

South Essex Colleges Group Strategic Plan 2023-27



**WE ARE THE HEART
OF COMMUNITY
TRANSFORMATION**



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OUR STORY:



South Essex Colleges Group is a uniquely formed college of general, further and higher education, serving the communities of Southend, Basildon, Thurrock, and Purfleet. Building on its original roots of three distinct colleges, we have recently organised into three 3 local colleges; Basildon College, Thurrock College and City of Southend College with a specialist creative production centre called The Back Stage Centre at Purfleet. The Back Stage Centre being a founding member of the National College of Creative Industries. Through a Group structure, we now feel ready to better meet the local skills and education needs of these distinct communities, whilst ensuring that regional coherence is maintained and economies of scale realised.

We have a strong tradition in delivering creative education, particularly at the City of Southend College. We are now providing state-of-the-art creative production facilities at The Backstage Centre, creative digital courses in Basildon, and we will soon deliver music and music production courses at Thurrock College, extending the brand of the National College for Creative Industries. We are poised therefore, to meet the emerging opportunities that will arise from the infrastructure projects of the Creative Estuary and developments on the Swanscombe Peninsula.

OUR STORY:



Our strong tradition in creative education is matched by our equally strong tradition of delivering trade, craft and advanced technology courses in construction and engineering, resulting in South Essex Colleges Group being the lead partner in the Southeast Institute of Technology. Our element of the Southeast Institute of Technology includes state of the art facilities featuring a robot-operated warehouse training facility, a Fulmax virtual reality cube for construction industry training, a business lounge, electrical engineering facilities, health and care VR, as well as courses in logistics, IT and business.

We offer a broad and deep range of courses which are supported by state-of-the-art facilities with over £60 million invested over the last six years.



OUR STORY:



We are proud that our courses enable learners to start learning at the level that suits them from beginners to degree level. We have a wide variety of learners including those learning to speak English for the first time (ESOL), adult learners looking to improve their maths and English skills, school age learners who have elected to be educated at home who attend college part-time, full and part-time learners aged 16-18, adults retraining on part-time courses and adults looking to get into the world of work via our get work ready series of courses.

We also provide skills updating and skills development for employers preparing their workforce for growth or innovation and of course, we deliver Apprenticeships. We work with some of the best known companies in the UK; household names putting their faith in us helping them to grow their business through our training services. The companies that have apprentices with us include: Simarco, ATL Haulage, Leonardo, Proctor & Gamble, DP World, Honeywell, Britvic, Thames Clippers, Port of London Authority, Wiggett, Lee Marley and Southend City Council.

Whatever type of learning is needed, South Essex Colleges Group has a course for you.





2023-27

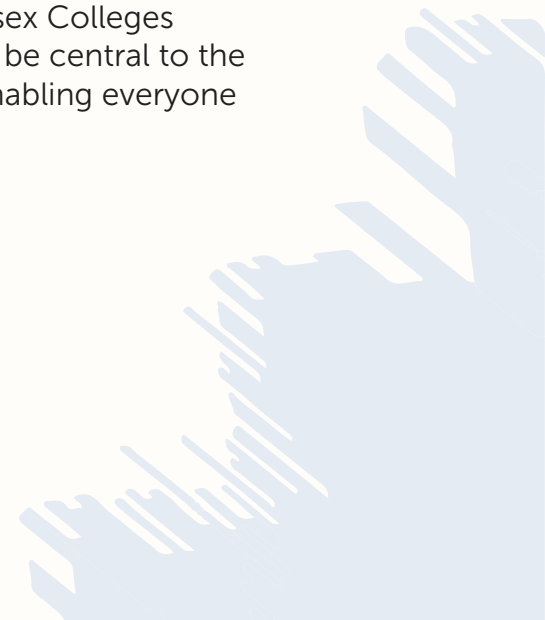


Our strategic plan from 2019 to 2023 delivered significant improvements in the College estate and embedded South Essex Colleges Group firmly within its local landscapes. Providing buildings and facilities that the communities in the South Essex region deserve: facilities of the very best standard.

We are now looking forward to the enormous opportunities available in the coming years. In Basildon the local ambition to define itself as a place to learn and stay, a place where creative technology entrepreneurs can thrive and where the community works as one to build its health and wealth. In Southend, the transition from town to city provides opportunities to build on the Lower Thames Crossing development to draw both people and businesses in that will grow the economy and cement Southend's position as a resort accessible to the communities of Essex, London, and beyond.

