Accountability Statement Review from South Thames Colleges Group (STCG) 2023-26

1) Purpose

This document is intended to serve as STCG's statutory 3-year review of its contribution to meeting local skills needs by better aligning its activities to the market demands as set out in the South London annex of the London Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP). It will provide an overview of the development of the infrastructure and capacity for targeted skills delivery across South London as well as an analysis of sectoral and cohort responses aligned to key themes taken from the London LSIP and the South London LSIP annex.

2) Review process

This review process is a statutory duty required of the Group's Governing Body and the organisation and the conduct of the review has been undertaken on their behalf and approved by a Corporation meeting on 2nd July 2026. This review will be published along with the 2026-27 Accountability Statement by 31st July 2026.

The published guidance available to define this process and its outcomes is set out here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/69383c0c33c7ace9c4a41e77/Accountability_statements_and_the_Local_Needs_Duty_2026_to_2027.pdf

The relevant section of the statutory guidance says:

'This section of the guidance is statutory and is issued under section 52B (2) of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 in relation to section 52B (1) of that Act. Governing bodies of institutions within the further education sector must comply with their duty to review provision in relation to local needs, as introduced in the Skills and Post-16 Education Act 2022. Governing bodies of institutions within the further education sector (as defined under section 91(3) of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992) must have regard to this guidance when discharging the duty to review how well the education or training provided by the institution meets local needs.

'The legislation requires governing bodies to consider, in light of the review, what actions might be taken (including action in conjunction with other governing bodies) to better meet local needs. These actions could include, for example, decisions to expand the curriculum offer to respond to emerging needs relating to securing local employment, or to collaborate with other providers to strengthen the quality and resilience of local provision. It is for governing bodies to determine the feasibility of these actions.

'We expect the review to be undertaken every three years, sooner if there are substantial changes in circumstances. Where a review has been undertaken, full details of the review must be included in the statement. However, if circumstances have not changed substantially, we expect the annual statement to include a short summative statement of the existing review.

'Governing bodies should engage at an early stage with the DfE Regional Improvement Teams and the Further Education Commissioner if any of the agreed actions following on from the review could lead to significant structural changes such as mergers.

'The review conclusions and associated accountability statement alongside Local Growth Plans and regional Employment and Skills Strategies (where applicable) as well as LSIPs will be part of the ongoing DfE Regional Improvement Teams and Further Education Commissioner discussions with governing bodies and will be discussed as part of the annual strategic conversation or through other engagement with providers.'

To discharge these duties, STCG, in partnership with the South London Partnership (SLP), has convened an exceptional meeting of the Education Group, South London to review the effectiveness of the work done over the past three years to respond to local skills needs and to plot forward changes based on new priorities emerging in the 2026-29 draft LSIP.

Based on this sub-regional perspective, STCG has undertaken its own internal analysis of the progress it has and has not made. The design for this process has taken account of evidence such as:

- Progress against the Accountability Statement Action Plans 2023-26
- The delivery of the LSIF programme and its impact
- Student outcomes and destinations data for priority sectors identified in the South London LSIP
- Changes in curriculum profile and the development of provision related to priority sectors as identified in the South London LSIP
- Data capturing levels of employer engagement, employer contributions to curriculum design and rates of work experience and industry placements
- Employer feedback captured through surveys of satisfaction rates
- Judgements made by Ofsted in considering the Group's contribution to meeting local skills needs from the May 2024 inspection and the Group's response to these
- Staff development activity to upskill and strengthen the currency of teaching teams in priority industries
- Cohort-based initiatives to develop provision for parts of the local community furthest from the workplace
- STCG's ability to respond to significant national and regional initiatives such as LSIF, Bootcamps, Youth Guarantee and other policy priorities over the three-year period

The outcomes from this review process have fed into the Group's revised Accountability Statement and action plan for 2026-27.

3) <u>Review status</u>

STCG is hereby compliant with its three-year duty to review its contribution to local skills needs through its response to the London LSIP and its South London annex in particular. It completed a high level strategic review in 2023 in preparation for the Local Skills Improvement Fund (LSIF) and now returns to the review cycle in 2026 with a clear view, set out below, of progress over this period.

4) <u>Executive Summary</u>

Since 2023, much has changed in the South London economy and its skills infrastructure:

- Unemployment rates in South London have risen in most boroughs served by STCG over this period, although they remain significantly lower than the London and national averages
- The incidence of young people being reported as Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) has risen in all South London boroughs, reflected in the most recent Trust for London report: https://trustforlondon.org.uk/news/unemployment-is-rising-among-young-people-in-london-whats-going-on/
- The London economy (measured by GDP) grew steadily following the pandemic, achieving rates of 1.1% in 2024 and 1.9% in 2025 (forecast at 1.7% for 2026, according to the GLA: https://www.london.gov.uk/programmes-strategies/research-and-analysis/economic-analysis/monitoring-londons-economy)
- Key sectors identified in the 2023 London LSIP and its South London annex have continued to show higher-than-average vacancy rates and sustained demand for new entrants over the three years since the first LSIP was published, highlighted in Business LDN's 2025 LSIP progress report: https://www.businessldn.co.uk/sites/default/files/documents/2025-06/Pan-London%20LSIP%20Progress%20Report%202025.pdf
- A number of complementary initiatives to tackle skills gaps in London and the UK have been launched by central Government and the Greater London Authority (GLA) since the change of Government in 2024. These include the national Youth Guarantee and the regional Inclusive Talent Strategy for example, alongside many others.

