

STRATEGIC PLAN

2023-2026

etc.

education
training
collective

*Fuelling ambition and driving success
in a resurgent Teesside and beyond.*





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Annex A: Strategic Plan Research and Evidence Report
Available on request from the Etc.



ABOUT THE Etc.

The Education Training Collective (the Etc.) is a leading group of vibrant colleges and training providers offering high quality education and training opportunities for learners, communities, and businesses in Teesside and across the UK.

Incorporating Bede Sixth Form College, NETA Training, Redcar & Cleveland College, Stockton Riverside College and The Skills Academy, we provide a full range of courses, training, and apprenticeship opportunities, as well as professional and commercial courses.

We create opportunities for our students, communities, and businesses by raising aspirations, equipping people with the skills they need to get into work and to build rewarding careers, and solving the skills needs of industry and key growth sectors.

We are driven by the twin missions of empowering learners from all backgrounds and communities to achieve their full potential, and enabling employers to find and develop the workforce they need to succeed and grow.



Bede Sixth Form College

Offering a broad, high-quality curriculum, primarily A Levels, but with Applied General Qualifications, GCSEs, and professional services training, alongside a unique Institute for Sport and Education, serving the communities and young people of Billingham and Stockton.



NETA Training

Successful employer-driven vocational training provider specialising in engineering, welding, pipefitting, electrical, gas services and in addition a comprehensive portfolio of commercial training to service the needs of industry.



Redcar and Cleveland college

Leading FE college offering a full range of vocational, higher education and commercial training for young people, adults, apprenticeships, learners with high needs, and local employers. Specialisms in low carbon energy, engineering, health, and construction.



Stockton Riverside College

Established FE college providing a full range of high quality academic, vocational, and higher education courses for young people, adult learners, people in the workforce, apprenticeships, and learners from diverse backgrounds. Sector specialisms in logistics, healthcare, and professional & business services and performing and visual arts.



The Skills Academy

Provides bespoke programmes in a small, nurturing learning environment that supports and celebrates the achievements of young people from all backgrounds and abilities.



With five well-equipped education and training centres at locations across Teesside, and one of the best qualified and most dedicated workforces around. We are among the North East's largest and most successful education and vocational training organisations.



A NATIONAL PLATFORM TO PROMOTE POSITIVE CHANGE

Stockton Riverside College

Foundation Skills students at Stockton Riverside College were among six groups selected nationally to work alongside the House of Lords Environment and Climate Change Select Committee.

The programme offered the learners a chance to share their ideas and have a say by scrutinising government policies on climate change and the environment. Their views fed into a committee report submitted to government.

Baroness Kate Parminster, chair of the House of Lords Environment and Climate Change Select Committee, said: *"We were keen to incorporate the views and ideas of young people, and the students helped give us that in spades."*

OUR STRENGTHS, SPECIALISMS AND ASSETS

Across the Etc. we have built our reputation around some key strengths and specialisms that define our unique offer and distinguish us from other education and training organisations.

These specialisms complement our comprehensive further education offer which covers all major curriculum areas and qualification types.

LOW CARBON ENERGY	We are a UK leader in developing the skilled workforce needed to support the rapidly growing low carbon energy sector in Teesside and nationally. Through our pioneering partnership with BP, GE, and Northern Gas Networks we have created a Tees Valley first - the 'Clean Energy Education Hub' in Redcar - providing opportunities for hundreds of learners, apprentices and businesses to develop specialist low carbon energy skills. We are playing a leading role in preparing the local workforce for the new low carbon jobs being created at the Teesworks site in Redcar. Collaborating with industry partners such as Sembcorp, we are also at the cutting edge of developing new curricula for low carbon and process industries, including hydrogen production, and carbon capture and storage.
ADVANCED MANUFACTURING AND ENGINEERING	Our employer-led curriculum and industry standard training facilities are the first choice for advanced manufacturing and engineering employers in Tees Valley including chemicals and process, renewables, oil and gas, sub-sea, decommissioning, and food & drink manufacturing. Through our Tees Valley Engineering Employer Forum, and working with industry bodies such as ECITB and Opito, we are leading innovators developing new courses and skills curricula equipping the workforce to adapt to new technologies, including digital manufacturing processes. We are also leaders in developing higher-level skills, such as our sector leading Higher Level Apprenticeships and HNDs in advanced manufacturing and engineering. Our commercial short courses are the go-to solution for employers and workers upgrading skills and licenses in scaffolding, lifting and rigging, and health & safety.
LOGISTICS	Our 'Tees Valley Logistics Academy', created in partnership with industry (including PD Ports, Road Haulage Association, Network Rail), is leading the way in tackling skills shortages in this sector which is so vital to the future success of the Tees Valley economy. The Academy is hugely popular and successful, raising awareness in schools about logistics careers, preparing young people and apprentices to enter the industry, helping unemployed adults to retrain for logistics jobs, and upskilling the current workforce through commercial training courses and higher-level skills.
HEALTH & CARE	We have invested significantly in state-of-the-art health and care training facilities and curriculum, positioning us as one of the largest health and social care education providers in Tees Valley. Our comprehensive curriculum offer, from level 2 to T-levels to Foundation Degree, supports the entire workforce journey, preparing young people to enter the sector for the first time, enabling adults to retrain for jobs in healthcare, and upskilling current workers in new technologies and working practices. In collaboration with local NHS and healthcare employers, we offer Tees Valley's leading healthcare workforce development programme, including apprenticeships, T-level placements, and maths and English programmes. We are leading the way in developing the local talent pipeline for this vital sector.

