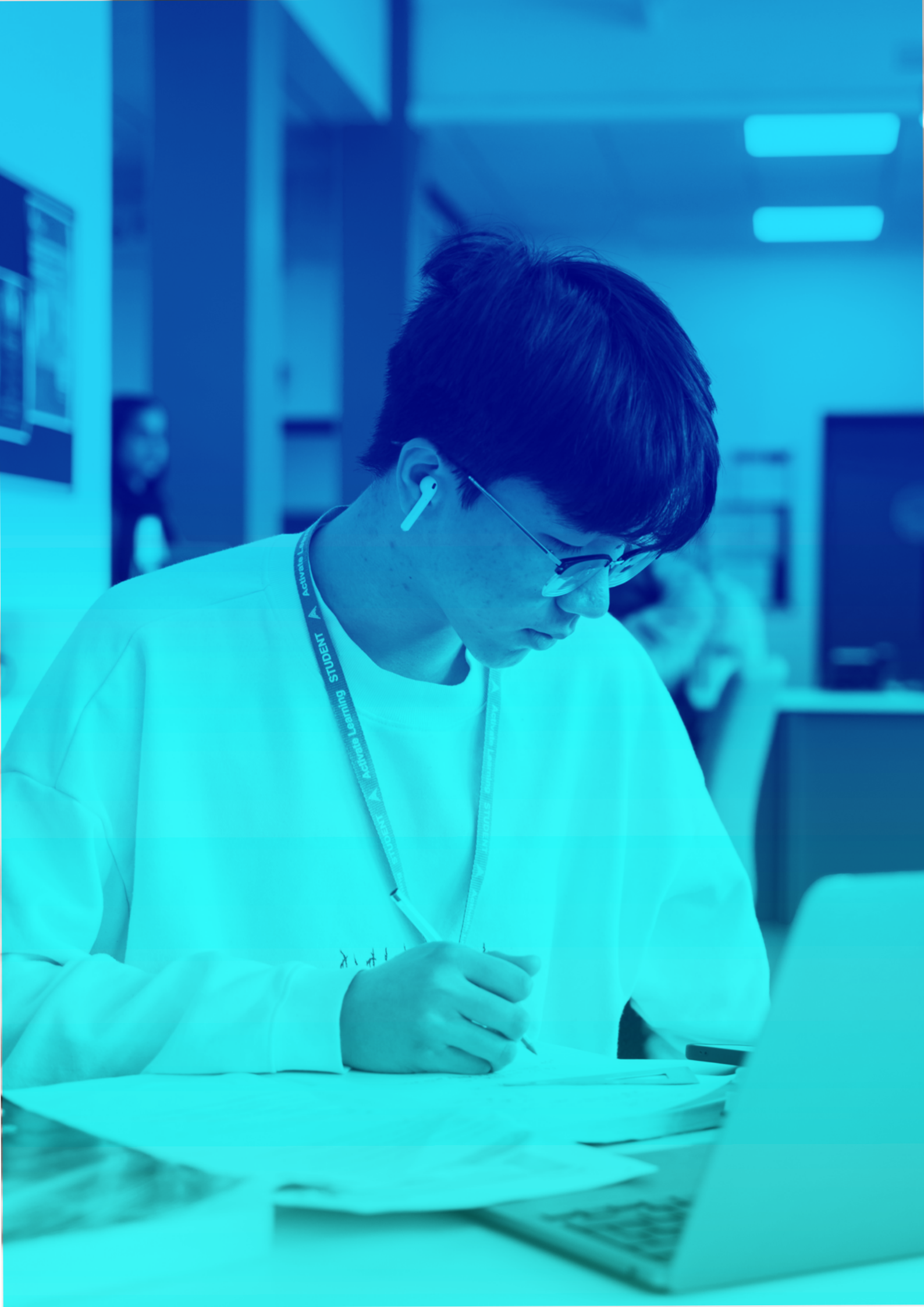# Activate Learning Accountability Statement

(2023/24)

Our Purpose

Activate Learning is a pioneering education group committed to transforming lives through our approach to learning. We operate seven Further Education (FE) colleges across Oxfordshire, Berkshire, and Surrey as well as delivering apprenticeships, higher education, and online courses.