The Free Port, DP World, the Creative Estuary, the Lower Thames Crossing and the prospective London Resort all provide opportunities for unprecedented economic growth for Thurrock and its surrounding areas. This period of seismic change for the region demands South Essex Colleges Group to take centre stage in pre-paring our communities to take up the opportunities that will imminently be available.

It is therefore, our pleasure to present to you the 2023-2027 strategic plan for South Essex Colleges Group, which sets out our ambition to be central to the transformation of our communities, enabling everyone to achieve their potential.





**SOUTH ESSEX
COLLEGES GROUP**

OUR VISION:



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OUR MISSION:

**WORKING TOGETHER, WE WILL
PROVIDE KNOWLEDGE, EDUCATION,
AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT FOR ALL**



DENISE BROWN
PRINCIPAL AND CEO OF
SOUTH ESSEX COLLEGES GROUP



DAME SALLY DICKETTS DBE
CHAIR OF
SOUTH ESSEX COLLEGES GROUP



WE SUMMARISE OUR CULTURE AND CORE VALUES WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS

- **We are a community of professionals**, inspiring our learners to be extraordinary in all they do.
- **We are accepting and encouraging** of all who come through our doors
- **Stimulated by modernity**, we are diverse in thought, identity and aspiration.
- **We are powerful and ambitious** as individuals and powerful together. We encourage performance to the peak of ability.
- **To build resilience**, we provide a tough love environment supporting each other and our learners to thrive in all situations.



WE WILL ACHIEVE OUR VISION THROUGH **5** STRATEGIC GOALS

1		We will provide teaching and learning that expands learners' horizons and enables them to achieve the qualifications they need to give them life-time choices
2		We will attract and retain the best and diverse people and become an employer of choice
3		We will become sustainable across three strands: • financial • technology • environment
4		We will build our brand equity to increase our markets, influence, and add social value across Essex and East of London
5		We will collaborate across education, community, and employers to find innovative solutions to achieve our shared goals



**SOUTH ESSEX
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STRATEGIC GOAL 1:

Provide teaching and learning that expands learners' horizons and enables them to achieve the qualifications they need to give them life-time choices



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Just 45.2% of the working population in Thurrock has qualifications at level 3 or above (56% in Southend, and 51.97% in Basildon), compared to the UK average rate of 61.5%. At level 4, the picture worsens with level 4 qualification rates at 2% for Thurrock, 37.9%

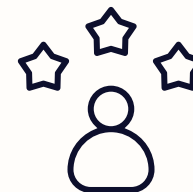
for Southend, and 30.7% for Basildon compared to the UK average of 43.6%. It is clear that our community is not prepared to take advantage of the imminent opportunities emerging in the region. Our first strategic goal focuses on our intention to address this.



1A.

Building skills, experiences and opportunities for all, our vision is that 100% of young students on level 2, 3 and 4 programmes will access enrichment activities, work experience and develop employability skills.

We aim to embed skills development and experience as part of the curriculum and improve engagement with vacancies as part of career planning.



1B.

The inclusive education philosophy of South Essex Colleges Group ensures that learners of all abilities are able to enrol. This approach needs to be backed with stringent standards for attendance, behaviour and submission of assessed work; the management of learner performance is crucial. We will use data to identify learners at risk of underperformance at the start of their course and direct resources to learner attendance and parental engagement. This project will be called Learning+.



1C.

South Essex Colleges Group has ambitions for all vocational and technical teachers to be dual professionals; as expert in teaching and learning as they are in their technical discipline.

To this end, we will establish a centre of excellence for teaching, learning and assessment (CETLA). Sharing good practice across the Group and with national colleagues, creating and sharing the South Essex Colleges Group learning system.



1D.

Other projects under this strategic aim will cover:

A maths teaching improvement scheme, which will be addressed via the CETLA.

A set of standards for the management of curriculum and teaching and learning will be devised and implemented.



