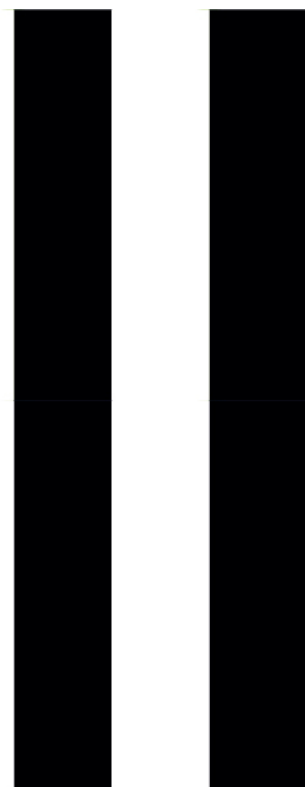
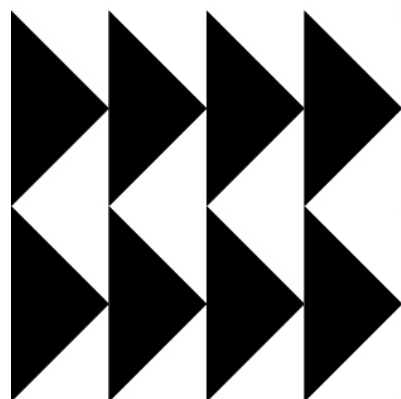
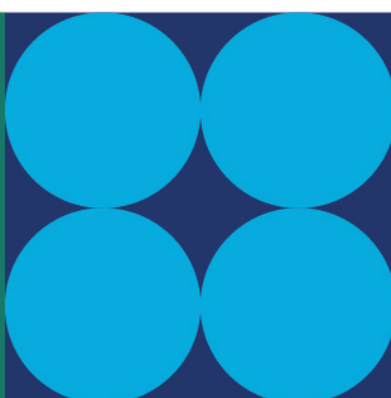


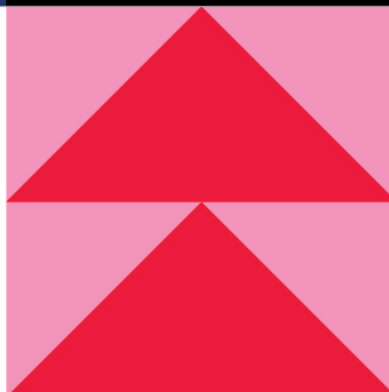
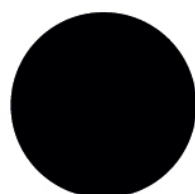
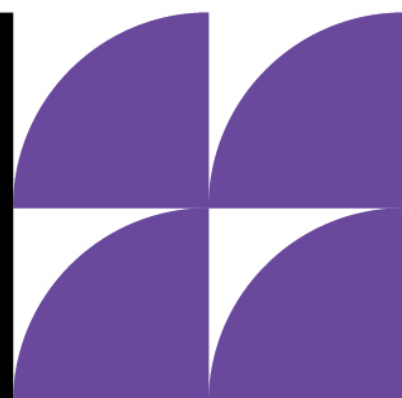
**HARLOW
COLLEGE**



Harlow College Annual Accountability Statement



**2025
2026**



Harlow College Annual Accountability Statement 2025-2026

Context

Harlow College is a medium-sized further education institution situated within the UK's Innovation Corridor, strategically positioned to serve West Essex and the surrounding regions including Hertfordshire and North London. The College is recognised for delivering good quality provision and for its strong contribution to meeting local skills needs, as evidenced by a strong track record of innovation, collaboration with industry partners and a student-centred ethos.

The main campus is located in Harlow, Essex, a town that experienced a 13.9% population increase between 2011 and 2021¹, significantly higher than the national average, making it one of the most densely populated local authorities in the East of England. A second campus, Stansted Airport College, is a purpose-built institution located at London Stansted Airport, specialising in courses in aviation, engineering, hospitality and events management.

Harlow and its surrounding areas exhibit significant economic polarisation, hosting both affluent communities and areas of high deprivation. The local economy is characterised by a high proportion of micro and small enterprises—88.7% of Harlow businesses employ fewer than 10 people²—which reinforces the importance of accessible, responsive and employer-informed education. The region's skills gap remains a critical concern, with only 38.9% of residents qualified to Level 3 or above, compared to 61.5% nationally and 8.6% of residents having no qualifications at all³.

Through continuous engagement with the Greater Essex Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) and collaboration with key stakeholders including employers, community organisations and educational institutions, Harlow College ensures its curriculum is strategically aligned to local labour market needs. This includes targeted efforts to support priority sectors such as Health Sciences, Aviation and Logistics and Construction. These contextual factors form the foundation of the College's ongoing response to the statutory Local Needs Duty under the Further and Higher Education Act 1992, as amended by the Skills and Post-16 Education Act 2022.