CONSTRUCTION	As industry recognised experts in large-scale civil construction and industrial decommissioning skills, we work closely with Tees Valley Combined Authority and construction businesses to develop the skilled workforce needed to prepare and construct the Teesworks site. Through our Retrofit Academy we are Tees Valley's leading provider of low carbon construction skills, training apprentices and the construction sector workforce in emerging technologies such as PV installation, air source heat pumps, and low carbon cladding, supporting housebuilders and social landlords with the major expansion of new homes and low carbon retrofit in Tees Valley and the UK.
PROFESSIONAL AND BUSINESS SERVICES	Working together with our commercial training partner we are leading the way in developing skills for this key growth sector including: apprenticeships in business, accounting, law, HR, and leadership & management; professional qualifications in finance, law, and management; and higher level skills courses, helping students and people in the workforce to progress to university and higher study.
SOCIAL INCLUSION AND EMPLOYABILITY	<p>Our mission is to support learners from all backgrounds to achieve their potential, lead fulfilling lives, and boost employability to give everyone the chance to get a good job.</p> <p>Through Skills Bootcamps and Sector Routeways we are helping unemployed adults to re-train for new careers with local employers, including engineering, decommissioning, and logistics.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our ESOL and digital skills courses help local people furthest away from employment to learn the basic skills they need for work. • We are one of the country's largest providers of the Prince's Trust TEAM programme, supporting more than 350 unemployed young people each year to boost their employability and make positive progress into education or a job. • Our unique Academy for Performing and Technical Arts, combining further and higher education courses, provides local people with pathways into the performing and visual arts, boosting wellbeing and quality of life, as well as employability. • We are a highly respected provider of education for people with special educational needs and disabilities. Every year our SEND courses help hundreds of local people to improve their life chances and make the most of their talents.

ABOUT THIS PLAN

This Strategic Plan describes our collective vision to fuel ambition and drive success for our learners, communities, and businesses, across Teesside and beyond, and will guide everything we do in the coming years to make our vision a reality.

Covering the period 2023 to 2026, the plan sets out our Strategic Objectives and priorities and highlights the key actions we will take to achieve our goals, with our colleges working as 'one Etc.'

CONTEXT, OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

2.1 Introduction

Our strategy and priorities are based on detailed research identifying key opportunities, trends and challenges in the Tees Valley and UK economy and labour market, in key growth sectors, and in the skills and education sector. The research describes the market context we will be operating in during the coming years and identifies the skills and education priorities our strategy will need to tackle.

The key issues highlighted by the research are summarised here. Annex A (Strategic Plan Research and Evidence Report) presents the research results in more detail and is available on request from the Etc.

2.2 Tees Valley economy and labour market

About the Tees Valley economy

Tees Valley covers five local authority areas (*Darlington, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Redcar and Cleveland, and Stockton-on-Tees*) and is home to 670,000 people, of which 414,000 are of working age.

Tees Valley has a strong business base with almost 18,000 firms operating in the area. It is home to many large-scale global businesses with plants in the region, although the business base is dominated by micro businesses, with 88% of all firms employing fewer than 10 people. The largest employment sectors in Tees Valley are business and professional services, construction, manufacturing and engineering, retail, transport and logistics, and public services (*including healthcare*).

Many people in Tees Valley are not achieving their full economic potential, illustrated by high rates of economic and social exclusion. Unemployment is high (*at 5.1% compared to 3.7% nationally*), and more than 100,000 working age residents are economically inactive. 4.7% of 16–17-year-olds in Tees Valley are known to be NEET (*not in education, training or employment*) compared to 2.6% nationally.

The region's employment rate is lower than the national average (*73% in Tees Valley compared to 78% in the UK*). A higher proportion of Tees Valley's workforce is employed in lower-level occupations (*21% compared to 15% in the UK*) and a lower proportion are in higher skilled jobs (*39% compared to 51% in the UK*).



ECONOMIC GROWTH AND KEY INVESTMENTS

- Tees Valley is embarking on a period of unprecedented investment and growth, led by the Combined Authority and world leading businesses operating in Tees Valley's priority growth sectors, including low carbon energy, advanced manufacturing, logistics, digital, and health & life sciences.
- A number of major strategic investments are leading the way in driving economic growth locally, creating new opportunities for young people and entrants to the labour market, adults re-training for new careers, and people in the workforce looking to progress into higher paid, higher skilled jobs:
 - The Teesworks site at the mouth of the Tees is part of the UK's largest freeport, covering 4,500 acres across 11 industrial zones. It is expected to create around 20,000 new, high quality jobs, primarily in offshore wind, clean energy, and advanced manufacturing. The development of the Teesworks site in the coming years will also be one of the largest industrial construction projects in the UK, creating thousands of new construction jobs.
 - Teesside has secured key investments in a number of renewable energy and low carbon projects including attracting major inward investors such as Equinor, EDF and BP, and UK Government support for 'Net Zero Teesside', the largest carbon capture and storage project in the country. These projects will create thousands of new, high-quality jobs locally.
 - The creation of HM Treasury's Northern Economic Campus in Darlington in 2022 is providing a huge boost to the region's professional and business services industry, employing more than 1,000 people directly by 2025, and supporting many more jobs in local professional services firms.
 - These investments are also stimulating rapid growth and job creation in other supporting sectors, including construction, logistics, professional & business services, and digital technologies.





