



Strategic Intent 2025 – 2030

Navigating Complex Markets:
The next stage of our College's development

We cannot direct the wind but we can adjust the sails

Strategic Intent 2025-30

Introduction

New City College (NCC) is a large, dynamic and innovative provider serving diverse communities across London and Essex. By one measure, our defining characteristic over the past decade has been growth. We have evolved from a single borough college to one of the five largest colleges in England. Our growth has given us influence. We are respected and listened to. Our voice matters. Our size has led to consistent improvement; we are greater than the sum of our parts.

The real measure of success, of course, is determined by our students and our communities. Have we enabled those who study with us to progress to the next stage of their educational or skills training or journey? Have they advanced in the labour market or their own career development? Are they more confident, more capable members of our community? The evidence of the period covered by our last strategic intent (2020-25) suggests that we have served our student and local communities well. But there is always more to do and the context in which we operate, the nature of the challenges we face, will never be static.

Our 2020-24 strategic intent launched five years ago, in February 2020. A month later, the Covid pandemic broke and the world changed. As we set out here, the Covid legacy is still with us. And, of course, the pandemic was a reminder of the challenge of strategic planning; events tend to get in the way. Despite the challenges of the times, we can take no small measure of pride in the progress we have made. As articulated below, we achieved most of what we set out to five years ago. More than that, we pushed ourselves to do better in our core business; enabling students to achieve. New City College is now in the top 10% of all providers for student outcomes and, as of March 2025, graded Outstanding by OfSTED.

Growth, of itself, is of no particular merit. However, as we have grown, so have our influence and impact. As our stakeholder research shows, we are a respected voice in the further education sector and that, in turn, means we can seek to influence policy to the advantage of the students we serve. With the addition of Brooke House Sixth Form College in Hackney to NCC, in August 2024, our 16-18 student enrolment rose to above 10,000.

Our 2020-24 Strategic Intent was largely inward facing. We sought to develop our evidence-based teaching practice through the launch of our Teaching and Learning Lab. A new Business Improvement Unit was tasked with eliminating unnecessary processes and streamlining how we work across our now, in sector terms, considerable operational reach. We set about refining and rationalising our curriculum. We began drawing up detailed plans to reinvigorate our estate.

This Strategic Intent, covering the period 2025-2030, will have a different focus. Having established ourselves as a successful, coherent and ambitious college, we now need to spend more time navigating through the complex markets we serve.

So, an externally facing plan. The key question we seek to address is which markets should we serve, in which locations and with what curricula. What can a young person in Havering expect from us? Or an apprentice training in Rainham? Or an adult learner in Poplar? We should not accept this as self-evident or allow inertia to set out our path. Instead, the strategic intent outlined here proposes a future focus and areas for investment. It tries to address the fair critique of our stakeholders that we lack an overarching recognisable curriculum identity. There is, too, a recognition that we must find our way in a landscape that will become more not less competitive, that funding will remain tight and that much of the technology we have today will be obsolete by the time this plan expires.

Finally, we must always recognise two guiding themes. That everything we do must be for the benefit of our students. That their judgement of the extent to which we helped them on the next stage of their journey is the one that matters. Second, that none of our aspiration can be realised without the expertise, dedication and commitment of the staff who make NCC what it is. The collective talents of New City College will set the sail for our future, whatever cross winds we face on our way.

Gerry McDonald CBE

Group Principal & CEO
New City College

July 2025



New City College 2025

New City College today is a large, successful provider operating across east London and south west Essex. Eight years ago, we were a single borough provider with an income of £20m. This year our income will exceed £130m and we will serve more than 10,500 young people and 9,000 adult learners.

Through a series of mergers from 2016 to 2024, we have become a regional FE provider that is successful, well respected, confident and coherent. We have improved outcomes for learners consistently over the past five years despite the often challenging circumstances of our communities. We are a leading provider of education for young people and adults with special needs and one of the largest providers of ESOL in the UK. Our learners benefit from partnerships with employers in a diverse range of sectors, helping them to shape exciting future careers.

We have evolved, developed and grown. Some of our now defining characteristics, such as the Teaching and Learning Lab, are now established parts of our DNA. We have strived to be a learning organisation, a self-reflective organisation, capable of assessing its own performance and rebalancing its efforts for the benefit of students and communities.

As we begin the next stage of our development, we do so from a position of relative strength. While the sector continues to suffer from under-investment, funding uncertainty and a legacy of constant policy change, we are debt free, financially resilient and, now, graded as OfSTED Outstanding. Our commitment to continuously improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment will be a constant theme as we deliver our plans over the years ahead. There will be no resting on our 2025 Ofsted assessment. The world will move on and so must we. Our leading position in developing reflective practice through research will be the defining characteristic of NCC's student centred approach.

Notwithstanding our progress however, there remains much for us to do. Feedback tells us that we lack an identifiable area of focus, a shorthand for what we do. We are a good generalist. That makes it harder for potential students to understand what we do. And we must, too, look to how the needs of our students will change over the next five or more years. What will they demand in terms of pedagogy, access to content and in the way they engage with us?

So, we can develop our plans from a confident base, but remain focused on the need for change, driven by the continuing evolution of the communities we serve.



The Context in Which We Operate

The context in which we operate and in which our plans will unfold remain as challenging as it was in 2020 when we embarked on our previous Strategic Intent. At that time, we referenced five key variables that would influence our development. These were: competition, funding, complexity, purpose (in the sense of how our sector is understood) and staff recruitment.

The dynamics of these factors have changed over the past five years, but their impact remains. Our 16-18 year old students find themselves still in a buyers' market despite our improving college brand reputation. We continue to be under-funded relative to schools although we have seen a little more capital come our way since colleges were re-classified back in to the public sector. And we remain too much at the whim of those who seek to renew our mission without necessary investment. We are well placed to support a mission-based approach to national economic growth.

