



Annual Accountability Agreement and the Local Needs Duty

Blackburn College
2025 - 2026

College Mission and Purpose

Blackburn College plays a significant role in the lives of thousands of students, the local community, and a variety of businesses each year. We are committed to ensuring that students leave Blackburn College ready and fully equipped to enter the world of work or to go on to further study.

Our Mission

Transforming students' lives and our community through exceptional education, training and support.

Our Vision

Aspiring, innovating and achieving through excellence.

Our Values

Excellence

We strive for excellence to realise the potential of all students and staff.

Knowledge

We promote the value of learning in fostering curious minds supporting the acquisition of knowledge and skills.

Inclusion

We promote equity, diversity and inclusion in our teaching, training, support and customer services.

Empowerment


We empower and support our students and staff to develop their lives through education and training.

Commitment

We are committed to the exceptional education, training and support of our students and staff.

Respect

We treat everyone as individuals and with respect.



Founded in 1888, Blackburn College's purpose was the provision of technical, employment-focused education for the people of Blackburn and the surrounding area.

The intent of Blackburn College remains the same today as it always has done, with students travelling from across Lancashire and beyond to study in its world-class campus, designed to provide high quality learning and support the acquisition of the skills needed by employers. The College is focused on leading the skills agenda locally, regionally and nationally. To meet the employability needs of individuals, and required by employers in line with Government priorities. This was recognised by Ofsted in their 2024 inspection where the College was graded as strong in relation to Meeting the Skills Need.

Developed in consultation with its external stakeholders, including staff, students and the College's Corporation Board, the Strategic Plan 2025- 2028 sets out the College's priorities as it continues on the journey to transform into one of the UK's leading Further Education colleges. This Annual Accountability Agreement and Local Needs Plan 2025-2026 sets out the key curriculum outcome targets for the academic year reflecting the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) and the National Skills Priorities.

The College has undergone many positive changes in recent years, including being rated Outstanding in four areas: Education and Programmes for Young People; Adult Learning Programmes, Behaviors and Attitudes and Personal Development with Good in all other areas. Significant campus investment has supported the creation of a dedicated Sixth Form and industry standard learning facilities across curriculum areas. During the last year the college has continued to invest significantly in its Cyber and Digital facilities supporting the local skills need including the National Cyber Force relocation to Samlesbury. In collaboration with the local Hospital Trust, the College has created a Health Ward with high tech patient simulators. Students, on all levels and modes of study, remain at the heart of everything that the College does. It is committed to providing the very best quality of education and student experience to enhance skills and knowledge to support and inspire students to achieve and progress on to their next steps.

Strategic Plan

The Strategic Plan for 2025-2028 focuses on three strategic pillars of activity underpinned by six cross-cutting themes which run through everything the College does and is at the forefront of our minds:

Strategic Pillars	Be Exceptional	To embed a culture of continuous improvement, innovation and excellence in all aspects of what we do.
	Be Future Focused	To prepare students for the future by adopting cutting-edge technologies, innovative teaching methods, and forward-thinking practices into the educational experience.
	Be Work Ready	To equip students with the essential skills, knowledge and behaviours required to thrive in the world of work and to foster lifelong career development.
Cross-cutting themes	Student Focused Ensuring that the student experience is the focus of every decision	
	Quality Ensuring that the College delivers the best results for the students	
	Innovation Encouraging continuous improvement and the adoption of new technologies and methodologies to stay ahead in a rapidly changing world	
	Digital Transformation Integrating digital tools and technologies to improve efficiency, accessibility, and the overall user experience	
	Finance and Resources Ensuring that Finances remain strong and resource utilisation is effective and efficient	
	Sustainability Ensuring that all initiatives and activities are environmentally sustainable and contribute to long-term carbon reduction	

All of these are supported by our Mission, Vision and Values and deliver a sustainable college for the future.

