

Accountability Agreement 2026/27

Purpose

The Annual Accountability Statement outlines how City of Bristol College will meet local, regional and national skills priorities during the 2026-27 academic year. This document also recognises how City of Bristol College fulfils its statutory responsibilities in relation to the Local Needs Duty (June 2022).

The College is the largest provider of vocational and technical education in Bristol and is therefore vital in the success of post-16 skills development for the residents of the West of England. In doing so, it significantly impacts the regional economy and society.

This statement aligns with:

- › The West of England Growth Strategy
- › Get West of England Working Plan
- › West of England Skills Strategy (in draft at time of print)
- › The West of England Local Skills Improvement Plan (in draft at time of print)
- › Bristol City Council NEET priorities
- › The UK's Modern Industrial Strategy 2025

Curriculum planning is underpinned by current labour market intelligence, and delivery of the curriculum is informed by regular Sector Boards formed of employers and other relevant stakeholder aligned to priority sectors.



City of Bristol College Strategy

The 2024-29 Strategy identified eight priorities through a collaborative process:

The strategic aims and associated objectives will be reviewed in early 2026-27 to ensure that they remain aligned with the regional and national changes to the external environment.

- 1. Curriculum and Quality.** We will co-create a responsive, relevant and rigorous, high-quality curriculum to meet the aspirations of our students, communities and align to the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) priorities. Our goal is to cultivate a curriculum that ignites curiosity, fosters adaptability, and inspires a passion for lifelong learning.
- 2. Equity and Inclusion.** We will deliver an inclusive and equitable educational and work environment at City of Bristol College that actively addresses and eliminates barriers hindering access to work and learning opportunities.
- 3. People, our workforce.** We will deliver a people first, high performance culture, within a valued, diverse community of colleagues.
- 4. Our communities and our region.** We will respond to regional employment needs by creating employable people for the future. We will support long term employability and economic independence that contributes to regional productivity.
- 5. Estate, resources, place and long termism.** We will develop excellent facilities in all parts of our College estate, including resources that support and enhance skills in Bristol and the wider West of England region.
- 6. Economic and environmental impact.** We will respond to the climate emergency by reducing our carbon footprint and embedding sustainability within our curriculum to benefit the local economy.
- 7. Collaboration, system leaders.** We will work ambitiously with partners to enable collaborative systems leadership.
- 8. Digitally enabled.** We will deliver a digitally responsive and enabled curriculum and workplace. Utilising technology, we aim to enhance collaboration, improve practice, meet regional skills needs, save time, and reduce our carbon footprint.

Context and Place

Bristol is one of the 11 UK Core Cities and the 8th largest city in England and Wales outside of London. The 2025 Indices of Deprivation identify that 11% of Bristol residents reside in the most deprived neighbourhoods in England. This is lower than in 2019. 9 of the 10 most deprived neighbourhoods are in South Bristol. Despite the improvement (relative to other parts of the country), the Indices of Deprivation 2025 reinforce previously identified patterns of deprivation across the city. Bristol continues to have deprivation 'hot spots' that are amongst some of the most deprived areas in the country yet are adjacent to some of the least deprived areas in the country. Inequalities in education, health and employment are evident, in contrast to areas of significant wealth.