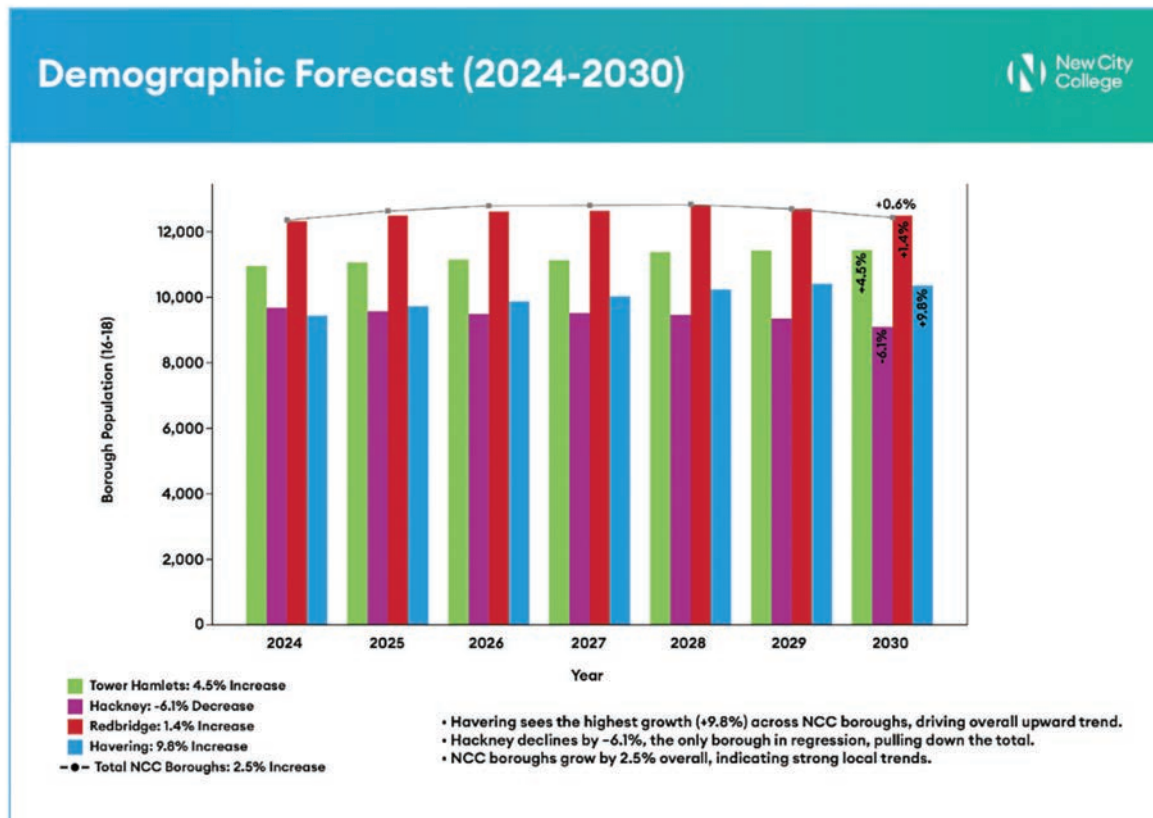
Staff recruitment is easier than a couple of years ago but if we are to meet the adaptive challenge of up-skilling the current and new workforce for the modern economy, new approaches are needed.

New Challenges

Last time's context is, broadly, this time's context. The emphasis is different but the backdrop is largely similar. However, we must also face an emerging landscape that presents its own, fresh tests. How, for example, will students want to be taught in the next five years? What role will technology play here?

Demographics

The demographic context in which we operate is changing more rapidly than we anticipated. In the autumn of 2024, for example, we experienced the twin phenomena of increased demand for places from outer London and Essex and a sharp fall in demand in inner London and particularly Hackney. Nationally, we are riding a wave of increasing numbers of 16-18 years olds for the next several years. But this is not true everywhere and it will be important that our strategies adapt to the realities of our changing local communities. The chart below shows the population forecast for 16-18 year olds.



(Data source: GLA)

At best, we will see a modest increase in the 16-18 cohort size over the next five years. However, this assumes that the cohort is stable. In reality, families are likely to move out of central London at an increasing pace. Hackney is of the greatest concern and our campuses in that borough will need a new curriculum and estates strategy.



Demand for Skills

The possible future demand for skills in London is outlined below. Our plans are informed by the intersection of skills demand and student interest. This is important because employer demand for skills will not necessarily create student interest. However, a well-conceived curriculum with a strong focus on practical skills and well articulated business relationships will showcase opportunities. High quality advice and guidance will help here.

The sectors listed here represent a broad range of opportunity for NCC.

Projected Growth Sectors in London to 2030 (GLA Economics, et al)

1. Technology & Digital Services:

- Growth Trend: London is home to over 75,000 tech companies, with the sector growing at about 6% annually. According to the London Tech Report 2020, the tech sector contributed £56 billion to London's economy, and it's expected to grow even further with strong demand for software developers, AI specialists, and data scientists.
- Projections: The number of tech jobs in London is expected to grow by 9% annually to 2030.
- NCC opportunity: The College is well positioned geographically and in terms of curriculum innovation to partner with new and emerging tech companies building capacity in coding, AI and data analytics through current and emerging curriculum.

2. Financial Services & FinTech:

- Growth Trend: Financial services make up about 12% of London's GDP. FinTech employment in London is expected to grow by 25% by 2025, driven by demand for blockchain and payment solutions.
- Projections: According to the City of London Corporation, employment in financial and related professional services is expected to increase by 4-5% annually to 2030, especially in roles that blend finance and technology.
- NCC opportunity: We can do more to exploit our proximity to both Canary Wharf and the City of London with a new, focused B2B Business School that targets career progression in financial services. Existing employer relationships will guide us here. The market is crowded but an offer that builds on our expertise in teaching and learning and its application to organisational development may prove successful.

3. Healthcare & Life Sciences:

Growth Trend: The healthcare sector in London employs around 300,000 people and is expected to expand with the aging population and increased demand for healthcare services.

Projections: Employment in healthcare is projected to grow by 3-4% annually to 2030, particularly in roles related to biotechnology, pharmaceuticals, and health tech. The Life Sciences Industrial Strategy predicts 20,000 new life science jobs will be created by 2025.

NCC opportunity: Our work with the NHS is broad. The opportunity here is to focus directly on skills pathways into nursing, pharmacy, paramedics and occupational health. Post Covid NHS challenges have made engagement challenging but a clear opportunity now exists for NCC to articulate to NHS trusts how it can build a future talent pipeline over the long term.

4. Green & Sustainability Sector:

- Growth Trend: According to the London Environment Strategy, jobs in low carbon sectors (renewable energy, electric vehicles, etc.) have increased by 10% in recent years.
- Projections: The UK government aims for net zero by 2050, which will drive substantial job creation in the green economy. The Green Jobs Taskforce projects 250,000 new green jobs by 2030, with a significant portion of those in London.
- NCC opportunity: Our priorities here have been constrained by moving political goalposts. However, this does not detract from the overall direction of travel. Through the Local Skills Investment Fund, we now have a technology base that can be used to upskill local employers and apprentices as the market moves towards a green transition. Our work here will be supplemented by extensive embedding of green skills in our wider curriculum, an area where we are already sector informing.
- The utilities sector may also present opportunities for NCC. This sector needs significant skills investment over the next decade and a carefully targeted approach building on existing relationships in allied sectors may be productive.

5. Creative Industries:

- Growth Trend: London's creative industries contribute around £13 billion annually. Employment growth has been especially strong in digital content creation, advertising, and gaming.
- Projections: The Creative Industries Federation estimates employment growth of 3-5% annually in this sector, driven by demand in digital content, video game production, and creative tech.
- NCC opportunity: We are already well established in the creative industries through our work in performing arts, digital media and emerging technologies. We can leverage this further through development of our relationships with key local employers, particularly in digital and IT where our Shoreditch location gives us a proximity advantage.

