everything we do

RESILIENCE

When faced with challenges, we work together to adapt and bounce back more determined than before

Career Ahead with Bishop Auckland College

EXTERNAL AND POLICY CONTEXT

Whilst considering the external and policy context for FE out of which the strategic priorities for Bishop Auckland College emerge, wide-ranging opportunities and challenges must be taken into account. These include:

Opportunities

Central role of further education in increasing productivity

Recent reviews and policy developments have made it clear that government sees the pivotal role that further and technical education has in increasing productivity and helping people to develop skills for good jobs now and in the future.

For example, in 2017 the Industrial Strategy set out a vision to “establish a technical education system that rivals the best in the world”. Then, in 2019 the Augar Review of post-18 education and funding set out recommendations to improve the “capacity of the tertiary education system to produce a suitably skilled workforce”.

More recently, and written against a backdrop of the imperative to catalyse economic recovery following the Covid-19 pandemic, the government’s FE White Paper “Skills for Jobs: Lifelong Learning for Opportunities and Growth” (January 2021), sets out a number of potential opportunities, including:

- The development of Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs), with employer representative bodies such as Chambers of Commerce expected to work closely with colleges to plan provision across an area. This presents an opportunity to further strengthen employer engagement and develop new provision to match areas of emerging demand.
- The planned introduction of a new Lifelong Loan Entitlement by 2025, covering flexible learning equivalent to four years of post-18 study and including support for adults without a level 3 qualification and also higher technical qualifications.
- A national FE teacher recruitment campaign and strengthening of initial teacher training.

Economic regeneration of Bishop Auckland

A range of initiatives to underpin the economic regeneration of Bishop Auckland are now underway, with the town benefitting from a unique and significant investment of both private and public funds.

‘The Auckland Project’, led by Jonathan Ruffer, combined with government investment through the Future High Streets Fund, the Stronger Towns Fund and the Heritage Action Zone initiative, mean that the town of Bishop Auckland is poised for transformation.

The key sectors of visitor economy, hospitality and culture will be at the centre of these developments and, as a key partner, Bishop Auckland College will play a crucial role in developing the skills of local people and connecting them to the new and exciting job opportunities that emerge.

Demographic growth

Following a substantial period of demographic decline in the number of 16 year olds, the trend locally reversed in the 2019-20 academic year to one of demographic growth.

Since then, the number of young people has been increasing each year and analysis of school census data indicates that this trend is set to continue until at least 2025.

Whilst increased funding will clearly be key to building capacity in the post-16 education system, this growth presents an opportunity to potentially expand provision in key areas of demand whilst leveraging increased economies of scale.

Digital sector

In the North East Strategic Economic Plan (January 2019) the North East Local Economic Partnership (NELEP) identifies the digital sector as one of four areas where evidence indicates that the north east has a distinct opportunity to improve its economic competitiveness – the others are advanced manufacturing, energy and health and life sciences.

Key areas of digital industry activity include software development, cloud computing, communications, buildings information modelling, gaming, data analytics, immersive technologies and cybersecurity.

However, the digital industries are not only a key employer and vital part of the economy in themselves, but they also act as an enabling sector for other key industries such as manufacturing and health.

Moving forward, there is an opportunity for Bishop Auckland College to significantly develop its digital curriculum offer in response to escalating demand for specialist skills, particularly in the areas of programming and systems development.

Challenges

Covid-19 pandemic

The Covid-19 pandemic has had far-reaching economic consequences beyond the spread of the disease itself and efforts to quarantine it.

The pandemic caused the 2nd largest global recession in history after the Great Depression of the 1930s, and in the UK GDP declined by 9.8% in 2020, the steepest drop since consistent records began in 1948.

The dominant service sector was particularly hard-hit by lockdown restrictions, along with other key sectors such as transport and construction.

The impact for communities local to Bishop Auckland College has been particularly difficult, in terms of job losses and a notable increase in the universal credit claimant count for young people.

Whilst the economy has gradually reopened and recovery is underway, much uncertainty remains over how strong and sustained the recovery will be, and whether any permanent economic damage might remain.

The clear priority for Bishop Auckland College is to work closely with employers and community partners in order to play our role in post-Covid recovery for the individuals, communities and businesses who need us most.

We will do this by raising skill levels in economically important sectors and by connecting local people with emerging job opportunities.

Climate emergency

As the UK government takes forward plans to tackle the climate emergency and meet its legally binding commitment to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050, it is crucial that the education sector embeds climate responsibility in all of its activities. To do this will require dedication, resource and a focus on all aspects of College activity including college operations, buildings and infrastructure; education about sustainable lifestyle choices; revisiting partnerships and suppliers; and curriculum developments to connect students with jobs emerging in the green economy.

From the 2021/22 academic year, Bishop Auckland College will recommit to the climate agenda, building on previous work with a renewed focus and using the framework provided by the Climate Action Roadmap for Further Education Colleges as a route towards achieving net zero emissions.

Sustained positive destinations

Department for Education data on the sustained destinations of 16-18 year olds after they complete studies at key stage 5 highlights stark regional inequalities, with the north east having the lowest performance of all regions in England.

The data indicates a clear positive correlation between level of study and sustained positive destinations, meaning outcomes are strongest for students studying at level 3. In addition, there is a clear inverse correlation between levels of socio-

economic disadvantage and positive destinations, as well as further barriers to progression for young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), including those who have high needs.

Bishop Auckland College is proud to be an inclusive learning environment, welcoming students at all levels and often supporting them to overcome significant challenges and barriers.

We know that we must continue our relentless focus on closing gaps in achievement and progression in order to transform the life chances of every student and support them into fulfilling careers and bright futures.

Support for students

Two key issues impacting upon the lives of young people mean that increased resourcing of student support services within colleges is now, even more than ever before, a critical issue.

Firstly, the mental health agenda has taken a centre stage in public discourse over recent years, as experiences of poor mental health and wellbeing – especially amongst young people – continue to escalate.

Evidence indicates that 20% of adolescents experience poor mental health in any given year and young people from low-income families are four times more likely to experience mental health challenges than those from more affluent families. Despite improved public knowledge and awareness and a huge range of



The HE Graduation Ceremony at Durham Cathedral

interventions, demand for mental health support continues to rise and the scale of issues has undoubtedly been amplified by the Covid-19 crisis.

A second key issue that has been brought into sharp relief by the bravery of those coming forward to tell their stories is that of sexual abuse and harassment. Colleges must have robust structures in place to support those who report incidents but our role goes much further than that. Whilst everybody has a part to play in ending sexual violence and harassment, colleges have a very direct role in stopping people from becoming perpetrators by creating a zero tolerance environment and providing robust education about consent and consequences.

It is clear that student support services within colleges play a crucial role, and this work must continue with renewed vigour and a collaborative approach between colleges, a wide range of external agencies and public services and education policy makers within the Department for Education.