- As a result of these and other investments, 10,000 job openings per year are expected in Tees Valley up to 2027 (including replacement demand as well as new jobs), with three quarters of jobs requiring higher level skills.
- Two key factors are driving investment and skills demand across the Tees Valley economy, creating the need to upskill current workers and to bring new entrants into the workforce.
 - Transition to low carbon / net zero. TVCA's ambition is to establish Tees Valley as the national capital of clean growth and green energy, and a hydrogen Super Place. This is changing job roles and skills needs across a range of sectors and disciplines including, construction (e.g. low carbon construction technologies such as solar PV, air source heat pumps, hydrogen boilers); energy and engineering (e.g. new renewable energy technologies, new maintenance approaches); advanced manufacturing (e.g. energy efficient production); and logistics (e.g. electric vehicles, hydrogen transport).
 - Digitalisation of economy and society. The pace at which digital technologies are being adopted is accelerating rapidly, changing job roles and skills needs across the economy. This includes higher level skills needed for specialist digital jobs (e.g. software development, manufacturing automation), as well as more basic digital skills needed to work in sectors and jobs across the economy (e.g. digital tracking systems used in logistics, digital records in healthcare).



KEY SKILLS AND RECRUITMENT ISSUES

Skills shortages

Many sectors in Tees Valley are experiencing skills shortages where employers are struggling to fill job vacancies. This is creating significant demand to bring new entrants (young people and adults) into the workforce to fill the new jobs being created, as well as to replace people leaving these industries. There are significant skills shortages in low carbon, engineering and manufacturing, construction, logistics, healthcare, and professional and business services.

Skills gaps

Employers in many sectors are also experiencing skills gaps where current workers lack some of the skills needed to do their jobs effectively. Skills gaps are affecting most sectors in the Tees Valley economy and include adapting to new technologies (e.g. training staff in new digital technologies, or new low carbon and energy efficiency technologies); leadership, management and supervision; project management; problem solving; innovation; health & safety; among others. This is creating significant demand to upskill the current workforce to address these skills gaps.



Intermediate and higher-level skills

There will continue to be a healthy demand in Tees Valley for staff qualified up to level 3 in technical and operational skills (e.g. manufacturing operatives, engineering technicians, healthcare assistants, drivers). However, demand is increasingly shifting towards higher level skills for staff qualified at Level 4 and above (e.g. qualified engineers, construction project managers, nurses, software developers). This shifting balance towards higher level skills will continue in the future, meaning workers will need to remain in education for longer and continually upgrade their skills in the workforce to remain competitive.

STEM skills

As growth in the Tees Valley economy is driven increasingly by technology-led industries, (such as low carbon energy, engineering, advanced manufacturing, digital, life sciences demand and competition for employees with STEM skills and qualifications is increasingly intense.

Employability skills (including basic digital skills)

Employers in Tees Valley continue to emphasise the need for all workers, including new entrants as well as existing employees, to possess strong employability skills, including communication, team working, customer service, and basic maths and English. Strong digital skills are also now increasingly considered a basic requirement for work across most jobs and sectors. These employability skills are becoming more important as employers struggle to find workers to fill job vacancies, and find that current employees lack some of the underlying skills needed to do their jobs.

Growth and opportunity sectors

Tees Valley is home to industries and economic sectors that are performing particularly well and offer exciting prospects for the future. These sectors are boosting productivity and prosperity in Tees Valley, driving demand to upskill the current workforce in new technologies, and creating job opportunities for new entrants.



GROWTH AND OPPORTUNITY SECTORS

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Low carbon energy

This sector is expected to create thousands of new, high-quality jobs in Tees Valley in the coming years in businesses operating at the Teesworks site, as well as major new inward investors and Tees Valley's existing energy and engineering business base. There will also be significant demand for workforce upskilling as businesses re-train staff in new and emerging low carbon technologies. Growing occupations

and skill areas will include renewable energy engineers, wind turbine and maintenance technicians, project management, health & safety, and skilled trades in engineering and fabrication. At least 25% of jobs will be at level 4 or above. The Etc. is already pioneering new low carbon energy skills curriculum and providing industry leading training facilities and programmes, working with key employers such as BP, EDF and Equinor.

Advanced manufacturing and engineering

While new jobs growth will be more modest in this sector there will be significant demand for new employees to replace workers leaving the industry, as well as growing demand to upskill the workforce in response to rapid changes in technology (e.g. growing automation and robotics, energy efficient lean manufacturing). Most skills demand will come from Tees Valley's world leading chemicals and process sector,



its engineering and fabrication businesses, and decommissioning, oil, gas, and subsea firms. Key occupations and skill areas will include engineers, technicians, skilled trades (e.g. welders, electricians), manufacturing operators, project management, and health & safety. The Etc. is already Tees Valley's first choice provider for advanced manufacturing and engineering skills and there is a real opportunity to strengthen this position in the coming years.

Construction

Growing demand for construction skills in Tees Valley is concentrated in particular specialisms and linked to key investment projects, most notably development and construction work at the Teesworks site. Significant new job creation, as well as demand for workforce upskilling, will be generated by large-scale civil construction and industrial decommissioning projects at Teesworks and elsewhere in Tees

Valley. Housing construction and retrofit is also growing significantly, with a focus on the installation of new energy efficient technologies.

Growing occupations include skilled construction trades, construction project managers, technical roles (e.g. engineers, quantity surveyors). There will be significant demand to upskill existing workers in general construction skills (e.g. skilled trades, scaffolding, lifting & rigging, health & safety), as well as the installation of new energy efficiency technologies such as solar PV, air source heat pumps, and low carbon cladding. The Etc. is a leading provider of specialist skills for large-scale civil construction and low carbon construction and should aim to grow this area of activity in the coming years.



