NWSLC
NORTH WARWICKSHIRE & SOUTH LEICESTERSHIRE COLLEGE

# North Warwickshire and South Leicestershire College (NWSLC)

# Access and Participation Statement 2026-2027

## Introduction

North Warwickshire and South Leicestershire College is a medium sized general further education College that serves south Leicester and Leicestershire and the north of Warwickshire including the districts of Blaby, Oadby and Wigston, Harborough and the boroughs of Nuneaton and Bedworth, North Warwickshire, and Hinckley and Bosworth.

The College operates from campuses in South Wigston, Nuneaton, Hinckley town centre and a further specialist construction centre in Hinckley. The College also operates from the MIRA Technology Institute (MTI), a bespoke global skills centre on the grounds of MIRA Technology Park, created to satisfy an ever-increasing demand for specialist skills in the automotive and engineering sectors.

Crossing the boundaries of the East and West Midland regions, the College has developed a dynamic curriculum that effectively meets the priorities of both the Leicester and Leicestershire Local Skills Improvement Plan and West Midlands and Warwickshire Local Skills Improvement Plan. The College also currently works with the West Midlands Combined Authority and the coalition of Councils, Combined Authorities, Universities and businesses to regularly review and develop its curriculum to ensure it is aligned to student and employer needs, addresses skills gaps, and meets local skills improvement plans.

The College offers a diverse range of qualifications from entry level to degree level across 15 Subject Sector Areas, meeting the needs of students, employers, local communities and addressing the skills priorities outlined in the UK's Modern Industrial Strategy (2025).

The College offers seamless progression routes for students from Level 3 programmes on to higher education programmes and continues to grow its higher adult education provision to ensure that educational routes are affordable and accessible to all, including those who, due to various barriers, (social, emotional, financial, limiting responsibilities) may not be able to otherwise access Higher Education, as well as those returning to education as mature students.

The College recognises the national shortfall in the percentage of the population holding level four and above qualifications and the significant impact this has on the overall national skills shortage in the UK and the economy. The College are committed to increase participation in further and higher education through accessible and flexible delivery modes to enable individuals to develop the skills they need at every stage of their lives.

NWSLC is proud to offer a diverse and expanding range of Higher Education programmes including a portfolio of BTEC Higher National qualifications (including a suite of BTEC Higher Technical Qualifications), as well as foundation and top up degree programmes through validation arrangements with partner universities  We value our continuing partnerships with Coventry University and The University of West London and remain alert to the benefits of diversifying and creating new partnerships and progression opportunities.

Our Higher Education provision enables students to study locally for a variety of higher level academic and professional qualifications, enhancing skill levels and career progression opportunities. The average 'travel to learn distance' for HE students studying at the College is 8 miles, compared to 16 miles for other FE Colleges and 55 miles for other Higher Education Institutions. (MiDES Higher Education Report)

## Context and Strategic Priorities

The College serves areas that continue to experience significant deprivation and social inequality. The English Indices of Deprivation 2025 (IMD25) confirm that deprivation remains widespread across both the East and West Midlands, with a high proportion of neighbourhoods within the College's catchment ranking as some of the most deprived nationally.

Despite gradual improvement over time, the proportion of residents holding Higher Education qualifications at Level 4 or above remains below the England average. Latest ONS Annual Population Survey data indicates that approximately 47% of the working age population in England hold Level 4 qualifications or above, compared with around 42% in the West Midlands and lower proportions across parts of the East Midlands, including Nuneaton and Bedworth.

Participation rates in Higher Education for young people within the College's local area remain low. Office for Students TUNDRA data continues to identify many local neighbourhoods within Quintiles 1 and 2, demonstrating persistent underrepresentation in Higher Education.

Labour market conditions remain particularly challenging for young people. National youth unemployment rose to approximately 15.8% in late 2025. The West Midlands continues to record some of the highest youth unemployment rates nationally, and local data for Nuneaton and Bedworth remains above the national average.

