

# STRATEGIC PLAN

2023-2026

## THE DIFFERENCE WE'RE MAKING

etc.

education  
training  
collective



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

# Progressing Our Strategy

The Etc. Strategic Plan 2023-26 set out our collective vision to fuel ambition and drive success for our learners, communities, and businesses, across a resurgent Teesside, and beyond.

It was intended to guide everything we did over this period, with the six Strategic Objectives and priorities the **means by which** we achieve this vision, with all parts of our group working as ‘ONE Etc.’

## Key Challenges:

- **High Unemployment and Economic Inactivity** – with the Tees Valley unemployment rate (5.1%) higher than the national average (3.7%); over 100,000 working-age residents economically inactive and a higher proportion of workers are in low-skill, low-wage jobs compared to the national average.
- **Shortage of Skilled Workers in Key Growth Sectors** – with the sectors driving Tees Valley’s growth (i.e., low-carbon energy, logistics, healthcare, and digital technologies) lacking a skilled workforce; major employers, including those at Teesworks and Freeport, requiring highly trained staff, with an insufficient talent pipeline.



- **Low Educational Attainment and Skills Levels**
  - with a significant portion of the workforce lacking higher-level skills (Levels 4-6); many young people not progressing to higher education or technical training, limiting their career opportunities, and with a NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) rate for 16-17-year-olds (4.7%) higher than the national average (2.6%).
- **Need for Green Economy Transition** – with the Tees Valley positioning itself as a leader in low-carbon energy, but workforce development lagging behind industry demand; employers needing specialised training in hydrogen production, carbon capture, and renewable energy, and workers in traditional industries (e.g., oil and gas) requiring reskilling for sustainable jobs.
- **Digitalisation and Changing Workforce Needs** – with digital transformation impacting all sectors, requiring both basic and advanced digital skills; automation and AI adoption changing job roles, necessitating continuous upskilling, and many businesses struggling to recruit staff with sufficient digital proficiency: from basic IT skills to cybersecurity and software development.
- **Lack of Strong Transport and Infrastructure Links** – with poor transport connectivity in some areas making it difficult for residents to access training and jobs; employers report challenges in attracting workers from outside Tees Valley due to limited housing and infrastructure investment.
- **Economic Dependence on Large-Scale Investments** - while Teesworks, Freeport, and Net Zero Teesside promise thousands of jobs, their success depends on timely project delivery, adequate skills training to meet employer demands, long-term sustainability of jobs (not just short-term construction roles).



## The Etc.'s Strategic Objectives:

The Strategic Plan set out six Strategic Objectives, with each objective based on a clear rationale, reflecting our analysis of the key issues, challenges and opportunities facing us – and the wider Tees Valley region – currently and into the future. They are:

- **Harnessing the Power of the Group (One Etc.)** - unifying and leveraging the strengths of all Etc. colleges and training providers, ensuring a cohesive, high-quality education and training offer.
- **Delivering Skills for Economic Growth & Inclusion** - aligning training and education with the future skills needs of Tees Valley's priority sectors, including low-carbon energy, logistics, healthcare, and digital industries.
- **Creating Long-Term Strategic Partnerships** - building strong, long-term collaborations with employers, universities, local authorities, and industry bodies to enhance education and training opportunities.
- **Enhancing Education & Training Offer** - ensuring that the Etc. delivers an industry-relevant, high-quality curriculum, equipping learners with in-demand skills and qualifications.
- **Creating Real-World Learning Environments** - providing learners with industry-standard training facilities and experiences, ensuring they are job-ready upon course completion.
- **Attracting & Developing the Best Staff Talent** - building a highly skilled, industry-aware workforce that can deliver high-quality training and support learners effectively.



# The Difference We're Making

The Etc. Strategic Plan 2023-26 outlined significant, aspirational outcomes for learners, communities, businesses, and stakeholders. Against the base line position of July 2023 (the beginning of the plan) we show here how the Etc. is delivering against these desired outcomes – half way through the plan, **the difference we're making.**

## 1. Our Learners and Communities:



### More young people in learning:

- With an increase of 8% in the number of young people in education and training at the Etc.
- A further 10% increase in the current year



**Achievement rates** amongst the top 20% of all colleges nationally:

- 16-18 achievement rates (at 89.9%) are 7.4 percentage points higher than the national average
- Adult achievement rates (at 94.9%) are 7.9 percentage points above the national average



### More **adults in learning**:

- With a 13% increase in the number of adult learners participating in training and education



Whilst the number of apprentices decreased in 2023/24 in comparison to the baseline year, recruitment has improved again in the current year and is at least in line with 2022/23



### **Adults into employment**:

- The percentage of adults securing employment after training improved from an already impressive 82.7% to 83.8% (+1.1%)



Improving **access** to education:

- With 52% of learners from the most deprived postcodes nationally

## 2. Our Businesses and the Economy



An increase in the number of Bespoke **Employer Led** Programme participants:

- With participation on BELPS increasing by 23%



An increase in the number of **Skills Bootcamp** participants:

- With participation on Skills Bootcamps increasing by 41%



Deepening **relationships with employers:**

- With an 8% increase in the proportion of employers who are repeatedly working with the Etc. – alongside an increase in the overall number of employers working with us



Creation of specialist, high quality learning environments, with the completion of new facilities for:

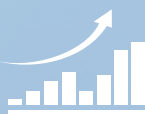
- Motor Vehicle
- Hair
- Beauty
- Childcare / Early Years
- Health
- Higher Education

The New All Access Academy – a best in class training centre for scaffolding – will be delivered in 2025, alongside the commencement of the new NETA Engineering / construction facilities

This is all in addition to the improved facilities for Clean Energy, Construction, Engineering and Retrofit delivered immediately prior to the commencement of the strategic plan

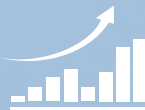


### 3. Our Partners and Stakeholders



More young people progressing to **Higher Education**;

- With an increase of 9% in the number of young people progressing to university level education
- With an increase of 2% of those accepting a place at their firm-choice institution



Increased participation in **technical education**:

- T Levels have been successfully launched, with numbers more than doubling (from 74 to 161) between 2022/23 and 2024/25



Increased **recognition** of the high quality teaching and learning provided by the Etc., with validation from Further Education Commissioner's Team, and inclusion in 'Powerful Pedagogy' publication



Greater alignment with **local economic priorities**:

- 56% of learners are on programmes specifically aligned to local and national priorities (an increase from 54%)



The **Etc. partnership model** has successfully driven sector-focused growth, particularly in low-carbon energy, and healthcare. Programmes such as the bp scholarships, and the Tees Valley Industry Scholarship Programme, and partnerships with stakeholders such as the ECITB, FE+ to deliver the Local Skills Improvement Fund, and Stockton's Care and Health Innovation Zone demonstrate the impact of collaboration



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### THE SKILLS ACADEMY

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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!*