PERFORMANCE HEADLINES

The last strategic planning period has yielded some impressive outcomes for Bishop Auckland College as well as some challenges, including those related to the Covid-19 pandemic. Headlines include:

- A positive full Ofsted inspection in November 2021, with the College graded 'good' for overall effectiveness. Inspectors praised the good quality of teaching, the wide range of enrichment activities for students, the good progress made by apprentices and students and the value that employers place upon the development of apprentices' professional standards.
- Despite the challenges of remote learning for extensive periods during the pandemic, strong student achievement rates were maintained in the vast majority of College curriculum areas.
- We have worked hard to simultaneously manage costs and develop strategic opportunities, meaning that for several years we have had a track record of good financial health.
- Investment in College systems and staff development, along with recruitment of staff with specialist skills, means that transformational change has taken place in some aspects of our work.

Examples include strengthened systems for personalising learning and monitoring student progress; the strong achievement rates for apprenticeships, largely sustained throughout the pandemic; and also revised approaches to teaching, learning and assessment in maths and English.

Photography Level 3 student,
Hannah Drinkwater, Bishop Auckland



RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

Whilst evaluating potential strategic developments, decision-making at the College is underpinned by a carefully balanced approach.

This involves judicious management of calculated risk whilst ensuring that we stay true to our core mission of enabling all of our students to progress towards a bright future, regardless of any barriers or challenges they might face.

This means that we have been keen to seize upon new initiatives only where these exploit market opportunities or respond to areas of specific need within our local communities.

We work collaboratively with a wide range of partners, knowing that productive partnerships are critical to addressing, head on, the key social and economic challenges faced by our communities.

Meeting the future sometimes requires brave strategic decisions to be made. Some of our key strategic actions over recent years have included:

- The 2018/19 launch of Durham Gateway, the College's direct-enrolled specialist alternative provision for 14-16 year olds. This provision, which has developed in partnership with Durham County Council and local schools, provides a combined academic and vocational curriculum for young people who thrive in a practical and nurturing environment. Having grown since its launch, the provision relocated to its own specially tailored campus in September 2021.
- The September 2019 launch of the College's first full degree-level programme, in counselling, followed a year later by the sports coaching degree. These courses are the first to be validated through the College's recent partnership with The Open University.

- Strategic engagement in a range of initiatives underpinning the economic regeneration of Bishop Auckland. With board and leadership roles in the Stronger Towns Fund initiative, for example, the College is playing a key role in connecting local people to job opportunities that emerge from investment in the transformation of our town.
- Substantial investment in the College's IT infrastructure to enable innovation in teaching and learning. These developments proved critical to enabling the transition to online learning during the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Development of a cost-efficient model for delivery of shared professional services (business support functions) across the Group.

With enabling developments such as these, the Bishop Auckland College Group remains strong and optimistic about the future. Moving forward, continued prudent management of finance will underpin our relentless focus on ensuring that student attainment is exceptional and opportunities for progression and employment are second to none.

Our overarching aim now is to further develop all aspects of our provision in a way that achieves the parallel aims of efficiency, excellence and impact, hence maximising progression opportunities for our students and communities. Whilst responding to areas of specific need with highly specialist provision, there is a consistent expectation that every student will enjoy their learning, fulfil their potential and move on to a bright future.

KEY STRATEGIC ACTIONS

Over the next three-year planning period

Continuation of established strategic development themes:

- **Ongoing investment in staff training and development** to ensure that the quality of education provided is consistently excellent.
- **Move achievement, progress and progression rates towards best-in-class performance** for all areas of activity.
- **Generate surpluses for continued investment** in exceptional resources by both increasing income and also leveraging efficiencies across the range of activities.
- **Ensure that the growth of Durham Gateway 14-16 alternative provision** is underpinned by both high quality and strong partnerships with commissioners.
- **Further expansion of the higher education portfolio**, to include additional degree-level programmes validated by The Open University alongside those established in counselling and sports coaching, as well as the existing University of Sunderland foundation degrees and Pearson HNC/D programmes.
- **Further development of the South West Durham Training business** in response to employer needs, with particular scope for growth in apprenticeships, higher education and commercial activity.
- **Continue to develop our role as a key partner in the regeneration of Bishop Auckland and South Durham.** This takes place through our strategic input on the Bishop Auckland Stronger Towns Fund and Brighter Bishop Auckland Partnership boards, our work with The Auckland Project and our relationships with many employers, stakeholders and community and charity partners.



Director of 14-16 Learning Richard Hinch with Durham Gateway staff

New strategic directions responding to key policy developments and areas of need:

- **Work closely with employers and community partners in order to play our role in post-Covid recovery** for the individuals, communities and businesses who need us most. We will do this by leveraging government initiatives and funding streams in order to raise skill levels in economically important sectors and connect local people with job opportunities that emerge from recovery and regeneration.
- **Strengthened approaches to careers and employability support, with proactive brokerage of employment outcomes and other positive destinations** for all students, including those with EHCPs, SEND, undiagnosed SEND needs and disadvantaged students. In addition to the hands-on approach established by the student progression team from 2021, future developments will centre on creation of a social enterprise recruitment agency, funded initially by the Bishop Auckland Stronger Towns Fund.
- **Further strengthening the College's response to local skills gaps and labour market needs**, by building on learnings from the Tees Valley pilot of the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) model. There is an opportunity to enhance existing employer engagement mechanisms, utilising relationships with employer representative bodies and other business networks, and focusing on target sectors that are of particular economic importance locally.
- **Redevelopment and relaunch of the digital curriculum offer** in response to escalating demand for specialist skills in this economically critical sector, particularly in the areas of programming and systems development. Underpinned by recent investment in state-of-the-art digital facilities, this curriculum development initiative will require appointment of specialist staff and a renewed focus on employer engagement.
- **From the 2021/22 academic year, Bishop Auckland College will redouble its commitment to addressing the climate emergency agenda.** We will build on previous work with a renewed focus using the framework provided by the Climate Action Roadmap for Further Education Colleges as a route towards achieving net zero emissions. All aspects of College operations will be reviewed in order to achieve the initial target of a 15% reduction in the College's carbon footprint by 2025. Work will embrace college operations, buildings and infrastructure; education about sustainable lifestyle choices; revisiting partnerships and suppliers; and curriculum developments to connect students with jobs emerging in the green economy, such as those in the domestic retrofit sector.
- **Introduction of T level curriculum** from September 2023, initially in the subject areas of early years and digital.

OUR COMMUNITY

Bishop Auckland College is the main post-16 technical and professional education provider in South Durham.

There is one 11-to-16 school in Bishop Auckland and two others with sixth forms; these, along with 12 other schools across south Durham (of which one has a sixth form) constitute the key feeder schools for Bishop Auckland College. The closest competing colleges of further education are Darlington College to the south and New College Durham to the north.

Whilst the declining population demographic for 16 year olds was a key issue for colleges for several years, the trend has now reversed dramatically.

From the smallest cohort size of the 2018/19 academic year, numbers are now increasing substantially year-on-year, presenting a real opportunity for growth in the number of full-time 16-18 year-old students.