In January 2025, Essex, Southend and Thurrock Councils submitted proposals to government to join the fast track for devolution towards a new Mayoral Strategic Authority for Greater Essex, which would see a mayor elected by May 2026. The Mayoral Strategic Authority will have delegated powers from government including funding for skills. Whilst this is planned to not come into effect until late 2026, the College is keeping abreast of developments.

¹ Office for National Statistics. (2022). *Census 2021: Population and household estimates, England and Wales*. Retrieved from <https://www.ons.gov.uk>

² Office for National Statistics. (2023). *UK Business: Activity, Size and Location*. Retrieved from <https://www.ons.gov.uk>

³ Department for Education. (2023). *Local Skills Dashboard - Harlow*. Retrieved from <https://skills.education.gov.uk>

Purpose and Place

Harlow College exists to transform lives and foster economic prosperity by delivering high-quality, career-focused education that is responsive to the evolving needs of learners, employers and the wider community. Our strategic purpose is underpinned by a mission to enable every learner to achieve their aspirations, contribute productively to the regional economy and lead purposeful lives.

Values and mission:

S: Students at the heart

T: Teamwork - work together, achieve together

A: Be Ambitious, Build Futures

R: Respect each other, share similarities and celebrate differences

Our five-year Strategic Plan (2024–2029) affirms a commitment to “More than Courses. Careers.” This guiding principle shapes all aspects of curriculum development, pedagogy and learner engagement. We are committed to supporting local, regional and national priorities, including those articulated in the Department for Education’s National Skills Priorities, by investing in high-demand sectors such as Health, Construction and Green Technologies.

Situated at the heart of the UK Innovation Corridor, our provision is geographically rooted in a dynamic region characterised by rapid growth, demographic diversity and a wide spectrum of employment opportunities. Our campuses in Harlow and at London Stansted Airport enable us to serve a broad learner demographic and respond flexibly to travel-to-learn and travel-to-work patterns.

The College is uniquely positioned to serve as a conduit between education and industry. By forging sustained partnerships with organisations including the NHS, Stansted Airport and the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town development, we ensure our programmes reflect real-world demands and provide clear progression routes into employment. As such, the College plays a pivotal role in supporting the ambitions of the Local Skills Improvement Plan and in fulfilling its statutory obligations under the Local Needs Duty.

This document details our shorter term aims, priorities and targets focussing on curriculum changes and adaptations to provision that are planned for the 2025/2026 academic year. Our strategic intentions for the next 5 years are contained within the 2024-2029 Strategic Plan which is reviewed annually and was approved by Corporation on the 13 June 2024. The Strategic Plan lays out our intentions as we continue our commitment to changing and transforming the lives of young people and adults in our community and focuses on three priority sectors for growth in Essex and includes six cross cutting themes. These sectors and themes align with the Essex Local Skills Improvement Plan.

Priority Sectors for Growth:

- Health Sciences;
- Aviation, Transport, Logistics and Engineering;
- Construction and Building Services.

Cross Cutting Themes:

- Career-led curriculum;
- Soft skills and behaviours;
- Excellent learning, teaching and assessment;
- Digital skills;
- Green skills;
- People.

Approach to Developing the Annual Accountability Statement

The development of this Annual Accountability Statement has been guided by an evidence-based, consultative process in line with statutory expectations under the Local Needs Duty. The College has drawn on a wide range of data sources, including the Greater Essex Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP), local labour market

intelligence, learner outcome data and sector-specific insights, to determine its strategic priorities and measurable objectives for the academic year 2025–2026.

Engagement with the designated Employer Representative Body (ERB), Essex Chambers of Commerce, has played a central role in shaping the College's curriculum and investment plans. In particular, the College has actively contributed to the development and review of the LSIP, ensuring that local employer feedback is embedded into programme design and delivery.

The College has also engaged in structured dialogue with other regional providers of education and training, including schools, universities, independent training providers and civic stakeholders. This collaboration has focused on aligning provision, enhancing progression pathways, addressing gaps in participation and avoiding unnecessary duplication. The College remains committed to joint delivery models and shared initiatives that advance skills development across Greater Essex.

Additionally, Harlow College has worked closely with its Corporation, internal governance structures and curriculum leaders to ensure that all identified targets and planned outcomes reflect institutional capacity, strategic direction and community need. The FE provider dashboard, alongside in-house data systems, has supported a robust review of previous performance, ensuring that this statement is grounded in continuous improvement and accountability.

Contribution to National, Regional and Local Priorities

In 2025–2026, Harlow College will deliver a focused set of curriculum aims and targets that respond directly to the national skills priorities outlined by the Department for Education and the regional imperatives identified in the Greater Essex LSIP.

The following priorities reflect a cohesive response to both current and projected workforce demand, as well as the College's long-term strategic objectives:

1. Health Sciences

- Expand technical education pathways through the Health Sciences and Social Care Training Academy.

