

# South Essex College Group

## Accountability Statement

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A period of seismic change for the region now demands that the South Essex College Group takes centre stage in preparing our communities to take up the opportunities that will imminently be available.

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## KEY INFORMATION

The South Essex College Group strategic plan of 2023 to 2027 sets out our ambition to be central to the transformation of our communities.

# College Mission and Purpose

The South Essex College strategic plan of 2019 to 2023 delivered significant improvements in the College estate and embedded South Essex College Group firmly within its local landscapes.

A period of seismic change for the region now demands that the South Essex College Group takes centre stage in preparing our communities to take up the opportunities that will imminently be available.

The South Essex College Group strategic plan of 2023 to 2027 sets out our ambition to be central to the transformation of our communities, enabling everyone to achieve their potential.

## Our vision

We are the heart of community transformation.

## Our mission

Working together we will provide knowledge, education and skills development for all.

## **We summarise our culture and core values with the following statements:**

- We are a community of professionals inspiring our learners to be extraordinary in all they do.
- We are accepting and encouraging of all who come through our doors.
- Stimulated by modernity, we are diverse in thought, identity and aspiration.
- We are powerful and ambitious as individuals and powerful together. We encourage performance to the peak of ability.
- To build resilience, we provide a tough love environment supporting each other and our learners to thrive in all situations.

## **Strategic Goals**

1. We will provide teaching and learning which expands learners' horizons and enables them to achieve the qualifications they need to give them life-time choices.
2. We will attract and retain the best and diverse people and become the employer of choice.
3. We will become sustainable across three strands: finance, technology and the environment.
4. We will build our brand equity to increase our markets, our influence and to add social value across Essex and the East of London.
5. We will collaborate across education, community and employers to find innovative solutions to achieve our shared goals.

The South Essex College Group (SECG) is the largest provider of technical and vocational education and training for 16-18 year olds, adults and apprenticeship provision within Greater Essex.

# Context and Place

In May 2022 South Essex College began consultation on a restructure which would lead to the establishment of the South Essex College Group.

## KEY INFORMATION

The restructure was prompted by recognition that the communities served by South Essex College were very different and geographically distant.

This overarching structure encompasses three main Colleges: Basildon Technical College, Thurrock, and Southend City. The restructure was prompted by recognition that the communities served by South Essex College were very different and geographically distant.

It was also recognised that South Essex as a region would be better served by having a training provider with a clear local focus, accountable to local stakeholders and with a curriculum tailored to meet the specific needs and interests of local people.

The South Essex College Group (SECG) is the largest provider of technical and vocational education and training for 16–18 year olds, adults and apprenticeship provision within Greater Essex. The Group is located within the Unitary Authorities of Thurrock and Southend and the Local Authority in Basildon, part of Essex County Council.



## KEY INFORMATION

SECG serves the towns and surrounding areas of South Essex and the Thames corridor having two large main campuses, delivering general further education curriculum, in Southend-on-Sea and Thurrock.

SECG serves the towns and surrounding areas of South Essex and the Thames corridor having two large main campuses, delivering general further education curriculum, in Southend-on-Sea and Thurrock, and three smaller specialist centres delivering motor vehicle, construction and engineering programmes in Leigh-on-Sea, digital technologies at Basildon town centre, and engineering and building services in Basildon.

SECG also has a specialist production campus called The Back Stage Centre located in Purfleet. Over the last 20 years, mergers have been a feature of what is now the South Essex College Group. The original mergers taking place between South East Essex College of Technology, Thurrock College, and Basildon College to form SEC and latterly in 2019 between SEC, Prospects College of Advanced Technology (PROCAT), and in 2020 the National College for Creative Industries (NCCI).

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Higher Education (HE) provision is delivered in partnership with the University of East Anglia, University of the Arts London and the Open University. The Group offers apprenticeships for 16–18 year olds and adults primarily within the local area.



SECG is well represented on regional and local skills boards, and the College Group engages with a wide range of stakeholders.