Strategic Plan link: [Mission, Objectives and Priorities \(blackburn.ac.uk\)](https://blackburn.ac.uk/mission-objectives-priorities)

Context and Place

Blackburn College is located within the town centre boundaries of Blackburn providing good access by public transport, road, and rail. A satellite centre providing commercial gas and low carbon energy source training is located on a nearby business park.

Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council is a unitary authority sitting within the newly formed Lancashire Combined Council Authority (CCA) footprint which is in the process of significant change, it will be served by The Lancashire Growth Plan launched for consultation in February 2025 with final release due shortly, in addition to the Lancashire Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP). The LSIP is led by the North and Western Lancashire Chamber of Commerce, working in partnership with the East Lancashire Chamber of Commerce: Lancashire was part of the initial LSIP trailblazer pilot in 2021.

Lancashire has a population of 1.53m people and a thriving Gross Value Added (GVA) of £40bn, with over 55,000 businesses generating more than 728,000 jobs across a range of future-facing sectors from advanced engineering and manufacturing, health, and tourism, to cyber security, digital, artificial intelligence and sustainable industries. The Lancashire Local Authority Leaders launched Lancashire 2050, which sets out shared ambitions for the future of Lancashire against eight priorities including employment and skills.

Blackburn with Darwen is a multi-racial community with a population who are 60.4% white, 36.6% Black and Minority Ethnic (BME). The College student community largely mirrors this make-up with 66% white and 34% of BME heritage. Blackburn with Darwen is ninth in the list of the most deprived local authority districts in England, with the highest proportion of neighbourhoods in the most deprived 10% of neighbourhoods nationally. The majority of students and apprentices are from the most economically deprived local areas (2019 English Indices of Deprivation). 70% of students who attended the College in 2023/24 resided in a postcode classed as deprived.

In Blackburn with Darwen 44% of students achieved a grade 5 or above in English and maths GCSE upon leaving school (2024 figures). The local authority average of students entered for the English Baccalaureate at GCSE (i.e. entered for qualifications in English, maths, sciences, a language and either history/geography) is 48.8% (2024 data). This has continued to be above the national average for England, albeit a slight decline from 2023 which is also reflected in national rates.

As such, just under a half of students and apprentices enrol at the College without having achieved five GCSEs at grades 4-9, including English and mathematics. In Blackburn with Darwen, 14% of the local population have no qualifications. The proportion of working age (16-64) residents in the borough who have a level 4 qualification or above has seen a gradual increase in recent years, currently standing at 28.9% compared to 21.9% in 2011. This gradual increase mirrors the regional trend, however the borough figure remains below the regional level.



Blackburn with Darwen has over 5,525 businesses contributing 10% of the wider Lancashire business base, the vast majority of which are micro businesses.

Business size based on employee numbers	2023: Number of businesses by business size
Micro (0-9)	87.6% (4975)
Small (10-49)	10.3% (585)
Medium (50-249)	1.58% (90)
Large (250+)	0.45% (25)

The borough has an entrepreneurial culture with a business start-up rate higher than Lancashire as a whole. There are 72,000 employees in jobs in Blackburn with Darwen, seven in ten jobs are in health, manufacturing, retail and wholesale, education and business administration, support services and construction. Health and social care is one of the biggest employers in the area, with the newly created Integrated Care Service developing a plan to meet the health needs of the local population and Integrated Care Board advising on workforce and their development.

The labour market characteristics of working age residents in the borough show proportions greater than the national average of people classed as economically inactive (28.4% against 21.3% nationally), of these, a larger proportion are described as looking after home and family. Unemployment is 5.9% (4% nationally). People who work in the borough have on average higher earnings than those who live in the borough. This suggests that people commute into the borough for some of the better paid jobs rather than these being taken by residents, who have on average fewer higher-level qualifications or no qualifications compared to regional and national averages.

To close the gap to meet current national levels Blackburn with Darwen will need:

8,407 more people with higher-level qualifications

7,090 more people in work

1,758 fewer people claiming benefits

6,505 more people economically active

4,233 more people able to work alongside looking after their family



Approach to developing the Annual Accountability Agreement

Blackburn College is outward facing ensuring key strategic relationships and active engagement in the skills strategy, through direct and regular collaboration with key anchor institutions such as the unitary authority, East Lancashire Hospitals NHS Trust, local schools and the business community.