Vision: to achieve far-reaching progressive change impact through learning.

Mission: Providing Talent for businesses and transforming lives through our Learning Philosophy by empowering every learner to reach their full potential.

Activate Learning believes everyone is capable of improving their lives through learning, with emotional support, motivation, purpose and the right application. We aim to provide this to everyone who studies with us across different parts of the group.

We work to ensure everyone who studies with us doesn't just develop their knowledge and understanding of their subject areas, but also leaves us feeling confident as a learner knowing how their behaviours and attributes make them sought after and highly employable.

We want to be a driver for change, and to do this we engage with different employers across multiple sectors to ensure what we deliver through our various learning programmes is what they want to see in their workplaces.

Our Learning Philosophy continues to provide our culture and the framework from which we build these work-ready learners. It recognises the need to provide opportunities to develop emotional intelligence and resilience. We do this by working with employers to gain real-world skills, which can be put into practice through live projects and industry placements.

As people's needs change as they advance throughout their careers, we will be there with them at every step of the way should they needs us, helping them to maintain a lifelong approach to learning.

We are constantly reviewing and updating our curriculum offer based on feedback from stakeholders such as businesses, local authorities, Local Enterprise Partnerships, and the Employer Representative Bodies that are responsible for the three Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIP) in our region.

Activate Learning is committed to addressing the needs of the communities we serve, something that was validated during our November 2022 Ofsted inspection when we were assessed as making a "strong contribution" to meeting skills needs. However, we are continuously looking to further enhance our impact.

Following the publication of the LSIPs we will conduct a detailed evaluation of our impact on addressing the needs of the communities we serve and how well we meet local and national skills needs. This will include an action plan outlining the developments we will make over the next three years. This will be followed by annual Accountability Statements (of which this is the first) detailing the improvements we will make each year.
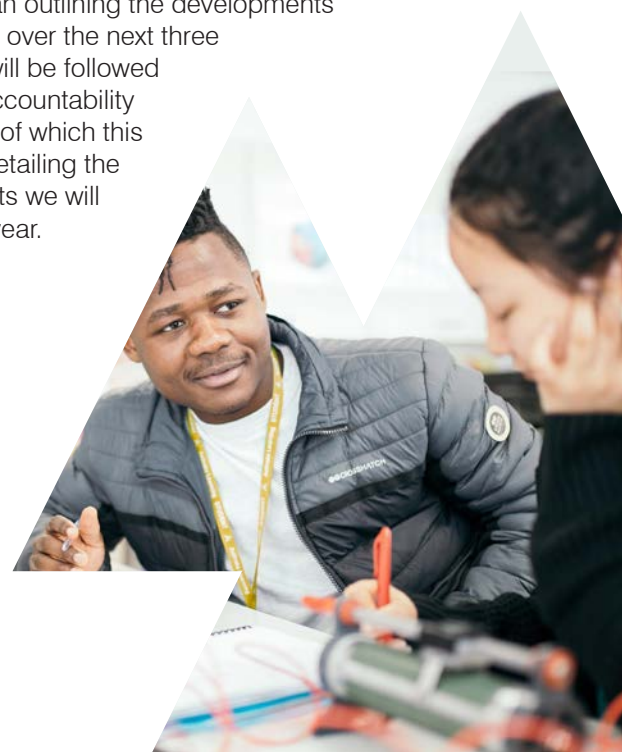
Context and Place

Activate Learning has college campuses in the counties of Oxfordshire, Berkshire and Surrey, although an increasing number of our apprentices and adult learners live outside these areas as technology enables them to access our programmes remotely. In particular we have a significant number of learners from the Greater London Authority, with which we have an Adult Education Budget contract.

Our core counties of Oxfordshire, Berkshire and Surrey share many similarities as areas with high-skilled, high-wage economies. We have therefore chosen to produce one Accountability Statement that reflects the similar needs of our three counties, whilst also recognising the differences between them.