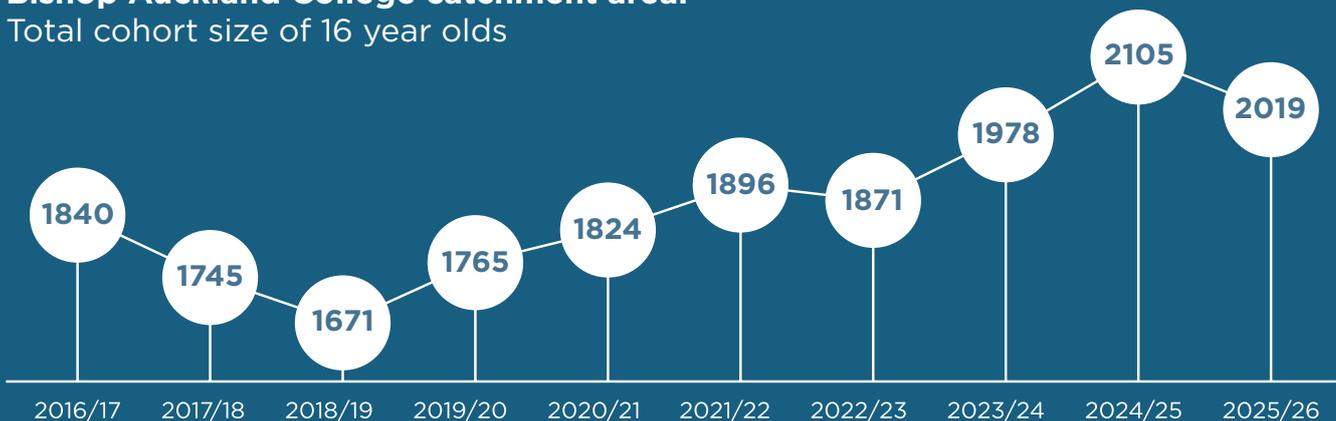
Analysis of census data for the schools within the Bishop Auckland College catchment area indicates that this trend is set to continue until at least 2025.

Assets and opportunities...

There are considerable assets and opportunities within Bishop Auckland and south Durham. Firstly, a major economic regeneration and job creation initiative is now well underway in Bishop Auckland, benefitting from significant investment of both private and public funds.

Jonathan Ruffer, an investment banker and evangelical Christian philanthropist, is leading a series of related initiatives known as 'The Auckland Project'. These are at varying stages of completion and include: redevelopment of Auckland Castle; creation of a viewing tower; development of a Christian heritage centre; an art gallery of Spanish old masters; a mining art gallery; and several hotels and restaurants. In an allied development, the spectacular open-air live show, 'Kynren', depicts 2,000 years of British history through the lens of the north east.

Bishop Auckland College catchment area:
Total cohort size of 16 year olds



By leveraging this unique investment of private funds, a partnership of community stakeholders and the local authority, Durham County Council, have also been able to secure substantial public funds targeted at regenerating high streets, boosting local economies, creating jobs and recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic.

Bishop Auckland has been successful in securing investment through both the Future High Streets Fund and the Stronger Towns Fund, with the latter placing a strong emphasis on skills development to connect local people to emerging employment opportunities.

Through our roles on the Stronger Towns Fund Board and the Brighter Bishop Auckland Partnership, Bishop Auckland College is fully integrated into this exciting and transformational regeneration of Bishop Auckland.

Through skills development, apprenticeships and training for businesses, and with the involvement of many students and staff in various aspects of the work, Bishop Auckland College is playing a leading role in this shared commitment to job creation and economic development.

Much economic activity is also centred in Newton Aycliffe, which is the location of Aycliffe Business Park.

This is the biggest single employment area in County Durham and one of

the largest business parks in the UK, being home to over 500 diverse and progressive companies and employing around 10,000 people.

Other centres of economic activity include the former west Durham coalfield towns of Spennymoor, Shildon and Crook. Apart from public sector employment, which is still dominant despite austerity cuts since 2010, key sector concentrations are in manufacturing, health including care, retail and distribution and education.

Tourism is a key target sector for growth, exploiting the considerable rural assets available within south Durham and also visitor attractions and distinctive town centres such as Barnard Castle.

Responding to the skills needs of this diverse industry base, Bishop Auckland College and its subsidiary company, South West Durham Training, are together the key destinations for technical and professional education, including apprenticeships, in south Durham.

In 2018/19 (i.e. pre-pandemic) the Bishop Auckland College Group trained around 500 apprentices of all ages, working with 250 employers in sectors closely matching local labour market needs. Apprentices are, in the main, employed by micro and small-sized businesses (0-49 employees), again closely reflecting the profile of the local industry base.

Overall, **82% of businesses** in County Durham are micro enterprises (0-9 employees), and **97.8%** are micro or small businesses.

...but challenges remain

Despite obvious advantages and opportunities locally, there remain nonetheless pockets of extreme disadvantage and deprivation within this semi-rural area, issues that have undoubtedly been exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2019 position the North East LEP area (which includes County Durham) as 6th in the ranking of multiple deprivation for the 39 LEP areas, a decline from 10th position in the 2015 IMD.

Within this already high level analysis there are pockets of very high deprivation at district level, particularly within south west Durham where Bishop Auckland College is located. Nonetheless, there has been a 1.1 percentage point reduction in the unemployment rate for County Durham over the last two years. The proportion of 16-18 year olds who are not in employment, education or training in County Durham has worsened over the previous two years and at June 2020 this stood at 5%.

The College's most immediate catchment area lies within the top 10% on the national Indices of Multiple Deprivation, and is the highest in the ranking in terms of deprivation in County Durham; health deprivation, education and unemployment are the key factors influencing this ranking.

It is also highest in County Durham in terms of income deprivation affecting children. The rate of unemployment within County Durham, at 6.2%, is higher than the national rate of 5.0% (Nomis, June 2021 data), and the north east as a region has one of the highest unemployment rates nationally, at 6.7%.

Nonetheless, there has been a 1.1 percentage point reduction in the unemployment rate for County Durham over the last two years.

The North East LEP reported progress (Dec 2019) towards achieving its strategy for becoming a fast-growing economy, having achieved 8.8% growth in GVA between 2014 and 2017. The target to achieve 100,000 new jobs by 2024 suffered a setback with the pandemic, however, with only 50,600

new jobs since 2014 reported in October 2021; this was 19,900 lower than a year previously.

A more positive outcome is that 121% of this net employment growth has been in higher skilled jobs. Despite this, economic exclusion in some parts of the region remains persistent and some of the jobs being generated are low paid and insecure; this is a particular challenge in south west Durham.

This compares unfavourably with the national figure of 3.2%. Bishop Auckland College works in partnership with a number of agencies (e.g. Department for Work and Pensions, Jobcentre Plus, Durham County Council, Durham Works) to develop provision that effectively supports adults and young people into employment or further training.

The College has developed a new programme for 16-18 year olds which combines skills development with employability training and this is proving effective in re-engaging some disenfranchised young people. Sector-based work academies have

proved effective at re-engaging unemployed adults and enabling positive progression outcomes.

Overall qualification levels of the County Durham population are low, with a high proportion of people qualified only at level 2 in County Durham - i.e. 75.9% (December 2020), compared with 75.5% for the north east region and 78.1% nationally. The issue is particularly evident at level 4 and above, with only 31.6% of County Durham residents qualified at higher levels compared to 43.1% nationally.

To address this, Bishop Auckland College has developed its higher education strategy to increase the number of people from the most deprived areas who progress into higher education, through its collaborative outreach programme work. This will, in turn, increase the skill and qualification levels of those at risk of becoming trapped in the cycle of low value, insecure employment.