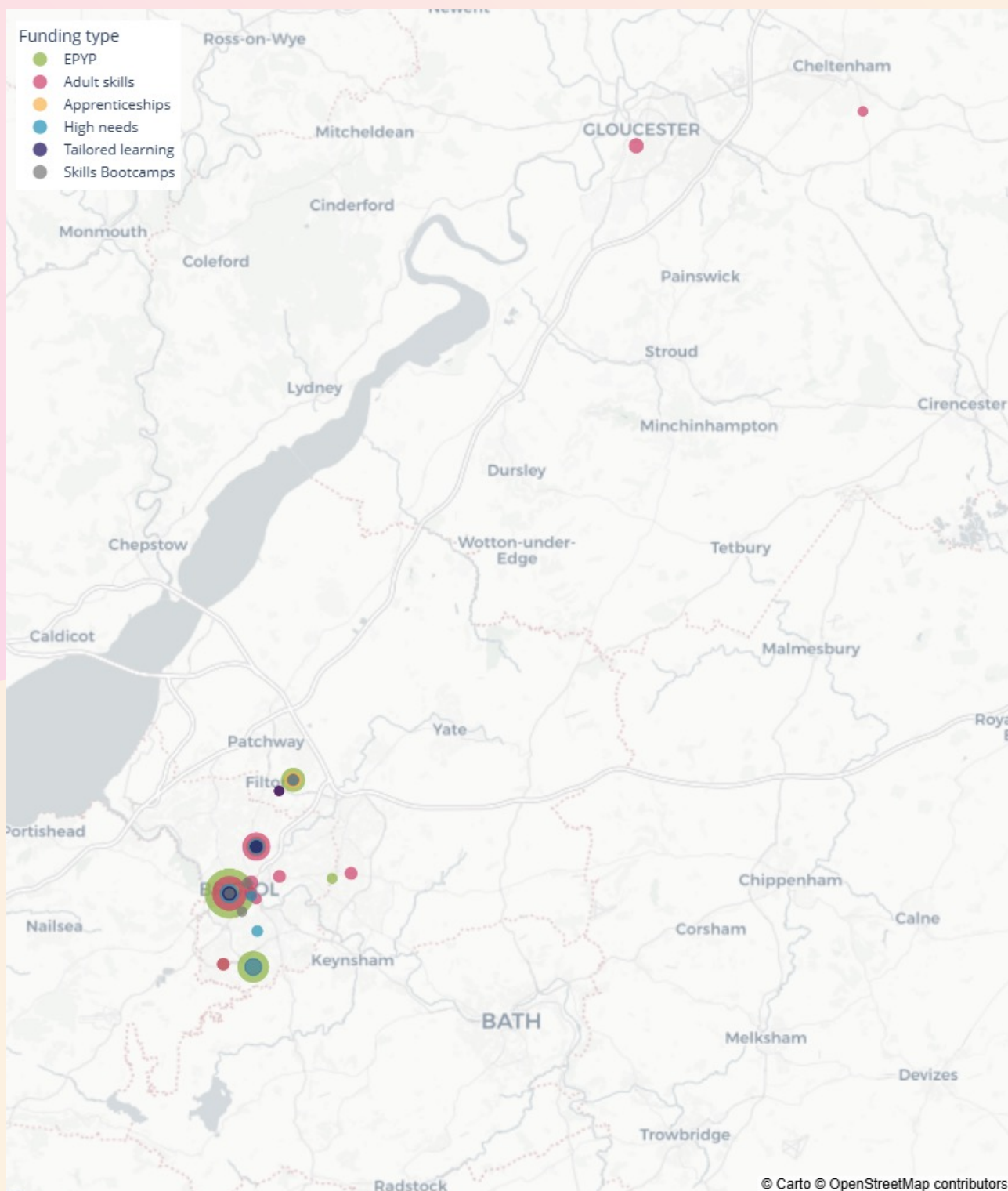
The City hosts a slightly larger proportion of medium and large businesses than the South West average, with the largest volume of Bristol jobs available in professional, scientific and technical activities, along with human health and social work. Availability of jobs in Bristol continues to grow, and productivity is identified as being the strongest of all the UK's large cities (Centre for Cities 2024). Despite the employment opportunities with the city region, unemployment rate of those aged 16+ in Bristol rose to 3.8% in 2024, a rate higher than the South West as a whole (ONS, 2025) and equal to that of Great Britain. The jobs market is often for highly skilled roles and attracts talent from outside the City, or students who have studies in Bristol and stayed. Housing is expensive because of the City's success and local communities struggle to find affordable housing, in a recent report by the BBC, Bristol was identified as Britain's least affordable city to rent in. In 2025, the NEET rate of young people aged 16-17 in Bristol was higher than the South West average at 6% (SW average 3.9%)

The population of Bristol was estimated to be 483,000 people in the provisional mid-2023 Office for National Statistics population estimates, a 10% rise over the last decade. The next few years are set to see a rise in the number of school leavers. In the 12 months prior to mid-2022, the population of Bristol grew by 1.6%, the largest annual increase since 2015-16. This is mainly due to the large increase in international migration, which is represented in the student population at City of Bristol College.

West of England

The West of England Mayoral Combined Authority region had an estimated population of 980,000 in 2024. In May 2025, a new Metro Mayor was elected for the region. The regional economy is valued at £43.2bn with 37,000 businesses. Within the region, 53% of adults hold a Level 4 qualification or above, and the region is identified as the most productive city region in England outside of London. Despite the many opportunities in the West of England, school level educational attainment remains below the national average, and 15,000 residents of the region live in neighbourhoods that are among the fifth most deprived in the country.