Logistics

Tees Valley's transport and logistics sector is growing quickly with a large number of successful local businesses (e.g. Teesport, Teesside Airport, UK-leading road haulage firms) moving goods and people by road, rail, air and sea. As the local economy expands and major investments such as Teesworks and the Freeport significantly increase the scale of production in Tees Valley, the logistics sector will continue to grow. The industry is also acutely affected by skills shortages and recruitment difficulties, so there are many new opportunities for young people and for re-training adults to join the workforce. Key occupations and skill areas will include drivers (HGV, LGV, forklift), warehouse operatives, logistics managers, and digital project managers. There is also demand for workforce upskilling in warehousing, vehicle maintenance, customer services, and team working. Through the Tees Valley Logistics Academy, the Etc. is established as the leading provider of specialist logistics training in the region and is well placed to build on this position in future.

Healthcare

This is a large and important sector in Tees Valley, offering well paid, skilled jobs for thousands of people, and providing a vital service for the local population which is ageing and has a higher-than-average incidence of poor health. While new jobs growth will be modest there will be significant demand for new employees to replace workers leaving the sector, as well as growing demand to upskill the workforce in response to rapid changes in technology (e.g. new treatments, digitisation of patient monitoring). Most demand will come from NHS employers and private businesses, including social care providers, with the key occupations and skill areas required including nurses (across a range of specialisms), nursing

auxiliaries and assistants, care workers, and managers. Over half of all jobs in the sector will require staff qualified at levels 4 or 5 and above. Tees Valley is home to a growing cluster of life sciences companies with significant potential for growth. The sector will also generate demand in upskilling existing workers in health care specialisms (e.g. mental health, dementia), as well as patient care, communication, team working, and digital technologies. Through its partnerships with local NHS employers, the Etc. is one of the largest providers of healthcare education and training in Tees Valley and is well positioned to grow this activity further.

Business and professional services

This is one of the largest employment sectors in Tees Valley, providing tens of thousands of jobs in a range of activities, including financial and legal services; business process outsourcing and contact centres; and marketing, employment and rental agencies. The sector is expected to create thousands of jobs in Tees Valley in the coming years, including new roles as well as replacing people leaving the workforce. Key occupations and skill areas in demand include accountants, bookkeepers, tax assistants, financial managers, lawyers, HR managers, contact centre operators, and customer service representatives. Businesses in this sector also require staff with higher level digital skills, including data analysts, software developers, and cyber security analysts. Basic digital skills are also an increasingly important requirement for all staff as more of the sector's services are digitalised, delivered online and automated. The sector is increasingly reliant on staff qualified at level 4 or above. The Etc. is strengthening its position as an important skills provider in this sector, working in partnership to deliver a range of apprenticeships, as well as technical and professional qualifications.

2.3 SKILLS AND EDUCATION POLICY PRIORITIES

National and regional policy is evolving quickly in response to these changing demands in the local and UK economy. The Government's Skills and Post-16 Education Act (2022) places a new duty on FE colleges and training providers to work closely with employers to align their curriculum and activities to meet the needs of the local economy. This is an important staging post on the journey to ensuring education provision in the UK is closely matched with industry needs, placing employers at the heart of the skills system and ensuring businesses and people have the skills they need to thrive and progress.

This policy is currently being driven forward by the Department for Education through Local Skills Improvement Plans. LSIPs identify employers' skills priorities and the changes needed in local areas to ensure post-16 technical education and skills provision is responsive and flexible in meeting these needs.

LSIPs have been prepared separately covering Tees Valley and the wider North East region, and will be implemented from 2023 onwards. The identified LSIP priorities are very similar across the whole North East. They include addressing skills shortages and gaps in priority growth sectors such as low carbon energy, construction, engineering & manufacturing, health & social care, and professional & business services. The North East LSIPs also highlight the importance of improving employability skills to grow the active workforce and tackle social exclusion, and boosting digital skills across the entire workforce. Crucially, prioritising stronger collaboration between employers and education & training providers is highlighted as vital to the success of the North East LSIPs.

These same priorities are echoed in the Strategic Economic Plans and Skills Strategies of the Tees Valley Combined Authority and the North of Tyne Combined Authority and are guiding how local skills investment in the region is targeted, focused on meeting the skills needs of priority growth sectors, and tackling unemployment and economic exclusion.

The Etc. is already leading the way among education and training providers in demonstrating our commitment to meeting the skills needs of the local economy, exhibited through our close collaborations with employer partners across many industries.

Our strengths and specialisms are very closely aligned with the priorities identified by the economic and labour market evidence, and highlighted in the North East LSIPs and the Combined Authorities' Strategic Economic Plans. As a result, we are strongly positioned at the forefront of delivering on the education and skills priorities of Tees Valley and the wider North East.



GE RENEWABLE ENERGY APPOINTS 14 APPRENTICES

Redcar and Cleveland College

GE Renewable Energy is working with Redcar and Cleveland College to deliver 14 new offshore wind turbine generator technicians. Offering a mix of level 3 and 4 qualifications, the company, which is supplying wind turbines to Dogger Bank Wind Farm, received hundreds of applications.

In offering these opportunities, project director Nathan Fahey and deputy project director Peter Dixon, both originally from Teesside themselves, wanted to give something back to the local area.