OUR PARTNERS

The Bishop Auckland College Group is an outward-facing organisation that recognises the critical importance of collaboration in order to lead change and influence local agendas.

Through our partnerships with employers and a wide range of stakeholders, we have established our place at the heart of our community and as a key partner in the regeneration of Bishop Auckland and South Durham.

Our business planning is strongly influenced by our connections with the North East Local Enterprise Partnership (NELEP) at the regional level and Durham County Council at the local authority level.

By aligning our agenda with the broader agendas for social and economic development, we are able to not only take a collaborative approach to accessing funds, but also ensure coherence and efficiency in the way that these scarce resources are deployed.

This same approach also applies to our work with other colleges in the region, and examples include our collaborative work on various ESF funded projects, such as those supporting the digital and health and social care sectors.

Employer engagement lies at the heart of our work and each year the Bishop Auckland College Group works with around 300 employers.

The profile of our employer base closely matches that of County Durham as a whole, with a predominance of micro and small businesses. However, the College Group has well-established relationships with many of the key large employers too, such as Durham County Council, Hitachi and 3M in Newton Aycliffe and GSK in Barnard Castle.

We are particularly proud of our role as a key partner in the regeneration of Bishop Auckland and south Durham, and here our relationships with business and community organisations are really fundamental in helping to leverage the benefits of our collective work. Examples include:

- The Auckland Project
- Eleven Arches (the organisation behind the spectacular production 'Kynren')
- The Brighter Bishop Auckland Partnership
- Bishop Auckland Stronger Towns Fund Board
- South Durham Enterprise Agency
- Engineering and Manufacturing Network
- Aycliffe Business Park

Strong relationships with our two university partners underpin the College's growing range of accessible higher education opportunities, attracting many students who would not traditionally have engaged in higher education.

This is a key area of the College's strategic development and critical to supporting social mobility and economic development.

Our long-established relationship with the University of Sunderland underpins high quality programmes such as initial teacher training (the Certificate in Education) and the Foundation Degree in Education and Care.

Since September 2019, two full degree programmes have been launched through our partnership with The Open University - the BA (Hons) Integrative Counselling Practice and BSc (Hons) Sports Coaching.

Together with the College's higher education offer of a suite of Pearson HNC/D programmes, these university relationships provide a valuable foundation for our growing offer of specialist higher level provision, with each course designed to respond to specific sectoral and employer needs.

Relationships with the College's 15 direct feeder schools are very

well-established and this is an area where colleges typically invest substantial resource.

Clearly, effective marketing and school liaison activity is absolutely critical to providing excellent progression opportunities for young people locally, whilst maintaining healthy recruitment to College courses.

However, our relationships with schools go well beyond this. For example, partnership work over many years has enabled the College to develop its successful 'Durham Gateway' 14 - 16 alternative provision routes for young people who thrive in practical and nurturing settings.

This has been a truly collaborative initiative, with input from local schools and Durham County Council throughout. In a further example, work with the local school for young people with special educational needs, The Oaks Secondary School, has strongly influenced development of the College's high needs provision.

In our 'Aspire' centre, students benefit from access to a wide range of vocational facilities and a curriculum that is designed to promote progression to independent living and employment.

The Bishop Auckland College Group positions itself firmly at the heart of our community and our wide range of productive relationships with community partners is one demonstration of this.

In a typical week, health and social care and catering students might be hosting the Age UK County Durham lunch club; sports students could be hosting activities for children from local primary schools; construction students might be refurbishing a local community venue; counselling students will be providing support in a variety of community settings; hairdressing and beauty therapy students might be working in a local care home; and

childcare students will be learning through placements in a variety of local nurseries.

In addition, each and every week, a range of sporting and community groups will be using the College's excellent facilities, which are for the benefit of our communities and we are proud to share.

These, and many other activities, are the lifeblood of the Bishop Auckland College Group and they are the means through which our students are effectively prepared to take their place in society and make valuable contributions as active citizens and highly skilled workers.



Employer partner Trades4Care's first ever apprentice Cameron Southworth, 18, with T4C Director Charlie Wright

OUR CURRICULUM INTENT

Bishop Auckland College is proud to be a uniquely vocational college, centred on providing high quality education and training to support local people into employment - either directly or via progression routes of apprenticeships or further and higher-level study.

The curriculum ranges from entry level for high needs learners to full degree level programmes in specialist areas, and the offer spans all subject sector areas other than land-based. The College is adaptive and efficiencies are maintained by choosing to focus on specific technical and professional routes where the quality of education is good, achievement and progression rates are high, employer links are strong and local labour market demand is evident.

Areas of particular specialism, that respond to specific economic and social priorities locally, include:

- Health and social care
- Education, including initial teacher training and teaching assistants
- Public services
- Counselling (to degree level)
- Sports coaching (to degree level)
- High needs
- 14-16 alternative provision

In addition, Bishop Auckland College has a strong presence in the engineering and manufacturing education and training market, through its parent/subsidiary relationship with the training provider South West Durham Training (SWDT), located on the Aycliffe Business Park.

It is the unique combination of three key features that informs the distinctive curriculum intent of Bishop Auckland College:

- I** Inclusion at our heart
- C** Community integration
- E** Employer engagement

1. Inclusion lies at the heart of Bishop Auckland College

Bishop Auckland College is a unique, diverse and inclusive environment in which everyone is supported to grow and flourish.

We treat each student as an individual with their own unique talents, circumstances and aspirations. We understand that some of our students face difficult challenges and, where barriers exist, we focus relentlessly on supporting students to climb high and overcome them.

We know that positive and productive relationships are the key to unlocking potential, and the smaller scale of our College and our class sizes mean that we can really get to know every student.

For all students our intent is always the same: from the moment they are welcomed into the College we aim to transform the life chances of each student, helping them to progress into fulfilling careers and contribute to the productivity and prosperity of our local economy.

We can do this because we work closely with employers across sectors to ensure that our curriculum

is effectively aligned to labour market demand and because we are a key partner in the regeneration of Bishop Auckland and south Durham.

The profile of curriculum for full-time students is very distinctive and in a typical year around 70% of the cohort are studying at levels 1 and 2.

We have a high proportion of young people taking resits in maths and English compared with the regional and national averages. Around 60% of 16-18 students are from the most disadvantaged ward uplift areas.

The College also welcomes into mainstream provision a high proportion of students with EHCPs, SEND plans, undiagnosed SEND needs and other disadvantage factors.

For example, in a typical year around 15% of this cohort have EHCPs and around 46% have disclosed learning difficulties or disabilities.

