



Review of meeting skills needs

A Kada Research Report

Executive Summary
for The Sheffield
College
July 2023



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of reviewing The Sheffield College's contribution to meeting skills needs is two-fold. Firstly, it is to assist the Governing Body in fulfilling the new statutory duty to review how well education or training provided (by FE and sixth form colleges) meets local needs. Secondly, it is to help inform the college's first Accountability Statement, for which the scope of the study was expanded to include consideration of the National Skills Priorities.

INTRODUCTION

The review of The Sheffield College's (TSC) contribution to meeting skills needs has been informed by detailed consultations with 15 stakeholders (see Technical Annex 1) and extensive desk research to identify local skills needs and provide a succinct illustration of the college's provision and collaborative arrangements. Drawing on the identification of skills needs and the evidence gathered through the review, a robust evaluation has been completed that demonstrates the extent to which and how the college is meeting each skills need, whether this be sector or subject specific or cross-sector. The review has considered what is in place now in terms of provision, learner progression opportunities and collaborative arrangements, and future plans relating to capital developments or curriculum growth in existing or new pathways for 16-19 year olds and adults, such as T Levels, Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQs), apprenticeships or Access to HE.

The review responds to a new statutory duty placed on FE college and sixth form governing bodies introduced by the Skills and Post-16 Education Act (June 2022) via an amendment to Section 5B of the Further and Higher Education Act (1992). The duty requires Governing Bodies to review how well the college's provision is meeting local skills needs. As noted above, to assist the college in producing its first Accountability Statement for 2023-2024 for the Department for Education (DfE) and Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), the reach of the review was broadened so that National Skills Priorities could be included.

HEADLINE FINDINGS

The review has illustrated how local and national priority sectors are reflected in the college's strategic priorities and plans for growth. Strengths that the college can build on are:

- The strategic positioning of the college and proactive involvement in local governance and strategic planning structures means it is well-placed to identify and respond to skills priorities. Bolstering capacity within the college and securing public funds for developments which respond to a fast-paced, evolving landscape of skills needs will continue to be important as the LSIP 2 is finalised and as technology continues to drive changes in sectors with skills needs.

- The college's strategic investment plans, namely for a new Advanced Technology Centre and a new Sustainable Construction Training Centre, directly address identified local skills needs and demonstrate clear alignment to regional and national priorities which make a strong business case for securing public funding, for example from South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (SYMCA) and DfE.
- Collaboration with employers and other organisations is broad-reaching and assisting the college to address technical, cross-sector and other learner needs, including pastoral needs especially through co-delivery with employers, for example the innovative Employer Skills Academy model.
- Community based and adult learning needs are being prioritised via established basic skills and employability provision and delivery partnerships, e.g. ESOL and collaboration with Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). Supporting inclusion of 'seldom heard' local communities offers an opportunity to reduce the higher proportion of adults with no or low qualification levels across South Yorkshire and may promote transitions to higher level learning pathways and sustained employment.

There are challenges to meeting skills needs:

- The local skills planning context is fluid and needs have not yet been fully defined. Continued collaboration and co-ordination with key providers and partners in South Yorkshire, including FE colleges and the universities, will be important to ensure coverage of priority sectors as local skills needs are formalised and continue to evolve.
- New and emerging technical skills needs are evolving rapidly and will require new provision and collaborative arrangements, particularly for technical pathways into priority sectors and sub-sectors, including sustainable construction, green energy, advanced engineering and manufacturing, digital and technology, and life sciences / healthtech.
- Securing work placement activity which is integral to important technical pathways for addressing skills needs, such as T Levels and apprenticeships, will likely require further scale up of employer collaboration to implement, grow and sustain these routes. The high proportion of smaller businesses in Sheffield means barriers to engagement, relating to business capacity or resources, may need to be considered.
- Attracting teaching staff with sector expertise is a challenge observed locally and nationally, particularly for sectors driven by technological change and digitalisation. Exploring further opportunities for co-delivery with employers to train sector specialists to teach may assist here.

SHEFFIELD AND SOUTH YORKSHIRE PROFILE

To provide the context for the review, analysis of the Sheffield and South Yorkshire economic and labour market characteristics was undertaken. Where data is available at the Local Authority level this has been included and it is important to note that, across the range of socio-economic indicators, Sheffield often performs differently to South Yorkshire as a whole. This means that the needs in Sheffield in terms of education and training provision may differ to those in the rest of South Yorkshire.

The top five employment sectors for Sheffield and South Yorkshire¹ are Human health and social work, Wholesale and retail trade: repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles, Education, Administrative and

¹ ONS, (2021). [Labour Market Profile](#).

support service activities, and Manufacturing. Professional, associate professional and elementary occupations are the largest occupational groups in Sheffield. Sheffield's economic inactivity levels are slightly lower than South Yorkshire and national levels. Long term sickness is the biggest reason for economic inactivity in Sheffield and the level is higher than national and regional averages.