The College is well informed, visible and best placed to maximise opportunities for its students through investment, projects and experience. Knowledge from this engagement, together with a review of labour market information available, contributions from the College's Governing body and from stakeholder groups, has informed the approach and content of this Annual Accountability Agreement.

The College is part of The Lancashire Colleges group (TLC); a collaborative network that we have invested in for over 25 years. TLC includes all the Further Education and Sixth Form Colleges in the area and represents the diversity of the sector as a whole. As part of TLC we have a successful track-record of working collectively and collaboratively to improve quality, enhance the curriculum and deliver programmes that respond to business and community needs.

The College is actively engaged in preparations for a Lancashire Combined County Authority (CCA) Devolution Deal which is expected to include the devolution of adult skills budgets. Under the banner of The Lancashire Colleges Group (TLC) the college is working closely with the emerging CCA team to demonstrate the impact that adult education and skills provision has on individuals, the local communities and economy. The college is supporting the CCA team to consider their skills strategy and to identify the opportunities and additional flexibilities that devolution can bring, allowing the sector to better-support local priorities and respond to emerging needs.

The College Strategic Plan 2025- 2028 has been developed alongside the writing of this Accountability Agreement.

Further labour market intelligence used included: the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) (August 2023); extensive labour market data and analysis by travel to work areas through the Lancashire Local Economic Partnership (LEP); and Blackburn with Darwen nomis economic data.

Through collaborative programmes funded via the Strategic Development Fund and the Local Skills Improvement Fund, Blackburn College has proactively worked with its neighbouring colleges, investing in a network of industry-standard education and training spaces, building on its specialisms and collaborating to develop new courses and curriculum that align with business needs. Through communities of practice and investment in joint CPD, the college has been able to jointly meet challenges and build on best practice to ensure its teaching remains high quality and keeps apace with technological and other developments.

The college collaborates with other local colleges, sixth forms and private training providers through a range of networks and groups, such as The Association of College's Academic and Sixth Form College's National Policy Group, Lancashire Workbased Learning Forum and the Association of Colleges Northwest.

There is a strong partnership approach in Lancashire with TLC working in partnership with the local authorities, the Skills Hub and the Chambers of Commerce. The colleges work collegiately to solve the skills challenges in the local economy and Blackburn College is a pro-active partner in this.

Stakeholder involvement has included: Blackburn with Darwen Unitary Authority, East Lancashire Hospitals NHS Trust, Job Centre Plus, East Lancashire Chamber of Commerce, Lancashire LSIP Lead and Blackburn with Darwen Hive Business Leaders Network.

Contribution to National, Regional and Local Priorities

Blackburn College is committed to the implementation of the Further Education (FE) White Paper 'Skills for Jobs', focusing on 'Get Britain Working', the UK Industrial Strategy, alongside responding to Higher Education (HE) reforms. This ensures our current and future workforce is best equipped to thrive in supporting local, regional and national priorities.

The College has successfully introduced T Levels and continues to be responsive to curriculum reforms and Skills England. The College makes a strong contribution to the skills agenda working with industry to co-create curriculum designed to lead into employment. The College will continue to operate across a range of sectors with a key focus on engineering, construction and green skills, health and social care, electric/hybrid and hydrogen vehicle technologies, cyber and digitalisation across the whole curriculum.

Labour market data and LSIP findings identify the significant replacement demand given an ageing workforce, technical skills shortages rising and limited employer capacity to support skills development. Common across all sectors, is the need for employability skills and the 'right attitude' to work and learning.

The LSIP has worked closely with employers to help to develop greater understanding of their requirements from the skills system, the emerging priorities for the local skills system are identified in the following table together with priorities identified in The Lancashire Growth Plan 2025 – 2035 Consultation Version and National Priorities.