Over recent years there has been a strong focus on further development of the College's inclusion strategies. Key elements include:

- i. Staff training in Quality First Teaching** to ensure that higher ability learners are stretched and challenged, whilst providing appropriate scaffolding and adaptations for those students who benefit from additional support. In this way we ensure that mainstream vocational provision is fully inclusive, rather than providing separate pathways that might unhelpfully label and limit those with inclusion needs.
- ii. Personalised learning** in which learning plans, timetables, work placements, enrichment opportunities, individualised target-setting, 1:1 progress reviews, careers guidance and progression planning are all designed to respond to the individual needs and interests of learners.
- iii. Highly effective support** including learning support assistants who are trained to build students' skills in independent learning, as well as exceptional pastoral support.
- iv. Specialist provision comprising programmes for learners with high needs ('Aspire') and 14-16 alternative provision ('Durham Gateway')** for young people who thrive in a more nurturing and vocational environment than mainstream education can provide.
- v. The student progression team** ensure that students receive tailored careers and employability interventions throughout their course, with support that goes well beyond the traditional CEIAG offer. The team are responsible for **proactive brokerage of employment outcomes and other positive destinations for all students**, including those with EHCPs, inclusion needs and the disadvantaged.

Their unique hands-on approach involves: liaison with employers, FE/HE institutions and other organisations to identify job opportunities and other potential progression routes; helping students to locate realistic target destinations; providing individualised support with CVs, applications, preparing for interviews and any additional training needed; and advocating for individual students to maximise their chances of securing a sustainable positive destination.

2. Bishop Auckland College is integrated at the centre of the community

Bishop Auckland College is seen as an anchor institution within the local community.

The College has extensive links with a wide range of community partners including Durham County Council, strategic regeneration boards, local schools, The Auckland Project initiative leading the regeneration of Bishop Auckland and a wide range of community partners and charities.

These community relationships shape the College's intent in five key ways:

i. Strategic engagement in key forums driving the regeneration of Bishop Auckland and South Durham more broadly means that the College is able to bring insight and influence to the local skills agenda. In particular, the Principal is a board member of Brighter Bishop Auckland Partnership and the BA Stronger Towns Board. She is also the lead for the skills element of the Stronger Towns Fund, working with a range of stakeholders to ensure that people within local communities are well-prepared with the skills they need to connect with the job opportunities that emerge from the transformation of our town.

ii. Integration with community partners and employers, and in particular those associated with the regeneration agenda, means that College students are able to access a curriculum that is designed to prepare them for emerging local jobs in the visitor economy. Bishop Auckland is on track to become a visitor destination with national reach, centred on attractions including heritage, culture, the arts and hospitality. With a curriculum offer that reflects these key segments of the visitor economy, students are well-prepared for fulfilling careers and effective contribution to the emerging local economy.

iii. Partnership working with local authorities and schools underpins specialist areas of delivery, specifically high needs and 14-16 alternative provision. Both of these are priority areas for the local authority, Durham County Council, and both centre on transforming the life chances of young people with extensive inclusion needs. Bishop Auckland College has developed expertise and capacity in these areas over recent years and has a very good reputation with commissioners.

- iv. Community partnerships are fundamental to providing an extensive range of **non-qualification** enrichment activities for students across College. This type of community integration is viewed as crucial in building the social skills and confidence of our students, helping them to build healthy relationships and in improving their mental health and wellbeing. Given the health inequalities associated with people from areas of disadvantage, there has been a very significant decline in the mental health of the College's student population over recent years, exacerbated further by the pandemic. Working closely with the mental health agencies, the College also sees a central role for the social prescribing model of intervention in improving the mental health and wellbeing of young people.
- v. As one of the biggest employers locally, **the College takes seriously its commitment to corporate social responsibility**. We are eager to use the resources, facilities, skills, energy and passion within our College to make as positive an impact as we possibly can within our community and environment. Each year, students and staff across College make a real difference to people's lives through our work with many community partners and charities. Just a few examples of our regular initiatives include: lunch clubs and activities for older people; construction and decorating projects in community venues; supporting retired veterans of the armed forces; theatre performances for local school children; hairdressing and beauty treatments for people in residential care; and extensive charity fundraising.

3. Impactful employer engagement shapes all College activity

Stakeholder analysis demonstrates that the College's partnerships with employers and other stakeholders such as industry sector bodies are extensive, well-developed and productive in nearly all curriculum areas.

Where new relationships are needed to inform and underpin potential strategic developments, then these are identified and facilitated through proactive and effective use of networks.

In terms of curriculum intent, employer relationships are crucial in a number of ways:

i. The curriculum offer in all subject areas has been shaped by listening - and responding - to key labour market messages from employers.

New curriculum pathways are only introduced where there is clear labour market demand and where employer partnerships underpin the development. Recent examples include introduction of the new policing curriculum, the level 3 diploma in health and social care and the development of full degrees in integrative counselling and sports coaching.

ii. Training for businesses is provided by the distinct employer-facing area of the College,

with a workforce development offer that comprises apprenticeships, adult learning provision and a range of externally funded projects, including those funded through the European Social Fund. Employer engagement lies at the heart of this team's work, who provide training for around 250 employers annually. Around 97% of these businesses are small and medium-sized enterprises, in line with the profile of the industry base locally.

iii. Work placements are a long-established core element of the full-time study programme curriculum.

In a typical year, well over 90% of full-time students complete work placements, with the majority of these based in industry and others with a range of social enterprise and community partners.

- iv. As a standard element of the careers education programme, courses across College include **regular input from visiting speakers who are experts in their industry sectors**. These provide inspiration and guidance for students as they are supported to plan their progression routes towards their chosen professions.
- v. Engagement of the student progression team with employers is critical to the **proactive brokerage of employment outcomes** for students, as well as bringing local industry intelligence and labour market signals directly into the College. The creation of this team in August 2021 was a key strategy for improving the positive destinations outcomes for all students, including those with EHCPs, inclusion needs and disadvantaged students.

The underpinning principle of the curriculum intent of Bishop Auckland College is that we continually maintain a sharp focus on delivering our core mission within our local communities and business. New developments are selected judiciously, and only where we are confident that we can respond effectively to areas of specific need. For all students our intent is always the same: from the moment they are welcomed into the College we aim to transform the life chances of each student, helping them to progress into fulfilling careers and contribute to the productivity and prosperity of our local economy.

OUR AMBITIONS

The Bishop Auckland College Group is an ambitious organisation: ambitious for the success and bright futures of our students; ambitious for the prosperity of our local businesses and communities; and with big ambitions for the future development and exceptional performance of the thriving learning organisations within our Group.

Our ambitions are articulated through the five strategic priorities that direct all of our work over the period of this strategic plan.



Pumie Senadhira,
BSc in Nursing -
University of Bradford
(former L3 Health and
Social Care student)

Strategic Priority 1

Vocational courses supporting local people into employment.

Effective partnerships and business planning mean that courses respond to actual local priorities, helping to build prosperity in south Durham.

This strategic priority defines the scope of our education and training activities and how we go about determining what courses we will offer and which new developments we will undertake.

We understand the critical importance of using our resources effectively to address real local issues and skills gaps, ensuring that we offer high quality, specially tailored training provision to address the needs of those markets.

Having established what we will offer and to whom, we must then monitor our success in those markets. This means meeting planning targets for recruitment and income, and ensuring that the Group operates as an efficient and sustainable business.

To address this strategic priority, these are the actions we will take:

Productive partnerships as a priority

- Maintain close and productive partnerships with local schools and Durham County Council, ensuring that inspiring progression opportunities are available and that the choices of young people are based on high quality careers education, information, advice and guidance.