The map below identifies the geographical communities we serve within Oxfordshire, Berkshire and Surrey.
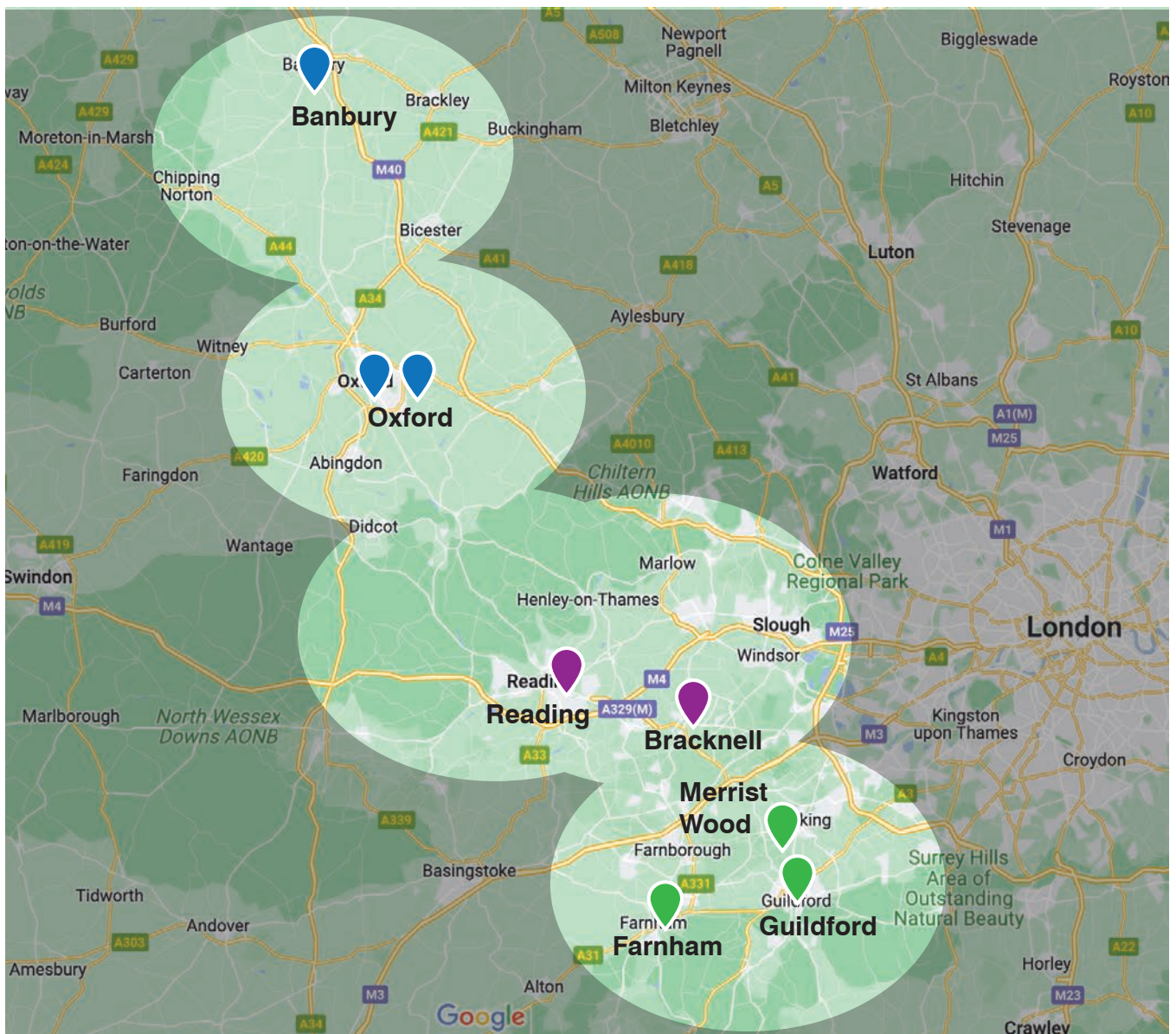
In Oxfordshire we have three campuses, Banbury and Bicester College, City of Oxford College, and our Technology Campus in Blackbird Leys. Delivery at these sites is supported by civic stakeholders that include Cherwell District Council, Oxford City Council and Oxfordshire County Council, Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (OxLEP) and the Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce.