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STRATEGIC GOAL 2:

Attract and retain the best and diverse people and become
an employer of choice



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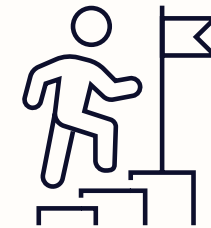
The average work based salary of employees in Thurrock is £32,800, in Southend it is £31,200 and in Essex £32,300. Compared to residence based salaries of £36,500 for Thurrock, £36,200 for Southend, and £35,800 for Essex. The average salary at South Essex Colleges Group is £28,300. In relation to work based salaries, we are approximately £4,000pa behind local salaries. This data also

suggests that all local employers are vulnerable to the better salaries provided by other employers, likely due to our close proximity to London and the better salaries on offer there. Our second strategic priority outlines how we will achieve our desire to position ourselves as an employer of choice, which will require investment in salaries as an integral aspect of our Total Reward System.



2A.

South Essex College Group desires to position itself as an employer of choice, to do so requires a comprehensive approach to reward and remuneration. Whilst the intention is to focus on a total reward system (TRS), it is clear that the remuneration element of our total reward has fallen behind that of an employer of choice. There is much work to do therefore, in directing resources to the pay element of TRS. This strategic project will determine a pay strategy, that will contribute to positioning the College as an employer of choice.



2B.

A workforce that is engaged with the college in its entirety, not only their department, is essential in creating a sense of belonging and a desire to build a career and stay at the college long term. It is our desire to create an environment that nurtures staff engagement and enables authentic contribution to the development of South Essex Colleges Group. This strategic project will design and embed an employee engagement system that will achieve this.



2C.

Whilst the College has a comprehensive range of talent management policies our ability to achieve our ambitions relies heavily on the new Group structure being successful. This requires all managers within the organisation to understand their role, develop their management and leadership competence and be properly supported. To this end the College will implement its newly conceived LEAP programme:

- Leadership first
- Enabled and trained according to a management competency framework
- Accountability by role Performance focuse



2D.

An employer of choice embraces the broadest range of the available talent pool in the adult workforce. Whilst having a comprehensive range of equality and diversity policies, our staffing profile does not yet reflect the full mix of the local population. This project will focus on agreeing the diversity standards we will apply to our organisation and outline plans to achieve those standards, particularly in staff recruitment



Other supporting initiatives that will take place include:

To support the LEAP strategic project we will develop a management competency framework, which will underpin all management training, performance evaluation, and internal promotions

To soft market South Essex Colleges Group as an employer of choice we will pursue awards and endorsements for our talent management activities



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STRATEGIC GOAL 3:

Become financially, technologically and environmentally sustainable



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To support the ambitions of our strategic priorities, we have a third strategic focus. Its initiatives are focused on enhancing the way we work, simplifying our processes and introducing technology wherever possible, to help drive improvement, ensure financial sustainability and support our academic objectives. Strategic priority



3A.

We will develop a financial plan to predict, control, and reduce expenditure in the key areas of:

- Agency staffing
- HE
- Estates



3C.

The college will refresh its estate strategy and as part of that, develop a plan for environmental sustainability including green sources of energy

3 currently has a programme of initiatives which, if successfully implemented over the next three years, will provide us with the opportunity to modernise the way we operate and further develop the important partnership between curriculum and business and learning support services.



3B.

The inclusive education philosophy of South Essex Colleges Group eTechnology is integral to our teaching and learning strategies, and our vocational and technical relevance. It is also integral to our business processes. This strategic project will ensure that we have an appropriate technology strategy that is costed and built into the financial investment plans of the organisation.



3D.

Another project under this strategic aim will cover curriculum efficiency:

It is hard to maintain or improve quality of provision if group sizes are too small to justify investment. We will implement intelligence- driven curriculum investment and undertake a comprehensive review of the curriculum from efficiency, competitor, and quality perspectives



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STRATEGIC GOAL 4:

Build our brand equity to increase our markets, influence, and add social value across Essex and East of London



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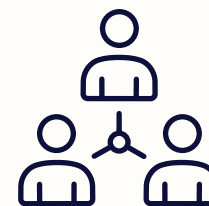
Our brand equity is solid but as new competitors establish themselves in the further education sector and the domains we operate in, we need to ensure that our brand continues to have sway with potential learners and stakeholders. We need our brand to be immediately identifiable with high quality provision and we

must ensure that we are held in esteem amongst our customers and partners, encouraging them to choose South Essex Colleges Group as first choice. Our fourth strategic goal identifies initiatives that will boost our brand equity



4A.