Two Bristol constituencies rank in the lowest 10 of the Sutton Trust Opportunity Index report (May 2025) indicating that that young people who reside in those constituencies have less access to opportunity and a secure socio-economic future.



Approach to Developing the Annual Accountability Statement

The City of Bristol Accountability Statement 2026-27 recognises the geographic spread of each campus, the curriculum diversity of sectors, qualifications and levels, the reach of the wholly owned subsidiary companies Partners in Bristol and South West Apprenticeship Company, and the subcontracted provision.

In 2026, the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority published the West of England Growth Strategy prioritising the following sectors:

- 1. Advanced manufacturing**
- 2. Digital and technologies**
- 3. Clean energy industries**
- 4. Creative industries**
- 5. Everyday economy**

These priorities align to the UK Industrial Strategy, and the unpublished 2026 West of England LSIP. The curriculum is aligned to these priorities.

Adults

Effective working relationships with Bristol City Council, WECA and the DWP across a range of areas effectively gather and share intelligence including around the offer for the unemployed (including those furthest from the workplace), work in the Care sector, ESOL and provision for adults with learning difficulties and disabilities. This supports the regional priority of employability skills for all ages and the Get West of England Working Plan.

Highly effective links with three local Higher Education Institutions, The University of the West of England (UWE), The University of Bristol (UoB) and Bath Spa University result in clear pathways of progression for students and community partnership work that extends into social responsibilities.

Young People

The continual development of curriculum informed by employer feedback and linked to regional priorities has seen an increase in the number of creative programmes on offer, linked to meaningful regional careers including in music production and festival production. Construction continues to grow with significantly increasing numbers of young people undertaking programmes in construction trades, supported by City of Bristol College being named as the spoke of the South West Construction Technical Excellence College.

Newly created green skills facilities at the Parkway campus provide access to high quality training in addition to the curriculum offer.

Careers education has developed further to focus on the employability skills identified in the LSIP as priority skills in all sectors.

City of Bristol College leaders have created an innovative partnership with south Gloucestershire and Stroud College to provide flexible and meaningful routes back into education for young people who are NEET. First run in 2025-26, this has been carefully planned with Bristol City Council to support the continued and flexible education for this specific group of young people.

College leaders have also procured experts in alternative provision in Bristol to deliver a pathway programme for young people who would benefit from an alternative learning environment before joining a college or starting an apprenticeship. This programme has a specific focus on young people identified as having Social Emotional or Mental Health needs prior to age 16 who have benefitted from alternative provision pre-16 and will benefit from a highly supported transition year to post-16 education.

Partners in Bristol have been working with Bristol City Council on the delivery of the Youth Guarantee trailblazer project, specifically supporting young people to gain access to construction site working and to gain their CSCS cards. In addition, Partners in Bristol will expand its reach with premises in South Bristol in 2026-27 to support the training of adults and NEETS.

SEND

City of Bristol College continues to offer a broad range of provision for young people and adults with SEND, including those with high needs. This includes the independence living facilities in collaboration with Bristol City Council.

In 2025-26, in addition to the long-established Supported Internships, additional funding delivered supported internship programmes to a wider group of young people, including those with SEND but not identified as High Needs. These programmes continue to deliver positive outcomes to meaningful employment.

Apprenticeships

City of Bristol College is leading on a collaborative partnership with Colleges West to ensure that the apprenticeship offer in the West of England region is one that meets employer needs and provides effective access to the future talent of our region.

Higher Education

The range of higher education programmes responds to the regional growth strategy and is delivered in consideration of the regional Universities.

City of Bristol College is a core partner in the local Civic University Agreement (CUA) group alongside University of the West of England, University of Bristol and Bristol City Council/One City. The partnership focuses on Education & Skills including improving employability, widening participation in

HE, increasing access to apprenticeships and access to lifelong learning.

Colleges West

Colleges West is a partnership of five FE and Sixth Form Colleges in the West of England Combined Authority Area. The colleges aim is to work together to enhance the quality of further education for the 50,000 learners currently enrolled in our colleges, and for future learners in our region.