Respiratory System

Respiratory

Cross Section

Nose

Sinus

Thoracic Air Supply

Alveoli

Breathing Dynamics



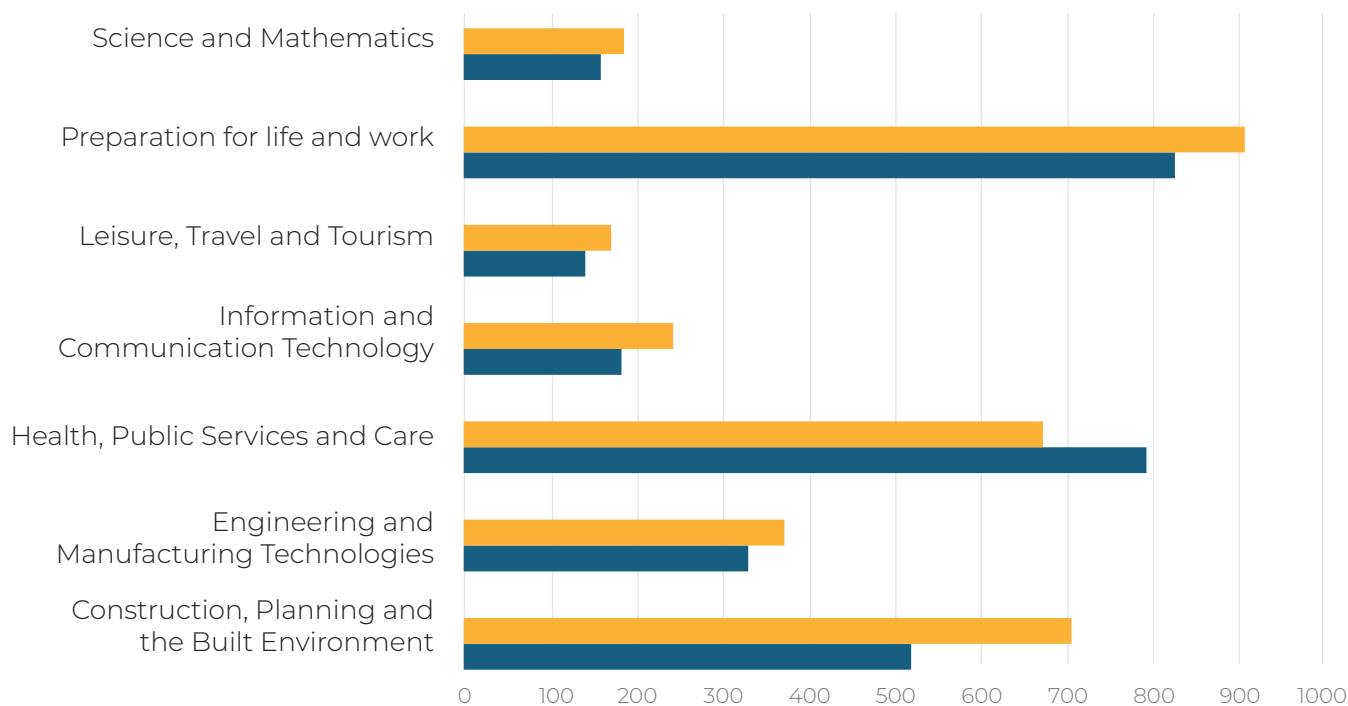
Sector	Local skills system priorities
Digital Technologies (including Artificial Intelligence and Quantum Computing)*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and grow digital, computing and cyber courses Collaborate with employers across all sectors to raise awareness of digital opportunities
Health*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Align courses with most pressing skills need Collaborate to explain a range of careers and education pathways to young people and others outside the workforce Ensure employability skills featured in courses meet employer needs Leadership and management training
Advanced Engineering and Manufacturing*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support leadership teams to develop plans and understand skills needs for decarbonisation and sustainability Digital confidence of staff Project and change management Leadership and management training New processes, machinery, regulations, productivity and operational skills gaps
Construction*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low carbon and retrofit technologies
Hospitality, Leisure and Tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Digital confidence Leadership and management training Transferable skills Customer service
Additional National Priorities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professional and Business Services UK Security (Defence in National Priorities) Clean Energy Industries (including Nuclear) Life Sciences Creative Industries Financial Services 	

* Also identified as a National Skills Priority, which in addition include: Science, Mathematics, essential skills including Level 2 English and Mathematics, up to and including Level 1 Digital.