Many of the structural needs identified originally in 2023 have now been delivered through partnership activity and stronger interaction between providers, drawn together originally by the LSIF process. New sub-regional partnership bodies have been established, led by STCG and the South London Partnership. Collaboration with referral agencies has focused on the development of new pipeline arrangements, although the number of people seeking work in South London remains relatively low and vacancy rates have fallen.

Business partnership work with employers has used feedback to enhance course content and inform the development of new facilities with investment from both Government agencies through the LSIF and from STCG's own resources. STCG has helped externally to lead sub-regional skills planning through a series of collaborative provider forums and implemented internal review processes highlighting the need for enhanced curriculum development and planning strategies and better cross-Group integration.

Specifically, over the three year lifespan of the London LSIP, STCG has:

- Taken a broad strategic responsibility for this development and positioned growth at the heart of its mission, set out in its revised strategic plan published in 2024: https://stcg.ac.uk/about/policies-and-procedures/supporting-documentation/997-stcg-strategic-plan-1/file
- Convened a coalition of delivery partners in South London to ensure robust co-ordination of the LSIF and improved collaborative activity between providers
- Led the delivery of the LSIF and overseen the expenditure of c£2.5M in a range of new capacity-building measures
- Significantly improved the quality of its Apprenticeship provision from a low base in 2023-24, providing a platform for growth and development in 2026 and beyond

- Invested in enhanced facilities and capacity through its own resources and capital grant, including an expanded Business Partnerships team based on the formation of a new function funded by the LSIF and continued by the Group after the end of the revenue funding
- Strengthened Employer Engagement and Work Experience programmes, delivering an improvement in surveyed employer satisfaction ratings from 65% good or better in 2023-24 (based on a very low response rate) to 87% in 2025-26 (based on a 50% response rate, with 299 employers engaged)
- Not yet achieved an integrated strategic curriculum review and planning process to ensure high-level co-ordination across its different Colleges
- Delivered significant growth of about 30% increase in 16-18 year old students in key sectors and cohorts identified in the London LSIP, while numbers of Adults and students in other funding streams such as Apprenticeships fell, as set out in the data below based on headcount:

Curriculum subject	Student Numbers 2022-23					Student Numbers 2025-26				
	16-18	Adult	Apps	HE	Total	16-18	Adult	Apps	HE	Total
Construction	471	113	221	44	805	646	55	192	7	900
Digital	471	893	9	22	1373	669	278	0	4	951
Education (Childcare)	136	636	1	73	773	109	368	0	12	489
Health and Care	376	2589	50	59	3015	513	1086	21	46	1,666
Hospitality/Retail	314	628	3	0	945	445	541	0	0	986
ESOL	199	2431	0	0	2630	205	2594	0	0	2,799
All other provision	2699	2658	301	131	5987	3887	5235	241	41	9,294
Student Numbers	4666	9948	585	329	15528	6269	7563	454	110	14396
LSIP Priority Areas	1,967	7,290	284	198	9,541	2,587	4,922	213	69	7,791
% Of provision in priority areas	42%	73%	49%	60%	61%	41%	65%	47%	63%	54%

From 2023 to 2026, STCG increased its overall number of 16-19 students significantly from 4666 to 6269 while provision for Adults has not changed, although the profile of enrolments has changed between sectors, with many priority sectors falling. HE has fallen significantly and Apprenticeship provision has declined, but less dramatically. As identified above the growth in young people enrolling at STCG has risen across all but one LSIP priority areas. The Group recognises how this growth taken with the decline in other student cohorts could have impacts on its reputation and ability to meet regional skills needs and employment demands. Its new Accountability Statement will renew efforts and strategies to increase STCG's contribution to the number of adults that obtain the qualifications and jobs particularly in LSIP priority areas. It is also notable that the numbers of students those with High Needs have risen during the same period and this will become a significant priority in the Group's future Accountability Statement::

Learner cohort	Enrolments 22/23	Enrolments 25/26	Total change
HNS	741	873	**+132**

5) <u>Overview of South London's LSIP and STCG's contribution to its skills needs 2023-26</u>

Following the introduction of Local Skills Improvement Plans in the Skills and Post-16 Education Act 2022, Colleges like STCG were required to publish an annual Accountability Statement demonstrating their commitment and operational planning to align their curriculum activity and strategic development to the requirements of the local economy. This process began in 2023 with the first Accountability Statements published that Summer and backed by additional investment through the LSIF and other sources.