In Berkshire we have two campuses, Reading College and Bracknell and Wokingham College. At these sites, delivery is supported by civic stakeholders that include, Reading Borough Council, Bracknell Forest Council and Wokingham Borough Council, Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership (Berkshire LEP) and the Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce.

In Surrey we have three campuses, Guildford College, Merrist Wood College, and Farnham College. The civic stakeholders supporting delivery from these locations are Guildford Borough Council, Waverley Borough Council, Enterprise M3 Local Enterprise Partnership (EM3LEP) and the Surrey Chamber of Commerce.

In addition to delivering to learners on a face-to-face basis in our local communities, we have also developed a growing online provision for adults, which includes online GCSE English and Maths and Access to Higher Education provision having learners across the country. This is an area of our provision which will experience increasing growth in the forthcoming years.

In terms of our learner population in 2021/22 the following are some key headlines:
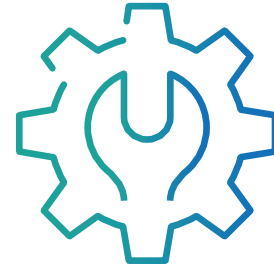
2,111
learners were undertaking apprenticeships

306
learners undertook employability programmes

we delivered provision to
20,428
individual learners

1,702
were online learners

8,080
learners undertook 16-18 Study Programmes across all business sectors

218
learners were undertaking Level 4 to 6 programmes with our partnerships with Kingston University, University of Reading, Oxford Brookes University and Middlesex University.

Strengths and Challenges of the Areas We Serve

Our colleges are situated within three adjacent geographical regions (Oxfordshire, Berkshire, and Surrey) that have great similarities in economic activity and growth potential.

All areas enjoy high employment, skills, and prosperity, with steep housing costs due to high property prices and a surplus of local job vacancies. The care, retail, personal services, and hospitality sectors, which are common starting points for young learners, face a severe shortage of workers in the current tight labour market.

Despite this relative affluence, all geographical areas have pockets of deprivation based on a range of national measures, including employment, skills attainment, English language skills, health and wellbeing, and economic standing. Several of these areas are situated near our colleges in Oxford, Banbury, and Reading. Local councils acknowledge that residents in these areas are being left behind and are implementing social inclusion policies to address this. They plan to utilise funding from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) to implement measures that support the Government's "Levelling Up" policy.

The three regions have a considerable proportion of their working population commuting in or out of their areas. Guildford, Bracknell, and Reading are particularly affected due to their easy access to London.

The three LEPs recognise the value of businesses hiring staff with Level 4+ skills, which can sometimes be lacking in the FE and apprenticeship sectors. However, upon analysing the competitive FE provision, it is evident that the reason for this is simply low student enrollment, rather than inadequate provision. While in Oxfordshire schools, there is a high demand for Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) skills among leavers, which presents an opportunity for businesses to tap into a talented pool of individuals with great potential.

Healthcare, life sciences and digital are critical areas of the local economies and we have already made great strides in investing in new physical spaces and curriculum provision for these sectors, including care suites, new science laboratories and e-sports facilities on several campuses and launching an Institute of Technology in Oxford and Reading.

The aim to achieve zero-carbon is a consistent theme in all LEP Skills Reports (Supporting Documentation provides links). This includes upskilling current employees in the construction and transportation sectors, as well as ensuring that young learners acquire these skills through vocational qualifications. In addition to the common themes impacting all three regions, the following LEP specific factors apply.

Surrey (EM3LEP and LSIP)

This area has strengths in specialist knowledge-based sectors such as Digital, Technology, Professional Services, Aerospace, Defense, and Pharmaceuticals. This has driven jobs growth in high skilled roles and these professional and technical occupations are forecast to grow the most in the future.