The Group has a highly developed awareness of the skills priorities across Essex. SECG is well represented on regional and local skills boards, and the College Group engages with a wide range of stakeholders at a strategic level, such as local authorities, business forums, local colleges and employers. The curriculum is planned with local and regional employers to meet local skills requirements and is focussed on providing progression pathways for students to enable them to progress into employment or further learning.

In 2022–2023, employer forums were introduced for all curriculum areas across the College to enhance further the involvement of industry partners in the design and delivery of the curriculum. The adult curriculum provides skills to unemployed adults to meet local job vacancies, through sector work based academy programmes in security, CCTV, forklift truck, warehousing and healthcare. The curriculum offer is reviewed annually and changes made to reflect performance and stakeholder feedback.

SECG works with partners for major projects in the area including the Lower Thames Crossing and the Thames Freeport and planning to meet the wide range of skills needed to meet the long-term local and regional development projects is in progress. The College works extensively and effectively with a range of stakeholders such as the Department for Work and Pensions, Thames Clipper, Royal Opera House, Tesco, and local and regional universities.

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## KEY INFORMATION

SECG has a significant number of students from areas of deprivation with 24.4% coming from areas of low deprivation, 38.9% coming from areas of medium deprivation and 36.3% coming from areas of high deprivation.

SECG aims to meet the aspirations and ambitions of each of the Unitary and Local Authority Partners by contributing to their regeneration plans through investing in resources and improving the skills base of our communities by meeting the skills needs of local and regional employers. Our curriculum is aligned with the priorities of the Local Skills Improvement Plan including soft-skills, literacy and numeracy, leadership and management skills and special educational needs. Increasing the skills of our students and encouraging progression to continued education, employment or training sits at the heart of the SECG mission and identity.

In October 2021 the proportion of adults of working age who were not working and in receipt of benefits had decreased from 2020 but remained below the national average (5.0%) in both Southend and Basildon. The number of 18–21 year olds not in work and in receipt of benefits make up the largest proportion of these claimants and is above national average (6.5%) in all three areas: Southend (10.3%), Basildon (8.8%) and Thurrock (8.2%). Average earnings in Southend, Basildon and Thurrock are above the UK average.

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Compared to the UK average of 61.5%, just 45.2% of the working population of Thurrock have qualifications at Level 3 or above; 56% in Southend and 51.97% in Basildon are similarly qualified. Level 4 qualification rates are at 27% for Thurrock, 37.9% for Southend and 30.7% for Basildon compared to the UK average of 43.6%.

The South East Institute of Technology (SEIoT) project is led by South Essex College Group with core partners University of East Anglia, Anglia Ruskin University, Canterbury Christchurch University, Harlow College, MidKent College, East Sussex College Group, Chelmsford College and Plumpton College. Employer partners include DP World (London Gateway), Port of Tilbury, Stansted Airport, Morgan Sindall Construction, Princess Alexandra Hospital Group, Leonardo, Megger Instruments, Chartway Group and Wine GB.

The SEIoT will provide training particularly in higher technical skills and research support for industry, across the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) area. The key industry sectors that will be supported through applied research and skills development include Engineering and Manufacturing, Transport and Logistics, Health Science, Construction and the Built Environment, Horticulture (including viticulture) and Animal Science, and Information and Communication Technology.

South Essex College Group has an established partnership with and sits on the board of the High House Production Park (HHPP) - a world class centre of excellence for creative production and skills training located in Purfleet-on-Thames, Thurrock.

A long-term collaboration between the Royal Opera House, Creative and Cultural Skills, Arts Council England, UK Government, South Essex College Group and Thurrock Council, the 14-acre site is a campus for creative and cultural industries next to the M25, at the heart of the Thames Estuary Production Corridor and close to London. It is home to purpose-built facilities for set construction and fabrication, costume design and storage, creative production and rehearsal and training facilities.