- Continue to develop our role as a key partner in the regeneration of Bishop Auckland and South Durham, through our work with employers, NELEP, Durham County Council, the Brighter Bishop Auckland Partnership, the Bishop Auckland Stronger Towns Fund Board, The Auckland Project and relationships with many other partners and stakeholders.
- Seek opportunities, on an ongoing basis, to work collaboratively with neighbouring colleges in order to access funding streams, develop exceptional practice and yield efficiencies.

Responsible curriculum planning

- Managers and course teams will continue to build extensive employer links and expertise in sourcing and interpreting labour market information, in order to ensure that they create courses that respond accurately to market demands.
- Well-planned, high quality courses will prepare students for entry to the labour market (either directly or via progression routes of apprenticeships or further and higher-level study) or career development and progression through the labour market.

Embrace change and leverage opportunities created by curriculum reforms

- Through effective engagement with businesses, encourage and support employers to take full advantage of opportunities created by reforms to apprenticeship funding, curriculum and assessment models.
- Develop organisational capabilities and capacity to enable successful introduction of T Level programmes from September 2023, ensuring that young people reap maximum benefits from the opportunities that this provides.

Higher education to promote social mobility and economic development

- Expansion of the range of higher education programmes offered by Bishop Auckland College, introducing further full degree level programmes validated through The Open University, complementing University of Sunderland foundation degrees and Pearson HNC/D programmes.

Support growth of engineering and manufacturing

- Further development of the South West Durham Training business in response to employer needs in the engineering and manufacturing sectors, with particular scope for growth in apprenticeships, higher education and commercial activity.

Prepare pre-16 young people for success and prosperity

- Further growth of high-quality alternative provision for 14-16 year olds through the 'Durham Gateway' campus in Spennymoor. Launched in September 2018, this combined academic and vocational curriculum is specifically designed to re-engage young people who are not thriving in mainstream education and set them on a pathway towards employment and bright futures.
- Work collaboratively with Durham County Council to develop the offer of individualised part-time programmes for young people who are electively home educated.

Address social and economic exclusion

- Continue the long-standing agenda of enabling access to learning and employment opportunities for those in areas with high levels of worklessness and deprivation, engaging more hard-to-reach learners and those not in education, employment or training (NEETs).
- Future activity will be shaped in line with social and economic needs and funding opportunities, responding to key areas of local demand and working collaboratively with the full range of stakeholders and community partners.

Former Brickwork student,
Craig Cummins, Ferryhill, who
secured employment at the
College after completing his L1,
L2 and L3 in Bricklaying



We will measure our performance against the following targets:

- 1.1** Meet recruitment and income targets for all sectors of College provision, as agreed through a market-led business planning and budget building process
- 1.2** Deliver planned volumes of high quality apprenticeships that meet the needs of local businesses, focusing particularly on sectors critical to economic recovery
- 1.3** Meet recruitment and income targets for all sectors of activity at the SWDT centre (full-time programmes, apprenticeships, higher education and commercial courses)
- 1.4** Achieve Group market share of year 11 leavers from core feeder schools of 16%
- 1.5** Deliver income growth through the strategic development priority of Durham Gateway 14-16 alternative provision
- 1.6** Deliver income growth through the strategic development priority of higher education



Higher education offer includes: BA (Hons) Integrative Counselling Practice and BSc (Hons) Sports Coaching



Growth of alternative provision for 14-16 year-olds who thrive in a nurturing vocational learning environment



Specialist engineering/manufacturing training provider, South West Durham Training, with 66 companies training engineering apprentices in 2021



Specialism in the health and social care sector

Strategic Priority 2

Expert staff; inclusive teaching, assessment and support

Inclusive and effective teaching, assessment and support mean that all students are engaged, inspired and enjoy learning.

Our expert staff are absolutely dedicated to the success of all of our students and, year-on-year, students tell us how much they value the high quality of our teaching and the support we provide.

However, we know that we cannot rest on our laurels and that is why teaching staff participate in a regular programme of high quality continuing professional development (CPD), industry updating and individual mentoring.

Our development activities are always based on an ethos of inclusive teaching, the latest education research, cutting-edge industry standards and exceptional practice in other education settings.

Through this continual investment in professional development, backed up by rigorous quality assurance processes, we ensure that every

student is stretched and supported to make outstanding progress during their time with us.

Whilst our primary purpose is to equip students with the skills needed to gain qualifications, achieve career success and enjoy prosperous futures, we also care deeply about the well-being of our students.

With escalating mental health issues amongst young people nationally, as well as an increased prevalence of peer-on-peer sexual harassment, we understand the critical importance of both education and excellent targeted support systems.

Through our focus on developing the broader life skills of our students, as well as exceptional pastoral support, we help students to develop their confidence and resilience, to build healthy relationships and to manage what life throws at them. Our culture and programmes are centred on developing the whole person and support for student well-being lies at the heart of College life.

To address this strategic priority, these are the actions we will take:

Expert staff

- Continue to support the growth and development of staff through investment in high quality CPD opportunities, industry updating and individual mentoring.
- Harness the passion, enthusiasm and creativity of leaders at all levels of the organisation, nurturing and supporting them and helping to model career pathways that catalyse their personal and professional development.
- Set clear and stretching performance targets within a fair, supportive and transparent performance management framework; in this way, staff and leaders at all levels will feel ownership and accountability for standards and outcomes.
- Ensure governance is highly effective, meeting or exceeding the requirements of the AoC Code of Good Governance for English Colleges and other relevant standards.

Inclusive teaching

- Further develop excellent practice in the College's inclusion strategies, including Quality First Teaching, personalised learning and proactive brokerage of positive destinations for all students.
- Maintain an underpinning culture of relentless aspiration amongst students and staff, rejecting mediocrity in everything we do and valuing the richness of ideas that diversity brings.
- Create confident independent learners, experienced in their use of digital learning technologies and study skills.
- Utilise well-structured and inclusive assessment strategies, with regular formative assessments and rigorous developmental feedback used to help students understand how to improve and to inform the planning of learning.
- Empower students to become responsible and active citizens by engaging them in a wide range of work experience, enrichment and social action activities.

Exceptional support

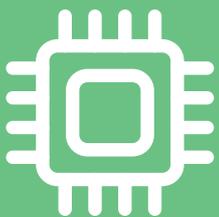
- Invest in building further capacity and expertise within the team of learning support assistants, hence underpinning excellence in inclusive learning and ensuring that all students are supported to achieve and progress.
- Further investment in the College's strategies to promote emotional wellbeing and support students facing mental health difficulties. This includes building increased expert capacity in response to escalating volumes of casework, as well as cross-College strategies to raise awareness and help students to develop coping strategies and emotional resilience.
- Extend programme of activities to enable students to make informed choices about general health, relationships and sexual health, healthy eating and physical fitness. There will be a stronger focus on education about healthy relationships and consent in response to escalating levels of sexual harassment and peer-on-peer abuse.
- Continued focus on building the digital resilience of young people – the social, emotional literacy and digital competency required to positively respond to, and deal with, any risks they might be exposed to online.