Employers seek specialist and entry-level skills in sectors such as hospitality, health, social care, sales, business development, construction, transportation, IT, and space. Personal care is a top requested specialist skill in EM3LEP job postings. This sector encounters difficulties in attracting and keeping experienced care workers, young talent, and gender diversity in the workforce.

There is twice the national proportion of creative arts / design graduates (17%) in this area. With excellent secondary schools, many young learners progress to university rather than undertaking a vocational education or apprenticeships.

Digital industries have a high concentration across the region with the three largest subsectors being wired telecommunications, computer consultancy, and computer programming. Guildford is also a global hotspot for the gaming sector and has the most games industry employees in the UK outside London.

Surrey has above national average employment rates in forestry (34%) and conservation (27%). Despite being a niche industry with a small portion of total jobs, the conservation sector is rapidly growing, as seen by the high number of job advertisements in Surrey in the past year. Agriculture employs a substantial number of workers, albeit less concentrated than other subsectors in the area.

In support of the UK Government aims to achieve net zero by 2050, EM3LEP forecasts that job growth in 2030-2050 will be highest in low emission vehicles, infrastructure, electricity, services, and alternative fuels. EM3LEP's 2022 Local Skills Report outlines three ambitions for expanding education and training, two of which focus on the green economy: supporting retrofitting of buildings to decarbonise them and providing technical jobs in low carbon sectors.

Professional services are also important to the EM3LEP economy with a high concentration of workers. This sector is dominated by management consultancy, and job roles tend to require more advanced skills and knowledge.

The EM3LEP 2022 Skills Report also notes that persistent vacancies exist in sales roles in the area. Under the Strategic Development Fund programme in EM3LEP, we have coordinated the delivery of sales and business export knowledge and training using the Institute of Sales Professionals and the Surrey and Hampshire Chambers of Commerce.

Oxfordshire (OxLEP and Oxfordshire LSIP)

This region's economic strategy priorities high-tech industries, including quantum computing, zero carbon, digital health, autonomous vehicles, space, and fusion technology. These industries, many of which are being developed at Harwell Campus and through Oxford University "spinouts," are seen as key drivers of the local economy and skills development.

Oxfordshire ranks third in the country for research and development workers. Job growth in this region between 2004 and 2020 was led by knowledge intensive, STEM and technology professionals, as well as managerial, senior leadership, and associate professional and technician roles.

The lack of learners undertaking STEM subjects and higher-level qualifications is a weakness cited by OxLEP, as is the numbers of apprentices linked to sectors with high skills needs or vacancies.

Whilst Surrey and Berkshire aspire to increase their tourism footfall, the Oxfordshire region, particularly Oxford itself, is a world-famous tourism hotspot. However, Experience Oxford's 2022 report on Covid's economic impact on the Oxfordshire economy since 2020 shows a 59% decrease in revenue to £1 billion annually, and a 39% reduction in supported jobs in the sector, with Oxford City being the most affected. There is a clear and substantial need for new staff in this sector, requiring short- to medium-term skills support.

Berkshire (Berkshire LEP and LSIP)

Berkshire and Oxfordshire share similar skill requirements due to their adjacent borders and good transport connections. Within Berkshire LEP's strategic policy on skills, it cites 10 priority job families in three Tiers linked to employment growth and opportunities. Tier 1 priorities include science, digital and engineering activities, which have always been sectors of economic importance to high-level growth in this LEP area.

Berkshire has over three times the national average of digital sector jobs and accounts for a quarter of its economic output, in contrast to the national average of 7%. Employer skills survey data from Berkshire LEP indicates that the key skillset Berkshire employers want improved most, compared to the rest of the country, is advanced or specialist IT skills, which is indicative of demand for jobs in this sector.

concentration of jobs, with several multinational companies based between Reading and Bracknell. This sector continues to expand, boosted by the role of life/bio science in fighting the pandemic. This sector requires higher-level technical skills and is struggling to fill laboratory assistant posts.

Tier 2 job families include construction, healthcare, and education, whilst Tier 3 includes transport/distribution, hospitality, business/finance/sales/customer service (business services) and creative.