There are considerable disparities in Sheffield in terms of employment, qualification levels and other measures of deprivation with wards in the east of Sheffield generally faring worse than those in the west. The average weekly pay for fulltime workers in Sheffield is £592.60, lower than the national average (£642.20)² but higher than South Yorkshire (£572.05).

Opportunities for student recruitment have been identified based on the DfE projections for the age 16-17 population in Sheffield which forecast growth from 2024-2030 with an expected peak in 2029³. Challenges are, however, noted in the higher proportion of young people Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) in Sheffield and more rapidly increasing rate of those who are NEET in Yorkshire and Humber compared with national levels. Nationally one in four NEET young people are now inactive due to 'long term or temporary sickness' compared to one in ten in 2012⁴.

Sheffield's GCSE attainment is below the national average as is the proportion of pupils achieving English and maths at grade 4 or above, including those taking (or re-taking) their exams at age 19^{5,6}. Although Sheffield has higher than average STEM Level 3 take up compared to South Yorkshire and England averages, 57% of students in South Yorkshire do not take any STEM A Levels compared to a national average of 53%. Increasing local STEM uptake represents an opportunity to broaden the pipeline of skills for local growth sectors such as advanced manufacturing and engineering and life sciences / healthtech.

Overall, Sheffield compares favourably against South Yorkshire and national averages for working aged people with no qualifications and with Level 4+ qualifications. Important opportunities have been identified in relation to the direction of travel for South Yorkshire's Adult Education Budget (AEB) towards technical provision at Level 3 and above. TSC has been involved in this planning process and is well-placed to respond given its substantial base of adult provision. Qualification projections for 2020-2035 show an increase nationally and sub-regionally in qualification levels from HE below degree level (RQF4) to doctorate (RQF8) and reductions in the levels of people with lower-level qualifications (GCSE RQF2 to no qualifications) presenting potential scope to explore expansion of provision at Level 4+⁷.

The largest share of online vacancies in South Yorkshire and England are for healthcare and ICT. Across all broad sectors South Yorkshire employment is projected to grow by 4% overall between 2023 and 2035, with an average 0.3% annual growth compared to 0.4% in England (and with a peak in growth in 2024 of 0.5% in South Yorkshire and 0.8% in England). All broad sectors in South Yorkshire are expected to grow except for manufacturing. The largest growth is expected in non-marketed services, business and other services and trade, accommodation and transport⁸. Despite the projected decline in

² ONS, (2021). [Labour Market Profile](#).

³ DfE. (2022). [Post-16 capacity fund for 2023 – 2024](#).

⁴ DfE. (2022). Labour Force Survey Estimates. [NEET age 16 to 24](#).

⁵ DfE. (2022). [KS4 Data 2021-22](#).

⁶ DfE. 2022. [Level 2 and 3 attainment age 16-25, 2020/21](#).

⁷ DfE. (March 2023). [Labour market and skills projections: 2020-2035](#).

⁸ DfE. (June 2023). [Local Skills Dashboard](#). (Vacancy and employment volume projections).

manufacturing employment in South Yorkshire, Lightcast data for Sheffield indicates current job growth in manufacturing and a moderate decline in manufacturing employment between 2023-2028 of 0.6%⁹. Digitalisation and decarbonisation of major industries will drive new skills needs in engineering and advanced manufacturing in Sheffield and regionally, demanding new provision for those already in work and for those entering the city's major industries.

IDENTIFYING THE SKILLS NEEDS

The skills needs underpinning the review are based on a combination of the National Skills Priorities included in the revised DfE Accountability Agreement Guidance for 2023 to 2024 published in April this year¹⁰ and local skills needs identified through the desk research and stakeholder consultations. The pilot / trailblazer Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP 1) for South Yorkshire (2022) acted as a key reference point and trigger for this first review. The first LSIP is due to be superseded by an updated version (LSIP 2) during the Summer this year and emerging findings and recommendations for LSIP 2 were also referenced for the identification of local skills needs for this review.

The National Skills Priorities identify sector subject areas based on data relating to high volume vacancies which are forecast to increase and, amongst other factors, are important for facilitating employment in green jobs, creative industries and science and technology, including AI and quantum computing.¹¹

Local skills needs are sector specific or cross-sector in nature and have been mapped against the National Skills Priorities below to demonstrate the logic for identifying the skills needs against which to evaluate the college's provision. The development of one set of skills needs attempts to address the nuances in the terminology used to describe similar sectors or industries across the National Skills Priorities and local articulations of skills needs. The Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE) occupational map routes are also included to provide a reference point given their role in framing technical education and curriculum planning.

⁹ Lightcast Q1 2023 Data Set, Sheffield Overview and Lightcast Industry Overview, June 2023.