North Warwickshire and South Leicestershire College is committed to improving access, success and progression for all students, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds and those coming from non-traditional routes into Higher Education.

Office for Students Access and Participation data demonstrates that the College recruit from a diverse community. In 2023/24 62.5% of our Full Time Higher Education student population was drawn from areas with the lowest higher education initial participation rates (TUNDRA quintiles 1 and 2) and 24.5% from the UK's most deprived areas (IMD Quintile 1 and 2). 43.7% of students undertaking higher level qualifications at NWSLC in 2023/24 were aged 21 or above with 28.2% declaring a disability on enrolment. (OfS Access and Participation Data Dashboard). In 2023/24 53% of NWSLC's HE student population consisted of students studying part time compared to 36% at other FE Colleges and 23% at other Higher Education Institutions. (MiDES Higher Education Report, May 2023)

## Our Mission

Our mission is 'To create success through learning'. empowering students, strengthening communities, and supporting employers to thrive in a changing world. Our vision is that we will be recognised as an irresistible learning partner for individuals and businesses, driving productivity and growth across the East and West Midlands.

We are ambitious for the diversity of people living across Warwickshire, Leicestershire and beyond and aim to:

- Deliver outstanding teaching, learning and assessment
- Prepare our students and apprentices to meet skills demands
- Meet skills demands through a collaborative and creative curriculum
- Be a high performing, caring and ambitious workforce
- Be financially sustainable and invest in high quality resources

## Strategic Plan

We have listened to employers, local communities, students, and staff to develop strategies to help us make a positive difference to the communities we serve. We keep abreast of major changes taking place in our local economies and the vital role that education can play. We believe that we can help local people, businesses, and organisations to grow through learning and the acquisition of new skills and competencies. NWSLC Strategic Plan

## Accountability Statement

Our Accountability Statement sets out the priority outcome targets for our College curriculum on an annual basis and reflects how the College contributes to the priorities outlined in Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs) in liaison with Employer Representative bodies and other local, regional and national stakeholders. NWSLC Accountability Statement

## Curriculum Strategy

We are passionate about learning, teaching and assessment and are totally committed to the success of our learners. Every year we support more than 10,000 people to gain skills and qualifications, that positively change their lives and enable them to progress in their individual education journeys or directly into employment. We have a wide range of education programmes designed to meet the needs of our students and the needs of our employers, both locally and regionally, set out in our curriculum strategy. NWSLC Curriculum Strategy

Our Higher Education Curriculum Strategic Intent is to:

- Continue to provide equal opportunities for all students, from all backgrounds, to access and succeed in Higher Education and to progress into successful higher-level careers or further study.
- Continue to offer students a personalised and supportive Higher Education experience which enables them to succeed on their courses and after graduation.
- Increase participation through accessible and flexible study modes, allowing more people to upskill and retrain throughout their lives, moving towards the flexibility envisaged by the Lifelong Learning Entitlement.
- Be responsive to economic need for a highly skilled workforce and bridge the skills gaps that are not currently filled by graduates. Including the development of level 4/5 higher technical qualifications which meet sector recognised standards.
- Ensure National Student Survey results remain in the upper quartile.

## Access and Participation Priorities 2026-27

The College is committed to promoting Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) for all those who help to shape our college community (learners, staff, governors, employers and wider stakeholders within our areas of work and sphere of influence). We believe that all individuals have the right to be valued and respected equally and to be provided with equality of opportunity.

We aim to create a positive and inclusive ethos with a shared commitment to advancing opportunity, challenging and eliminating stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination, and fostering good relations across our community.

The College is fully committed to actively promoting shared values that include equality, diversity and social inclusion. We aim to achieve this by involving our community and valuing their contribution to the delivery of our work. We actively listen to and engage with our stakeholders to continually develop our work in this area.