The recent development of Shinfield Studios in Reading will provide the focus for "Cine Valley" in the years ahead, providing several thousand new jobs and ensuring options exist for local residents to complete relevant creative and digital qualifications at Reading College is vitally important.

Approach to Developing the Annual Accountability Statement

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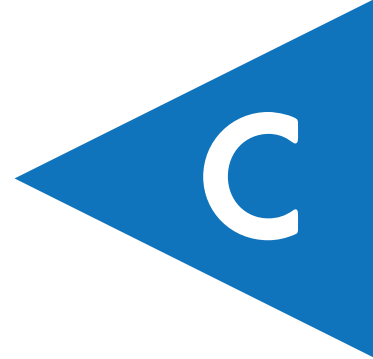
In developing our Accountability Statement we have sought to understand the national and local skills needs through extensive stakeholder engagement and desk-based research. We have then identified a wide range of curriculum developments we can make that help us to meet those needs. For the purposes of this document, however, we have focused on those developments that we can implement in the 23/24 academic year.

Our research has particularly focused on engagement with the ongoing development of Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs) via employer representative bodies, which are Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce and Surrey Chamber of Commerce for our geographical locations.

We have worked closely with both organisations over the last year to support the development of the LSIP, including as FE provider representative for the Oxfordshire and Berkshire LSIPs, hosting LSIP events for members of our corporation and hosted and attended sector events with employers. In addition, in leading two Strategic Development Fund (SDF) projects, representatives from Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce with responsibility for LSIP development have attended our monthly SDF project board meetings.

More generally, Activate Learning collaborates with a wide range of stakeholders to support the development of skills for the three main geographical areas it serves. These stakeholders exist within civic organisations, such as local authorities, LEPs, third sector not-for-profit organisations, employers in every business sector and with skills providers in schools, colleges, and Higher Education institutions.
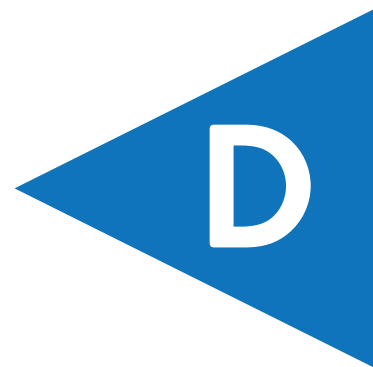
Examples of this collaboration include:

– Our Schools Liaison Team works with over one hundred local schools to help their pupils understand skills and training opportunities available at college. In the past twelve months they attended more than 250 careers events, fairs, and talks

– Working with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and Job Centre Plus on employability programmes, including the Work and Health Programme in Oxfordshire, we are assisting hundreds of long-term unemployed, economically inactive, or disabled individuals in finding employment each year

– Engaging with local employers on Faculty Advisory Panels to identify skills needs and design curriculum

– Our Group Executive Team participates in the Skills Advisory Panels of three LEPs and as a board member of Berkshire LEP

– Participation in the development of Local Skills Improvements Plans (LSIPs) with local Chambers of Commerce as the employer representative bodies

– Leadership of Strategic Development Fund (SDF) projects for the FE providers in Oxfordshire and Berkshire delivering green and digital skills included in the list of priority sectors identified by the LSIPs and included within this statement

– Working with local authorities to help them design and commission skills provision under the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Multiply numeracy programmes for adults.

– Collaborating with other local and regional Further Education colleges, especially through the delivery of Strategic Development Fund projects.

In helping to identify skills needs and shaping our medium and long-term plans for skills development, as well as utilising these external stakeholder collaborations, we also have our own dedicated market research resource within our Marketing and Communications Team.

We have also considered, the emerging priorities outlined in the Greater London Authority LSIP as we have a contract to deliver adult learning for several hundred adult London residents each year. These are:

– Construction

– Creative

– Health and Social Care

– Hospitality

– Cross cutting themes: digital skills, green skills, transferrable skills, labour market inclusion.