The College continues to grow student numbers in sectors meeting the national, regional and local sector priorities. The chart below illustrates employment destination data for learners leaving in 2023 and 2022 demonstrating strong and growing numbers in LSIP priority sector areas:

Employment Destination of Leavers by LSIP Priority Sectors

2024 2023



The forecasted 10-year employment change for Lancashire and Blackburn with Darwen provides key sectors for new job and replacement demand, which for Blackburn with Darwen are health and social care, manufacturing and wholesale and retail.

Forecast 10 year Employment Change 2018 - 2028

New Jobs



Administrative and Support Services



Construction, Planning and the Built Environment



Wholesale and Retail



Digital



Professional, Scientific and Technical activities

Replacement Demand



Health and Social Care



Manufacturing



Wholesale and Retail



Accommodation and Food Services



Administrative and Support Services



Education

College strategic aims and objectives	Impact and/or contribution towards national, regional and local priorities for learning and skills
Be Exceptional	
<p>Strategic Aim:</p> <p>To embed a culture of continuous improvement, innovation and excellence in all aspects of what we do</p> <p>Objectives:</p> <p>Student Development: Focus on the development of students by offering a wide range of extracurricular activities, work experience, leadership opportunities and support services – ensuring our students are ready for work / further study – create the Blackburn College Student</p> <p>Community Engagement: Actively lead in initiatives that benefit our community, foster cohesion, build aspirations and enable social mobility</p>	<p>Relevant national/regional/local priority</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) – employers identified a range of soft skills needed Further Education ‘Skills for Jobs’ white paper ensuring students have the skills needed in the job market ‘Get Britain Working’ white paper aligning curriculum to skills need <p>Key milestones for success</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consistently high achievement rates in all areas and increasing student numbers in key LSIP (Local Skills Improvement Plan) priority areas including Construction, Engineering and Health Deliver “CyberFest “ community engagement event raising awareness and promoting career opportunities in cyber and digital Strong contribution to the National Festival of Making across all curriculum areas Proactive community partnerships and delivery of annual Community Voices Forum <p>Role and contribution of partners</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employer partners embedded within curriculum areas as critical friend co-creating curriculum, supporting students to develop skills and employment within their sectors Community partners engaging and delivering together with the College



Be Future Focused	
<p>Strategic Aim:</p> <p>To prepare students for the future by adopting cutting-edge technologies, innovative teaching methods, and forward-thinking practices into the educational experience</p> <p>Objectives:</p> <p>Delivering Employer Led Future Focused Curriculum – Further respond to local needs by seeking to re-engage those who are not in employment, education or training (NEET)</p> <p>Being Distinctive and progressive – Continue to develop the campus by delivering industry-standard facilities in all areas</p>	<p>Relevant national/regional/local priority</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) identified the need to support those Not in Employment Education or Training (NEET) Further Education ‘Skills for Jobs’ white paper ensuring students have the skills needed in the job market ‘Get Britain Working’ white paper aligning curriculum to skills need <p>Key milestones for success</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Launch Future Focus Centre, purpose to re-engage NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) and at risk students achieving targets set Industry-standard upgraded facilities including: Hair Salon, Beauty, Science Labs and three kitchens <p>Role and contribution of partners</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partnership with Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council, Schools and NewGround supporting referrals and opportunities Employer consultation in design of upgraded facilities



