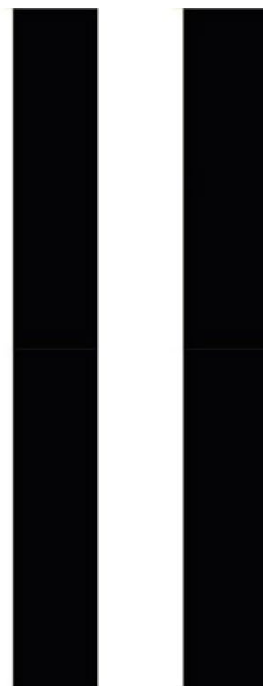
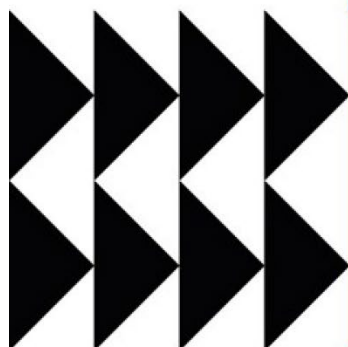
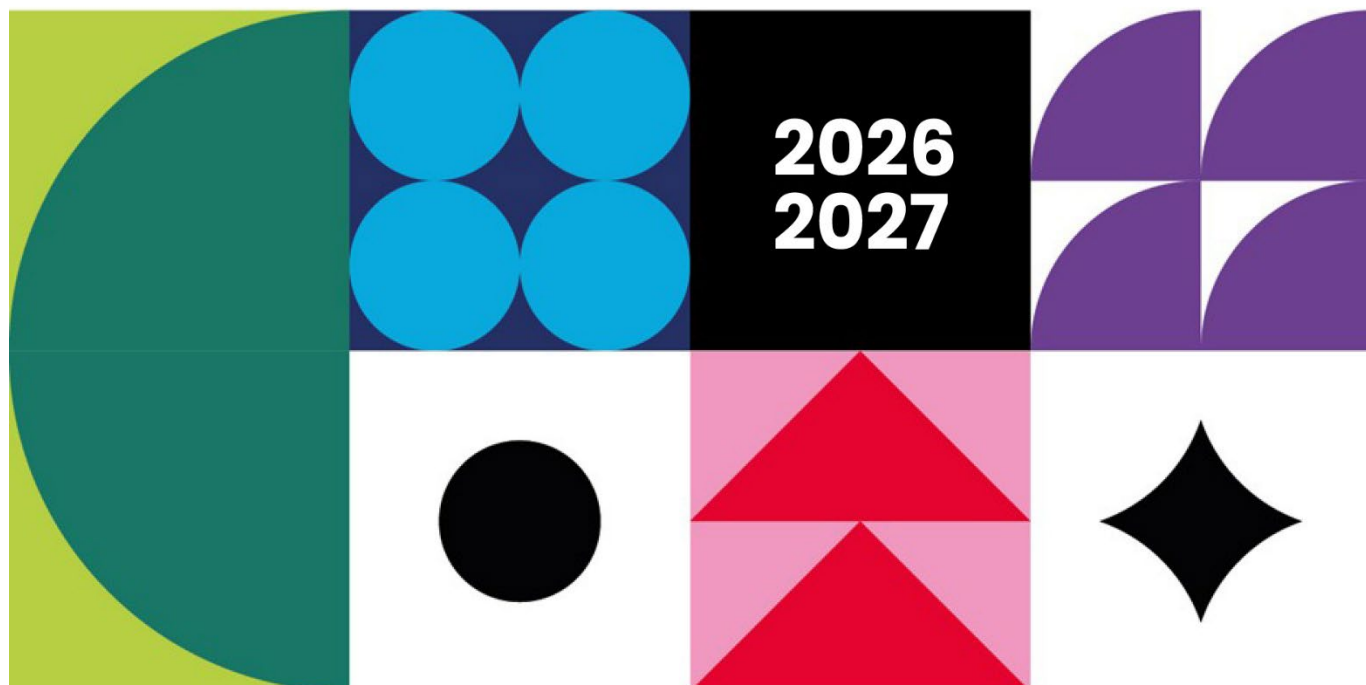


**HARLOW
COLLEGE**



Harlow College Annual Accountability Statement



Purpose

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.