North Warwickshire and South Leicestershire College is proud to work with the Association of Colleges (AOC) and has signed up to the AOC Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Charter. By embedding the objectives and commitments of the Charter, we aim to ensure that:

- The College is an inclusive and safe environment for all.
- Leaders and governors actively demonstrate their commitment to equality.
- The College supports staff and students to challenge discrimination and harassment.
- We take action to identify and address systemic inequality.
- We provide equity of opportunity and fair outcomes for everyone.
- The College reflects the communities it serves, celebrating and valuing diversity.

- We provide professional development to staff to embed equality and diversity in all areas of our work.
- We proactively review and address the impact of our policies and practices on equality.

To improve access, success and progression for students on our Higher Education programmes, the College has identified the following key access and participation priorities:

- **Clear Information, Advice and Guidance.**
- **An affordable fee policy.**
- **Effective marketing.**
- **Fair access, effective admissions and guaranteed progression pathways.**
- **Pastoral and academic support to secure positive outcomes for students.**
- **Flexible modes of study.**
- **Partnership working to improve Access and Participation.**

**Clear Information, Advice and Guidance**

- The College recognises the importance of clear information, advice and guidance to meet the needs of students from a diverse range of backgrounds, including those returning to study or coming from non-traditional routes into Higher Education. To ensure that those needs can be met we will aim to ensure that accurate information is available to prospective students through:
- Our Higher Education publications and website content.
- Our Higher Education marketing and promotional campaigns.
- Our well-established partnerships with Higher Education Institutes, local schools and communities.
- Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS).
- Our pre-entry guidance, (Higher Education Open Events / Interviews / Taster Days).
- A thorough HE Induction programme and centralised Moodle page for all HE student information.

**A Clear and Affordable Fee Policy**

The College aims to provide a high-quality learning, teaching and training experience for its students whilst maintaining tuition fees (within the basic fee level) that are affordable and commercially appropriate to both students and employers.

We continue to utilise funding to widen participation for example utilising grant funding to widen access for students from disadvantaged backgrounds, improve support provision for disabled students and providing financial support to students facing financial hardship.

**Effective Marketing**

The College has a successful record of recruitment and progression within the Higher Education cohort, it does, however, recognise the need for diverse and effective marketing and recruitment strategies to ensure policy and practice are responsive. The Higher Education provision has been ‘branded’ and continues to promote and recruit by emphasising its unique qualities and opportunities. The marketing team within the College will ensure continuing publicity for Higher Education by adopting differing approaches to recruitment activities.

We currently use several marketing techniques such as newspaper advertising, radio commercials, social media, open events, Schools information events and employer information events.

A full audit is carried out on an annual basis to ensure that all public information is compliant with the Competition and Markets Authority's (CMA) guidance for Higher Education providers on Consumer Protection Law.

**Fair Access, Effective Admissions and guaranteed progression routes.**

The College is committed to excellence in admissions and aims to provide a professional, fair, equal and transparent service to all applicants. The College aims to recruit students who have the potential to meet the demands of and benefit from their programme and is committed to widening participation.

The College takes every possible step to ensure that no prospective student or applicant is treated unfavourably on the grounds of race, colour, nationality, ethnic origin, gender, gender identity, marital status, family responsibilities, disability, age, sexuality, political or religious beliefs, social class, trade union activity, being an ex-offender (there are some courses which are exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act due to the nature of the work they will undertake. Where this is the case that information will be provided in the course information), or other unreasonable grounds.

The College's Recruitment Policy and Higher Education Admissions Policy outline the admissions procedures which seek to eliminate barriers to access, support inclusion and provide the framework for admissions practice relating to Universities and Colleges Admissions Service.

These policies are underpinned by high quality careers advice and guidance provision.

In partnership with Coventry University, the College has developed and implemented a progression framework that guarantees eligible students a clear route to higher education. Under this agreement, students studying Level 3 or higher qualifications at NWSLC are granted the right to progress directly to the next level of study at Coventry University, provided they achieve a pass grade and receive a tutor-endorsed progression recommendation.