Be Work Ready	
<p>Strategic Aim:</p> <p>To equip students with the essential skills, knowledge and behaviours required to thrive in the world of work and to foster lifelong career development.</p> <p>Objectives:</p> <p>Work Ready Skills Development: Offer workshops and training sessions focused on developing skills such as leadership, teamwork, adaptability, and emotional intelligence.</p> <p>Employer Engagement: Lead and support strong partnerships with local and national employers to align educational offerings with industry needs, skills priorities and standards</p>	<p>Relevant national/regional/local priority</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) reported soft skills needed • Further Education 'Skills for Jobs' white paper ensuring students have the skills needed in the job market • 'Get Britain Working' white paper aligning curriculum to skills need <p>Key milestones for success</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All students on academic and vocational pathways to receive work ready skills development as part of weekly tutorial sessions • Industry partnerships and Boards positively impacting students in each curriculum area • Further develop/embed newly introduced T Levels • Relevant and high quality work experience, placements, projects and enrichment for all students to equip them with the knowledge, skills and behaviours for the future <p>Role and contribution of partners</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employers providing high quality work placements, experience, projects, guest lectures, work place visits and engagement to co-design and co-develop the curriculum • Stakeholder engagement for support and sharing activity

Local Needs Duty

The College continues to work to local, regional and national priorities, reviewed annually through its labour market review and business planning exercise.

Employment destinations of students demonstrate that growing numbers are finding employment in the priority sector areas. The College works well with other local providers to ensure provision is meeting the skills needs and works collaboratively on projects providing capital investment, curriculum development and investment in continuing professional development for staff to ensure currency of professional skills.

The College will continue to work with its fellow institutions in Lancashire, supporting our Governing Body in effectively discharging its duty to review provision in the local area. Through The Lancashire Colleges, Blackburn College seeks to enhance the collective understanding of how well the college provision meets local needs and develop a shared evidence base to assist Governing Bodies in identifying strengths and specialisms within Lancashire. The College will continue its work towards the development of a shared action plan and consider what actions the colleges might take, individually or collectively, in order to better meet identified local needs.

Corporation Statement

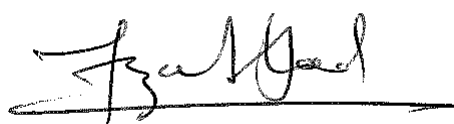
On behalf of Blackburn College Corporation, it is hereby confirmed that the College plan as set out in this Annual Accountability Agreement and Local Needs Duty reflects an agreed statement of purpose, aims and objectives as approved by the Corporation Board at their meeting on 26 June 2025.

Chair of Corporation Board:

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'M. Allen', written over a horizontal line.

Dated: 26 June 2025

Principal and Chief Executive:

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'Paul Good', written over a horizontal line.

Dated: 26 June 2025

Supporting Documentation

The Annual Accountability Statement has been produced with the use of labour market intelligence including the Lancashire Local Skills Improvement Plan, published Department for Education documents, Ofsted report and the College's annual financial statements.

Labour Market Intelligence

[Lancashire LSIP report 2023.pdf](#)

[Lancashire LSIP - Progress Report 2024.pdf](#)

https://www.lancashireskillshub.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/FINAL_Blackburn-with-Darwen-Hyndburn-Ribble-Valley-Rossendale_TTWA-REPORT_12.05.2020.docx.pdf

[Evidence Base - Lancashire Skills and Employment Hub](#)

<https://lancashire2050.co.uk>

https://lancashirelep.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/FINAL-Lancashire-Digital-Strategy-September-2022_compressed.pdf

[Lancashire-Local-Skills-Report-Annexe-A-2022-Final.pdf \(lancashireskillshub.co.uk\)](#)

[Labour Market Profile - Nomis - Official Census and Labour Market Statistics](#)

[How life has changed in Blackburn with Darwen: Census 2021](#)

Ofsted

<https://files.ofsted.gov.uk/v1/file/50268841>

Financial Statements

[Annual Financial Statements 2023 - 2024 \(PDF\)](#)



Blackburn College
Feilden Street
Blackburn
Lancashire
BB2 1LH

thehub@blackburn.ac.uk

01254 292929

blackburn.ac.uk