Our values are expressed through our STAR framework:

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, approved by Corporation in June 2024, is built around the principle of 'More than Courses. Careers.' It establishes three priority sectors for growth: Health Sciences; Aviation, Transport, Logistics and Engineering; and Construction and Building Services. Alongside six cross-cutting themes: career-led curriculum; soft skills and behaviours; excellent learning, teaching and assessment; digital skills; green skills; and people.

This Annual Accountability Statement sets out our shorter-term aims, priorities and targets for 2026–27. It demonstrates how the College fulfils its statutory obligations under the Local Needs Duty (Section 52B of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992, as amended by the Skills and Post-16 Education Act 2022). It should be read alongside the College's Strategic Plan 2024–2029, the Greater Essex LSIP 2026–2029 and Harlow Council's Building Harlow's Future 2026–27.

Context and Place

Harlow College is a medium-sized further education institution situated within the UK Innovation Corridor, serving West Essex, East Hertfordshire and North London. The College is recognised by Ofsted for delivering good quality provision and is noted for its strong record of innovation, employer collaboration and student-centred ethos.

The College operates across two campuses:

- Main Campus, Harlow. Harlow experienced a 13.9% population increase between 2011 and 2021¹, significantly above the national average of 6.6%, making it one of the most densely populated local authorities in the East of England. Building Harlow's Future projects 50% population growth for Harlow and Gilston, rising from approximately 93,000 to around 140,000 residents as the Garden Town development is delivered.²
- Stansted Airport College. A purpose-built campus at London Stansted Airport, one of the UK's busiest airports, handling 28 million passengers per year and directly

¹ ONS, Census 2021: Population and Household Estimates, England and Wales.

² Building Harlow's Future Investment Prospectus 2026, Harlow Council.

employing over 10,000 people³, specialising in aviation, engineering, logistics, hospitality and events management. Stansted is located 10 miles north of Harlow.

Harlow Council's Building Harlow's Future plan is the primary local growth framework for 2026–27. Organised around six missions: Transform our council; Rebuild our town; Invest in our housing; Renew our neighbourhoods; Secure our future; and Protect our communities, the plan sets an ambitious trajectory for Harlow as the UK's fastest growing place.

The plan's 'Secure our Future' mission is of direct relevance to the College, encompassing the acceleration of the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town, maximisation of inward investment, the completion of the Harlow Innovation Park and Enterprise Zone development and embedding a new approach to inclusive growth.

Key capital investments that will drive skills demand across the College's three priority sectors include:

- £1.5bn New Hospital and Health Campus: the most significant single driver of demand for Health Sciences skills in the region, supporting world-class healthcare and life sciences innovation.
- Harlow and Gilston Garden Town: at least 23,000 new homes and 20,000 new jobs by 2045, with 16,000 homes to be delivered within the next decade.⁴
- Harlow Innovation Park and Enterprise Zone: named the UK's number one tech hub location, home to Kao Data and the UK's most powerful supercomputer, creating sustained demand for digital and advanced engineering skills.
- £171m Housing Investment Grant and £20m Plan for Neighbourhoods: sustaining demand for construction trades, retrofit skills and community-facing services.

Greater Essex is undergoing significant structural change, a Combined County Authority for Greater Essex will be established in 2026, becoming a Mayoral Combined County Authority (MCCA) following election in May 2028. The Government confirmed on 25 March 2026 that Greater Essex will move to five new unitary councils: West Essex, North East Essex, Mid Essex, South West Essex and South East Essex with full powers from April 2028.⁵

The College is monitoring devolution developments, the MCCA will hold delegated powers including skills funding and the College is committed to aligning provision with any integrated skills agreement as it develops.

Local Growth Plans

The College engages actively with the strategic frameworks that shape growth and skills priorities across the area, including the Greater Essex Local Skills Improvement Plan, Essex County Council's economic strategies and Harlow's own local growth and regeneration programme; Building Harlow's Future. This includes alignment with the Government's Get Britain Working agenda, while Greater Essex does not yet have a formally published local Get Britain Working plan, Essex County Council will deliver the Connect to Work programme

³ London Stansted Airport published passenger and employment figures, 2025.

