

NCG Accountability Statement 2025/26

1. NCG Mission and Purpose

NCG's strategic curriculum intent is set out in **Our Strategy Towards 2030**, which is defined at corporate level through our mission and vision:

Mission: Enabling social mobility and economic prosperity through exceptional education

Vision: To be the UK's leading college group recognised for our local impact, national influence, and reach.

NCG's mission sets out the ambition we aim to realise, whilst our vision describes how we will know when we get there. To underpin both, we have six strategic themes that are based on fundamental pillars of the organisation (Quality, Curriculum, People, Facilities, Finance and Reach). Our focus in each theme is on continuous improvement towards excellence, and each theme intrinsically supports our curriculum strategy delivered through our national network of colleges.

We are a family of seven colleges bound by the same mission, strategic aims and a number of business-critical policy frameworks. However, each college retains a very unique identity which is based on its heritage, its curriculum and its place in the community. We work collaboratively through the theme 'One NCG' to ensure that wherever possible, we develop common approaches to the National and Regional Skills Priorities, whilst ensuring that each college has the flexibility to be able to respond to specific local skills needs.

That way we ensure that each NCG college remains embedded at the heart of its local civic infrastructure, whilst drawing on all the benefits of being part of a large national group.

Using our Indefinite Taught Degree Awarding Powers, NCG is also uniquely placed to address the current national and regional skills gap at Level 4 and 5, indeed we are already trailblazing in co-development of Higher Technical Qualifications with our partners.

2. NCG Strategic Aims and Objectives

As part of our development of the NCG Strategy to 2030 we reviewed and consulted on the strategy in 2024 to ensure its relevance for the next 5 years. The review confirmed that the vision, mission and strategic themes are still valid and will carry NCG forward to 2030. The strategic objectives are underpinned by a set of strategic KPIs and plans that are overseen by the NCG board and its sub-committees. The key themes are:

- Exceptional Teaching, Learner Experience and Outcomes
- Innovative, Relevant Courses and Qualifications
- Ambitious and Responsible Educators and Leaders
- Outstanding Digital and Physical Learning Environments
- Financial Sustainability Powering Reinvestment
- Impactful External Engagement and Civic Commitment where we operate

The updated strategy and strategic aims were approved by the NCG Corporation in November 2024 and the KPIs are measured and refreshed on an annual basis.

Each NCG college has its own college strategy which aligns to local skills needs and the NCG Strategy. As with the NCG strategy, the colleges have reviewed their college strategy, they will be in place for the start of the 2025/26 academic year.

There is also a statement of local curriculum intent. The curriculum intent is reviewed, to ensure it remains relevant in its efficacy (self-assessment). Our local curriculum intent is tested routinely with college boards and other local stakeholders and periodically through Ofsted Inspection.

When determining our curriculum strategy, we will pay heed to four key drivers:

1. Our Strategic Mission and Vision
2. National and regional economic context
3. Emerging government national and regional policy ambition
4. Local skills requirements and stakeholder needs

[NCG-Strategy-to-2030.pdf \(ncgrp.co.uk\)](https://ncgrp.co.uk/NCG-Strategy-to-2030.pdf)

3. The Community NCG Serves

Our colleges are each located in their own distinctive geography and serve a specific local demographic:

- Carlisle College - the single FE college in Cumbria's only city, works closely with the other 3 Cumbrian colleges to ensure a coherent FE offering for that area.
- Kidderminster College - serves the Wyre Forest area of Worcestershire to the West of Birmingham, reaching into the fringes of the Black Country.
- Lewisham College - sits at the heart of the vibrant SE London Borough with its main campus on Lewisham Way. It is a community-focussed college with a large adult and ESOL provision.
- Newcastle College – serves the city of Newcastle upon Tyne and combined authority North of Tyne, as well as large parts of Gateshead, Derwentside, South Tyneside, and Durham. It also offers sector-specialist vocational and technical education across the wider NE region and beyond.
- Newcastle Sixth Form College - is a specialist, high-quality and inclusive provider of A Levels to the city of Newcastle upon Tyne and surrounding areas.
- Southwark College - located on The Cut close to Waterloo Station, serves the diverse borough of Southwark, with a growing focus on the working population that travels to the borough each day.
- West Lancashire College - located in the town of Skelmersdale, serves a broad population spread from the fringes of Greater Manchester to the outskirts of Liverpool. The college is also the base for our national online learning offer.

Each College is positioned as an anchor institution within their community and also is actively engaged with local stakeholders. More recently, this has included the Employer Representative Bodies (ERBs) within the area to inform and then deliver the local LSIPs. The specific demographics and local geographies are set out in each college's local document.