Nathan, GE Renewable Energy's project director, said: *"Investing in future talent seemed like the ideal way to make a tangible difference right here in the Tees Valley."*

KEY MESSAGES AND STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS FOR THE Etc.

The research evidence highlights a number of key issues that we must address through our Strategic Plan, and our approach to delivering our education and skills programmes in the coming years. We will:

- **Continue to deliver our core, broad based further education and vocational training curriculum at Levels 1 to 3**, equipping learners with the key skills needed for basic and intermediate jobs across all sectors of the economy, providing pathways into work for all our learners and enabling them to make the most of their talents and opportunities.
- Alongside this we will **adopt a specific focus on six priority sectors**, where our strengths and specialisms align with the opportunities and challenges facing key sectors in Tees Valley, the North East and the wider UK. Our priority sectors are **low carbon energy; advanced manufacturing and engineering; construction; logistics; healthcare; and business & professional services**. In these sectors, we will:
 - Provide additional modules and short courses for our core FE and vocational learners to equip them with the specialist skills and know-how needed for successful careers in these sectors.
 - Continue to build commercial partnerships with employers, providing training to upskill the workforce in the specialist competencies and new technologies required by these fast-changing industries.
 - Extend our existing sector-focused best practice into our other areas (e.g. replicating the Clean Energy Employer Forum model and approach in other priority sectors).
- **Deepen our focus on STEM skills provision**, which will be essential in meeting the current and future skills needs of employers in our six priority sectors.
- **Embed digital skills in all of our curriculum areas and programmes**, equipping learners with the basic digital skills needed increasingly to work in all sectors of the economy and delivering on our commitment to address digital exclusion. Through our further education computing and digital courses, we will also provide a pipeline of students ready to progress into jobs or higher education in digital technologies.
- **Further strengthen our focus on delivering high-quality, impactful employability and social inclusion programmes**, supporting learners from all backgrounds to achieve their potential, giving everyone the chance to get a good job, and providing a skilled and motivated workforce to tackle the skills and labour shortages facing local employers.
- **Expand our work in providing pathways for our learners into higher education**, playing our part in meeting the higher-level skills needs of the local economy. This will include exploring new opportunities to directly provide or feed our learners into Degree Apprenticeships and HE in FE courses, working alongside our university partners.
- **Continually invest in improving our curriculum and facilities, and developing our people**, informed by our learners, businesses and stakeholders. This will enable us to provide all our learners and businesses with the best industry relevant education and training available, aligned to the real world of work.

By focusing our Strategic Plan on addressing these key issues, we will deliver on the priorities of our learners, communities, and businesses, as well as our key stakeholders.

OUR STRATEGY

Introduction

Based firmly on our understanding of the opportunities and challenges that lie ahead, and building on our strengths and specialisms, we have developed a strategy that sets out our collective aspirations for the future. This is expressed in our vision, purpose and values which will guide everything we do in the coming years.



Our Vision

One Etc. - Fuelling ambition and driving success in a resurgent Teesside and beyond.



Our Purpose

The Education Training Collective inspires and equips our people, communities and businesses with the skills, experience, and ambition to grasp opportunities, locally and nationally, boosting prosperity and transforming lives.

Our Values

- High performing, with heart.
- Confident, with absolute focus on success.
- Raising aspiration and ambition, improving opportunities and life chances.
- Proud to serve our students, communities, and businesses.

Our Tone of Voice

Our Tone of Voice is directly influenced by our values

We are not brash, showy or arrogant, we are present and can be relied upon when needed. We don't make claims that we can't uphold, we do celebrate the successes of students, staff and our communities. We are quietly confident – we talk in a friendly voice, one that wants to help, and has a casual, polite manner. No big claims, no jargon, but a smart, self-assured tone of voice that connects with people and offers support.

OUR STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES AND PRIORITIES

We will achieve our vision by focusing on six Strategic Objectives, which describe our priorities up to 2026. Each objective is based on a clear rationale, reflecting our analysis of the key issues, challenges and opportunities facing us in the future.

SO1: Harness the power of our group

SO2: Skills for economic growth and inclusion

SO3: Long-term strategic partnerships

SO4: Employer and learner-led curriculum

SO5: Real world learning environments

SO6: Attract and develop the best staff talent



SO1: To transform opportunities for our learners, communities, and businesses by harnessing the power of our group, delivering as ‘One Etc.’

Analysis and rationale - The Etc. is recognised as one of Tees Valley’s leading further education and vocational training groups. Through our two FE colleges, sixth form college, and vocational training centres our group provides a high-quality FE curriculum, alongside key industry specialisms in low carbon energy, logistics, engineering, construction, healthcare, and business & professional services, as well as specialist social inclusion and employability programmes opening-up new opportunities for disadvantaged learners. While our group’s specialisms and key assets are currently concentrated within individual provider organisations and in specific local areas, over the three years of the Strategic Plan, by delivering as one unified Etc. our specialist facilities and offers will be opened up to more people, communities and businesses across the whole of Teesside and beyond, creating new opportunities for our customers and widening the reach and impact of the entire group.