Over the three years since then, STCG has been an active contributor to this process, leading the sub-regional LSIF programme and co-ordinating all of the providers in the SLP area in their response to the London and sub-regional LSIPs. Now, after three years, a new LSIP is due to be published in the Summer of 2026 and STCG has undertaken and published this review of how successful its response has been to date.

In 2023, STCG welcomed the development of a structured and strategic approach to skills development and workforce capacity-building and has worked with key stakeholders ever since to lead and deliver a meaningful response in South London. In December 2024, STCG's Board approved a new four-year strategic plan, committing the Group to a whole-organisation approach founded on the skills needs of the region and the aspirations of our South London communities:

Our new Strategic Plan builds further on our history of success. We have become a foundation for the communities of South London, an engine of growth and inclusion.

We have made outcomes for staff and students more equal, become a trusted partner to many stakeholders, raised quality to new heights and shown how a whole organization can generate such concerted support and ambition that students are genuinely defined by their potential here.

We will continue this approach into the future and strengthen it. We will do this through our actions:

- *Bonding our new curriculum strategy and resulting annual planning to the skills needs of the region, using evidence of demand to drive change while securing a coherent and efficient curriculum offer*
- *Strengthening our response to our students' expectations, meeting their needs and upholding their ambitions for the future*
- *Innovating through technology and partnership to lead key regional initiatives*
- *Raising standards of teaching and learning further still to achieve excellence for all of our provision and supporting our colleagues to grow their skills and knowledge*
- *Unifying and enhancing our extensive wellbeing strategies to promote resilience, happiness and inspiration through our culture, services and programmes for students' development*

- *Setting new ambitious equalities targets to respond to emerging priorities, improve the diversity of our leadership and close the gender pay gap further*

STCG is recognised as a key strategic partner in the sub-regional skills infrastructure. STCG has effectively used its convening and co-ordinating powers to deliver a set of successful LSIF outputs and move towards better integration of skills provision against local need within a diverse set of provider partners. This process of establishing a collaborative set of provider partnerships has made good progress and a number of new bodies have emerged through the implementation of STCG's Accountability Statement action plan:

Body	**Lead/Chair**	**STCG's role**
South London Employment and Skills Alliance	South London Partnership/Royal Borough of Kingston CEO and Wimbledon BID CEO	Member
South London Colleges and Universities Partnership	South London Partnership	Member
Education Group, South London	STCG	Lead and Chair
Kingston Skills and Employment Partnership	Royal Borough of Kingston convenor/STCG	Chair
Kingston First (Business Improvement District)	Kingston First	Board membership
Kingston Chamber of Commerce	Kingston Chamber of Commerce	Board membership
Merton Chamber of Commerce	Merton Chamber of Commerce	Board membership
Merton Council Partnership Board	Merton Council	Board membership
Sutton Employment and Skills Board	Sutton Council	Board membership
Wandsworth Chamber of Commerce	Wandsworth Chamber of Commerce	Member
Supply Wandsworth and Wandsworth Employer Forum	Wandsworth Council	Member

This work is not yet complete and further opportunities to harness the potential of this initial set of collaborations will be necessary to achieve an optimal level of impact; this will remain a priority for the lifespan of the second LSIP and STCG's engagement with it. For example, the lack of any Chamber of Commerce or robust business network in Sutton presents a significant challenge in creating a consistent level of support and development across all four of the South London Boroughs where STCG is based.

In spite of these gaps in the landscape of engagement infrastructure, STCG has grown its employer engagement capabilities significantly since 2023 and now has two teams operating in this field: Business Partnerships established originally with LSIF funding to build links with employers across the sub-region and to recruit Apprentices, while the Group's Employability team has the specific task of securing work experience and placement opportunities for students. The impact of these teams is demonstrable and their establishment and expansion over the three years since the LSIF was first launched has yielded significant change in the delivery of the curriculum and the connectedness of the Group's curriculum provision. In Summer 2024, Ofsted commented:

'Leaders are at the forefront of skills development work in south west London. They work closely with key strategic bodies, employers and other stakeholders.'

STCG's significant investment in its Business Partnerships team has yielded not only an enhanced level of capacity, but stronger leadership, integration with the curriculum and a long-term, stable focus on relationships with partners at various levels across the sub-region has generated a significant rise in both the extent and quality of these engagement. Employer satisfaction rates have risen from around 65% 'good or better' in 2023-24 to 87% 'good or better' in 2025-26, while volumes of activity have approximately doubled:

Employer interactions by subject	**2023-24** Employability – Kingston	**2023-24** Employability – Carshalton, Merton and South Thames	**2023-24** Business Partnership Team	**TOTAL 2023-24**	**2025-26** Employability - Kingston	**2025-26** Employability – Carshalton, Merton and South Thames	**2025-26** Business Partnership Team	**TOTAL 2025-26**
Construction	30	80			30	100	252	
Digital	20	16			20	20	30	
Education (childcare)	90	51			115	25	8	
Health and Care	90	63			130	130	150	
Hospitality/ retail	0	55			0	79	38	
Total	**230**	**265**	**57**	**552**	**295**	**354**	**478**	**1,127**

However, STCG has also recognised that its conventional curriculum development and planning processes do not sufficiently draw on employment skill demands- and it has not yet been able to implement a full-scale revision of its internal processes to ensure that they are more clearly driven by analysis of demand and key planning factors.