We will measure our performance against the following targets:

- 2.1** All teachers provide a consistently high quality of education
- 2.2** 90% attendance and 98% punctuality to be achieved across College and for each age group and all learning areas
- 2.3** 95% of students on study programmes complete a purposeful work placement or social action project

“The college has a great ethos and family community. All staff share a vision of the college and strive towards making the college the best organisation it can be... We offer a wide variety of different subjects within the college and seem to have great retention rates with good satisfaction from the students”

(Anonymous, staff survey, July 2021)



Extensive investment in digital technologies



92% of full-time Bishop Auckland College students participated in purposeful work experience



97% of students say they are being well-supported (Student survey, 2021)

* Data relates to 2020/21 academic year

Strategic Priority 3

Outstanding student outcomes

Progress, achievement and positive destination rates reflect best-in-class performance for all areas of activity.

Bishop Auckland College and South West Durham Training set very high standards for our expectations of student outcomes.

Hence, we benchmark our performance against the very best further education colleges and training providers of a similar type nationally, including those that have been judged to be 'outstanding' by Ofsted.

Considering the various data-sets of student outcomes published nationally, including the national achievement rate tables, Department for Education progress measures and 'Alps' value added scores, our aim is always the same.

That is to perform at the level of the top 10% of similar education and training providers nationally; if we are not, then we are firmly focused on bringing about the necessary improvements to achieve this best-in-class performance.

Whilst student achievement rates for vocational courses are generally high, we know that we must do more to develop the crucial employability skills of maths and English.

This is a particularly challenging area of government policy for colleges nationally, but even more so at Bishop Auckland College where, in a typical year, around two-thirds of the annual cohort of full-time students must undertake resits of one or both subjects. Hence, building capacity and expertise in the teaching of maths and English is a key area of our planning.

Whilst attainment of qualifications is important, we know that progression, ultimately into paid employment, is the way to build prosperity within the communities we serve.

It is our aim that each year, over 90% of our full-time students will make a positive progression step towards employment, whether that is through further study, apprenticeships or directly into work.

We are a proudly and uniquely vocational college and we are here for students who are serious about developing advanced skills and successful careers.

We will achieve best-in-class student outcomes by taking the following actions:

Aspirations underpinned by the expectation of exceptional outcomes

- Student target grades are underpinned by high expectations and top decile performance levels.
- Individual planning for learning is focused on stretching and supporting students of all abilities to make excellent progress.
- Early and continuous formative assessment to promote attainment of the highest grades.
- Rapid intervention and support mechanisms if students are falling behind.
- Progress tracking systems that provide students, staff and parents/carers with a clear view of individual student progress.

Prepare students for positive progression and future prosperity

- Tailored, regular and high-quality careers education and employability interventions throughout a student's time at College, underpinned by effective employer engagement.
- Proactive brokerage of employment outcomes and other positive destinations for all students, including those with EHCPs, SEND, undiagnosed SEND needs and disadvantage factors.
- High-quality work placements for all full-time students, as well as those on adult and higher education courses where applicable.
- Effective use of digital platforms to support students in planning progression pathways and monitoring their progress as they develop skills towards achieving their target destinations.

We will measure our performance against the following targets:

- 3.1** Achievement rate in top decile nationally for vocational education and training provision (i.e. classroom based) for each age group (16-18 and 19+)
- 3.2** Achieve apprenticeship outcomes in top decile nationally - estimated at an overall (pre-pandemic) apprenticeship framework achievement rate of 80% and a timely framework achievement rate of 75%
- 3.3** Achieve positive Department for Education progress scores for maths and English
- 3.4** GCSE maths and English high grade achievement rates for 16 - 18 year olds to be in line with national rates
- 3.5** Achieve Alps score of 2 (i.e. top decile) for all in-scope level 3 subject areas
- 3.6** Deliver excellent positive destination rates:
 - (a) Target of 90% (across College and within learning areas) for students on full-time programmes
 - (b) 90% of high needs students progress to further study, independent living or sustainable employment
- 3.7** Achieve full-time internal progression rate from level 1 to level 2 of 70% and from level 2 to level 3 of 50%
- 3.8** Achieve progression to higher education of 65% of eligible students (level 3, year 2 and Access courses)



The subject areas of music, art, photography, health and social care and early years achieved value added scores in the top 10% of colleges

95%

of apprentices secured permanent employment

90%

of Bishop Auckland College students achieved their qualification

* Data relates to 2020/21 academic year

Strategic Priority 4

Reputation for excellence

Students, parents, employers, staff and other stakeholders are proud of Bishop Auckland College and passionate about the role that we play.

We are proud of the role that Bishop Auckland College has played over many years in technical and professional training, community engagement and supporting young people and adults into employment.

But we know that we have much more to shout about too; each year, students, parents/carers and employers provide feedback demonstrating exceptional levels of satisfaction with the service they have received.

Further education colleges work hard to build their reputations, sometimes having to overcome misconceptions about what we do and who we are for. Whilst marketing and PR activities are important, the real imperative is to continually delight our students and stakeholders with standards that exceed expectations; in this way, they become advocates and the word spreads!

We know that the success of Bishop Auckland College is built on our focus on inclusion, community and employers, all underpinned by the brilliant work of our exceptional team of dedicated staff.

To maintain this distinctiveness, we aim to be an exceptional employer too. This means caring about staff well-being; maintaining positive industrial relations; engaging colleagues in influencing the way the College works; recognising and rewarding talent; providing opportunities for individuals' growth and progression; and celebrating successes together.

We want staff to feel that Bishop Auckland College is a great place to work – and this is how we attract new talent and retain a fantastic team of committed people.

To further build our reputation for excellence these are the actions we will take:

Achieve exceptional standards in everything we do

Set the cultural expectation that only the best is good enough and that we will all work as hard as is necessary to be outstanding.

Maintain exceptional standards of customer service as a key differentiator and source of competitive advantage; at every touch-point and interaction, we will seek to exceed expectations.

Investment will be made in technologies that underpin 'best-in-class' business processes.

Engage students, employers and other stakeholders in our development

Student leaders and representatives will be influential in shaping College life to meet the needs and interests of the student body.

Students will play a central role in marketing and schools liaison activities.

Feedback from students and other stakeholder groups will be used to drive service improvements.

Be an exceptional employer

Engage staff throughout the organisation in generating ideas to influence the way the College works and drive improvement.

Adopt a wide range of approaches to promoting and supporting staff health and emotional well-being.

Provide opportunities for individuals' growth and progression through training and development, secondments and special projects.

Harness the passion, enthusiasm and creativity of leaders at all levels of the organisation, nurturing and supporting them and helping to model career pathways that catalyse their personal and professional development.

Provide an attractive package of staff benefits that reflects the wide-ranging needs and interests of staff.

We will measure our performance against the following targets:

4.1 Achieve overall satisfaction rating of at least 90% for all external stakeholder groups (FE students, HE students, employers, parents/ carers) and all learning areas

4.2 Achieve employee satisfaction rating of at least 90% (i.e. recommendation of Bishop Auckland College as a good place to work)

94% of students said their experience at Bishop Auckland College had been good or outstanding

96% of staff are happy working at Bishop Auckland College

97% of students are proud to study at Bishop Auckland College and believe the College has a good reputation



Uniformed Public Services Level 3 student Lucas McLaughlin

* Data relates to 2020/21 academic year

Strategic Priority 5

A thriving and environmentally conscious business

The college operates as an efficient and environmentally conscious business, constantly innovating to build capacity, improve value for money, achieve excellence in business operations and reduce our carbon footprint.