SO2: To lead the way in delivering on future skills and economic growth priorities, including the transition to net zero, digitalisation, and economic inclusion, based on the Etc.'s reputation as a trusted education provider

Analysis and rationale - Tees Valley is embarking on a period of unprecedented investment and growth, led by the Combined Authority and world leading businesses operating in the region's priority growth sectors, including low carbon energy, advanced manufacturing, logistics, digital, and health & life sciences. Two factors in particular are driving growth and investment in Tees Valley and the wider UK: the transition to net zero and green technologies; and rapid digitalisation of the economy and society. These powerful forces are already changing the content of our curriculum, and transforming the facilities, equipment, and expertise we will need to offer to meet future economic needs and priorities. Our group is very well placed to lead the way in addressing the skills needs of priority growth sectors regionally and nationally, based on our established strengths and specialisms in low carbon energy, advanced manufacturing, logistics, construction, healthcare, and business & professional services. We are also strongly placed to tackle local skills shortages and support a more inclusive economy through our employability programmes, equipping unemployed people of all ages with the skills needed to progress into work.



SO3: To create long-term strategic partnerships, providing new opportunities for all our learners, communities and businesses

Analysis and rationale - The Etc. recognises the crucial role that strong and enduring partnerships play in allowing us to achieve our vision and objectives, and creating opportunities for our learners, communities, and businesses to succeed. We already have many successful strategic partnerships in place with industry, education providers, and others (e.g. our partnership with BP at the 'Clean Energy Education Hub'; our collaboration with NHS employers which is providing a future talent pipeline for this vital sector; our joint programme with the Prince's Trust transforming the life changes of economically excluded young people; and our partnerships with North East universities encouraging local people from all backgrounds to progress into higher education). Tees Valley Combined Authority and our local authorities are also key strategic partners and we will continue to work together to ensure our activities are focused on addressing the skills needs of the region's key growth sectors and local people. Over the next three years we will build new, carefully targeted relationships with partners in Tees Valley and the wider UK to ensure our strategy is a success.



SO4: To develop and enhance our exceptional education and training offer, designed with our employers, learners, and stakeholders

Analysis and rationale - We are committed to continually refreshing and improving our offer to keep pace with the demands of employers and learners, and constant changes in technology, the economy and society. This includes ensuring our learners and businesses are equipped with the skills and knowledge needed to be part of the transition to net zero, the adoption of digital technologies, and to meet the growing demand for higher-level skills, among other changes. This commitment applies to all parts of our education offer, including our general FE and vocational training curriculum, as well as the specialist courses and facilities we provide with industry to upskill the current workforce in our priority sectors. We will design and update our offer in close discussion with employers, learners and stakeholders, evolving constantly to meet their needs.



SO5: To meet the skills needs of key industries and local people by creating engaging learning environments reflecting the real world of work

Analysis and rationale - The economy is changing more quickly than ever before, with rapid changes in digital technology, the introduction of new products and services (e.g. low carbon, healthcare), and new working practices (e.g. remote homeworking) combining to transform the world of work. These drivers are changing the skills that people need to enter the workforce and to develop rewarding careers, and the education experiences they need to equip them for work. We understand the importance of continually adapting our learning environment so that learners and employers have access to the latest equipment, facilities, and experiences, learning in a context that mirrors the real world of work.



SO6: To lead ground-breaking approaches to developing our people, ensuring we attract and develop the best staff talent at the heart of the Etc. offer

Analysis and rationale - We have a great workforce, with some of the best qualified and dedicated staff in Tees Valley delivering high-quality education and training to our learners and businesses. We understand the importance of continually investing in the development of our workforce, who are the heart of the Etc. offer and the reason why learners and employers value our service so highly. It is crucial that staff are supported to continually update their skills and knowledge to keep pace with the latest changes in technology, the world of work, and wider society. It is equally important that we provide an appealing work environment where staff are valued and want to stay for the long-term to develop their careers and be part of our thriving learning community.



LAUNCH OF THE CLEAN ENERGY EDUCATION HUB

Redcar and Cleveland College

Doors have officially opened at Redcar and Cleveland College's Clean Energy Education Hub.

Part of the group's commitment to skills of the future, the hub was made possible by the Redcar Town Deal investment plan.

The hub will specialise in clean and renewable industry training for school leavers and adults. The college has worked in collaboration with Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council and industry giants including bp and Northern Gas Networks, who stepped up to help shape plans.

Darren Winter, Chair of the Redcar Town Deal Board, said: *"The Redcar Town Deal Board is delighted to have been able to support this fantastic project. It will make a positive difference in the lives of people in Redcar and the surrounding area by equipping them with the relevant skills needed now in jobs and in the future, especially in new technologies."*



DELIVERING OUR STRATEGIC PLAN

Our Strategic Plan, up to 2026, focuses on delivering some key priority actions that together will achieve our Strategic Objectives and realise our vision.

These actions will define the work we do as the Etc. to widen the reach and impact of the entire group. The actions will also be prioritised in an annual operational plan, and objectives for each of our colleges, demonstrating how our individual and collective efforts are focused on achieving our shared strategy.

We will deliver the following priority actions up to 2026, aligned to each of our Strategic Objectives.

SO1: To transform opportunities for our learners, communities, and businesses by harnessing the power of our group, delivering as 'one Etc.'

Priority actions up to 2026

- Tackle the skills and recruitment needs of employers in key growth sectors across Teesside by expanding and opening up access to the Etc.'s specialist facilities and courses in low carbon energy, logistics, engineering, construction, professional & business services, and healthcare. This will include expanding Redcar and Cleveland College's UK-leading low carbon skills programmes, and Stockton Riverside College's respected healthcare courses, reaching more businesses and learners across the region as part of an enhanced Etc. offer.
- Share key employer contacts and relationships across the Etc., so that each employer accesses the best specialist facilities and courses to meet their needs, and the group deepens its offer and relationships with strategic employer partners.
- Create communities of practice to pool expertise and pilot new approaches across the group.
- Identify strategic points of contact across the group to liaise with external agencies and stakeholders on skills priorities.
- Share staff expertise, facilities, and equipment across the group, so that learners and employers can access the best support available, regardless of their location in Teesside or beyond.
- Develop and strengthen the Etc. brand and trusted voice at the forefront of promoting the group's offer to businesses and learners and developing relationships with strategic partners.