Further changes will be necessary to look forward and forecast the future demands of the region, using this scan to inform priorities, investment and capacity-building activity for key areas. For example, Local Authorities in South London are now working with STCG to identify the needs of a rising number of children with SEND currently in Key Stage 4 in local schools and who will need adapted and expanded provision to be available from 2028.

In terms of its ability to meet community needs, STCG has been active in the expansion of its provision across most funding streams, although some elements of its activity are either static or falling, as described below.

16-19 provision

Between 2023 and 2026, STCG has seen the numbers of young people studying at STCG rise rapidly from 4666 to 6269, an increase of 34% over three years, with some evidence of demand still increasing into the Autumn enrolment process in 2026. This has been distributed relatively evenly across all five of the Group's sites with programmes for young people, with some greater concentration of demand at Kingston College. During this period of growth, retention and achievement rates have risen significantly, as has the proportion of young people retained beyond the 42-day funding threshold.

Attendance rates have not improved, but remained largely static. Sectoral distribution has been relatively even across all subjects, although the Group is recruiting more young people with lower levels of attainment and is developing provision to adapt to the needs of more vulnerable students.

The introduction of T Levels has been part of this and T Level uptake has risen to about 140 new starts alongside 100 progressing students planned for 2026-27.

The Group recognises that it should make a major contribution to support the region in addressing rising numbers of young people Not in Education, Employment or Training and has undertaken early development work in delivering a Youth Guarantee Trailblazer.

Mental health needs continue to be an important aspect of the Group's response to the challenges faced by this cohort and the Group continues to provide regional and national leadership in developing models of delivery designed to address this barrier to success. STCG's response to this likely priority within the refreshed South London LSIP will form a central party of its Accountability statement for 2026-27 and beyond.

Provision for students with High Needs

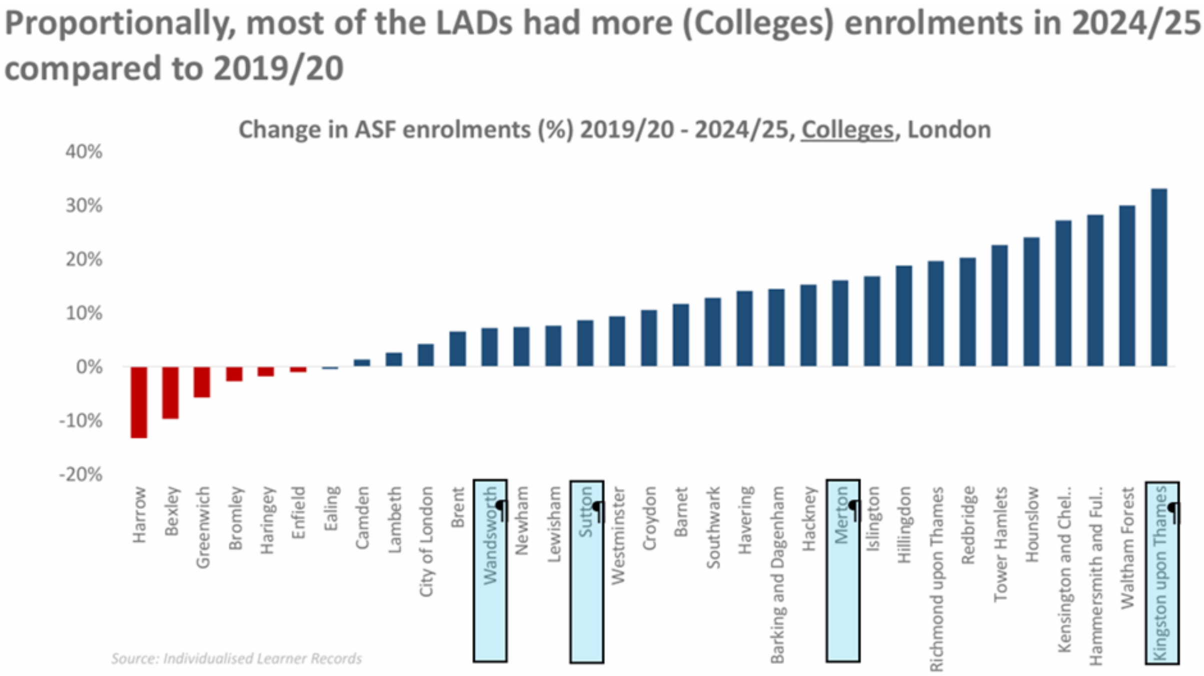
As a subset of the programmes for 16-19 year-olds, this important provision has grown within the overall funding allocation. In 2022-23, a total of 741 students with High Needs were funded to study with STCG; by 2025-26, this figure had risen to 873, an increase of 18%. All recent interaction with the Local Authorities commissioning provision of this kind from STCG are indicating that there will be further rises into the future and the Group will set out its approach to this growth as part of its planned use of the Inclusive Mainstream Fund to be described in its Accountability Statement for 2026-27.