In the majority of cases, the priority sectors outlined above are ones that we have prioritised over a number of years. We already therefore make a significant contribution to meeting skills needs in those areas. For example, we have prioritised development of our offer in Health and Social Care and Digital (ICT) over a number of years in response to identified skills shortages. The table below outlines some of our achievements in these areas:

Digital (ICT)

– Launched the South Central Institute of Technology in Oxford and Reading with more than £6 million of capital investment;

– Delivered three new digital sector apprenticeships: Data Analyst (Level 4), Software Engineer (Level 3) and ICT Technician (Level 3);

– Commenced delivery of the Digital Production, Design and Development T Levels;

– Developed new Digital Technologies HNC/D programme.

– Provide ICT 16-19 study programmes for more than 200 students per year.

– Launched esports Study Programmes at Reading College, Guildford College and Banbury and Bicester College.

Health and Social Care

– Secured Local Enterprise Partnership investment for care suites at our Guildford, Bracknell, Reading and Oxford campuses to create simulated work environments.

– Launched Health T Levels at Reading College and City of Oxford College.

– Developed new on-line Access to Higher Education Diplomas in Paramedic Science, Allied Health Professions, Health and Social Care, Nursing and Midwifery, supporting more than 250 students each year.

– Launched short courses for people working in the care sectors including: Principles of End of Life Care, Principles of Dementia, Awareness of Mental Health Problems, Safe Handling of Medication, and Understanding Autism.

In addition to the contribution we have already been making to national, regional, and local skills priorities, we are constantly look for ways to enhance and broaden our curriculum in these key sectors. The table below outlines the key objectives we have set for the 23/24 academic year. These objectives are aligned to the key sectors and priorities emerging from the LSIPs being developed currently and due to be published in June 2023. We have chosen not to include targets for courses that we already run, but instead to focus on new education and training programmes. They are not intended to be a comprehensive plan to address all of the skills needs outlined in LSIPs and at a national level, but instead represent our priorities for the 23/24 academic year.

Objective	National, Regional or Local Priorities
Increase the breadth depth of our offer in the digital sector: 1. Introduce digital skills bootcamps to help people develop the skills to work in the digital sector. 2. Introduce the Access to Higher Education Diploma in Computing. 3. Introduce the Level 4 Cyber Security Technologist Apprenticeship. 4. Roll-out new Level 2 and 3 short courses in Cyber Security and Software Development. 5. Commence delivery of the Higher Technical Qualification in Digital Technologies.	The digital sector has been identified as a priority in each of our three Local Skills Improvement Plans and plays a significant role in all three of our local economies, particularly in Berkshire. The use of Skills Bootcamps enables us to design a bespoke provision with support from selected employers to quickly resolve immediate skills needs. For example, we will be delivering curriculum designed by Amazon Web Services to increase the number of people able to enter employment in Cloud computing across their supply chain. We will also be using our established Institute of Technology brand to help promote this new curriculum. Our successful online model for delivering Access to HE courses enables us to extend the provision to support adult learners enter higher education and subsequently enter digital careers.
Continue the expansion of our T Level offer in Oxfordshire, Berkshire and Surrey: 6. We aim to recruit more than 250 new T Level enrolments in Business, Engineering, ICT and Childcare and Health.	Increasing the number of learners undertaking vocational subjects at Level 3 either with progression into an apprenticeship or undergraduate study is important for the wider economy and ensures those learners with more technical and practical skills, rather than a purely academic focus, have the chance to progress in their early careers. Having launched T Level provision across the group over the last two years, this is an extension of our existing strategy to support this government priority and provide learners with practical skills for entry into employment.
Broaden our offer to the regionally important Life Sciences sector: 7. Introduce the Access to Higher Education Diploma in Science 8. Introduce a Life Sciences Skills Bootcamp	In line with our strategy on digital skills outlined above, life sciences play a similarly important role across our local economies and as such is identified as a priority sector in each of developing Local Skills Improvement Plans. We are working with Newbury College and University of Reading to develop a Skills Bootcamp in Berkshire and we expect this to also extend into South Oxfordshire where OxLEP have similar ambitions to develop a Skills Bootcamp model. Our successful online model for delivering Access to HE courses enables us to extend the provision to support adult learners enter higher education and subsequently enter science careers.