## KEY INFORMATION

The SEIoT will provide training particularly in higher technical skills and research support for industry, across the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) area.

The Strategic Plan 2023–2027 is informed throughout by the collaborative and well-established relationships with a comprehensive range of local and regional stakeholders. It is through these relationships that we meet local and regional skills needs and position the Group at the heart of community transformation.

# Approach to developing the annual accountability statement

The development of this accountability statement coincided with the creation of the SECG Strategic Plan 2023–2027 and as a consequence both documents are closely aligned.

The Strategic Plan 2023–2027 is informed throughout by the collaborative and well-established relationships with a comprehensive range of local and regional stakeholders. It is through these relationships that we meet local and regional skills needs and position the Group at the heart of community transformation.

Through a continuous process of engagement with employers, stakeholders and local representative groups we strive to ensure that the curriculum we offer is responsive, informed by labour market intelligence and provides our learners with progression pathways into meaningful and sustainable employment. South Essex College Group is proud of its ability to identify and respond to specific occupational priorities through working directly with employers.

The Group is a partner provider of the Greater Essex Skills Network, an Essex-wide partnership between Harlow College, Chelmsford College, Colchester Institute, South Essex College Group, USP College, Writtle University College and the Essex Provider Network, in association with the Essex Chamber of Commerce, which enables the delivery of bespoke training courses to meet the needs of local business. In the Higher Education sector, SECG has strong partnerships with the Open University, The University of East Anglia and the University of the Arts London.

## KEY INFORMATION

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## KEY INFORMATION

The establishment in 2022 of the three constituent Colleges within the South Essex College Group has enabled even greater participation in groups with an interest in developing local skills.

An additional relationship with Anglia Ruskin University is in development. The Group works extensively with other providers through the Essex Provider Network and the Federation of Essex Colleges (FEDEC). On adult skills, SECG works in partnership with Thurrock Adult Community College (TACC) offering Multiple courses to students wanting to enrol on nursing and midwifery degrees and courses for care leavers in budget management.

SECG works with partners through the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) Major Projects Group including the Lower Thames Crossing and the Thames Freeport to ensure that not only are current skills being addressed but that potential future skills are within the Group's strategic plans for future years. Close working relationships with these organisations is helping to shape the future of the South Essex College Group. We are actively involved in business forums across the county of Essex including the Thurrock Business Board, the Southend Skills Group and Opportunity South Essex.

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At Basildon, SECG sits on the board of Creative Basildon and is represented on the UKSPF Creative Digi-Tech Accelerator Programme, the Basildon Construction Group, the Morgan Sindall Basworx programme, the Basildon Business Group and the Basildon Next Generation Champions Programme. At Southend City, SECG is actively engaged with the Southend Business Partnership Executive, Southend Skills Group, Essex Commissioner for Skills, the Midlands & East Apprenticeship Forum, the Engineroom, the Greater Essex Careers Hub and Opportunity South Essex.

Close working relationships with these organisations is helping to shape the future of the South Essex College Group.

Regular stakeholder meetings take place between South Essex College Group and Balfour Beatty, the Murphy Group, Sharp UK, Morgan Sindall, the Construction Industry Training Board, the Lower Thames Crossing, Thames Clippers, DP World, Mid and South Essex NHS, Swan Housing and Skills for Logistics.

#### KEY INFORMATION

At Southend City, SECG is actively engaged with the Southend Business Partnership Executive, Southend Skills Group, Essex Commissioner for Skills, the Midlands & East Apprenticeship Forum, the Engineroom, the Greater Essex Careers Hub and Opportunity South Essex.

## KEY INFORMATION

The Group's The SECG focus is on businesses working in the five key growth sectors in the county, as identified in the Essex Sector Development Strategy: construction and retrofit, clean energy, advanced manufacturing and engineering, digi-tech and life sciences.