6. Construction & Infrastructure:

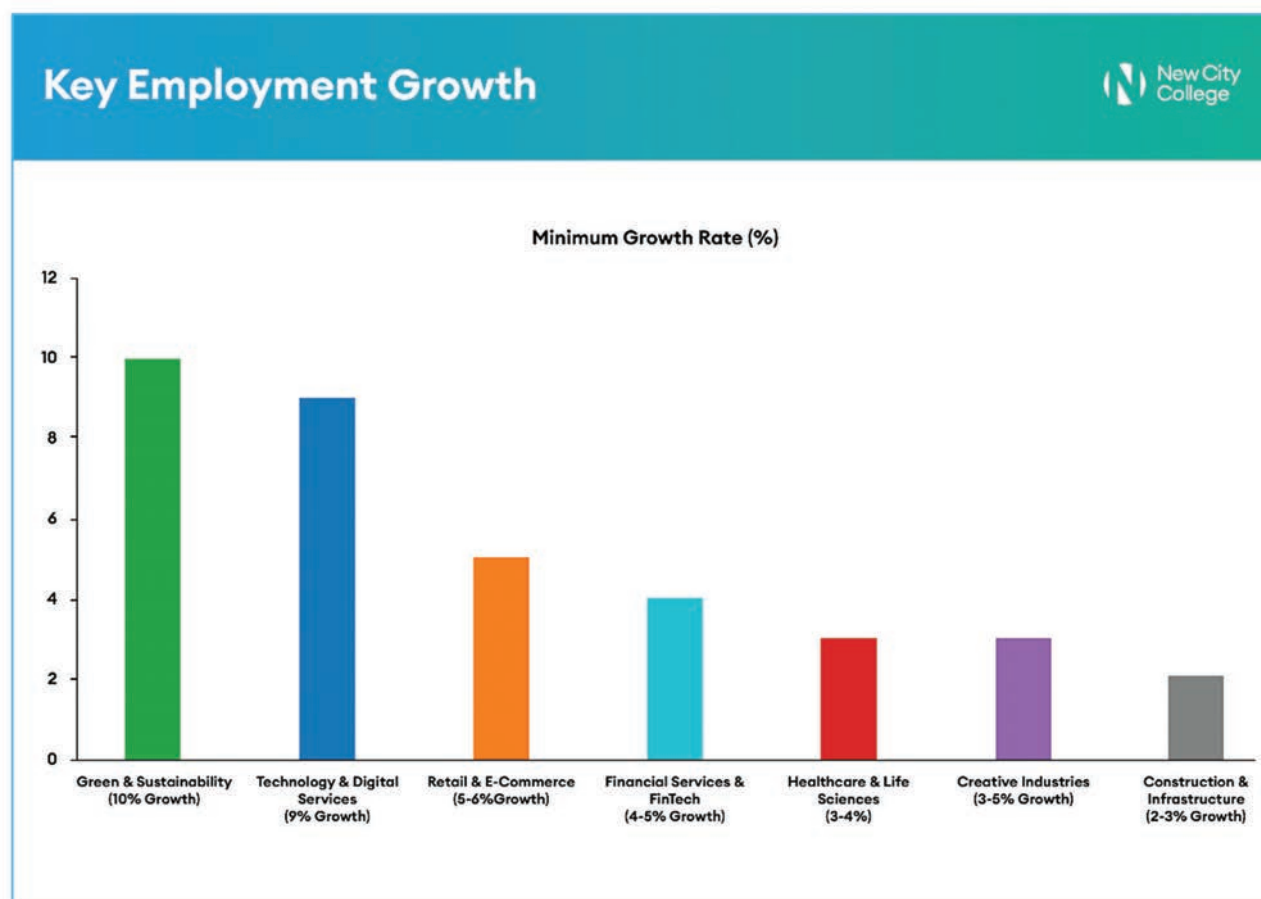
- Growth Trend: London has several major ongoing infrastructure projects and a significant housing shortage driving demand for construction workers. Logistics, robotics and high-tech manufacture will also drive skills demand.
- Projections: According to Construction Skills, employment in construction and related infrastructure roles is expected to grow by 2-3% annually through to 2030.
- NCC opportunity: The demand for qualified and skilled construction professionals is evident in the growth in enrolments across NCC and especially at our specialist campus in Rainham. To meet this demand, we will invest in new infrastructure and expand our workforce. We are also well placed to take advantage of regional opportunities such as the Lower Thames Crossing and those that arise from the Thames Freeport.

7. Retail & E-commerce:

- Growth Trend: Traditional retail is declining, but e-commerce is booming. The retail sector was worth £40 billion to London's economy in 2020, and e-commerce accounts for a growing share.
- Projections: Employment in e-commerce and digital marketing roles is expected to grow by 5-6% annually, while jobs in traditional retail may decline by 2-3% annually as automation and online shopping take hold.

- NCC opportunity: There is opportunity here for NCC to develop new career pathways in digital marketing and e-commerce and also to embed these skills into our employability programmes which will continue to expand over the next five years. We will also consider how we can support students who wish to start or expand their own e-commerce businesses. Student run e-commerce businesses is currently a strong trend which we see continuing.

Summary of Key Employment Growth Projections by Sector (London, 2025-2030):



(Data source: GLA)

Our Response

While we offer a broad and comprehensive curriculum, the next phase of our development will see our provision more keenly aligned to labour markets than it is currently. This is already the case with digital and creative but less so in financial services and life sciences. As the next stage of Canary Wharf's development takes place and our plans for a Business School emerge, we should be better placed to take advantage of these opportunities in these markets.

In construction and engineering, our provision will evolve to include new partnerships with the Thames Freeport and surrounding area. We will explore the potential of growth sectors such as food technology, logistics and process engineering, aligning provision to need.

Importantly, we will stay rooted in our core competence of providing labour market entry for those who need to re-skill or gain the basic skills they need to move into employment.

Economic Context

Current economic events provide a challenging environment for policy makers and providers alike. We do not know how emerging tensions will play out. What we can be certain of is that the macro context will be challenging for the foreseeable future. Even before the present turmoil, the UK was seeking a response to low and falling growth rates and a constrained monetary environment. The growth projections outlined above may prove over-optimistic. Now more than ever, it is critical that the UK develops a skilled workforce to drive growth.

All this means that we cannot expect funding settlements to be favourable. We are seeing that already with a reduction in funding for higher numbers (despite demographic pressures) and, very disappointingly, lower funding for adult skills. There is sector specific cause for optimism such as in construction where colleges can lead the way in supporting infrastructure projects with staffing skills.



Stakeholder Feedback

Earlier this year, we conducted stakeholder research through an external company. Their findings have informed our approach in developing the new Strategic Intent. In summary, our stakeholders tell us we are seen as an effective organisation, focused on a high-quality experience for our learners and the communities we serve.