SO2: To lead the way in delivering on future skills and economic growth priorities, including the transition to net zero, digitalisation, and economic inclusion, based on the Etc.'s reputation as a trusted education provider

Priority actions up to 2026

- Further strengthen the Etc.'s distinctive position as a leading education and skills provider in many of Tees Valley's priority sectors (low carbon energy, advanced manufacturing, logistics, construction, professional & business services, and healthcare), targeting investment in developing staff expertise and the curriculum, facilities, and equipment to meet employer needs in these sectors.
- Embed the latest low carbon skills, knowledge, and technologies in all relevant curriculum areas (focusing on energy, advanced manufacturing & engineering, construction, and logistics) positioning the Etc. as a national leader for low carbon skills provision.
- Train new entrants for sectors expected to create new jobs in Tees Valley (e.g. engineering, logistics, construction, life sciences, professional & business services) as a result of key low carbon investment projects including Teesworks and Net Zero Teesside carbon capture, taking full advantage of retraining initiatives for adults.
- Place digital skills and learning at the heart of our curriculum. This means teaching the latest digital skills (e.g. software development, automation, robotics, sensor technologies) needed by key industries such as advanced manufacturing, logistics, healthcare, digital, and professional & business services. It also means equipping all learners with the basic digital skills now needed to work in all sectors and occupations in the economy, demonstrating that we are a leader in tackling economic and digital exclusion and boosting social mobility.
- Bring even greater focus on social inclusion, widening our provision for those with learning difficulties, high needs and English language needs, and tackling skills shortages by opening-up our employability programmes to more people across all our centres and communities in Tees Valley. This includes extending our Skills Bootcamps and Sector Routeways to support more unemployed people into work and building on our partnership with the Prince's Trust.
- Play an active leading role in local and national initiatives (such as Local Skills Improvement Plans, and education and business groups) to improve how education and training provision meets the needs of the local economy.



SO3: To create long-term strategic partnerships, providing new opportunities for all our learners, communities and businesses

Priority actions up to 2026

- Develop new strategic partnerships with employers, and strengthen and deepen existing business partnerships, focusing on our key strengths and specialisms (low carbon energy, logistics, engineering, construction, professional & business services, healthcare, and social inclusion & employability). Build on and replicate partnership approaches that are delivering successfully in other sectors (such as the Clean Energy Employers Forum), prioritising new partnership models for our work across growth sectors.
- Develop new strategic partnerships with other education and training providers and Teesside University, focused on engaging more learners from diverse backgrounds, and supporting learners to progress into jobs and higher-level skills programmes, improving opportunities and life chances.
- Continue to deepen the relationships with Tees Valley Combined Authority and our local authorities, seeking new and better ways to work together to address the skills needs of local people and businesses.
- Seek opportunities to develop strategic partnerships in other areas of the UK, aligned to our key sector strengths and assets, where this will allow us to reach more learners and businesses.

SO4: To develop and enhance our exceptional education and training offer, designed with our employers, learners, and stakeholders

Priority actions up to 2026

- Expand our use of Employer and Learner Forums, allowing us to build a deep understanding of what businesses and people want and need from our courses. Replicate and expand on successful engagement approaches, such as NETA's Engineering Employers Forum.
- Continue to deliver our high-quality core FE and vocational training offer at levels 1 to 3, equipping learners with the core skills needed for basic and intermediate jobs in Tees Valley's priority sectors (e.g. engineering, construction, logistics, professional & business services, life sciences, healthcare), ensuring more learners from disadvantaged backgrounds progress into rewarding careers.
- Update and enhance our core curriculum at levels 1 to 3 with new modules and short courses equipping learners with the specific specialist skills needed by employers in key sectors (e.g. installation and maintenance of hydrogen boilers / air source heat pumps; automation in manufacturing).
- Place STEM education at the heart of our curriculum, recognising that STEM skills are a growing requirement for employers across the full range of Tees Valley's priority sectors (e.g. low carbon, engineering, advanced manufacturing, digital, life sciences, healthcare, business & professional services).
- Expand our provision aimed at upskilling the current workforce in priority sectors (e.g. low carbon manufacturing and construction, digitalisation and automation in logistics and manufacturing, new technologies in healthcare and life sciences) by developing and introducing new industry specialist and short courses.
- As part of our commitment to meet the ever-growing demand for higher-level skills in Tees Valley's priority sectors, work with universities across the region and the UK to provide enhanced pathways for our learners into higher education and expand our HE in FE offer including innovative degree-level courses and Degree Apprenticeships in our key sectors.



SO5: To meet the skills needs of key industries and local people by creating engaging learning environments reflecting the real world of work

Priority actions up to 2026

- Invest in providing digitally enabled learning environments so that all our learners and employers are developing skills using the latest digital technologies used in the workplace.
- Continue to enhance and upgrade our equipment and facilities to keep pace with changes in the workplace, ensuring that learners in all vocational curriculum areas are acquiring skills in real world environments so they are employable and work-ready on completing our courses.
- Work with local businesses to expand the scale and scope of our work experience activities, ensuring learners on all our vocationally focused courses can benefit from a high-quality work placement or employer-focused project.
- Work with employers to co-create and co-deliver training in as many vocational areas as possible.