⁴ Harlow and Gilston Garden Town designation, 2017.

⁵ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, March 2026.

across Greater Essex (2025–2030)⁶ supporting people with disabilities, health conditions and complex barriers into employment. The College will align its inclusive provision, employability support and adult offer with this programme as it develops. The College is a committed partner in these arrangements and will engage fully with the development of a Greater Essex Local Growth Plan and any local Get Britain Working plan, ensuring our curriculum planning and capital priorities are aligned with the area's emerging growth ambitions.

Greater Essex supports 777,850 jobs across 81,065 businesses⁷, demonstrating a broad, service-led economy with strong retail, health and logistics bases and targeted opportunities to expand higher productivity industries. Harlow's local economy contributes £2bn in annual GVA, supported by approximately 3,300 businesses and 44,000 jobs⁸.

Key economic characteristics informing skills needs across the Greater Essex area include:

- Business size: 90.1% of Greater Essex businesses⁹ are micro enterprises (0–9 employees). In Harlow, 88.7% of all businesses employ fewer than 10 people, limiting employer capacity for training and apprenticeship provision and reinforcing the importance of accessible, responsive education.
- Sector structure: Wholesale and retail trade is the largest employment sector (15.7%), followed by Human health and social work (13.2%) and Administrative and support services (9.4%). Greater Essex shows a higher concentration in Construction (8.4% vs 5.0% nationally) and Transportation and storage (7.9% vs 5.1%), both priority sectors for the College.¹⁰
- In Harlow, 34.9% of the workforce is employed in Wholesale and retail trade (8,000) and Human health and social work (7,000), with Administrative and support services (4,500), Education (4,000) and Manufacturing (3,500) accounting for a further 25.5% of employment.¹¹
- Sector growth forecasts: Construction, Accommodation and food, Business and other services and Health and social work (forecast +23,000 jobs regionally by 2027) are the key growth sectors to 2027.¹²
- Labour market: Unique job postings across Greater Essex slowed through 2025, fluctuating between approximately 28,000 and 34,000 per month. Health and care (13% of all postings), Education (13%) and Retail and hospitality (25%+) remain the most active hiring sectors.¹³
- Wages: Median gross weekly wages for full-time workers rose across Essex, Southend-on-Sea and Thurrock through 2022–2025, outpacing the East of England and national averages.¹⁴

⁶ Essex County Council / DWP Get Britain Working White Paper, November 2024.

⁷ ONS Business Register and Employment Survey, updated January 2026.

⁸ Building Harlow's Future Investment Prospectus 2026, Harlow Council.

⁹ ONS UK Business Counts – Enterprises by Industry and Employment Size Band, November 2025.

¹⁰ ONS Business Register and Employment Survey, updated January 2026.

¹¹ ONS Business Register and Employment Survey, updated January 2026.

¹² Working Futures Labour Market and Skills Projections 2017–2027, DfE-sponsored.

¹³ Lightcast Unique Postings Trend Data, December 2025, updated January 2026.

¹⁴ ONS Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings – Resident and Workplace Analysis, updated January 2026.

Greater Essex has a stronger overall qualification profile than both the East of England and England, with 43.7% of residents holding RQF Level 4+ qualifications compared to 38.1% nationally.¹⁵ However, there is significant local variation:

- Harlow skills gap: Only 38.9% of Harlow residents aged 16–64 are qualified to Level 3 or above (vs 61.5% nationally) and 8.6% hold no qualifications at all (vs 6.6% nationally).¹⁶
- Adult education achievement: The highest levels of adult education completion are in Health and social care, Retail and commercial enterprise, and Business, administration and law, closely correlated with the vacancies advertised across the region.

Approach to Developing the Annual Accountability Statement

The Annual Accountability Statement has been guided by an evidence-based, consultative process in line with the statutory requirements of the Local Needs Duty and the DfE guidance on Annual Accountability Statements 2026–27.