“What comes to mind is a college that’s doing an enormous amount of good things. It’s a big college and it’s an effective organisation that is trying to be strategic as well as delivering an amazing experience for learners and employees. It’s a very positive image.”

Externally, we are seen as visible and proactive in building connections with the right organisations and leaders to influence and innovate. There is a strong leadership appetite to drive positive change. Our leadership of education is influencing best practice in the FE sector and we are seen as approachable and open to collaboration with others. This has fed into the positive viewpoints on the college’s reputation: NCC is highly regarded and respected.

However, some stakeholders have told us that there is no place association in the name ‘New City College’ and it’s difficult for some external stakeholders to understand the location and therefore to form a connection. The size and breadth of offer, while an overwhelmingly positive aspect of the organisation, has also been developed at the expense of creating a USP or clear identity to external stakeholders. There was also a recognition that some aspects of the estate require modernisation to provide a consistent experience for all learners.

In summary, stakeholders told us:

- New City College is learner-focused with strong ties with all its local communities.
- It is a resilient, successful organisation with clear leadership and high expectations which support a positive learner experience.
- NCC is investing in its students, its staff and its estate, but needs more resource to bring all campuses to the same high standard.
- A focused effort to develop a unified, cohesive culture is clearly evident.
- NCC is a supportive stakeholder partner, often a go-to college for sector and regional initiatives. It has a strong voice on key issues and drives positive change. It can and should be a more prominent influencing voice. Clear and distinct specialisms in curriculum will support this.

Our 2025 Ofsted report provided direct feedback on the quality of our provision and the impact of NCC in our colleges. Their report is well summarised by these quotes from the report:

Learners and apprentices thrive while learning in diverse communities across all campuses.

(NCC is) highly committed to widening participation and tackling social inequality through excellent education and training. They provide exceptional leadership to drive improvements across the group and create a culture of high ambition and success. Leaders offer a wide range of accessible, innovative and challenging learning opportunities for local communities in east London and Essex.

A Review of our Previous Strategic Intent

Our previous Strategic Intent covered the period 2020-2024. The main themes and our progress are outlined below. Each of the headings here was essentially a commitment we made in 2020.

Establish a Teaching and Learning Lab

We established a Teaching and Learning Lab in 2020 and resourced it to create college wide impact. The essential rationale was to create an organisational culture where improvements in teaching and learning arise from reflective practice informed by research.

The lab has been highly successful and is now part of NCC's culture of improvement. The work of the lab has contributed to a more collaborative culture and directly enhancing student learning outcomes and teaching practice. These small-scale investigations have been carried out individually and as Directorate led activities. One example is in maths where the teaching team have developed activities aimed at improving trust and confidence in maths lessons. This has contributed to the outstanding success in GCSE in this area.

Externally, NCC has been seen to be leading in developing use of AI and has been asked to share research at sector level and for and with other colleges. The Lab has led work in embedding sustainability education and carbon literacy.

Our work has led to two volumes of published research.

In summary, the Teaching and Learning Lab has become part of NCC's DNA. Its work will continue into the next phase of our development. We have a unique facility in the Teaching and Learning Lab that actively seeks to engage with research and informs our approach to professional development.

Establish a Business Improvement Unit

During a period of expansion through merger, it is not unusual for processes to become confused, overlapping and burdensome. There was an identified need to find ways to simplify approaches, learn from best practice across the group and find new ways of doing things. This is the work of the BIU which was established in 2020. We have successfully integrated operations across seven legacy organisations.

The BIU has been successful in leading reviews into individual processes and improving them. There is data to evidence the impact on reduced error rates, workload etc. for specific processes. Staff who have been actively engaged in process reviews have tended to find the business improvement approaches refreshing and have in some cases continued to use these approaches in their day jobs. For instance, in MIS and apprenticeships, process mapping is increasingly used to define and communicate processes. In some cases, the BIU has enabled long standing issues to be resolved or progressed to a better place. The improvements to the enrolment processes and the intranet are examples of these.

The work of the BIU will continue with an added focus on how improvements can reduce workload and create meaningful budget savings.

Establish a New Curriculum Intent

Our task here was to realign our curriculum to better meet the needs of our student communities in an increasingly complex environment, shaped by emerging opportunities and evolving employer needs. In 2021, we commissioned an independent review of our curriculum which produced some broad targets:

Digital skills delivery is now being embedded across the whole curriculum. Essential Digital Skills is offered as a standalone course for adults and attached to a broad range of adult vocational and foundation learning programmes. Delivery now routinely uses digital technology such as digital textbooks, industry-level software and, the use of online learning platforms

Curriculum innovation over the past five years has seen some notable developments: Esports successfully launched at Poplar and Redbridge; Labs with interchangeable, modular spaces and live briefs set by employers up and running at Ardleigh Green, Redbridge and Poplar, increasing digital connectivity. A suite of Immersive Classrooms has been launched across the College alongside high end VR headsets at every campus. NCC has significantly increased the development of green technologies course offer with retrofit labs being installed.

Growth in 16-18 provision has been variable at campus level and driven by better progression, demographic change, curriculum innovation and an improving reputation.

Develop clear internal progression routes for adult learners and increase course flexibility. A new cross-group pathways department now liaises between foundation and vocational programme managers to remove skills and language barriers to employment, and raise skills levels of adult students to help them move into work above entry level.

Deliver more adult provision 'in house', subcontracting for adult courses has now been replaced with direct college delivery.

Increase employer engagement to inform the curriculum and ensure qualifications are fit for purpose. There have been good developments with employer engagement, with some specific strong examples across the curriculum. Our strategic leadership of skills through the central London Local Skills Improvement Plan has been strong, there is more to do to achieve employer influence in every curriculum area.

Establish a New Property and Estates Strategy

Endeavours here have been both fruitful and frustrating. During the past five years we have expanded our teaching space at Havering Sixth Form and will complete a significant redevelopment at Havering – Ardleigh Green in the next two years. We have also completed the significant new build at Rainham which has led to a sharp increase in student numbers at that campus.

In Epping, the new Wellness Centre adds an important property asset and facility for our students and community. However, the re-development of Poplar has suffered seven years of political and funding setbacks and remains unresolved, although new options may be available. In addition, we have added:

- A new SEND suite at Ardleigh Green.
- Immersive rooms at three campuses: Redbridge, Epping and Hackney (Hoxton).
- Green technology labs at Rainham, Hackney (Hoxton) and Epping.

We have started a programme of estate decarbonisation with a project completed in Redbridge and underway in Epping.

Our plans for our Hackney (Hoxton) campus are now advanced but subject to us finding a suitable funder. This opportunity, which would involve scaling back to a smaller footprint, is of a scale to enable us to consider options for reinvestment elsewhere if the receipt is sufficient. It is worth noting that we have invested more than £40m in our estate in the past five years. The next phase of our development will seek to deliver a step change in our physical environment and utilise innovative approaches to investment.



