

New Directions College (URN: 54075) Annual Accountability Statement 2024-25

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) with an annual £1.3m Skills Fund. The college also delivers Apprenticeships, specialist courses funded by other government bodies such as the Home Office and courses 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.





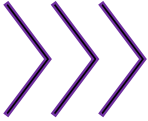
How we will measure impact:

- Our learners gain new skills and qualifications and 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.

Underpinning principles and aims of service delivery:

1. The College uses a place-based approach to both service and curriculum planning and development. We use local social, economic, human, and environmental data and intelligence to build our local learning offer. The College is focused on supporting the future social and economic prosperity of all learners, local communities, and businesses.
2. The College, its partners and subcontractors deliver an outstanding quality of learning with clear delivery intentions, strong implementation plans and effective methods of monitoring and recording impact.
3. The College is committed to ensuring all learners, including the most vulnerable and those furthest from the labour market, have good and equal access to high-quality learning opportunities that meet local needs and support progression to employment or further learning.
4. The College develops and harnesses strong and effective partnerships with local employers, sector bodies, business associations and stakeholders such as Job Centre Plus, that widen participation and support learners' progression to further learning and/or employment relevant to their circumstances.

5. The College offers a range of community learning opportunities that provide first-rung access to pathways into further learning or employment and support for adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to support their personal development and access to independent living.
6. The College prepares learners for life in modern Britain by equipping them to be responsible, respectful, active citizens who contribute positively to society, developing their understanding of fundamental British values and developing their understanding and appreciation of diversity.
7. The College provides an effective careers programme that offers advice, experience and contact with employers to encourage learners to aspire, make good choices and understand what they need to do to reach and succeed in their chosen career, actively supporting readiness for the next phase of education, training, or employment so that learners can make the transition to the next stage successfully.
8. The College is graded Good/Outstanding by Ofsted, is financially fit for the future, is well-resourced and sustainable and delivers value for money and is prepared to take risks in a balanced and measured way.

Our Priorities				
				
1. The Service Offer	2. The quality of the service	3. Access to the service	4. Partnerships	5. Fit for the future
The service offer is strong, relevant, and aligned with local needs.	The service delivers the highest quality standards and is recognised by external bodies such as Ofsted, Matrix, and other awarding organisations for doing so.	Ensure equality of access to learning for learners from different communities across all parts of Reading, including those who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, suffer hardship or experience other barriers to participation.	Build strong and effective partnerships with local employers, sector bodies, business associations and stakeholders, which lead to improved outcomes for our learners.	Ensure the service is fit for the future, is well-resourced and sustainable and delivers excellent value for money.

Our Objectives

1. The Service offer	2. The quality of the service	3. Access to the service	4. Partnerships	5. Fit for the future
<p>Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Deliver a service that is effectively aligned and connected to local projects and programmes of work linked to improved economic and social outcomes and skills for adults. b. Build and deliver foundation-level talent pipelines into jobs within existing and emerging sectors across Berkshire, including Film and Production Industries and Green Skills. c. Deliver Multiply to over 1000+ adults in Reading until 2025, providing innovative numeracy courses that promote skills development and progression to further learning. 	<p>Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Deliver adult skills and community learning that is recognised as good to outstanding by Ofsted and other external bodies. b. Aim to be recognised as an example of excellent practice and share our knowledge and expertise with others. c. Develop and offer a highly effective physical and virtual learning environment where learners can fully access high-quality education with high-quality ICT kit and equipment available to all. d. Deliver education for sustainable development as an integral part of the whole college curriculum. 	<p>Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Offer adult skills and community learning across the borough and in a range of community outreach settings to widen participation. b. Ensure easy access to course information and the local learning offer. c. Deliver a highly effective Learner Support programme, tackling hardship and childcare issues, which breaks down barriers to participation and success. d. Deliver highly effective learning support for all learners who need it, including specialist support for adults with SEND. 	<p>Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Work with key partners and stakeholders such as the local FE sector, REDA, the Berkshire LEP and the Chamber of Commerce to identify and utilise local social, economic, human, and environmental data and intelligence to build our local learning offer. b. Contribute to the development and delivery of Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs) and where appropriate, bid for structural development funds. c. Work with local FE and learning providers to avoid duplication and to ensure equality of access to learning provision across Reading. 	<p>Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Deliver a service that is financially sustainable and agile to changing demands. b. Horizon scan and adapt how we operate considering emerging policy changes. c. Produce clear and accurate annual budgets d. Budget for the service to operate within its own financial envelope from 2024 onwards.