- Grow student numbers in Health T Levels, dental nursing and NHS-linked apprenticeships.
 - Establish new simulated learning environments and partnerships with NHS Trusts to increase industry placements.
2. **Aviation, Transport, Logistics and Engineering**
- Extend engineering curriculum at Stansted Airport College.
 - Launch preparatory programmes aimed at widening access for underrepresented groups into aviation careers.
 - Collaborate with airport-based employers to tailor qualification frameworks to licensing requirements.
3. **Construction and Green Technologies**
- Strengthen provision in renewable energy, retrofit and modern methods of construction, linked to the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town development.
 - Establish a SMART construction unit and increase enrolments in T-Levels and apprenticeships.
 - Develop modular curriculum content for green skills, aligned to the College's Carbon Reduction Road Map.
4. **Digital and Emerging Technologies**
- Expand use of Augmented Reality (AR), Virtual Reality (VR) and Artificial Intelligence (AI) across curriculum areas.
 - Increase digital literacy provision for adult learners to improve employability and reduce digital exclusion.
 - Pilot AI-based assessment tools and provide CPD for staff in ethical and effective AI integration.
5. **Soft Skills and Employability Development**
- Embed College-wide framework for soft skills through enrichment, enterprise competitions and advocacy activities.
 - Strengthen employability initiatives including live briefs, industry placements and employer mentoring across all key sectors.
 - Evaluate impact through Super 6 Careers strategy indicators and feedback from employer advisory boards.

Each of these priority areas will be supported by SMART objectives, with clear targets for enrolment growth, employer engagement and learner outcomes. These are monitored via internal Quality Improvement Plans and benchmarked against previous performance to demonstrate continuous impact and strategic ambition.

Local Needs Duty Statement

In fulfilment of its statutory responsibilities under Section 52B of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 (as amended by the Skills and Post-16 Education Act 2022), Harlow College has undertaken a review of how well its education and training provision meets local needs. This review has informed both our Strategic Plan 2024–2029 and this Annual Accountability Statement.

The College operates within the Greater Essex region, an area defined by demographic growth, economic disparity and evolving labour market demands. Key conclusions from the most recent review highlight:

- **A significant shortfall in higher-level skills in Harlow**, where only 38.9% of working-age residents are qualified to Level 3 (compared to 61.5% nationally) and 8.6% possess no qualifications at all⁴.
- **High demand in sectors including health, engineering, logistics and green construction**, aligned with both the Greater Essex LSIP and the Department for Education's national skills priorities.
- **Employer appetite for work-ready graduates**, particularly in soft skills, digital competencies and practical experience.

In response, the College has taken the following actions:

- **Established or expanded sector-specific centres of excellence**, including the Health Sciences Training Academy, Electric and Hybrid Vehicle Training Centre, Renewable Energy Centre and Stansted Airport College.
- **Strengthened employer engagement and co-designed provision**, involving NHS trusts, airport-based employers and regional construction bodies.
- **Invested in technological innovation and inclusivity**, with initiatives to integrate AR/VR in curriculum, support high needs learners and improve digital access.
- **Collaborated with other education providers and community organisations**, promoting progression pathways and addressing gaps in provision.

The next comprehensive statutory review is scheduled within the three-year cycle unless prompted sooner by substantial changes in regional or institutional circumstances. This summative statement confirms that the College's provision continues to align with and respond to local and regional needs and that all actions taken are consistent with the duties set out in the statutory guidance.

Corporation / Governing Body Statement

This Annual Accountability Statement, including the embedded Local Needs Duty review summary, has been formally reviewed and approved by the Corporation of Harlow College.

The Corporation confirms that:

- The development of this statement has been informed by the College's Strategic Plan 2024–2029, the Greater Essex Local Skills Improvement Plan and relevant national policy guidance including the Department for Education's Accountability Agreement Guidance (January 2025).

⁴ Department for Education. (2023). Local Skills Dashboard - Harlow. Retrieved from <https://skills.education.gov.uk>

- The contents of this statement accurately reflect the College's current provision, strategic priorities and planned outcomes for the 2025–2026 academic year.
- The Corporation acknowledges and fulfils its statutory responsibility under the Local Needs Duty and confirms that this document constitutes its published response as required by law.

The Corporation remains committed to ensuring that Harlow College continues to act in the best interests of its learners, staff, partners and the wider community and to delivering provision that is high quality, responsive and aligned to the evolving skills landscape.

Hyperlink

The plan is published on the College's website and can be accessed from the following link:

[Harlow-College-Annual-Accountability-Statement-2025-2026.pdf](#)

Relevant Supporting Documentation

[Harlow College - Strategic Plan 2024-2029](#)

[Harlow College - Equality & Diversity](#)

[Harlow College - Financial Statements](#)

[LSIP | Essex Chambers of Commerce](#)