SO6: To lead ground-breaking approaches to developing our people, ensuring we attract and develop the best staff talent at the heart of the Etc. offer

Priority actions up to 2026

- Invest in continually developing our staff, supporting them to update their skills and knowledge to keep pace with the latest changes in teaching practices, technology, industry, and the world of work. This will include expanding opportunities to undertake CPD placements and projects with employers in our key priority sectors, providing staff with new and interesting ways to update their skills.
- Develop CPD and knowledge exchange programmes with regional and UK higher-level skills providers, equipping our staff to teach higher-level skills programmes, as well as supporting and encouraging learners to progress to higher-level skills courses and jobs.
- Continually review best practice in teaching, learning and assessment to bring an evidence-informed and impactful approach to the development of our staff. This will include working with partners to bring the very best teaching and learning practice into the group, developing an incremental coaching model of teaching and learning improvement, and the use of professional development research projects bespoke to individual needs.
- Develop and expand new approaches to flexible working as part of our drive to retain and attract the best staff, positioning the Etc. as a best-in-class employer in the FE and training sector.



SHORT COURSE OFFERS ACCESS TO A NEW CAREER

NETA Training

A short course in scaffolding proved a step on the ladder for Dean.

Embarking on a six-week access course at NETA gave the 29-year-old the entry skills and site tickets to go on to find work as a trainee scaffolding labourer. The academy, delivered alongside JMAC Scaffolding, covered essential employability skills, health and safety, with practical elements of scaffolding application.

Dean said: *“This was a step in the door for me. It gave me an insight into the industry and the cards I needed to be on site.”*

THE DIFFERENCE WE'LL MAKE

Our Strategic Plan will deliver these important outcomes and benefits by 2026.

For our learners and communities

- More young people and adults getting well-paid, secure jobs in the local economy
 - More people in work developing new skills, achieving career progression, and earning higher incomes
 - More local people developing the higher-level skills that lead to better paid jobs
 - More young people experiencing the world of work and learning new skills through high-quality work placements, apprenticeships, and real-world work environments
 - More adults re-training and progressing into new careers in growing industries
 - Reduced unemployment and social exclusion in local communities
- Reduced digital exclusion with more people developing digital skills for life and work
 - More learners with special educational needs and disabilities making better progress in their development towards adult hood, improving their life chances through employment, volunteering and leading a good quality life

For our businesses and the economy

- More skilled and motivated new entrants (young people and re-training adults) ready to take up jobs in growing sectors and businesses
 - More highly skilled workforce, with more employees equipped with the specialist skills needed by growing sectors and businesses
 - More courses and training places providing the industry specialist skills needed by employers
 - More new entrants and current employees with better employability skills
 - Improved workforce digital skills, including specialist technical skills, as well as basic digital skills for work
 - Better access for employers to high-quality, specialist curriculum, facilities and the best teaching staff, aligned to their specific skills needs
 - Deeper relationships between the Etc. and businesses, with better joint planning of workforce training
- Accelerated business growth in key sectors and the wider economy as a result of a bigger, more highly skilled, and flexible local workforce
 - Increased impact on supporting business growth in other parts of the UK



For our partners and stakeholders

- Accelerated growth of priority economic sectors as a result of a better skilled local workforce
 - Improved take-up and impact of technical education programmes including apprenticeships and T-levels
 - More young people and adults progressing into higher education and higher-level skills programmes
 - Increased success and impact of key investments in Tees Valley (e.g. Teesworks, Net Zero Teesside) as a result of a highly skilled, motivated local workforce
 - Tees Valley and the wider North East
- positioned as UK leaders in meeting the skills needs of the local economy, delivering Government skills priorities, and a trailblazer in the successful delivery of LSIPs
 - Deeper working relationships between the Etc. and stakeholders, with a greater impact on skills priorities
 - Improved profile and perceptions of Tees Valley as a place with a highly-skilled, highly motivated workforce, equipped to support growth in priority industries including low carbon, advanced manufacturing, logistics, and business services, helping to attract more businesses and investment





BY ROYAL INVITE

Stockton Riverside College

Having been through the course herself, learning support assistant Chloe has a real insight into life as a Prince's Trust Achieve student at Stockton Riverside College.

For her the results have been huge, ultimately going on to start a new career at the college.

Now working towards a level 3 teaching qualification, Chloe was among three former Prince's Trust students selected to accompany Etc. Prince's Trust head of department Gillian Hutchinson to the King's coronation concert, as guests of the Lord Lieutenant of County Durham, Sue Snowdon.

Gillian Hutchinson, head of department for the Etc. Prince's Trust, said: *"This was incredibly exciting and such a fantastic opportunity, not just for us, but also to be able to share that experience with three of our young people."*



WORKING TOGETHER FOR A SUCCESSFUL TEES VALLEY AND NORTH EAST

Through its strategic location, industrial heritage, infrastructure, and collaboration and partnerships, Tees Valley's economic potential is tremendously exciting. In delivering this plan, we will support industries and businesses with the skills they need, and ensure the people of Tees Valley access well-paid, challenging careers.

Whether you're a business, an industry or sector body, an education or training provider, or a partner in local, regional or UK government, we'd be delighted to work with you to achieve our shared priorities.






etc.




education
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collective

SOCIAL MEDIA




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Please contact us to find out more about our ambitious plans for the future, and how we can work together. We're looking forward to hearing from you!