Focus on Wellness, Workload and Sustainability

Wellness and workload

This was envisioned as an important priority for the group. A wellness and workload forum has been in place since shortly after the publication of the Strategic Intent document.

The purpose of the forum was to address both wellness and workload against the DfE's Charter for Education Staff Wellbeing.

There have been some successes:

- The development & implementation of a flexible working policy came directly from this forum.
- The inception of the college deadlines (pinch point) calendar was also developed by this group.
- The introduction of wellbeing sessions to all staff development days.
- The launch of lean ways of working to several administrative functions through the work of the Business Improvement Unit.

Sustainability

NCC has made some significant steps towards becoming a more sustainable organisation. In the past five years, we have significantly reduced our emissions, decarbonated two campuses and developed an environmental scorecard agreed as a measure to direct sustainability in major projects. Carbon literacy or other environmental sustainability training has been delivered to over 500 staff and students with a pilot group of students completing the certified Carbon Literacy training.

The college is represented across the sector in a wide range of sustainability groups and is often referred to as a leading provider on this agenda. NCC won the Green Gown Award for sustainable development – green skills in 2024.

NCC is a considerably more environmentally sustainable organisation in 2025 than it was in 2020. This will continue to be a priority.

Vision and Values

Our work needs to be underpinned by a shared vision and a set of common values.

New City College exists to give our students a better future

To achieve this vision, we will:

- Use the scale and strength of our college to drive educational excellence and innovation.
- Continue improving student outcomes and achievement. We will challenge every student, whatever their background, to maximise their potential within an environment of challenging targets.
- Support our staff to develop their skills and talents and look after their wellbeing.
- Make a positive impact on our local communities and the local economy by meeting the unique needs of all the areas in which we work, within a group structure.
- Be recognised as a beacon for learning with an influential position locally and nationally.

Education must enhance the progression, employment and life chances of those who study with us. This is our overarching purpose and intent.

We have developed the following group values that will shape our work.

Further to feedback from our staff we have updated our organisational values:

New City College is an outstanding college. It is built on respect, trust, a positive attitude, honesty and integrity. We inspire and celebrate success. In all that we do, we value:

- effort, determination, aspiration and excellence in our students and ourselves.
- continuous improvement in high quality education and training.
- meaningful support for staff and student wellbeing and success.
- local priorities within a regional and national landscape.
- sharing knowledge and skills, working productively together across the group.
- the celebration and promotion of equality, diversity and inclusion.

Strategic Priorities 2025-30

Below, we set out our key priorities for 2025-30, the opportunities available to us and high level risks that would need to be navigated as we move to the delivery phase.

Our Strategic Intent 2025-30 will be based around five key themes:

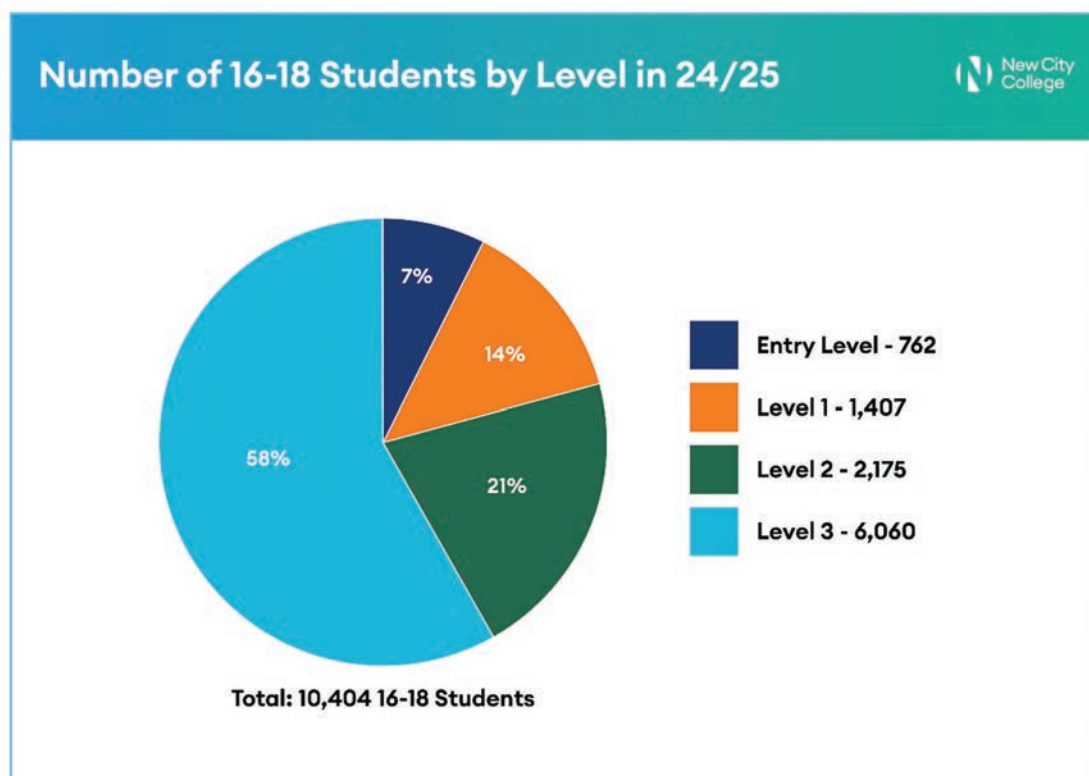
- Deepening our market engagement and presence
- Building strategic relationships with employers
- Carefully considered diversification
- A step change in our campus environments
- Developing our voice as a sector and policy influencing college

Deepening our Market Engagement and Presence

We are a college that is well represented across the markets in which we operate. This theme seeks to set out parameters for how we address each part of the education market. This is important because the competitive challenges show no sign of dissipating and so that we can ensure our curriculum aligns to the needs of our students, our communities and our stakeholders.

Our Markets

Young People



Consistently, the government has prioritised 16-18 over all other parts of the post 16 landscape. This reflects the presence of schools in this market (they are absent from adult skills and apprenticeship markets). While this has not resulted in a well-funded 16-18 system, it does mean that when additional funds are made available, they tend to be allocated through this budget line.

We will need to ensure our focus is accurate. This will mean listening to the feedback of our stakeholders so that we market our points of difference and promote the work of our Directorates more effectively. Effective advice and guidance will be crucial.

We will consider how our campuses are positioned in terms of their specialisms: These statements are indicative. Clear local commitments will arise as we develop a market proposition for each campus.

Hackney Sixth Form will be an outstanding provider of 16-18 vocational pathways for central London, reversing the borough trend of decline through a wider catchment area from the north and west.

Hackney (Hoxton) will be an agile centre of excellence for adult progression E1- L5.

Rainham and Hackney (Hoxton) will be East London's premiere construction hubs.

Redbridge will be a 16-18 centre of excellence with a specialism in supporting young people who are care leavers

Havering Sixth Form will be London's largest A level centre.