Students with High Needs have seen improvements in their experience at the Group over the lifespan of the LSIP, with retention and achievement rates rising in line with those of their peers to an equally high level. Efforts to secure high quality destination outcomes for students with High Needs have been largely successful and these also remain at a high level in common with those enjoyed by their peers, but further work is necessary to enhance progression for this cohort of young people. Further work to improve employment opportunities through partnership with employers and a fully developed infrastructure for placements, internships and tailored advice and guidance will need to continue to feature as a priority in STCG's Accountability Statement action plan for 2026-27 and beyond.

Provision for Adults

Since 2023, STCG has offered its provision for adults through funding grant funding, from the Greater London Authority and the Department for Education directly and indirectly through Merton and Wandsworth Councils. STCG has seen growth in ESOL activity, which expanded by 558 enrolments over the period, or 11% of the 2022-23 total.

The growth it has seen amongst the numbers of young people enrolled in local LSIP priorities areas has not been replicated in adults student numbers apart from ESOL provision. However, the Group has also contributed to the London-wide picture of growth in Adult learning activity, reported by the GLA over the period 2019-2024:



Detailed analysis of all the different types, lengths, funding sources and other aspects of Adult provision is provided in sector subject reviews below, but this category of provision spans a wide range of enrolment types, from Adult Learning Loans to fully-funded learners, to Adult and Community Learning (ACL) provision and to fee-paying students. The funding structures and arrangements have changed over the three year time period and the overall envelope for Adult Skills Funding (ASF) has not grown while other, short-term and contestable funding streams have for adults.

Contestable funding

There have been numerous new funding opportunities offered to the sector over the past few years designed to inject short-term funding into specific, targeted programmes largely focused on improved job outcomes and programme development in key areas. STCG has a mixed record in its success in bidding for and delivering new funding opportunities. It has been granted funding or delivery responsibility for:

- LSIF
- Construction TEC spoke in South London
- Green Skills programme development
- Green Skills qualification review
- Youth Guarantee Trailblazer
- SWAPs

- Multiply

It has not been successful in bidding for or delivering:

- Bootcamps
- Inclusive Talent Pathways funding
- Construction Technical Excellence College status
- Additional Construction Skills Funding from GLA

The Group's ability to embrace new opportunities, grow new provision and to respond successfully to new funding sources has been variable. Its new Accountability Statement will identify ways to strengthen its internal responsiveness to external policy and associated national and regional employment and skills demands.

Apprenticeships

The Group's Apprenticeship delivery has contracted significantly since merger, from around 1400 in 2016 to about 400 in 2025. The number of new apprentices commencing each year is currently less than 20 but seems to have stabilised and is now showing slight growth. The Group will need much stronger development and partnership activity to deliver the 300 "starts" a year set as a target in the 2024 Strategic Plan.

Efforts to grow and enhance this important provision type have been constrained by its 2024 Requires Improvement inspection grade for Apprenticeships, occasioning a concerted intervention process to strengthen this activity and develop new capacity. It is now self-assessed as 'good' and an growth plan to deliver the Group's Apprenticeship recruitment targets is now in draft.

This aspect of the Group's growth and development will again feature as a priority in the 2026-27 Accountability Statement.

HE

Again, the Group's Higher Education provision has seen ongoing, progressive decline since merger, reducing its activity level from a total enrolment of about 2000 in 2016 to just over 200 in 2025. Key subject sectors that have been discontinued or sharply reduced include:

- Science and Computing
- Art and Design
- Engineering

The remaining core of the Group's HE provision is relatively small and is focused in a few key areas. Changes to the funding system and definitions of HE may change into the future and the Group may consolidate this provision around Higher Professional qualifications. Structural changes achieved over the Summer of 2026 will be expected to rebase this provision and establish new ways of enhancing the offer and its appeal.

6) <u>LSIF delivery</u>

The Group had sub-regional responsibility for the project management of LSIIF activity during the period September 2023 and March 2025. A total of approximately £2.5M was allocated to South London and intended to enhance facilities in key subject areas, drive new models of student and employer engagement and strengthen collaborative working across the sub-region. The structure and distribution of the LSIF projects is summarised in the table below and all of the projects were delivered, although there was some underspend against the project budgets and a total of about £37,000 out of £1.9M was returned to the DfE.