The College has engaged proactively with Essex Chambers of Commerce (designated ERB) throughout the development of the second cycle of the Greater Essex LSIP 2026–2029. This engagement has included participation in LSIP consultation events and employer roundtables, contribution of curriculum intelligence to inform priority-setting and ongoing co-design of provision.

The College has engaged directly with Harlow Council in relation to the Building Harlow's Future 2026–27 plan, the College's three priority growth sectors directly mirror the investment priorities contained within it and we have been represented at relevant employer and skills forums organised by the Council.

The following evidence sources have informed priorities and targets:

- Greater Essex LSIP 2026–2029 (Essex Chambers of Commerce)
- LSIP Data Report, March 2026
- Building Harlow's Future 2026–27 (Harlow Council)
- Building Harlow's Future Investment Prospectus 2026
- DfE FE Provider Dashboard — learner outcome and participation data
- ONS Business Register and Employment Survey, January 2026
- ONS Annual Population Survey, January 2026
- Working Futures Labour Market and Skills Projections 2017–2027
- Lightcast unique postings data, December 2025
- HESA HE Qualifiers data, 2024/25
- DfE Further Education and Skills and Apprenticeship Achievement data, 2023/24
- Internal Quality Improvement Plans, curriculum data and enrolment data (2025–26 academic year)

The College has also engaged with other regional providers of education and training, including independent training providers and civic stakeholders. This collaboration has focused on aligning provision, enhancing progression pathways, addressing gaps in participation and

¹⁵ ONS Annual Population Survey, updated January 2026.

¹⁶ DfE Local Skills Dashboard – Harlow, 2023.

avoiding unnecessary duplication. The College remains committed to joint delivery models and shared initiatives that advance skills development across Greater Essex.

The College has also worked closely with its Corporation, internal governance structures and curriculum leaders to ensure that all identified targets and planned outcomes reflect organisational capacity, strategic direction and community need.

Contribution to National, Regional and Local Priorities

The following priorities and objectives reflect the College's response to DfE national skills priorities, the Greater Essex LSIP 2026–2029, the Building Harlow's Future 2026–27 plan and the College's Strategic Plan 2024–2029. All targets compare planned 2026–27 volumes against 2025–26 baselines.

Priority Area	2025–26 Baseline	2026–27 Target
Health Sciences — T Level Adult Nursing enrolments	59	70
Health Sciences — T Level Laboratory Science enrolments	0	10
Stansted Airport College – total enrolments	501	561
HNC/D Aeronautical Engineering enrolments	0	10
Construction Placements – T-Level and Study Programmes	37	56
Construction Maintenance Enrolments	0	30

Priority 1: Health Sciences — Developing the Health Sciences Academy

Alignment: LSIP Health, Care and Med-Tech priority; DfE National Skills Priority: Health; Building Harlow's Future £1.5bn Hospital and Health Campus; Working Futures forecast of 23,000 additional health and social work jobs in Essex by 2027.

The £1.5 billion new Hospital and Health Campus represents a significant opportunity and creates sustained long-term demand for skilled health and care workers that the College is uniquely positioned to meet.

The College will continue to develop its Health Sciences Academy as a sector-leading specialist facility, with the following objectives for 2026–27:

- Grow T Level enrolments in Adult Nursing from 59 learners in 25/26 to 70 in 26/27.
- Establish a T Level pathway in Laboratory Science with at least 10 enrolments in 26/27.

Priority 2: Aviation, Transport, Logistics and Engineering — Expanding Stansted Airport College

Alignment: LSIP Transport and Logistics and Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering priorities; DfE National Skills Priority: Advanced Manufacturing and Defence; Uttlesford employment data showing Transportation and storage accounts for 15,000 of the district's jobs¹⁷.

In 2026–27 the College will invest in further expanding its engineering and aviation curriculum:

- Commence the next phase of development, adding a new workshop and hangar to the existing campus.
- Increase capacity to meet demand for learner places, increasing total enrolment numbers from 501 in 25/26 to 561 in 26/27.
- Extend the engineering curriculum to include an HNC/D in Aeronautical Engineering with at least 10 enrolments in 26/27.
- Strengthen employer partnerships, signing at least five additional agreements with airport-based employers for co-designed qualification content, industry placements and apprenticeship frameworks.