Havering – Ardleigh Green's vocational curriculum will complement Havering Sixth Form in providing first choice pathways for students into employment, particularly in IT, Health and performing arts

Poplar learners will benefit from a sector defining campus with learning environments informed by employer demand and emerging technology.

Attlee Academy will respond to its local community with a curriculum for 14-18 year olds focused on enabling students to progress to the next stage of their academic, vocational or employment journey.

Epping will be an outstanding provider of vocational and technical education with a clear focus on career pathways.

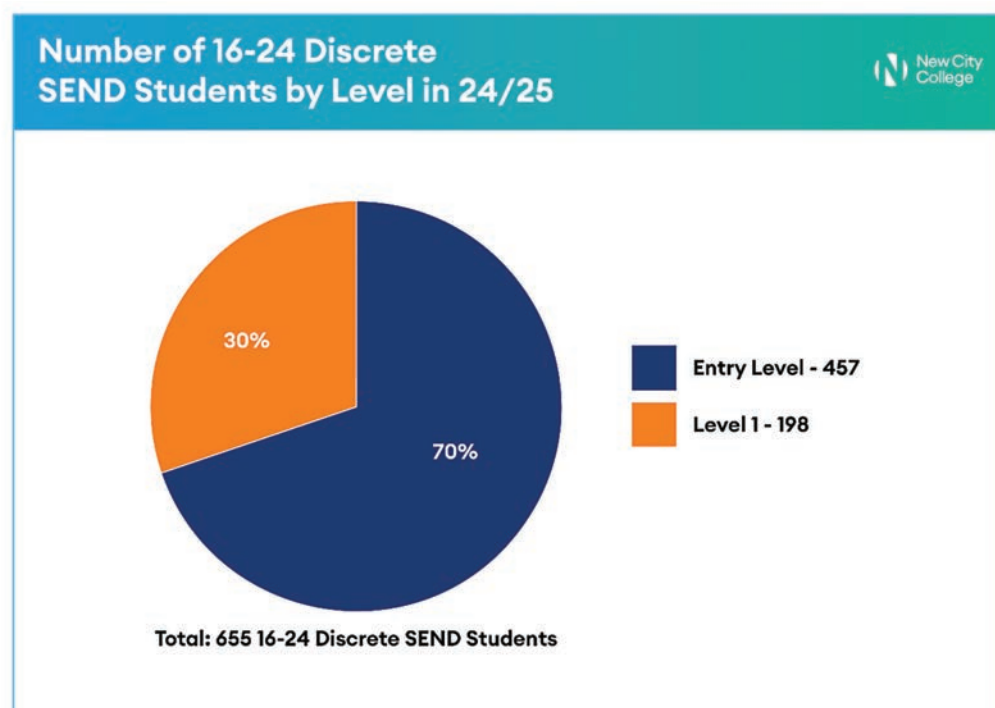
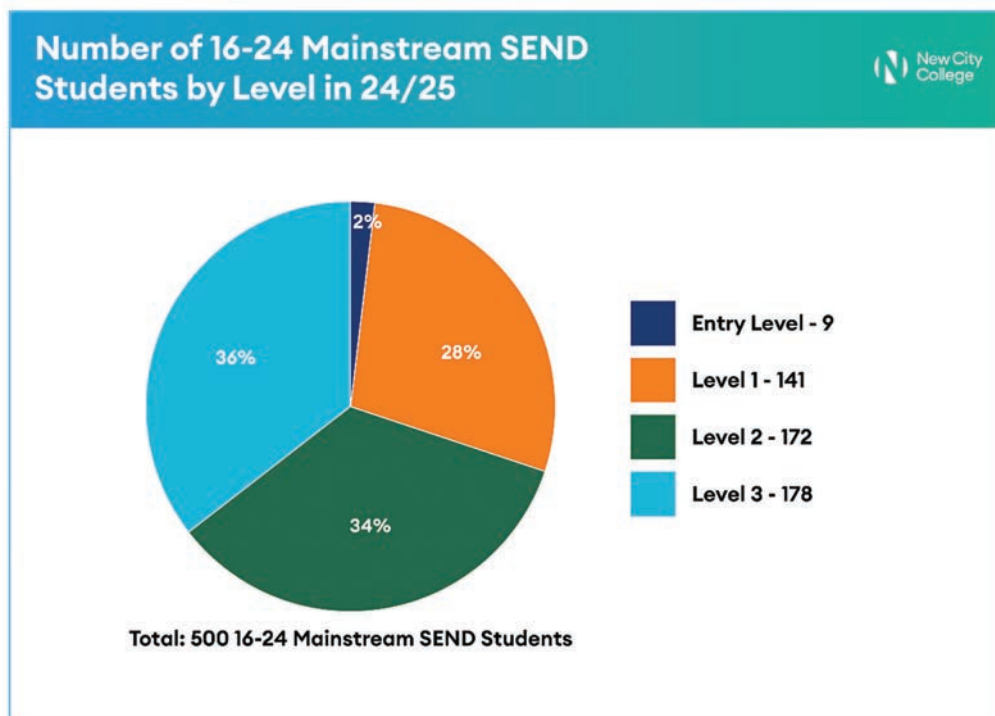
We will:

- Grow our 16-18 numbers by 2,000 to 12,000.
- Develop curricula that can be further expanded into USPs. Sport, construction and our green curriculum stand out here.
- Re-focus and grow our A Level offer to a position of market leadership in the areas in which we operate.
- Develop a vocational curriculum that is clearly and explicitly supported by employers with outstanding progression into work pathways.
- Develop clear Directorate level identities, such as Schools or Academies that articulate our offer to the market.
- Maintain a specialist 14-16 offer, focused on progression into the next year of study at NCC.
- Ensure that our curriculum is financially viable.

Key risks

- Will funding policy continue to favour this cohort as we seek to expand our market share and reach?
- Will we develop a sufficiently differentiated offer that appeals in a competitive market?

SEND



Provision for students with high needs is an area of expertise for NCC. We have successfully grown this area and demonstrated that we can do so while improving quality. We are good at navigating the complexities of local authority funding but, equally, realise that the system itself is under strain. A modest growth target is achievable.

At the same time, we should be more decisive in promoting our excellence in courses and support for learners on the autistic spectrum. This area of high needs work is growing and we should develop our provision such that NCC becomes a recognised leader in the sector.

It is also important that we recognise that an institution of our size and scale has a responsibility to influence the development of policy for students with high needs. We will seek to do this proactively over the next five years.

