

New Directions College (URN: 54075)

Annual Accountability Statement 2023-24

Purpose:

New Directions College is Reading Borough Council's Adult Skills and Community Education service. The college is grant funded by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) and delivers Apprenticeships, specialist provision funded by other government bodies such as the Home Office and courses that are delivered for a fee to the learner i.e., Leisure courses.

Our intent: To deliver an outstanding quality of education that supports all our learners to achieve future social and economic prosperity.

How we will measure impact:

- Our learners gain new skills and qualifications, report enhanced levels of knowledge and self-development, including increased resilience, confidence, and independence.
- Our learners know how to keep physically and mentally healthy and have access to education for sustainable development (ESD).
- An outstanding quality of education develops personal and social skills, including employability skills that prepare learners well for their intended job role, career aims and/or personal goals.
- Learners are and feel safe. Arrangements for Safeguarding are appropriate and effective.

Context and place

Reading is home to 162,666 residents and 66,000 households, while around 233,000 people live in Reading's greater urban area. Reading is the principal regional and commercial centre of the Thames Valley, a major retail and leisure destination, with a thriving night-time economy.

Reading is also a place with huge potential, second only to London for wages; it has above average economic productivity and rates of employment. Yet Reading is now the third most unequal city in the UK, with significant groups not benefiting from the success of the economy, and with rising demand for housing, and for services to support vulnerable adults and children. Reading has some of the most affluent and the most deprived neighbourhoods in the whole of the Thames Valley.

Facts and Figures

- Reading's population is 162,666
- 77 languages spoken in homes across Reading
- 10% rise in social care referrals over the last five years
- Difference in life expectancy between most and least deprived areas - The difference is 8 years for men and 7.2 years for women
- 4th in the country for number of businesses
- 4th highest in the country in terms of wages
- 2nd highest in the country for 'good growth'
- However, 3rd most unequal city in terms of wealth
- 5 neighbourhoods are within the 10% most deprived in the country

- Reading Borough Council has reduced its carbon footprint by 10% with £13 million saved
- 90% of council-maintained schools rated good or outstanding but 10.4% of young people are not in education, employment, or training. Above the national average
- Reading rated one of the best placed cities for post-covid economic recovery.

Approach to developing the annual accountability statement

As a Local Authority led adult and community education service, New Directions College works with a full range of partners and stakeholders to deliver provision and to understand the local needs of our community and our employers. Our strategic plan, which is used to formulate this accountability agreement, is co-produced with senior leaders and staff at the college. The plan is then shared with our Governance Board and senior Council members, officers, and leaders. The accountability agreement demonstrates our commitment to support the social and economic prosperity of our community and is shared on our website.

Contribution to national, regional, and local priorities

As an ACE provider, we are focused on working with adult learners who are looking to up-skill, re-skill and progress into and on in employment. As such, we do not deliver technical education as much as our local FE college would. Instead, we focus on delivering the basic skills for life that adult learners need to secure progression into further learning and employment. Responding to significant local need, we focus our learning offer on ESOL, English, maths and digital skills. This makes up a significant proportion of our learning offer. In addition, we are an apprenticeship provider and have developed apprenticeship pathways with and at Reading Borough Council and Brighter Futures for Children. We work with a small number of other local authorities across England and a small but growing number of employers. Our apprenticeship provision is in line with our general vocational training offer which is focused on careers in early years and teaching support as well as business administration and leadership and management. This offer of learning not only responds to RBC and BFfC as employers, but also responds to learner demand. Nearly 80% of our learners are female and are returning to work after having children. Many are looking to secure work within the health and childcare sector and therefore this offer of learning very much meets local need.

Another growing area of our provision is employment support. Working closely with job centre plus and other key partners and employers, the college offers a range of programmes that support the unemployed to gain skills, knowledge, and behaviours to seek and secure work. Delivering sector-based work programmes with employers such as Thames Water, Ikea, Crowne Plaza, De Vere, JD Sports, and the Royal Berkshire Hospital, we support unemployed adults with being interview ready and going for job interviews for actual vacancies in Reading.