Priority 3: Construction and Building Services — Meeting Growing Sector Demand

Alignment: LSIP Construction priority; DfE National Skills Priority: Construction; Greater Essex Construction employment at 8.4% (vs 5.0% nationally)¹⁸; Harlow and Gilston Garden Town delivering 23,000 homes and 20,000 jobs by 2045; Building Harlow's Future comprehensive town centre redevelopment programme.

The Garden Town development together with the town centre regeneration programme creates exceptional and sustained demand for construction skills across every trade and at every level.

The College will:

- Grow construction industry placements across T Level and study programmes from 37 in 25/26 to 56 in 26/27.
- Establish a Construction Maintenance offer with at least 30 enrolments in 26/27.
- Strengthen relationships with regional housebuilders (including Hill Group / Harlow Regeneration Partnership) and construction employers to increase industry placements and employer-led curriculum design.

Tailored Learning

Harlow College's Adult Skills Fund Tailored Learning allocation directly supports the local

¹⁷ ONS Business Register and Employment Survey, updated January 2026.

¹⁸ ONS Business Register and Employment Survey, updated January 2026.

need to move unemployed and economically inactive residents into sustainable work.

We use this allocation to deliver preparation for work and employment programmes for unemployed learners referred to us by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). These programmes build the employability and basic skills that local employers have identified as priorities and provide a supported route from unemployment into further training or work.

This provision responds to the local skills needs evidenced in the Greater Essex LSIP Data Report, which highlights employer demand for soft skills and behaviours. By working in partnership with DWP and local employers, our tailored learning offer complements the College's wider curriculum and contributes to the County's ambition to raise employment rates and reduce the proportion of residents holding no or low-level qualifications.

Inclusive Mainstream Fund 2026–27

Harlow College is committed to inclusive education and to ensuring that all learners with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) have access to high-quality provision and achieve strong outcomes. The College recognises its responsibilities under the SEND Code of Practice and the duty to have regard to the inclusive mainstream approach set out in the reformed SEND system.

IMF allocation 2026–27	£319,938.72
Current EHCP & HNF learner numbers (2025–26)	190
Planned use of fund	From the 2026/27 financial year, the College will receive an allocation from the DfE's Inclusive Mainstream Fund. This funding, alongside core 16 to 19 programme funding, will support the College's transition towards the reformed SEND system and strengthen our capacity to identify and meet the needs of young people with special educational needs and disabilities within mainstream provision. The College will utilise the funding across three priority areas, aligned with the fund's stated purpose: 1. High-quality, adaptive teaching and pedagogy The College will invest in a sustained programme of professional development for teaching and learning support staff, building whole-college capability in adaptive teaching, scaffolding and inclusive curriculum design. This will include targeted CPD on supporting learners with needs such as autism, ADHD, speech, language and communication needs, as well as social, emotional and mental health needs, so that effective SEND practice is embedded in everyday classroom delivery rather than dependent on specialist intervention alone.

	2. Inclusive decision-making and accessible learning environments The College will improve the accessibility of both our physical and digital learning environments. This includes extending the availability of assistive technology across curriculum areas, developing low-arousal and sensory-aware spaces within the College estate and ensuring digital learning platforms and materials meet accessibility standards. 3. Evidence-informed approaches and targeted interventions The College will strengthen the early identification of need during application, interview and enrolment, ensuring learners arriving without formal diagnoses or EHCPs are screened and supported from the start of their programme. Funding will support targeted, evidence-informed interventions, including literacy and numeracy support for learners with low prior attainment, structured study-skills provision, and mentoring. Impact will be measured against retention, achievement and progression outcomes for learners with SEND relative to their peers.
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The College will report on IMF expenditure and outcomes as part of its annual review process and will include an update on progress in its 2027–28 Annual Accountability Statement.