- › City of Bristol College
- › South Gloucestershire and Stroud College
- › St Brendan's College
- › Bath College
- › Weston College

Colleges West recognises that Further Education will play a critical role in delivering economic growth and vibrant communities in our region, and Colleges West works closely with national and regional Governments to ensure alignment and delivery of our shared aims.

Our partnership aims to:

- › Ensure FE Colleges are positioned as key strategic partners in the development of an ambitious vision for skills in the West of England.
- › Meet the needs of local employers and other commissioners more effectively by ensuring a cohesive approach to skills provision.
- › Represent the voice of FE Colleges in the West of England with impact in local, regional and national policy making.
- › Explore opportunities for joint projects, programmes and innovative curriculum approaches across colleges.
- › Foster a greater sense of collective responsibility across leadership teams to improve cross-college working.

Inclusive Mainstream Fund

The Inclusive Mainstream Fund will be used to maximise inclusivity at City of Bristol College by investing in targeted training for employees, strengthening transition into and out of post-16 education for students to improve outcomes, and investment in resources to further enhance inclusive facilities.

To support the Inclusion Fund's seven priorities, City of Bristol College plan to invest in a range of whole-college improvements that strengthen inclusive practice, early intervention and accessibility. This will include:

- enhancing ProMonitor to provide more timely and automated support for EHCP reviews and ensure colleagues have rapid access to key learner information;
- increasing Educational Psychologist capacity to support early intervention and specialist training for mentors, Additional Learning Support, ESOL teams and other key colleagues;
- delivering a comprehensive staff development programme to strengthen our universal inclusive offer across all student-facing roles;
- undertaking a full review of assistive technology to ensure learners have access to the most effective and accessible tools; and upgrading learning spaces to better meet a range of sensory, accessibility and regulatory needs (focus SBSA and Parkway / AEC);
- collaborate with regional partners on approaches that further enhance inclusive provision, learner belonging, participation and outcomes.

Response to the Local Needs Duty Objectives 2026-27

Objective 2026-27	Success Measures	Local, Regional and National Priorities
Recruit and retain subject experts in skills shortage areas to deliver high quality teaching to students.	➤ Successful delivery of Teacher Industry Exchange project ➤ Successful delivery of the Construction Technical Excellence College spoke project. ➤ CoBC employer brand project delivered ➤ CoBC communication strategy delivered ➤ Vacancy rate low in specialist areas ➤ Employer and student feedback high in all areas	➤ Construction and the built environment ➤ Clean energy industries ➤ Health ➤ Social Care ➤ Artificial Intelligence ➤ Employability Skills ➤ Engineering ➤ Advanced Manufacturing ➤ Creative industries ➤ Early Years ➤ Basic skills ➤ Provision for High Needs ➤ Digital and Technologies ➤ Routes to employment through SWAP
Deliver highly effective partnerships to reduce the NEET rate in Bristol.	➤ NEET rate reduced to in line with national rate ➤ Students on partnership provision make successful transition to full-time post-16 study ➤ Risk of NEET Indicators (RONI) inform curriculum planning for future student cohorts ➤ Expand transition and re-engagement programmes with SGS and BCC	
Inform the development of the regional plan for employability skills for pre and post 16 students in response to employer demands and the needs of young people to include communication, problem solving, and workplace behaviours.	➤ West Bac plans successfully implemented to ensure that young people in the region are given equal opportunity to a successful transition to employment with the skills required by employers ➤ Improved work-readiness of young people who have not yet had access to the jobs marked through part time employment	
Integrate AI and sustainability training into all curriculum to enhance capabilities of the future workforce.	➤ Students will understand AI beyond basic LLM use to support their future employment ➤ Students will understand sustainability as it applies to their chosen sector to support their future employability ➤ Employers will have access to upskilling units to support their workforce training requirements	

Governance

The City of Bristol College Annual Accountability Statement has been:

- informed by employer and stakeholder engagement
- approved by the Corporation Board
- developed in line with meeting Local Needs Duty through the collaborative partnership of Colleges West.

This document will be published in line with DfE guidance on the College website at the following link [here](#).

Declaration

The Governing Body of City of Bristol College confirms that this statement accurately reflects the college's plans to meet skills needs and discharge its duty under the Local Needs Duty for the 2026-27 academic year.

Phil Smith
Chair of Governors



Julia Gray
Principal & CEO



cityofbristol.ac.uk