Finally, responding to local need, we are growing our offer of learning for adult learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. We are growing our pathways into employment and independent living. Working in partnership with a supported employment organisation, we secure our learners work placements within the hospitality industry and provide skills and training in Barista and front of house. This is not only meeting local labour shortages but is also providing skills to an underrepresented group of adults across Reading.

The College is working closely with our employer representative bodies such as Thames Valley Chamber and are involved in the ongoing work related to the Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs).

Whilst we recognise the focus of the LSIP is on post 16 technical education, we are keen to support the underpinning skills needs of local employers in areas such as sales, leadership and management and skills for a net zero economy. We recognise the role we must play in delivering this in partnership with employers and other local FE skills providers across Berkshire.

Emerging themes for Berkshire LSIP are:

Priority Skills – Post 16 Technical Education	Priority transferable skills
Creative (Screen Industries), Construction and Built Environment, Health and Life Sciences, Care, Transport & Logistics, Digital (ICT)	Leadership & Management, Skills for a Net Zero Economy Digitalisation, Business, Professional & Administration

Working closely with Economic Development colleagues and specific skills groups such as the LEP, SAP, REDA Skills for Growth Group and the work underway as part of the Berkshire County Deal, the service reviews our offer of learning annually and remains committed to delivering adult skills and community learning that is well aligned to local, regional, and national skills needs. This includes delivery of national programmes such as Multiply, Free Courses for Jobs and how we respond to refugees and asylum seekers through provision funded through the ESFA and Home Office.

Corporation statement

Reading Borough Council - Corporate Mission, Values and Foundations

Our mission is to ensure that Reading realises its potential – and to ensure that everyone who lives and works here can share the benefits of its success.

We can achieve this by working together across the borough and by focussing on three inter-connected themes:

- 1. Healthy Environment**
- 2. Thriving Communities**
- 3. Inclusive Economy**

In 2018, the Council came together with local businesses, community groups and Reading University to plan for Reading's future. The result is the Reading 2050 Vision, an ambitious description of what Reading can be: a city of green spaces, smart technology, and economic growth.

The Coronavirus pandemic has not changed this vision. It may have changed how we go about making a difference, and it may have made it more difficult. But we still believe in Reading's potential, and the right of everyone who lives and works here to have a stake in that future.

The Council's Foundations:

The following projects and ways of working underpin everything we do at the Council:

People first: our Customer Experience Strategy puts our customers at the heart of service design and delivery, and we seek regular feedback through consultations and our residents' survey.

Digital transformation: both internally and externally, we're transforming how we work using the power of digital technology. We're modernising services and harnessing new technology to make it easier for residents to interact with us. We're improving our website, streamlining processes, and making more services available online.

Building self-reliance: we work with others to build the ability of individuals and communities to solve their own problems and withstand the shocks that come their way. We provide support to those who need it – but our priority is always to help people live independently for as long as possible.

Getting the best value: we strive for value for money in everything we do, and we are focussed on delivering the Council's three-year Savings and Investment Programme. But the best deal is not always the cheapest – it's the one that protects people, jobs, the environment, and the budget. So, we're also evolving our procurement policies to find the social value in all we do.

Collaborating with others: we are stronger in partnership, and we collaborate with organisations from major corporations to local groups; with the business sector, charities, education institutions, health and social care, the police, faith groups, and the voluntary sector in Reading and across the Thames Valley to achieve our vision for Reading. We will build on the work done during the pandemic to consolidate partnerships and ensure a better network and stronger funding streams to support the most vulnerable.

Relevant Hyperlinks

New Directions College website is here: www.newdirectionsreading.ac.uk

[Reading Borough Council's 2050 Vision can be found here](#)

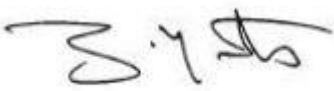

[Reading Borough Council's Corporate Plan can be found here](#)

Supporting documentation

[Strategic Development Plan 2021 - 2022 - New Directions College \(newdirectionsreading.ac.uk\)](#)

[Latest Ofsted Report - New Directions College \(newdirectionsreading.ac.uk\)](#)

[Subcontractors and Partners - New Directions College \(newdirectionsreading.ac.uk\)](#)

Chief Executive:			
Date:	25.05.23		
Head of Service:		Date:	25.5.23