The Group offers an industry insights week enabling local employers to engage with each College, offering masterclasses, toolbox talks and involvement in curriculum delivery. Talent pipeline forums have been set up to work with employers in local sectors on curriculum planning to ensure that SECG offers courses which align to the local skills needs. These employer boards have been set up in the first instance for the following sectors: Engineering, Construction, Digital, Health, Logistics, Catering & hospitality, Hair and Beauty.

Talent pipeline forums have been set up to work with employers in local sectors on curriculum planning to ensure that SECG offers courses which align to the local skills needs.

SECG is active in accessing funding streams to contribute to the levelling up agenda and fulfil its mission to provide knowledge, education and skills development for all. The Strategic Development Fund draws together collaboration between Essex businesses and training providers to create a technical skills system led by employers that better supports the needs of the local labour market and wider economy.

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The SDF is being allocated to three strands: a capital project to support the development of a course in the installation of Electric Vehicle chargers in domestic properties, engagement with employers in key skills areas (construction including retrofit, DigiTech, Health, Green skills, engineering and manufacturing including training needs analysis, design and development of new courses) and a knowledge exchange project to enable teachers in Essex to collaborate in staff development.



We will continue to work closely with Essex County Council, the local unitary authorities Thurrock Council and Southend City Council, key employers, providers, and Essex Chamber of Commerce.

#### KEY INFORMATION

SECG will align its existing strategic planning processes to ensure that the new statutory duty to undertake regular reviews on how well the Group's provision meets local needs, is met.

At Thurrock the Community Renewal Fund (CRF) is being accessed to offer training to the unemployed in forklift truck, HGV driving and Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) cards to help them gain employment. SECG delivers a Skills Bootcamp for HGV drivers and bids for further Bootcamps in Digital, Construction and retrofit and Green skills are in the pipeline.

Through its membership of the Economic Development and Skills Partnership (EDSP), the Group works in partnership with Thurrock Council, Thurrock Adult Community College, REED in Partnership, Port of Tilbury, Lower Thames Crossing, DWP, Swan Housing, Basildon Construction Group, Essex University on collaborative levelling up projects through the Shared Prosperity Fund.

SECG will align its existing strategic planning processes to ensure that the new statutory duty to undertake regular reviews on how well the Group's provision meets local needs, is met. We will continue to work closely with Essex County Council, the local unitary authorities Thurrock Council and Southend City Council, key employers, providers, and Essex Chamber of Commerce to ensure they are fully involved in the review process, whilst ensuring we align with each area's developing local skills improvement plans.

SECG is active in accessing funding streams to contribute to the levelling up agenda and fulfil its mission to provide knowledge, education and skills development for all.

# Contribution to national, regional, local priorities

College Strategic Aims and Objectives	Contribution towards National, Regional and Local Priorities for Learning and Skills
<p><b>Strategic Goal 1</b></p> <p>We will provide teaching and learning which expands learners' horizons and enables them to achieve the qualifications they need to give them life-time choices.</p>	<p>Given qualification levels in South Essex, it is clear that our community is ill-prepared to take advantage of the imminent opportunities emerging in the region.</p> <p>In order to develop the higher level technical skills which local and regional infrastructure projects will need, SECG believes that all technical and vocational teachers should develop their dual professionalism.</p> <p>To this end we will establish a centre of excellence for teaching, learning and assessment (CETLA). We will share good practice across the Group and with the wider College sector, creating and sharing the South Essex Learning System.</p>
<p><b>Strategic Goal 2</b></p> <p>We will attract and retain the best and diverse people and become the employer of choice.</p>	<p>Analysis of average work based salaries suggests that all local employers in the South Essex region are vulnerable to the better salaries offered elsewhere due to our close proximity to London. The SECG intention is to develop a comprehensive approach to reward and remuneration through a total reward system (TRS) but it is clear that the Group has fallen behind with respect to the remuneration element.</p> <p>We will therefore establish a pay strategy in order to direct resources to the pay element of TRS and an employee engagement system to create an environment which enables staff to build and commit to long term careers at SECG.</p> <p>The Group is also committed to building a staff profile which fully reflects the mix of the local population. We will agree the SECG diversity standards and outline plans to achieve those standards in staff recruitment. We will focus on developing the talents of our staff through structured CPD and use our relationships with industry experts to ensure that their skills are current and relevant.</p>