The process is streamlined through direct entry applications, significantly reducing the barriers and administrative burden associated with traditional university admissions. This approach ensures accessible and efficient progression opportunities for students across the majority of subject sector areas.

**Pastoral and Academic Support to Secure Positive Outcomes for Students**

The College is committed to supporting all students from all backgrounds to access, succeed in, and progress from higher education.

To support students' pastoral and academic needs during their higher education study the College provides:

- Initial assessments in Maths and English to ascertain starting points for students.
- Digital cognitive screening and access to neuroscience-driven insight modules via Cognassist platform to support academic and professional success.
- A dedicated Higher Education Induction Programme to introduce students to the College, resources, Terms and Conditions for HE Students, academic regulations and access to learning support.
- Designated academic and pastoral tutorials to support students with individual / diverse needs, review progress and support achievement.
- A dedicated Higher Education Moodle page which acts as a central point for all key information, policies, resources and signposting to support services.
- Regular Student Forums, at programme level, to gather in year student feedback.
- Workshops to support academic study and IT skills.
- Educational visits and residentials to enhance research and study skills relevant to vocational pathways.
- Guest speakers from industry to enhance industry knowledge and requirements.

- Valuable work experience and / or collaborative projects with industry to strengthen links to employment.
- Timetabling flexibility to accommodate the personal commitments of students.
- Support with Disabled Students' Allowance applications and dyslexia assessments.
- IT resources such as laptops, and our Virtual Learning Environment ‘Moodle’ to ensure all students have access to resources which will enable success and help overcome barriers to retention.
- Support for students in financial hardship through the Access to Learning Fund.
- Access to affordable on-site nursery facilities.
- The College Chaplaincy builds strong links with students across all campus locations. The Chaplaincy expatiates the values of tolerance and respect of those with different faiths and beliefs through a broad range of initiatives and programmes including pastoral support, student mediation sessions, charity work and religious education programmes.

**Disabled Students Allowance and Reasonable Adjustments**.

Disabled Students Allowance (DSA) is extra support funded by the government to cover any additional study related costs that students may incur because of a mental health condition, long term illness or any other disability.

DSA can support students in the provision of:

- Specialist equipment: Such as computers, software, printers/scanners, audio capture equipment and other software.
- Non-Medical helpers: Such as specialist note takers, communication support workers sign language interpreters, specialist mentors and specialist on-to-one study skill support works.
- General Allowance: For any additional costs such as printing.
- Travel Allowance: To cover extra travel costs, you have because of your disability for example if you need to get a taxi to College instead of public transport.

Students who have previously received support via an Education, Health and Care Plan should be aware that a move to Higher Education will cause the EHCP to cease. An application for DSA is therefore advised in order to ensure that appropriate support is in place to support study in higher education.

Students are encouraged to inform NWSLC about a disability or medical condition as early as possible in the application process, so that relevant reasonable adjustments can be implemented to support successful achievement. Students are asked to indicate on their application and enrolment form that they have a learning difficulty and / or disability and / or health problem and where relevant are encouraged to share their DSA Needs Assessment Report with the College as soon as this is received.

**Flexible Modes of Study**

The College maintains a flexible approach to teaching and learning, offering flexible Higher Education learning programmes to ensure learning is available for all. This includes recent developments in online blended learning opportunities. We will continue to monitor market trends and demands to ensure the provision meets the needs of local and wider industry.

From January 2027, the College will deliver Higher Education provision aligned to the Lifelong Learning Entitlement (LLE). This will include modular, credit-based Level 4 and 5 provision designed to support adult learners to upskill and reskill through flexible study patterns, including part-time and blended delivery. LLE-funded provision will particularly support learners from under-represented and disadvantaged backgrounds in line with national skills priorities.