Local Needs Duty

To fulfil 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), the College keeps its provision under regular review against local needs. Following internal review of provision, on 11 June 2026 the College brought together Principals, Chairs of Governing Bodies and Governance Professionals from all Further Education Colleges across Essex, along with key stakeholders such as the local authority, the Essex Provider Network and the Local Skills Improvement Plan Employer Representative Body, to review provision across the county. A key outcome from the event was the agreement on an updated and renewed Greater Essex Federation of Essex Colleges Commitment Statement detailing our collective commitment to supporting the region's economy through learning and skills development. The next comprehensive statutory review will take place within three years, unless prompted sooner by substantial changes in regional or institutional circumstances, including the establishment of the Greater Essex Mayoral Combined County Authority, the completion of Local Government Reorganisation, or material changes to LSIP priorities.

The most recent review of provision against local needs identified the following key conclusions:

- Persistent skills gap in Harlow: With only 38.9% of working-age residents qualified to Level 3 or above (vs 61.5% nationally)¹⁹ and a town experiencing 50% projected population growth, demand for accessible higher-level provision is acute and growing. The College plays a critical role in addressing this structural deficit.
- Demand driven by large investment: The £1.5bn Hospital and Health Campus, the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town (23,000 homes, 20,000 jobs), and the Harlow

¹⁹ DfE Local Skills Dashboard – Harlow, 2023.

Innovation Park together create exceptional and sustained skills demand across three of the College's priority sectors. The College's curriculum planning is directly aligned to this predicted growth.

- Employer appetite for work-ready employees: LSIP engagement and employer roundtables consistently confirm sustained demand for learners with strong soft skills, digital competencies and practical industry experience.
- Aviation and logistics: Stansted Airport, directly employing over 10,000 people at a single site, creates a nationally significant and distinctive skills need for aviation engineering and logistics, which the College is uniquely placed to meet through Stansted Airport College.
- Construction demand is structural and long-term: The Garden Town development and the comprehensive town centre redevelopment programme require construction skills at every level for at least two decades.

In response to the review, the College is planning the following actions:

- Expanding and developing specialist sector centres: Health Sciences Academy; Electric and Hybrid Vehicle Training Centre; Renewable Energy Centre; Stansted Airport College.
- Strengthened employer co-design across sectors, with curriculum developed in collaboration with key stakeholders.
- Expanded inclusive and community provision: high needs learner support, ESOL growth in partnership with community organisations, and targeted engagement with care-experienced young people and adult learners with no prior qualifications.

Corporation / Governing Body Statement

This Annual Accountability Statement, including the embedded Local Needs Duty summative statement, 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 LSIP 2026–2029; Building Harlow's Future 2026–27; and the DfE guidance on Annual Accountability Statements and the Local Needs Duty, May 2026.
- The Corporation has engaged with Essex Chambers of Commerce as the designated Employer Representative Body, with Harlow Council and with the emerging Greater Essex Combined County Authority in the development of this statement, and is satisfied that the College's provision has been shaped by that engagement.
- The statement accurately reflects the College's current provision, strategic priorities and planned outcomes for the 2026–27 academic year.

- The Corporation acknowledges and fulfils its statutory responsibility under the Local Needs Duty (Section 52B of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992, as amended) and confirms that this document constitutes its published response as required by law.
- The Corporation has considered the planned use of the Inclusive Mainstream Fund and is satisfied that it supports the College's transition to the reformed SEND system.

Chair of Corporation	
Principal & CEO	
Date of approval by Corporation	

Hyperlink and Supporting Documentation

This Annual Accountability Statement is published on the College website and can be accessed at:

https://www.harlow-college.ac.uk/images/harlow_college/about-us/policies/Harlow-College-Annual-Accountability-Statement-2026-27.pdf

Relevant supporting documentation:

- Harlow College Strategic Plan 2024–2029
- Greater Essex LSIP 2026–2029 (Essex Chambers of Commerce):
- Building Harlow's Future 2026–27 (Harlow Council):
- Building Harlow's Future Investment Prospectus 2026:
- Harlow College Equality and Diversity Statement
- Harlow College Financial Statements 2024–25
- Harlow College Ofsted Inspection Report
- DfE Guidance: Meeting Skills Needs — Accountability Statements and Local Needs Duty, May 2026