¹⁰ DfE, (April 2023). [Guidance for Accountability Agreements for 2023 to 2024](#).

¹¹ ONS, (March 2023). ["Green jobs" update, current and upcoming work](#). Green jobs in the DfE Accountability Agreement Guidance refer to the Office for National Statistics (ONS) definition: "Employment in an activity that contributes to protecting or restoring the environment, including those that mitigate or adapt to climate change."

Identifying the Skills Needs for the Review



THE SHEFFIELD COLLEGE OVERVIEW

TSC is the largest provider in South Yorkshire for 16-19, adult and apprenticeship provision and describes itself as an anchor institution for the sub-region. There are currently 12,831 students enrolled (2022/23 YTD) and the majority (76%) are in full-time education with 14% enrolled on apprenticeships. TSC is the largest apprenticeship provider in South Yorkshire by market share and standards have been aligned with key employment sectors identified in the SYMCA Strategic Economic Plan. 16-19 provision is orientated towards Level 2 and Level 3. Adult provision focuses predominantly on Entry Level alongside a HE offer, Access to HE and other part-time programmes above Entry Level. There are plans to develop pathways at Level 4+ via Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQs) in health, digital, construction and engineering. Priority sector subject areas and pathways are identified in the Estates Strategy 2021-25 for curriculum growth as follows (Science was added as a new priority in 2022/23):

TSC Curriculum Growth Priorities

Sector Specific Curriculum Growth Area	Pathway and Cross-sector Curriculum Growth Areas
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital • Engineering • Health & Social Care • Science • Sustainable Construction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to HE • A Levels / 6th form • Apprenticeships • (Basic Skills) • Higher Technical education (HTQs) • T Levels (technical)

Courses at Level 3+ reflect TSC strategic priorities and broadly align with national and local skills priority sectors: Engineering and manufacturing (22% of all active courses); Health (14%); Business (14%); Construction (11%); Arts (10%).

Progression rates are positive with 92% of students moving onto FE or HE (66%), employment (22%) or apprenticeships / training (4%). Progression to employment from Construction is the highest amongst all sector subject areas (60%) and Health achieves the highest rate of employment, training or FE/HE destinations overall (95%). Engineering and Manufacturing, ICT and Science and Maths have slightly lower rates of students progressing to FE / HE, employment or apprenticeships / training. Of the recent 117 starts on the college's Sector-based Work Academy Programmes (SWAPs), 52% have moved into employment.

The college has extensive collaborative arrangements in place with employers, representative bodies and community and voluntary organisations to support provision in key pathways and the college's overall offer for learners, including employability skills. The college works with approximately 2,458 employers overall (2021/22) and has a strategic partnership with Sheffield Hallam University (SHU) to identify skills needs at Levels 2-7 and plan collaboratively to ensure needs are being addressed. SHU is the primary validation partner for the college's HE provision and will be the primary partner (awarding organisation) for the college's HTQs.

The college is well represented across Sheffield and South Yorkshire's strategic groups putting it on a strong footing for understanding and addressing local skills needs. A member of the college Executive Team is represented on 27 local groups and partnerships. This includes chairing the SYMCA Regional Skills Advisory Board; Sheffield City Goals Working Group; Sheffield Employment and Skills Board Sheffield Futures Audit Committee: SY Colleges Group – Apprenticeship Workstream; and vice chairing Sheffield UTC Academy Trust Board. The college works closely with Sheffield City Council and SYMCA.

HOW THE COLLEGE IS CONTRIBUTING TO MEETING SKILLS NEEDS

The evaluation of the college's contribution to meeting skills needs uses the skills needs identified above and, drawing on the analysis and synthesis of the data gathered through the desk research and stakeholder engagement, an overall category has been assigned for each area of need. These categories are summarised in the following table.