4. Process followed by NCG to meet Statutory Requirements

As a national group of colleges, NCG has a process to meet this statutory requirement which maximises the local knowledge and expertise of its local governance arrangements and the wider stakeholder groups to review their college's provision in relation to accountability statement aims /targets as well as its Local Needs Duty. In 2023/24, NCG undertook a review of its local governance arrangement to better meet changing demands and assuring local skills needs were being addressed. A revised model of governance was introduced which has a place-based priority. College Boards are more focused on local skills and fulfil an Advisory, Advocacy and Assurance role. Place-based governance is a collaborative, stakeholder model of governance in which the NCG Corporation Board, its committees and local college boards, work together within clearly defined parameters to ensure that decision-making is informed by the needs of all our key stakeholder communities. In developing the Accountability Statement for NCG, the following process was followed by all 7 colleges:

- Each college produced a draft Accountability Statement based on its own research and consultation relevant to its local area. For 2025/26 this includes a review that the college is satisfying the Local Needs Duty.
- Key to developing the statement is direct engagement with larger employers, Employer Representative Bodies (ERBs) and those responsible for producing the LSIPs.
- The draft Accountability Statement is discussed locally under the governance arrangements and is also taken to a broad range of stakeholders for consultation and input including employers, other education providers and civic bodies and community groups.
- The stakeholders are also consulted with on the extent to which the college offer meets the local skills needs and national priorities.
- The college accountability statement is modified as a result of the feedback from the consultation process.
- A statement on the colleges success in meeting the local skills and national priorities is agreed and identifies how this could be further improved.

- A final version is agreed with NCG Executive and checked for alignment to the NCG strategic priorities and satisfying the Local Needs Duty.
- The final version of the College Accountability Statements is incorporated into the NCG Accountability Statement.
- This NCG Accountability Statement is reflective of the skills needs across NCG's scope of operation and has been developed and robustly challenged through a comprehensive consultation process including community representatives, employers, civic bodies and other education providers.
- The NCG Accountability Statement including the statement on how well NCG meets the local skills needs and national priorities, Local Needs Duty, is presented to the NCG Corporation for approval.

5. National Policy Overview

The key policy focus for 2025/26 and beyond for NCG will be to continue the implementation the Further Education curriculum reforms for Post-16 Education, alongside responding to the national skills priorities. We will:

- Ensure the curriculum offer to meet local and national skills needs as identified in LSIPs, now and Local Growth and Industrial Strategies in the future.
- Contribute and respond to curriculum and funding reforms
- Develop Higher Skills especially at levels 4 and 5.

The overarching NCG approach to national priorities is covered in the Strategic Aims of each of the colleges.

6. NCG Contribution to National, Regional and Local Priorities

The key policy focus for 2024/25 and beyond for NCG will be to continue the implementation of the FE White Paper – 'Skills for Jobs', particularly the changes enacted through the Skills and Post-16 Education Act 2022, alongside responding to the qualification and Higher Education reform. Across its 7

colleges, NCG will address all the National Skills Priorities shown below except for Haulage and Logistics. This national priority is not pertinent to the local areas in which the NCG colleges operate, or it is actively being addressed by another provider in that location area. This will continue to be monitored as part of the Local Needs Duty.

- Construction
- Manufacturing
- Digital and Technology
- Health and Social Care
- Haulage and Logistics
- Engineering
- Science and Mathematics

The focus on national skills priorities will include:

- Ensuring the local curriculum offer meets the local and national skills needs as identified in LSIPs, Local Growth or Industrial Strategies, now and in the future.
- Contributing to and responding to, curriculum and funding reforms.
- Developing Higher Technical Skills.

7. NCG Accountability Statement overarching Aims and Objectives

NCG Strategic Aims /Objectives	Impact and/or Contribution towards National, Regional and Local Priorities for Learning and Skills
<p>Aim/Objective 0.1:</p> <p>Develop provision for SEND learners to enable them to stay within their local area.</p>	<p>NCG colleges will strengthen collaborative partnerships with local authorities across our regions to further refine our inclusive offer for learners with SEND, with the aim of delivering in County placement offers that meet needs.</p> <p>Work with Local Authorities to identify funding that would enable improvements or new facilities to support SEND delivery in our colleges</p> <p>Review our cost model for SEND to provide vfm for learners.</p>
<p>Aim/Objective 0.2:</p> <p>Introduce new initiatives to recruit and retain staff to teach and work in FE.</p>	<p>In line with our People Plan, over the course of 2025/26 we will introduce a number of initiatives to address the staffing challenges in FE.</p> <p>Improve recruitment using the People 25 project including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving recruitment channels and processes • Improve the way we advertise • Develop an attraction strategy to promote NCG as an employer of choice • Ensure a better onboarding experience where the induction and probation period are used to strengthen the commitment to a career with NCG <p>Our Colleges will develop initiatives to work with local employers to bring experts in from</p>