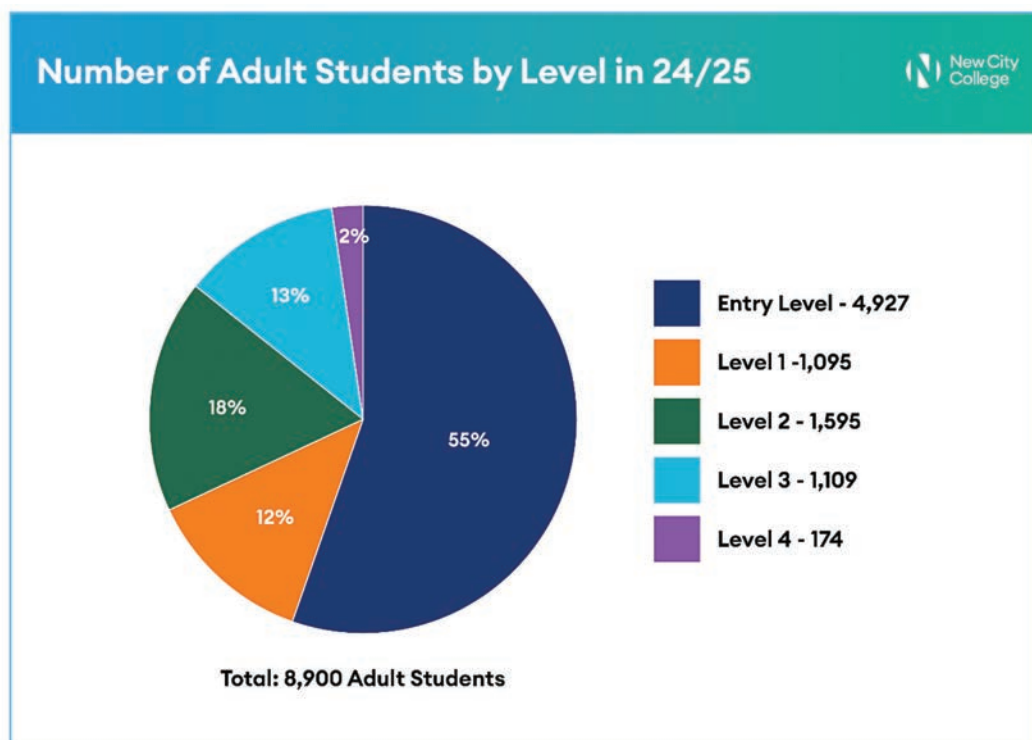
We will:

- Grow our SEND provision to 1500 students (from 1150 in 2025).
- Become recognised as a national leader in provision for neuro-diverse learners.
- Inform national policy change so that funding arrangements are more dependable.
- Develop expertise in specialist therapies, building our offer around student need.

Key risks

- Will local authority funding remain sufficiently stable to support our aspiration?
- Will our voice enable real change in this complex policy space?
- Uncertainty over future Government policy in this area.

Adult Skills



Despite the focus on growth, current policy is not prioritising adult skills funding. We see this long-term trend continuing and so are not predicating our plans on growth for this part of our offer, important as it is.

Within our possibly shrinking allocation, we should aim to allocate more resources to level three courses especially where routes into employment are strong. However, we do not yet see sufficient and explicit demand from employers at level 4 and 5 to suggest we should pivot toward this sub-degree level provision. However, there are opportunities to further develop innovative courses that align more closely to skills needs and each Directorate should prioritise this area of its activity.

We will:

- Maintain our adult skills offer at the same level as in 2025 in terms of volume.
- Shift our offer more towards level 3 and professional qualifications, developing clear specialisms in line with market and student demand and prioritising progression.
- Pioneer new curriculum that adapts to changing labour market needs particularly in digital and creative and construction.
- Develop provision that reduces time and place commitments through flexibility of delivery.
- Continue to support marginalised and vulnerable individuals with employability and language skills, building on our established excellence in ESOL.

Key risks

- Will government policy begin to reverse the decline seen in adult funding over the past decade?
- Will we be able to successfully align employer and student demand in an adaptive and agile skills market?

Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships remain a government priority. However, many standards are poorly funded and as a consequence of this and the very high costs of end point assessment, many colleges run this area of provision at low to zero margins. This is the case for NCC. However, there is an opportunity to continue to expand our market penetration in key sectors and so lower our overhead. This will build on the specialisation agenda we have pursued over the past several years, with a focus on apprenticeships in three areas: business, construction and health and social care.

In addition, we should discuss more pro-actively with employers how they see their skills pipeline strategies so that we can plan our provision more efficiently.

We will:

- Grow our apprenticeship provision to £4m income and improve the efficiency of delivery.
- Maintain the current breadth of apprenticeship standards.
- Work with employers to better understand the role of apprentices in their skills acquisition strategy.

Key risks

- Will we be able to pivot to a more financially viable business mode for apprenticeships while maintaining a quality service for employers?
- Will employers continue to support apprenticeships as the skills levy is reformed and provides alternative funding routes?

Building Strategic Relationships with Employers

As we continue to develop our curriculum, it is essential that it is shaped and informed by employers. There is much strong work here with exemplar leadership in strategic skills development across central London through the Local Skills Development Fund initiative, but we can and will do more. Every curriculum area will need to articulate a deliverable plan for greater employer engagement, coordinated through and supported by our business development and apprenticeship teams.

Our Rainham campus is in the catchment area of the new Thames Freeport. It is also situated in an area where local business is focused on logistics, food technology and manufacture. We already work with these businesses and can do more. The next stage of the development of our Rainham campus can exploit opportunities here and extend our engineering offer into new sectors such as process technology, robotics, automation and AI. Plans are speculative at this stage but will be firmed up within the next twelve months and it is important to note the intended direction of travel here.

We will:

- Ensure each Directorate is well placed to develop sector leading employer relationships that enhance opportunities for learners.
- Strengthen and extend the use of employers and other stakeholders in curriculum development particularly where sector change is ahead of current qualification specification.
- Work on developing pathways to employment for all Directorates that support progression into careers.
- We will develop a new technology centre at Rainham with a focus on process technology and logistics, informed by the development of the Thames Freeport.

Key risks

- Will employers engage in a meaningful way that allows us to plan and co-design curriculum fit for the contemporary and future labour market?
- Capital funding availability to facilitate the next stage of development for our Rainham campus.

Carefully Considered Diversification

We will continue to be highly dependent on government funding. However, the outlook for government finances suggests that diversification strategies should be investigated with renewed interest. These should align to our core markets, be supportive of our overall mission and be in areas where risk is well understood.

We will:

Explore these and other opportunities that meet the criteria set out above:

Opportunity	Why?	Risks
Launching a professional services B2B Business school. An offer based around organisational development could build on our teaching research expertise	Our proximity to Canary Wharf and the City gives us access to a large potential market	This is a market with significant competition. The offer would need to be unique and compelling
Adding a third language school to our portfolio	We have tested expertise here and despite market changes, our existing two schools are making good progress	A third school may not offer economies of scale if not properly integrated. Market conditions could deteriorate given current global economic uncertainty
Delivering year zero (a transition year for students who do not meet degree entry requirements) for London based universities	Funding rates for year zero courses have been reduced presenting an opportunity for universities to engage with colleges to deliver this provision	This would be a new market for NCC and we would need to build credibility and capacity

Key risks

- Ensuring we set clear criteria for income diversification within a framework that provides appropriate oversight.
- Ensuring that any new diversification opportunities align with our vision and overall strategic direction.