South Essex Colleges Group is strong in 16-18 recruitment. Our market share has held over recent years but due to demographic changes, 16-18 student numbers have reduced, creating financial pressures for the organisation causing us to look to the Adult Education market. For a college of this size and scale, given our vision as the heart of community, transformation in this market sector needs to grow. Therefore, this strategic project will create a new 6th Form provision for technical subjects: The Academy of Advanced Technology will reintroduce A levels in technical areas and expand our T level provision. The Open College will also be developed to expand adult learning, including distance and remote learning.



4B.

South Essex Colleges Group is a very successful college delivering education and training to over 8,000 adults and young people a year. Our facilities are amongst the best in the sector and we have innovation and future-forward activity in many curriculum areas. It is time to shout about this success and use our web and social media presence to share our best practice. This strategic project will develop a new marketing strategy for the College, making the best of digital media. Our website will reflect, support, and promote our local college structure, showcasing our facilities, our learners and our expert staff team.



4C.

We will expand our pathways to ensure that our curriculum spans the learning continuum from entry level to level 6, increasing our appeal to the wider regions of Essex and Greater London. This will position the College to provide the skills and education needs of the population that will serve to fill the emerging skills gaps brought about by the significant infrastructure developments in progress.



4D.

South Essex Colleges Group has several sub-brands that are not fully utilised in how we position ourselves; the National College for Creative Industries (NCCI), the Southeast Institute of Technology, Essex Shared Services, and our subsidiary companies are all examples. We will shortly launch an Academy of Advanced Technology and the Open College. This strategic project will clarify our headline and sub-brands, develop a clear brand strategy, whilst our website and social media will promote and reflect the full range of our brands and the work that we do.



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STRATEGIC GOAL 5:

Collaborate across education, community, and employers to find innovative solutions to achieve our shared goals



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It is only through working together that we are able to deliver remarkable outcomes for those we serve. South Essex Colleges Group has had a strong reputation and success in the past and retaining that status will require embracing the changing world. Future success will be realised by applying existing strengths into new contexts and creating new strengths for emerging contexts.



5A.

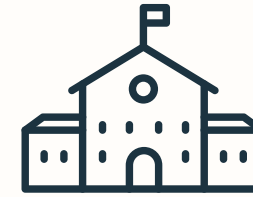
We will work to build on the existing relationships we have with key employers and build new ones with more employers, not least small and medium sized enterprises.



5C.

We will embrace the outer east of London communities and stakeholders to meet the skills needs of those communities and people who could fill the emerging skills gaps in our region

We will look to attract and nurture new partnerships and collaborations which will expand our reach, enable innovations and creativity, and so think and act differently in developing services and solutions that have relevance within the context of shared goals. This fifth strategic goal will focus on collaboration to expand excellence and our learners success.



5B.

We will develop a community engagement strategy that will solidify and build relationships with schools, the health care system, universities, community and religious groups, local politicians, and local authorities.





STRATEGIC TARGETS:

AREA:	STRATEGIC TARGET:	2021/22 POSITION	TARGET BY 2026/27
Growth (SG1, SG4, SG5)	Young people aged 16-18 studying at the College	4,670	5,000
	Adult Education income from all streams	£4m	£4.5m
	Higher Education income from all streams	£4.3m	£5m
	Apprenticeship income	£3.7m	£4.5m
Quality (SG1, SG4)	Ofsted	Requires Improvement with Good features	Good with Outstanding features
Brand Equity (SG4, SG5)	Customer conversion rate	circa 50%	60%
	Internal progression	65%	80%
Employability (SG1, SG4, SG5)	Good destinations	85%	95%
	Staff turnover rate	28%	15%
People (SG2)	Staff survey response to questions on a) College purpose b) Feeling valued and supported c) Agency cost as a proportion of overall staff costs	N/A	a) 85% b) 80% c) 5%



STRATEGIC TARGETS:

AREA:	STRATEGIC TARGET:	TARGET BY 2026/27
Estates (SG3)	Utilities and cleaning cost per sqm	
	Net zero rating	
	Occupancy level	
Finance (SG3)	Capital maintenance per year	1.5%
	Financial health grade	Good
	Cash days	Never less than 45
	Capital investment	3% of turnover



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