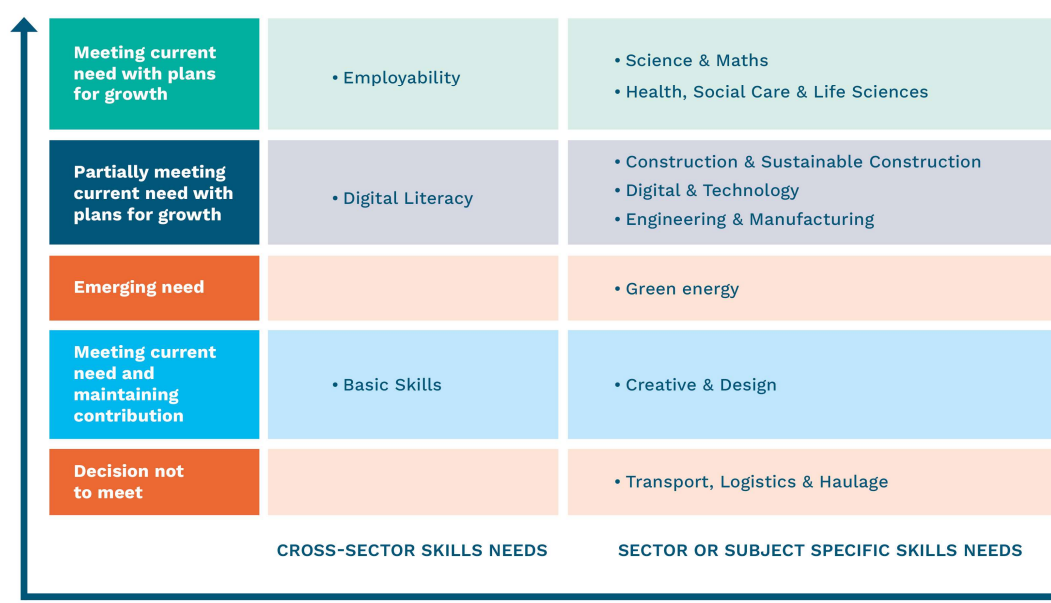
The following categories and summary diagram provide a snapshot of the college's contribution to meeting skills needs while more detailed analysis and synthesis of the data gathered through the review demonstrates how the college is meeting needs (see Chapter 5 in the full report). This analysis captures what is in place (e.g. scale and reach of provision) and future plans regarding capital or new qualification pathway development¹².

¹² In the *How TSC is meeting skills needs* diagram, Basic Skills has been allocated to "Meeting current need and maintaining contribution". There is local demand for Basic Skills provision to grow, however, existing regional and national funding constraints mean that there is not currently scope to develop provision further. TSC plan to monitor this position in response to any funding changes.

Categories for Summarising how the College is Contributing to Meeting Skills Needs

Category	Definition
Meeting current need with plans for growth	Need is being met by current provision and growth is prioritised by the college given local demand.
Partially meeting current need with plans for growth	Need is being met in part by current provision and growth is prioritised by the college given local demand.
Meeting current need and maintaining contribution	Need is being met and current provision will be maintained (there are no current plans to grow provision) due to level of demand or other factors, such as funding.
Emerging need	Need is emerging and skills requirements are yet to be formalised.
Decision not to meet	A strategic decision has been made by the college not to prioritise as the need is currently being addressed by other local providers.

How TSC is meeting skills needs



RECOMMENDATIONS

The Governing Body and Executive Leadership Team may wish to consider the following recommendations:

1. **Scale up digital literacy, and basic skills** adult provision where funding allows, for continued prioritisation of inclusion and community-focussed learning, especially for those hardest to reach and with an emphasis on progression to employment and further (higher-level) training.
2. **Grow provision for technical skills** in sectors / sub-sectors with new or emerging needs or where there is growth in existing needs, i.e. sustainable construction, green energy, advanced engineering and manufacturing, digital and technology, and health, social care and life sciences. Continue to pursue strategic investments that will support this growth e.g. a Sustainable Construction Training Centre and Advanced Technology Centre.

3. **Expand employability activity** focussing on work placements to support new technical pathways (e.g. T Levels, HTQs), and to establish more work-related activity in growing sectors / sub-sectors of need i.e. sustainable construction, green energy, advanced engineering and manufacturing, digital and technology, and life sciences / healthtech.
4. **Continue to develop CEIAG** and awareness raising of the college's new pathways and technical provision, expanding / developing links with other organisations e.g. Work-wise, Equality in STEM, Include Me / STEM Ambassadors to promote uptake and diversity and inclusion in STEM pathways for priority sectors.
5. **Broaden and deepen awareness of the college's strengths** within the local business community showcasing learner progression and employer collaboration case studies.
6. **Further develop employer co-design and co-delivery arrangements**, for example expanding Sheffield Chamber business round tables, Employer Skills Academies, and partnership working with the Employer Representative Body (Doncaster Chambers) as LSIP 2 is implemented.
7. **Strengthen and maintain collaboration with key providers in Sheffield and South Yorkshire to ensure needs are being addressed**, including for needs that TSC has made a strategic decision not to meet.
8. **Identify administrative / information management developments** that will help the college to monitor how it is continuing to contribute to meeting skills needs.

Acknowledgements: We would like to thank those individuals and organisations who generously gave their time to the study. We would particularly like to thank the client team and those who helped to provide the key sources of information to inform the review. Study consultees included those involved in strategic planning in Sheffield and South Yorkshire, including the Employer Representative Body leading on the second LSIP, and key local delivery partners. They are listed in the Technical Annex which accompanies the full report.



KADA Research

10 South Street, Park Hill,
Sheffield, S2 5QY. UK

T: 0114 350 3303

M: 07714 136463

E. karl.dalgleish@kadaresearch.co.uk

www.kadaresearch.co.uk