A Step Change in our Campus Environments

Central to our plans is the need to refresh our estate. Our complex and diverse ten campuses need significant investment. Some of that is in place but we need to do much more and, with routes to finance uncertain, our ambition may be constrained. We will need to persuade policy makers of return on investment against a challenging fiscal backdrop.

We have invested considerably in our estate over the past five years and will continue to do so. The intent here is to transform campuses at scale with a masterplan for each. This is not achievable in a five year window but we will establish a costed plan as a clear route to completion.

We will:

- Develop a clear and costed asset plan for each site based on our local curriculum aspiration.
- Seek innovative ways to fund our plan that draw on private partnerships where this is appropriate.
- Release capital funds from partial site rationalisation where that aligns to our strategic intent.

Key risks

- Will we be able to leverage sufficient capital from assets and funding sources to achieve our plans?

Developing our Voice as a Sector and Policy Influencing College

We have a strong track record of innovation. This will continue. We are already market leader in ESOL where our provision is large and consistently outstanding. We will leverage this position to further influence policy and do the same for English and Maths where our approaches are already garnering interest from policy makers.

Our intent here will be to use our strengths as levers for change. We can do this through exemplary provision and ensuring that we are a clear regional and national voice. This will mean empowering staff at all levels to speak for the college about what we do well and what policy change we need to see. We do this already through the networks and policy groups we are part of, and do so for the benefit of the sector and our students.

We will:

- Empower a wider group of staff to engage with policy and practice networks.
- At a senior level, engage proactively with policy makers to shape skills policy.
- Be an active voice in our sector bodies, shaping thinking based on our expertise.
- Engage in the development and dissemination of research such that we become known as sector informing for further education pedagogy.
- We will continue to be the regional leading provider of ESOL and develop our influence further such that policy aligns to the needs of learners and employers.
- We will be the sector leader in Maths and English provision and pedagogy.

Key risks

- Will our voice, influencing and messaging lead to real change that benefits learners?
- Will our research led approach to pedagogy shift teaching practice at scale across NCC?

The successful delivery of our Strategic Intent will be dependent upon key enablers. Much of this is already in place: We are a confident and strong provider with a research-based approach to teaching improvement. We must also support our staff to do what they do best with appropriate workload and wellbeing strategies. We will maintain our Outstanding profile for our curriculum and financial health.

As we develop our plans over the coming five years and beyond, we must maintain focus on risk and ensure we maintain and build sufficient resilience. And of course, we must always remember that the true measure of success or otherwise will be determined by the extent to which we enable students to achieve their ambitions and their future prospects.

New City College in 2030

By 2030, the college will:

Be firmly established as a market leader for 16-18 provision with a curriculum that allows students to excel and progress to the next stage of their education or career.

Be a highly respected sector voice, influencing policy for the benefit of our students.

Be recognised as a leading provider of SEND, specialising in provision for students with neuro-diversity.

Have refocused our adult provision to higher level courses with each curriculum areas demonstrating deep and productive relationships with employers.

Have realigned our Higher Education offer and diversified our income through careful consideration of opportunities that align with our strategic objectives.

Have further enhanced our position as a pioneer of sustainability for the sector.

Continue to lead our development as an organisation through a research focused approach to teaching improvement.

Have made substantial progress on a comprehensive estates strategy, overcoming funding challenges through innovative funding approaches.

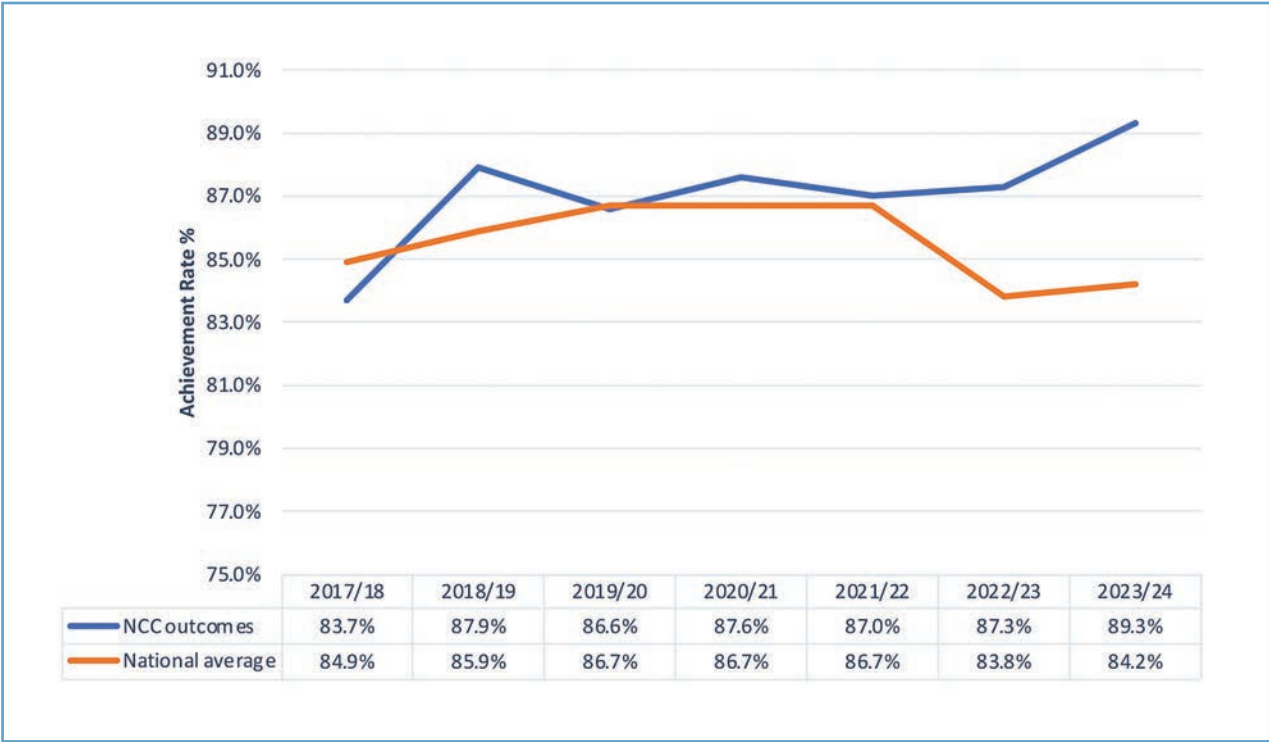
Be recognised as the leading employer in our sector, enabling staff to achieve their potential.

We will demonstrably live our vision: **To give students a better future.**



Appendix: Student Outcomes

NCC Achievement Rates 2017/18 – 2023/24



NCC Strategic Intent 2025-2030

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