The fifth strategic priority is fundamental in its role in underpinning the success of the other four priorities.

By maintaining stability and resilience in the management of resources, the College can continue to invest in providing outstanding facilities and recruiting and developing exceptional staff.

Over the coming years there will be a continued focus on growing income in target sectors, optimising business processes and yielding further efficiency improvements, all building on the successes of the previous planning period.

To fuel innovation in our business operations, there will be continued collaboration with other colleges and business partners as sources of exceptional practice and efficiencies.

From the 2021/22 academic year, Bishop Auckland College will redouble its commitment to playing our part in addressing the climate emergency agenda.

We will build on previous work with a renewed focus using the framework provided by the Climate Action Roadmap for Further Education Colleges as a route towards achieving net zero emissions.



One of our brand new Digital IT Suites, funded by the Government's Stronger Towns Fund.

Reduce our carbon footprint

- Reserve a proportion of capital funds to invest in initiatives that will reduce the College's carbon footprint.
- Review all aspects of College operations in order to reduce our energy consumption and carbon footprint. Key strands of work will include:
 - i Creating a culture of energy efficiency and resource conservation amongst staff and students through education about lifestyle choices
 - ii Sustainable procurement, using a specialist partner organisation to assist in reducing carbon footprint
 - iii Replacing equipment, where possible, to the most energy efficient available, with regular servicing to maintain efficiency standards
 - iv Where possible, switching lighting to LED and incorporating PIR sensors
 - v Avoiding disposable items and replacing them with reusables where possible
 - vi Conducting waste audits to identify the most commonly thrown-away items and finding ways to prevent or reduce waste
 - vii Monitoring and controlling the use of aerosols on campus, where appropriate replacing them with a sustainable alternative

Be efficient

- Generate surpluses for continued investment in excellent resources by both growing income and leveraging efficiencies.
- Manage our finances so that we have continued good financial health. We will build realistic budgets for pay and non-pay expenditure which are devolved to responsible budget holders and monitored through effective systems of control.
- Seek opportunities for diversifying income streams and sourcing grant funding in partnership with other stakeholders, as appropriate, thereby reducing reliance on core funding.
- Manage curriculum delivery costs fairly and robustly, with efficient staff utilisation and economic class sizes. We will review and benchmark the financial performance of learning areas regularly, ensuring that each is providing value for money and making the level of contribution required to ensure ongoing sustainability and investment in resources.

- Regularly review and benchmark the cost-base of business support services, revising business processes as necessary to ensure that they provide value for money and that service standards are exceptional.

Invest in excellence

- Continue to develop the Group accommodation strategy to respond to market needs and maximise the use of space.
- Continue to invest in capital and IT infrastructure projects in order to create an exceptional learning environment and position us at the forefront of learning technologies.

We will measure our performance against the following targets:

- 5.1** Achieve Group turnover of £14m by 2023/24 (baseline figure of £12.8m in 2020/21), with growth underpinned by expansion of both higher education and Durham Gateway 14 - 16 alternative provision
- 5.2** Meet contribution target of 55% for all sectors of College provision - based on methodology that includes non-pay costs and direct delivery costs
- 5.3** Return a minimum of 2% adjusted operating surplus on income, excluding pensions adjustments
- 5.4** Ensure staffing expenditure (including partnership) is no more than 63% of annual turnover (excluding restructuring and pension fund deficit costs)
- 5.5** Remain solvent with a minimum adjusted current ratio of 1.4
- 5.6** Maintain a debt service cover ratio of greater than 2
- 5.7** Maintain over 25 cash days in hand for all months
- 5.8** Ensure bank covenants are achieved
- 5.9** Achieve a 15% reduction in the Group's carbon footprint by 2025



Track record of good financial health



63 years delivering skills in south Durham



27,000m² of specialist training space and workshops



Working with 300+ employers every year



Second largest employer in Bishop Auckland

RESOURCING THE PLAN

To underpin the 2021-2024 Strategic Plan, the College produces a rolling three-year financial forecast, alongside a detailed annual budget.

A suite of financial key performance indicators aligns with those established by the FE Commissioner, and progress against these is reviewed at each Board meeting.

Within these, a headline financial objective for the Bishop Auckland College Group is to generate surpluses for continued investment in exceptional resources, by both growing income and being proactive in seeking opportunities to leverage cost efficiencies.

Naturally, the forecast makes assumptions, particularly with regard to income and sustainability of funding streams over the coming years.

Recent years have been challenging for colleges nationally, with substantial decline in key income streams since 2010, followed more recently by the challenges created by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Clearly, any future reductions in income will require judicious management and a corresponding reduction in expenditure.

Monitoring and implementation

The five strategic priorities and their associated key performance indicators form the core of the College's performance management framework, with targets set annually for staff teams and individuals.

Progress against these targets is monitored at various levels within the organisation and in a number of forums, including:

- Individual staff member performance reviews
- Course performance reviews
- Learning area business performance reviews
- Monthly senior leadership and management team (SLMT) meetings
- Corporate Board

If it becomes clear that insufficient progress is being made towards targets, then appropriate interventions would be made.

This could mean, for example, seeking sources of exceptional practice and advice externally, reformulating delivery plans or providing appropriate targeted support for relevant teams of staff within the College.

PUBLIC VALUE STATEMENT

Bishop Auckland College is an exempt charity under the terms of the Charities Act 2011.

In return, the College takes seriously its commitment to deliver a significant, measurable, public benefit to the local community. Whilst establishing its vision, mission and values, the Bishop Auckland College Corporation has paid due regard to the Charity Commission's guidance on reporting this public benefit.

Bishop Auckland College creates public value by:

- Designing courses and services that enhance the social, economic and physical well-being of young people and adults across south Durham.
- Providing a broad range of learning to maximise the skills and knowledge of students so that they become economically active citizens.
- Engaging with local employers to meet the needs of businesses and non-commercial partners.
- Displaying and promoting local leadership through our relationships and collaboration with a wide range of community stakeholders, partners and other organisations.
- Valuing the educational aims of all students equally and seeking to raise the aspirations of students and staff so that each may make the maximum contribution to the community.
- Promoting enterprise and entrepreneurship through skills acquisition.
- Promoting and enabling active citizenship and democratic engagement.
- Encouraging and supporting participation in volunteering and social action activities.
- Supporting individuals and communities facing disadvantage or deprivation into learning and/or employment.
- Promoting inclusivity and creating an environment in which everyone is supported to grow and flourish.
- Contributing to the local economy as a major employer and consumer of services and provider of skills training.
- Remaining committed to our environmental responsibilities, playing our part in addressing the climate emergency by reducing our carbon footprint and encouraging sustainable community use of College facilities.

The value added to the communities served by the College in delivering its mission can be demonstrated and assessed publicly through:

- Annual Reports and Financial Statements
- Inspection reports
- Records of meetings of the College's Corporate Board
- College publications and regular media/social media communications
- Annual equality, diversity and inclusion reports
- Stakeholder satisfaction surveys (students, parents/carers and employers)

The College reviews its Public Value Statement as part of the regular review of this Strategic Plan.

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