From September 2026, the College will significantly increase part-time Higher Education study options in leadership and management training, delivered from a new Nuneaton town centre campus. This development aims to improve geographic accessibility and widen participation for working adults and carers.

**Partnership working to improve Access and Participation.**

**Coventry University Group Access and Participation Plan: Lifelong Learning Progression Framework**

NWSLC have a longstanding and successful partnership with Coventry University. Existing partnership work includes a validation agreement to run degree level top-up programmes in Creative Practice and Creative Computing at NWSLC as well as an automatic progression agreement which enables students successfully completing level 5 qualifications at NWSLC to top up to full degree qualifications at Coventry University.

Access and participation is a critical theme within the Coventry University Group's Education and Student Experience Strategy. Central to the strategy is the development of flexible learning pathways, responding to the changing needs of students and learners and utilising open frameworks.

NWSLC are a strategic partner on the Coventry University Group's Lifelong Learning Progression Steering Group, working collaboratively with other education group members to develop a Lifelong Learning Progression Framework (LLPF). The LLPF will aim to provide the vehicle through which students across the education Group, (including Better Futures MAT, students in the Group's FE College partners and CU Group, and students already within Coventry University) can more easily progress to their next level of study.

**Engagement in Outreach Work to Encourage More Young People to Aspire to Progress Into Higher Education**

The College is a partner of Coventry and Warwickshire's 'UniConnect' Outreach network **'ThinkHigher'.** The network aim to help streamline Higher Education outreach for local schools, as well as exploring new ways of delivering outreach to meet local needs and priorities.

ThinkHigher exists to foster collaborative working across partners to enhance and promote progression to further and higher education for young people from under-represented groups in Higher Education. The network aims to reduce the gap in higher education participation between the most and least represented groups and deliver targeted intervention to support young people to make well-informed decisions about their future education.

The College are a partner of the 'ThinkHigher' steering and strategy group and continues to work collaboratively to develop initiatives to raise the aspirations of young people to progress to further and higher education, particularly those young people where the aspiration or opportunity to progress in to further or higher education is low.

**Schools Outreach**

A Higher Education fair is held at the College each autumn term and is attended by many local and national Higher Education Institutes as well as employers, supporting a diverse range of Information Advice and Guidance for potential applicants for Higher Education programmes. The event provides the opportunity for potential students to meet and discuss progression opportunities.

The College also engages in outreach work by attending post 18 careers events in local schools to promote our Higher Education portfolio of qualifications. As a sponsor of the Midland Academies Trust the College proactively promotes, Higher Education directly to the four schools who are part of the Trust.

**Monitoring and Evaluation**

Monitoring of our Higher Education provision includes a strong focus on student feedback. Student forums are scheduled throughout the academic year and are well attended. Student voice is a standard agenda within academic board meetings and is used to inform quality assurance, self-assessment and curriculum planning processes to ensure that students are provided with an

opportunity to assess and shape their own learning experience. In addition to student forums, students are actively encouraged to participate in the National Student Survey as well as internal questionnaire processes to ensure that the College is responsive to need.

The College is committed to continuous monitoring and improvement of the quality of our Higher Education provision. The College has a dedicated Vice Principal for Higher Education and Adult Programmes and a dedicated Higher Education Quality and Compliance Manager who are responsible for the monitoring of progress against action plans. The annual Higher Education Self-Assessment Report and Quality Improvement Plan measures performance against the Office for Students on-going conditions of registration for Access and Participation, Academic Standards, Quality of Academic Experience and Outcomes for Students.

The monitoring of progress against action plans is completed through a series of internal quality audits and termly quality panel meetings, leading to the on-going development of our annual Higher Education Self-Assessment Report, Quality Improvement Plan and Higher Education strategy which is approved by our Executive Team and Corporation.

**Sources of Information**

Participation measures in higher education

Office for Students Access and Participation Data Dashboard

Office for National Statistics – Local Authority Profiles

MiDES Higher Education Report May 2023