The service offer Objectives:	The quality of the service Objectives:	Access to the service Objectives:	Partnerships Objectives:	Fit for the future Objectives:
<p>d. Further develop innovative employability opportunities that are created in partnership with local employers, key stakeholders such as REDA and JCP i.e., Sector Based Work Programmes linked to specific employers/sectors and targeted at specific learner groups that lead to employment outcomes.</p> <p>e. Deliver learning programmes that support adults who are ‘under-employed’ and are seeking in work/career progression through the acquisition of new skills and experiences.</p> <p>f. Deliver Apprenticeships and technical/vocational education that meets the skills gaps within key sectors and is responsive to employer demand.</p>	<p>e. Develop and implement an effective and meaningful system for monitoring and developing the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.</p> <p>f. Establish effective methods of recognising and recording progress and achievement and implement this across all non-accredited ESFA provisions (RARPA).</p> <p>g. Enhance the delivery of fundamental British Values across all provisions so that it celebrates our cultural diversity and has a prominent place within the College.</p> <p>h. Grow the delivery of highly effective Apprenticeships, with timely achievement and excellence in end point assessment.</p>	<p>e. Strengthen partnerships with local community and voluntary sector groups to promote the learning offer, build and deliver support packages that increase participation and identify potential gaps in the service.</p> <p>f. Work with employers to increase the numeracy skills of the existing workforce through the delivery of Multiply.</p> <p>g. Establish a system for signposting adults to a local alternative provision that meets their needs if the college is not able to.</p> <p>h. Re-fit our digital learning suite to ensure it provides state-of-the-art technology and a fully accessible learning environment.</p>	<p>d. Work with the local VCS and develop volunteering opportunities for adult learners and accredit the skills gained to support future employment opportunities.</p> <p>e. Work with partners and stakeholders to actively identify and promote progression opportunities for all adult learners.</p> <p>f. Build on the exploratory work for the possible devolution of AEB in Berkshire and maximise opportunities for collaboration in the delivery of high-quality adult skills across Reading and beyond.</p>	<p>e. Implement robust systems for financial reporting and monitoring.</p> <p>f. Have a clear sustainability plan.</p> <p>g. Annually revise the fees policy for co-funded learners and full cost recovery provision.</p> <p>h. Fully deliver against the AEB Grant - aiming for 3% over delivery where possible.</p> <p>i. Set and monitor clear income generation targets for the service.</p>

<p>The service offer Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> g. Offer the National Skills Fund and Lifetime Skills Guarantee to Adults across Reading looking to secure their first full L3 qualification. h. Offer bespoke provision for adults with LD with a focus on developing pathways to employment. i. Offer provisions for adults with mental health conditions that will support their recovery and enable them to progress. j. Offer family learning activities which promote the development of basic skills and parental engagement in education. k. Celebrate Learner success throughout the year and via the annual Adult Learning Awards. 	<p>The quality of the service Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Establish a Governance Board that will monitor and challenge the service performance rigorously, quarterly, and annually. j. Develop innovative ways of capturing service user feedback, that will contribute to ongoing service development. k. Develop new mechanisms for promoting and delivering highly effective staff CPD. l. Celebrate staff and contributors' success regularly and at the adult learner awards. m. Establish protocols for collectively assessing staff workload and implementing measures to address challenges. 			<p>Fit for the future Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> j. Annually review the local terms and conditions and pay scales for academic roles. k. Ensure the service operates at full staff utilisation and identifies emerging resource need promptly. l. Ensure the service is agile to respond to emerging funding streams and is successful in its bids for external funding.
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	<p>The quality of the service Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">n. Deliver highly effective careers and IAG across the service to ensure all learners have access to the information they need to make positive progression from learning and beyond.o. Explore new ways of promoting a sense of community and belonging for apprentices and other remote learners.			
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Context and place

Reading is home to 173,400 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 immense potential, 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 Thames Valley.

Facts and Figures

- Reading's population is 173,400 (Nomis 2021).
- 68.9% of the population are aged 16-64.
- 89% of the working-age population is economically active vs a national average of 78.8% with 74.2 employees and 11.3% self-employed.
- 11% of the working-age population is economically inactive with 4.2% claiming benefits.
- 8.1% of the working-age population have no qualifications which is higher than the national average of 6.8% and the South-East average at 4.9%.
- Most employees across Reading work in Information & Communication (17.1%), Professional, Scientific and Technical (15.4%) and Health and Social Care (12%).
- There are over 6,550 Small and Medium Enterprises across Reading, reflecting the high rate of self-employment.
- Job vacancy data (Nomis 2022) shows 131,000 job vacancies and a job density of 1.10.
- 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 supporting the social and economic prosperity of our community and is shared on our website.

Contribution to national, regional, and local priorities

The college delivers skills for life courses that adult learners need to secure progression into further learning and employment. Responding to significant local demand, we focus our learning offer on ESOL, English, maths, and digital skills. This makes up a considerable proportion of our learning offer. We deliver courses that support unemployed and economically inactive adults into work through sector-specific employability programmes, courses that target better health and wellbeing and specialist courses for adults with health conditions or learning difficulties/disabilities.

Working closely with jobcentre plus and other key partners and employers, the college offers a range of programmes that support the unemployed to gain the 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.

We are growing our offer of learning for adult learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. We are developing and delivering 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.

Our vocational learning offer targets local job vacancies in Childcare, Teaching, Teaching Support, Business Administration, Hospitality and Customer Service. We work alongside our local FE College to make sure we do not duplicate provisions and work closely with employers to shape courses and help identify progression routes into employment.

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 demand.

Throughout 2023-24 the college is working on a priority around Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and is working to roll out carbon literacy to all staff and some of our learners. We aim to become a carbon-literate educator to work with local businesses (SMEs) and offer carbon literacy training.

The college is collaborating closely with our employer representative body: Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce and is involved in the ongoing work related to the Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs). The college is represented at each of the workforce development partnership groups and is directly involved in delivering programmes of work linked to skills for net zero and leadership and management via the Local Skills Improvement Fund (LSIF). The college does not deliver 16-18 provisions or Technical Education.

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 Prosperity Board, 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 focusing 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:

These 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' surveys.

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.

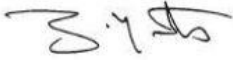
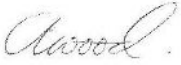
Relevant Hyperlinks

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

[Accountability Agreement and Strategic Development Plan - New Directions College \(newdirectionsreading.ac.uk\)](#)
[Latest Ofsted Report - New Directions College \(newdirectionsreading.ac.uk\)](#)

OFFICIAL

Chief Executive:	 Jackie Yates		
Date:	25 th April 2024		
Head of Service:		Date:	25 th April 2024