	<p>industry to support deliver in to support hard to recruit areas.</p> <p>The Leadership hub will develop a retention strategy for managers including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a Leadership guarantee programme which will run for 18-month programme development journey to develop strategic leadership skills to improve organisational performance. • Formalise a coaching initiative for new and aspiring middle managers
<p>Aim/Objective 0.3:</p> <p>Learner Data Academy</p> <p>The NCG Learner Data Academy has been established with the aim of recruiting and retaining talent for our Learner Data Service and the wider community of NCG data practitioners. It will also nurture a culture of professionalism and enable us to maintain consistent operating standards.</p>	<p>FE learner data is a very specialised subject and recruiting experienced staff with the necessary knowledge has proven to be difficult. The Academy will help us to “grow our own” talent by recruiting new entrants ideally from our students and develop them in house. Some of these colleagues will progress to more senior NCG roles, but we recognise that others will be attracted to work elsewhere in the sector. This will bring its own benefits by enhancing NCG's the reputation as a learning organisation committed to the development of professionalism in FE. We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify a partner provider to deliver learner data apprenticeships training in June 2025 • Commence the first cohort of apprentices from existing staff in September 2025 • Design an apprentice data practitioner programme customised to our specific needs for launch in 2026

Due to the geographically dispersed nature of NCG as a college group, each of our colleges has undertaken its own local review to identify how well it is meeting the local needs. This is a place based review engaging with and responding to feedback from local stakeholders. This has enabled the specific challenges and needs of the local area to be identified and reported on to NCG Corporation and included in the NCG Accountability Statement. The colleges response has been agreed by their College Board Chair and addressed the following headings:

- The College Purpose
- Context and Place
- Engagement with key stakeholders and providers
- Strategic aims and targets
- Links to supporting documentation
- Local needs duty statement

The College statements can be found in the appendices:

- Appendix B - Carlisle College
- Appendix C - Kidderminster College
- Appendix D - Lewisham College
- Appendix E - Newcastle College
- Appendix F - Newcastle Sixth Form College
- Appendix G - Southwark College
- Appendix H - West Lancashire College

8. NCG Local Needs Duty

NCG is meeting its local needs duty in its area of operation across the country as well as supporting the national skills priorities.

NCG provides a framework through its executive and its governance arrangements that enable the Corporation to satisfy itself that it is meeting the local needs duty.

Each college has demonstrated that it is meeting the local skills needs in its geographical area as well as contributing to the wider skills needs of its the region as well as contributing towards the national priorities.

This is confirmed by the College Boards who have specific knowledge of the local skills needs and opportunities.

NCG has reviewed and refreshed its governance arrangements to provide better advice and oversight in developing a skilled workforce. Local college board members are drawn from the four key Ofsted stakeholder groups (employers, educators, civic and community) and have knowledge of the local skills demands and challenges.

NCG has set its 3 high level aims that are aligned to the broader activity of NCG and cut across all our colleges to enable them to meet priority skills needs. These are supported by more specific, local objectives that are identified, developed and agreed at college level. Together the two sets of objectives provide comprehensive targets for NCG.

To complement the local arrangements, NCG has worked to develop regional and national partnerships to provide input into our curriculum offer and planning. Whereas the employer stakeholders have direct input to the local curriculum offer in the college, the national relationships tend to be with sector based ERB and other education providers to provide broader objectives. For example, implementing curriculum reform and planning is developed with national partners such as Activate Learning and LTE and locally with Educational Partners North East and regional Universities. The employer relationships are with organisations such as Chamber of Commerce and CBI.

We recognise the need for continuous improvement, as addressing the skills needs will require a process of reflection and adjustment to meet the changing demands of the external environment. Significant progress has been made against the previous year's aims/objectives and new challenges are emerging.

The colleges have recognised that there is more to be done around the skills needs for Digital, Health and Care, Engineering and Construction trades. The green economy and sustainability is a theme that cuts across most areas.

In some areas Hospitality and the Visitor Economy remains a regional priority and more will need to be done to meet these needs.

Where NCG does not offer much training in a subject area such as Haulage and Logistics, we will work with and support other providers to meet the local needs.

Although NCG is involved in a great number of partnerships at local and national level, we recognise that we need to continue to build on this success to provide a comprehensive approach to meeting the skills needs.

9. NCG Corporation / Governing Body statement

On behalf of the NCG corporation, it is hereby confirmed that the NCG plan as set out above and in the individual college accountability statements, reflects an agreed statement of purpose, aims and objectives as approved by the Corporation at its meeting on 20 May 2025.

The plan will be published on the college's website within three months of the start of the new academic year and can be accessed on the NCG website:
www.ncgrp.co.uk

Chair of Governors	Chief Executive and Accounting Officer
John Widdowson	Liz Bromley