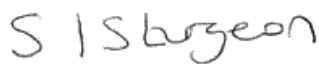| Objective	National, Regional or Local Priorities
Develop new solutions to meet emerging skills needs in net zero and green technologies: 9. Introduce green technologies Skills Bootcamps for electric bikes and electric vehicle charging installation / electric vehicle maintenance 10. Commence delivery of heat pump training courses	With the government's drive to net-zero, many sector representative bodies recognise that existing employees in these relevant sectors have insufficient skills to maintain products and services. Therefore, all FE providers are now investing in developing training solutions to help close these gaps. Green technologies are cross-cutting themes in each of our Local Skills Improvement Plans and these will be the first of a portfolio of green skills training developed over the coming years.
Continue the expansion of our on-line learning offer to enable us to reach more adult learners: 11. Introduce a range of new on-line courses for professional services. . 12. Continue the growth of on-line GCSEs, Access to Higher Education and short vocational courses	Increasing participation in lifelong learning is a government priority. The introduction of on-line learning has already helped us reach more than 2,000 additional adult learners. We believe that adult provision is moving increasingly to either a fully online or blended delivery model to minimise any barriers to participation for working or with family duties and wishing to develop their skills further. Activate Learning is currently one of the most advanced FE providers for this type of delivery and current evidence suggests learners are more successful studying this way. In 2023/24 our ambitions include holding contracts for online delivery for Combined Authorities in London and the West Midlands.

Corporation Statement

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On behalf of the Activate Learning Corporation, it is hereby confirmed that the plan as set out above reflects an agreed statement of purpose, aims and objectives as approved by the Corporation.

The plan has now been published on the college's website, which is within three months of the start of the new 2023/24 academic year as per the Department of Educations guidelines, and can be accessed from the following link:
https://www.activatelearning.ac.uk/who-we-are/corporate-governance/policies-and-procedures/

Chair of Governors Signature:

S I Sturgeon

Chief Executive and Accounting Officer Signature:

G Headland

Dated: 19th May 2023

Supporting Documentation

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The following is a range of documents from stakeholders across the three LEP areas Activate Learning operates within which has helped to formulate the annual Accountability Statement for 2023/24.

Labour Market Intelligence and Evidence Sources:

– Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce 2023 - https://www.thamesvalleychamber.co.uk/business-manifesto/

– EM3LEP 2022 Skills Report - https://enterprisem3.org.uk/sites/default/files/2022-02/EM3%20Local%20Skills%20Report%20Jan%202022%20Executive%20Summary.pdf

– Berkshire LEP – 2022 Skills Report - https://www.thamesvalleyberkshire.co.uk/getfile/Thames%20Valley%20Berkshire%20LEP%20Skills%20Report%202022.pdf

– OxLEP – 2022 Skills Report - https://www.oxfordshirelep.com/sites/default/files/uploads/OxLEPLSRPExecutiveSummary.pdf

– Experience Oxford – 2020 Economic Impact Statement - https://www.experienceoxfordshire.org/economic-impact-survey-2020/

– Berkshire LSIP - https://www.berkshirelsip.co.uk/

– Oxfordshire LSIP - http://www.oxfordshirelsip.co.uk/

– https://department-for-education.shinyapps.io/local-skills-dashboard/

– Surrey LSIP – Surrey Chamber information is sparse at present

Ofsted Report – November 2022:

https://files.ofsted.gov.uk/v1/file/50203755

Activate Learning Financial Statement for the period ending 31 July 2022:

https://www.activatelearning.ac.uk/who-we-are/governance-documents/

Group members

Colleges
- Banbury and Bicester College
- Bracknell and Wokingham College
- City of Oxford College
- Farnham College
- Guildford College
- Merrist Wood College
- Reading College

Schools
- The Bicester School
- Theale Green School
- UTC Heathrow
- UTC Oxfordshire
- UTC Reading
- UTC Swindon

Training
- Activate Apprenticeships
- Activate Business School

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