Project Number	Project Sector	Lead Provider	Strand / ref	Provider
1	Construction	Harrow, Richmond and Uxbridge College	1	Croydon College
			2	East Surrey College
			3	Hruc
2	Health	South Thames Colleges Group	4	South Thames Colleges Group
3	Digital	Richmond And Hilcroft Adult And Community College	5	East Surrey College
			6	London Learning Consortium Community Interest Company
			7	Richmond And Hilcroft Adult And Community College
			8	Sutton College
4	Education	South Thames Colleges Group	9	Royal Borough Of Kingston Upon Thames
			10	London Learning Consortium Community Interest Company
5	SEND	South Thames Colleges Group	11	Croydon College
			12	Royal Borough Of Kingston Upon Thames
			13	South Thames Colleges Group
6	Cross-sector	South Thames Colleges Group	14	South Thames Colleges Group

Some images of the capital investments arising from the LSIF process are depicted below:

7) <u>Accountability Statement Action Plan</u>

The Group's original Accountability Statement action plan, developed in 2023, focused on the assembly of the sub-regional partnership and the leadership of an integrated platform for organising delivery and sharing practice in order to ensure that the Local Skills Improvement Fund was channelled successfully into priority areas of provision with the intended impact. The evolving action plans, developed and reviewed annually in 2024, 2025 and now in 2026 contained a total of over one hundred discrete actions, grouped and summarised in the table below:

Priority area	Core actions	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
Leadership and partnership infrastructure	• Establish and lead sub-regional provider collaboratives • Co-ordinate programme development and partnership			
LSIF delivery	• LSIF projects delivered on time and within budget			Activity closed
SLP priorities	• Integrate activity with other partners • Engage fully with key stakeholders and support capacity-building			
Employer engagement and capacity-building	• Increase employer engagement capacity • Engage employers in productive sectoral and regional development			
Apprenticeships	• Improve STCG Apprenticeship provision to a good standard • Grow STCG Apprenticeship provision			
Construction	• Expand Construction provision • Develop new programmes, especially in Green Skills • Engage Construction employers in programme design and delivery			
Digital	• Expand Digital provision • Develop new programmes • Engage Digital employers in programme design and delivery			
Education (Childcare)	• Expand Childcare provision • Develop new programmes • Engage Childcare employers in programme design and delivery			
Health and Care	• Expand Health and Care provision • Develop new programmes • Engage Health and Care employers in programme design and delivery			
Hospitality	• Expand Hospitality provision • Develop new programmes • Engage Hospitality employers in programme design and delivery			
ESOL	• Expand ESOL provision			

	• Develop new programmes			
Students with High Needs	• Expand HNS provision • Develop new programmes			

8) Student destinations

The Group as invested in the development of stronger, direct destinations monitoring and has robust methodology for capturing actual student progression at a point six months after the end of their programme of study. Positive destinations means for those students not returning to the Group they have either remained in employment, obtained employment or continued in education outside of the Group. STCG is further developing its systems for collecting this information and in future will be able to identify whether the destination aligns with the curriculum area they enrolled on at STCG. The overall data for the priority subjects offered by the Group over the lifespan of the LSIF are captured below but are analysed in more detail in the sector subject reviews following.

Curriculum subject	% positive destinations 22/23				% positive destinations 24/25			
	16-18	Apps	Adult	HE	16-18	Apps	Adult	HE
Construction	77.6%		67.2%		69.2%		68.1%	
Digital	80.6%		65.5%		75.3%		68.6%	
Education (Childcare)	79.2%		62.8%		74.2%		72.6%	
Health and Care	77.8%		73.9%		81.6%		72.4%	
Hospitality/Retail	81.5%		63.7%		82.7%		56.4%	

9) Sector subject reviews

Construction

Curriculum subject	Student Numbers 2022-23					Student Numbers 2025-26				
	16-18	Adult	Apps	HE	Total	16-18	Adult	Apps	HE	Total
Construction	471	113	221	44	805	646	55	192	7	900

Student engagement levels in Construction rose overall during the period 2023-26, although this was entirely due to a significant rise in participation by 16-18 year-olds as all Construction provision within all other funding streams contracted. Employer engagement rose significantly over this period with intensive activity on the part of the Business Partnerships Team to extend relationships with a wider network of employers across the sub-region and nationally, with a number of regional and national events held at STCG to promote clean energy and green skills initiatives in particular. The volumes of employer activity more than tripled over the reference period:

Employer interactions by subject	**2023-24** Employability – Kingston	**2023-24** Employability – Carshalton, Merton and South Thames	**2023-24** Business Partnership Team	**TOTAL 2023-24**	**2025-26** Employability - Kingston	**2025-26** Employability – Carshalton, Merton and South Thames	**2025-26** Business Partnership Team	**TOTAL 2025-26**
Construction	30	80		110	30	100	252	382

These enhanced levels of employer engagement generated numerous opportunities to embed employers' perspectives into the curriculum delivery as well as CPD and placement activities for staff.