College Strategic Aims and Objectives	Contribution towards National, Regional and Local Priorities for Learning and Skills
<p><b>Strategic Goal 3</b></p> <p>We will become sustainable across three strands:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finance</li> <li>• Technology</li> <li>• The environment</li> </ul>	<p>SECG is committed to modernising the way in which the Group operates by simplifying our processes, introducing technological solutions and ensuring financial stability.</p> <p>Our financial plan will predict, control and reduce expenditure in the key areas of agency staffing, Higher Education and Estates.</p> <p>SECG will establish a technology strategy which is costed and built into our financial planning.</p> <p>We will develop a plan for the environmental sustainability of our estate and facilities including the introduction of green sources of energy.</p>
<p><b>Strategic Goal 4</b></p> <p>We will build our brand equity to increase our markets and influence, and add social value across Essex and East London.</p>	<p>In an increasingly competitive landscape, we need our brand to be instantly identifiable with high quality provision so that we are held in high esteem by our customers and partners.</p> <p>South Essex College Group must be seen as the education and training provider of first choice in all areas of our portfolio.</p> <p>We continue to look for opportunities to grow and will create an Academy of Advanced Technology to introduce A Levels in technical subjects and to expand our successful T Level provision.</p> <p>We will develop the Open College to expand adult learning, including distance and remote learning.</p> <p>SECG will develop a new marketing strategy which will reflect and promote our local college structure, our outstanding facilities and our expert staff.</p>

College Strategic Aims and Objectives	Contribution towards National, Regional and Local Priorities for Learning and Skills
<p><b>Strategic Goal 5</b></p> <p>We will collaborate across education, community and employers to find innovative solutions to achieve our shared goals.</p>	<p>South Essex College Group has long had a strong reputation but future success will only be realised by applying existing strengths to new contexts and creating new strengths for emerging contexts.</p> <p>We will attract and nurture new partnerships and collaborations to expand our reach and facilitate innovation and creativity.</p> <p>We will build on the existing relationships we have with key employers and build new ones with small and medium sized enterprises.</p> <p>We will develop a community engagement strategy with a local focus to solidify and build relationships with schools, health care providers, universities, community and religious groups and local decision makers.</p> <p>We will expand our reach to embrace outer east of London communities and stakeholders in order to meet the skills needs of those communities and develop the skills of people who can fill the existing skills gaps in our region.</p>

# Corporation statement

On behalf of the South Essex College Group corporation, it is hereby confirmed that the college plan as set out above reflects an agreed statement of purpose, aims and objectives as approved by the corporation on the 24th of May 2023.

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.

## Hyperlink

### Accountability statement

<https://www.southessex.ac.uk/policies>

# Supporting documentation

- **Ambition Southend: A skills and labour market strategy**  
<https://www.southend.gov.uk/downloads/file/5680/ambition-southend-skills-strategy>
- **Ambition Southend: A skills and labour market review**  
<https://www.southend.gov.uk/downloads/file/5681/ambition-southend-evidence-base>
- **Essex Skills Plan**  
<https://www.essexchambers.uk/files/2023/LSIP/EssexSkillsPlanFinal.pdf>
- **Lower Thames Crossing: Skills, education & employment strategy**  
<https://nationalhighways.co.uk/media/fwckc3ev/ltc-see-strategy.pdf>
- **Essex Local Skills Improvement Plan**  
[https://www.essexchambers.co.uk/local\\_skills\\_improvement\\_plan\\_lsip.htm](https://www.essexchambers.co.uk/local_skills_improvement_plan_lsip.htm)
- **SECG Ofsted Report**  
<https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/31/130672>