Student progression for Construction skills learners into related destinations improved for the small number of enrolled adults but fell for young people:

Curriculum subject	**% positive destinations 22/23**				**% positive destinations 24/25**			
	16-18	**Apps**	**Adult**	**HE**	**16-18**	**Apps**	**Adult**	**HE**
Construction	77.6%		67.2%		69.2%		68.1%	

Ongoing priorities for Construction will need to include:

- Promotion of the sector as an attractive progression route for students, especially adults and Apprentices
- Ongoing diversification of the curriculum to meet specialist employer needs more precisely, especially in areas such as green skills
- Improved destinations reporting and guidance to raise progression rates

Digital

Curriculum subject	**Student Numbers 2022-23**					**Student Numbers 2025-26**				
	16-18	**Adult**	**Apps**	**HE**	**Total**	**16-18**	**Adult**	**Apps**	**HE**	**Total**
Digital	471	893	9	22	1373	669	278	0	4	951

Overall numbers of students studying Digital qualifications fell during the lifespan of the LSIP, with a very significant drop in the number of adults, largely attributed to the withdrawal of short add-on Digital qualifications in some parts of the curriculum. Young people studying Digital subjects rose and the Group introduced the T Level in Digital Technology recently. The number of employers active locally in the Digital and IT sector is not high and the Group's employer engagement team have increased engagement volumes but from a low base:

Employer interactions by subject	**2023-24** Employability – Kingston	**2023-24** Employability – Carshalton, Merton and South Thames	**2023-24** Business Partnership Team	**TOTAL 2023-24**	**2025-26** Employability - Kingston	**2025-26** Employability – Carshalton, Merton and South Thames	**2025-26** Business Partnership Team	**TOTAL 2025-26**
Digital	20	16		36	20	20	30	70

Employers in this sector have been active in a number of forums in the region and contributed to some of the strategic developments evident in South London, but there will be more to do in the coming years to support the growth of this sector.

Student progression from courses in this sector to a positive destination began at a very high base for young people, but fell slightly over this period, remaining relatively high nonetheless, while progression for adults rose slightly:

Curriculum subject	**% positive destinations 22/23**				**% positive destinations 24/25**			
	16-18	**Apps**	**Adult**	**HE**	**16-18**	**Apps**	**Adult**	**HE**
Digital	80.6%		65.5%		75.3%		68.6%	

Ongoing priorities for Digital will need to include:

- Enhanced curriculum development to make a greater range of Digital qualifications available to adult students
- Further engagement with employers in the sector to promote careers and opportunities
- Improved destinations reporting and guidance to raise progression rates

Education (Childcare)

Curriculum subject	**Student Numbers 2022-23**					**Student Numbers 2025-26**				
	16-18	**Adult**	**Apps**	**HE**	**Total**	**16-18**	**Adult**	**Apps**	**HE**	**Total**
Education (Childcare)	136	636	1	73	773	109	368	0	12	489

Childcare has seen very significant reductions in student numbers during the life of the LSIP, with all funding streams falling and creating an overall reduction of abut 40%. The loss of key HE programmes, although not numerically substantial, has removed a key flagship programme from the

Group's provision, with the remaining twelve on a programme set to close in 2026. The introduction of the T Level for 16-18 year-olds does not appear to have had a profound or long-term effect as the reduction in numbers for this cohort is less severe than expected. However, the very substantial decline in adult provision is concerning and further analysis of the trends here will need to be completed.

Employers are active in this sector and the substantial work placements required for new entrants into the sector has created significant demand for engagement with businesses in the sub-region, while many early years providers remain actively committed to the promotion of the sector as a desirable destination, with the sector already highly engaged at the start of the period and remaining at a similar level through the three years:

Employer interactions by subject	**2023-24** Employability – Kingston	**2023-24** Employability – Carshalton, Merton and South Thames	**2023-24** Business Partnership Team	**TOTAL 2023-24**	**2025-26** Employability - Kingston	**2025-26** Employability – Carshalton, Merton and South Thames	**2025-26** Business Partnership Team	**TOTAL 2025-26**
Education (childcare)	90	51		141	115	25	8	148

Progression rates from courses in this sector subject area have fallen for young people, but from a high base, while adult progression has increased significantly, by about ten percentage points:

Curriculum subject	**% positive destinations 22/23**				**% positive destinations 24/25**			
	16-18	**Apps**	**Adult**	**HE**	**16-18**	**Apps**	**Adult**	**HE**
Education (Childcare)	79.2%		62.8%		74.2%		72.6%	

Ongoing priorities for Childcare will need to include:

- Promotion of the sector as an attractive progression route for students, especially adults
- Exploration of the market for Childcare Apprenticeships
- Improved destinations reporting and guidance to raise progression rates

Health and Care

Curriculum subject	**Student Numbers 2022-23**					**Student Numbers 2025-26**				
	16-18	**Adult**	**Apps**	**HE**	**Total**	**16-18**	**Adult**	**Apps**	**HE**	**Total**
Health and Care	376	2589	50	59	3015	513	1086	21	46	1,666

The student engagement data for Health and Care over the 2023-26 lifespan of the LSIP is concerning with a drop of nearly half over the period in question, most notably marked in the number of adults participating in this provision. This has been partly driven by the withdrawal of some short adult qualifications by the Group through its subcontracted programmes, but this change clearly represents a deterioration in access to careers in this sector. It is partly offset by a gain in the number of young people studying courses in this sector and this represents a significant gain where the sector has been seen as unattractive to new entrants.

Care providers have engaged actively with the Group, the numbers of employers providing work experience, curriculum contributions, talks and visit opportunities to the Group's student have more than doubled over the period and there is good evidence of a strong willingness in the sector to promote its benefits as a career destination:

Employer interactions by subject	**2023-24** Employability – Kingston	**2023-24** Employability – Carshalton, Merton and South Thames	**2023-24** Business Partnership Team	**TOTAL 2023-24**	**2025-26** Employability - Kingston	**2025-26** Employability – Carshalton, Merton and South Thames	**2025-26** Business Partnership Team	**TOTAL 2025-26**
Health and Care	90	63		153	130	130	150	410

This is in part borne out by a slight rise in positive destinations for young people studying in this sector from a high base to a very high level; adult progression fell very slightly:

Curriculum subject	**% positive destinations 22/23**				**% positive destinations 24/25**			
	16-18	**Apps**	**Adult**	**HE**	**16-18**	**Apps**	**Adult**	**HE**
Health and Care	77.8%		73.9%		81.6%		72.4%	

Ongoing priorities for Health and Care will need to include:

- Ongoing promotion of the sector as an attractive progression route for students, especially adults
- Improved destinations reporting and guidance to raise progression rates for adults

Hospitality

Curriculum subject	**Student Numbers 2022-23**					**Student Numbers 2025-26**				
	16-18	**Adult**	**Apps**	**HE**	**Total**	**16-18**	**Adult**	**Apps**	**HE**	**Total**
Hospitality/Retail	314	628	3	0	945	445	541	0	0	986

Historic reductions in the Hospitality and Retail sector have been a significant phenomenon over previous years and the impact on opportunities of the Covid pandemic on this sector has been marked. In spite of this, the numbers of students studying in this sector subject have risen slightly over the past three years and an increase in the number of young people again offsets the reduction in adult numbers.

Employers have been active in their engagement with the curriculum at South Thames and Merton Colleges and the volumes of interactions have more than doubled. The Group has been able to hold sector-based recruitment fairs to promote careers in Hospitality especially on a number of occasions with employers contributing readily, while they are also active in supporting students through placements, visits and curriculum design and delivery, which underpins the data for this measure:

Employer interactions by subject	**2023-24** Employability – Kingston	**2023-24** Employability – Carshalton, Merton and South Thames	**2023-24** Business Partnership Team	**TOTAL 2023-24**	**2025-26** Employability – Kingston	**2025-26** Employability – Carshalton, Merton and South Thames	**2025-26** Business Partnership Team	**TOTAL 2025-26**
Hospitality/ retail	0	55		55	0	79	38	117

Progression for students studying in this sector subject area has improved slightly for young people, but fallen for adults to a low level:

Curriculum subject	**% positive destinations 22/23**				**% positive destinations 24/25**			
	16-18	**Apps**	**Adult**	**HE**	**16-18**	**Apps**	**Adult**	**HE**
Hospitality/Retail	81.5%		63.7%		82.7%		56.4%	

Ongoing priorities for Hospitality and Retail will need to include:

- Ongoing promotion of the sector as an attractive progression route for students, especially adults
- Improved destinations reporting and guidance to raise progression rates for adults

10) Key priorities for 2026-29

Headlines:

- Detailed response to SLP LSIF action plan: adoption of sub-regional priorities
- Sustain and enhance STCG's leadership in South London to promote partnership and collaboration
- Growth of Apprenticeship provision
- Growth of Adult provision

- Growth of NEET provision
- Growth of HNS provision
- Programme of development funded by Inclusive Mainstream Fund to expand and improve provision for students with High Needs
- Stronger promotion of vulnerable sectors: eg Construction, Care and Hospitality
- Develop consistent engagement with each of the four London Boroughs we serve
- Better internal curriculum integration to streamline and focus responsiveness
- Employer advisory boards re-established
- Overhaul of careers guidance, employability and work experience programmes
- Targeted CPD and industry engagement to underpin relevance of curriculum
- Enhanced destinations reporting
- Improve bidding capabilities in order to improve STCG's success rate for contestable funding opportunities

11) External validation of review outputs

The Group has worked with external partners to share its review of its delivery of the Accountability Statement and its contribution to the LSIP and an event was held on 19th June to engage partners in a sub-regional review of progress. The picture of STCG's progress set out above was endorsed by the Group's partners and the SLP have indicated their willingness to provide a formal endorsement of this self-assessment subject to Governors' approval.