

# **Annual Accountability Statement**

**2023/2024**

## 1 College Mission and Purpose

**The RNN Group (the Group) is a Further Education College Corporation with a Group structure following merger of four Colleges in 2016 and 2017, meeting the needs of thousands of employers, adults and school leavers every year.**

The Group has sites situated within the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (SYMCA) and the Bassetlaw Local Enterprise Partnership (D2N2) area which includes: Rotherham College (RC); North Notts College (NNC); Dearne Valley College (DVC); University Centre Rotherham (UCR); Retford Post-16 Centre; Idle Valley and the National Fluid Power Centre (NFPC).

### The Group:

- Supports 11,000 learners annually across a range of different education and training programmes and over 1,400 apprentices across a range of frameworks and standards
- Employs more than 1,000 people

- Works with more than 600 employers and businesses
- Has an annual turnover of £36m
- Serves areas with economic, social and educational disadvantage.

**The Group's Strategic Vision is to:** 'lead innovation and skills within our communities'.

**The Group's mission is:** "Through our strategic relationships with all the communities we serve, our education and training will provide exceptional opportunities for people throughout their lives. Our Centres of Excellence will be inspirational and we will be agile to the needs of our employers, stakeholders, schools and the community".

**The Group's core values are:** "We are inclusive, we have integrity, we are one team, we deliver".

## 2 Strategic Ambition

**The Group 2022 - 2025 Strategic Plan has a focus on People, Productivity and our Place in the Communities we serve.**

We are taking the Group forward within a changing political and economic environment, ensuring we establish ourselves as an anchor institution in the Rotherham and North Notts areas. We are preparing for a post pandemic world facing significant changes in technology, climate change and the need for us to focus on sustainability and environmental priorities, in addition to the impact of Brexit and the recent cost of living challenges. We look forward to a sustainable future, working in collaboration and partnership with all of our stakeholders, making the right choices and ensuring that we achieve our vision and strategic priorities.

After the challenges of mergers in 2016 and 2017, the RNN Group has reviewed and purposely reduced our estate, made financial improvements, and importantly, improved the quality of our educational provision. The Group was judged to be 'Good' by Ofsted in December 2022.

We support local skills investment through the NFPC, by delivering specialist training and upskilling in systems engineering. The NFPC has a National and International footprint, through which we support and further the development of skills of employers nationally, regionally and locally. We provide strategic advice and support for employers to drive business change, innovation and future workforce planning.

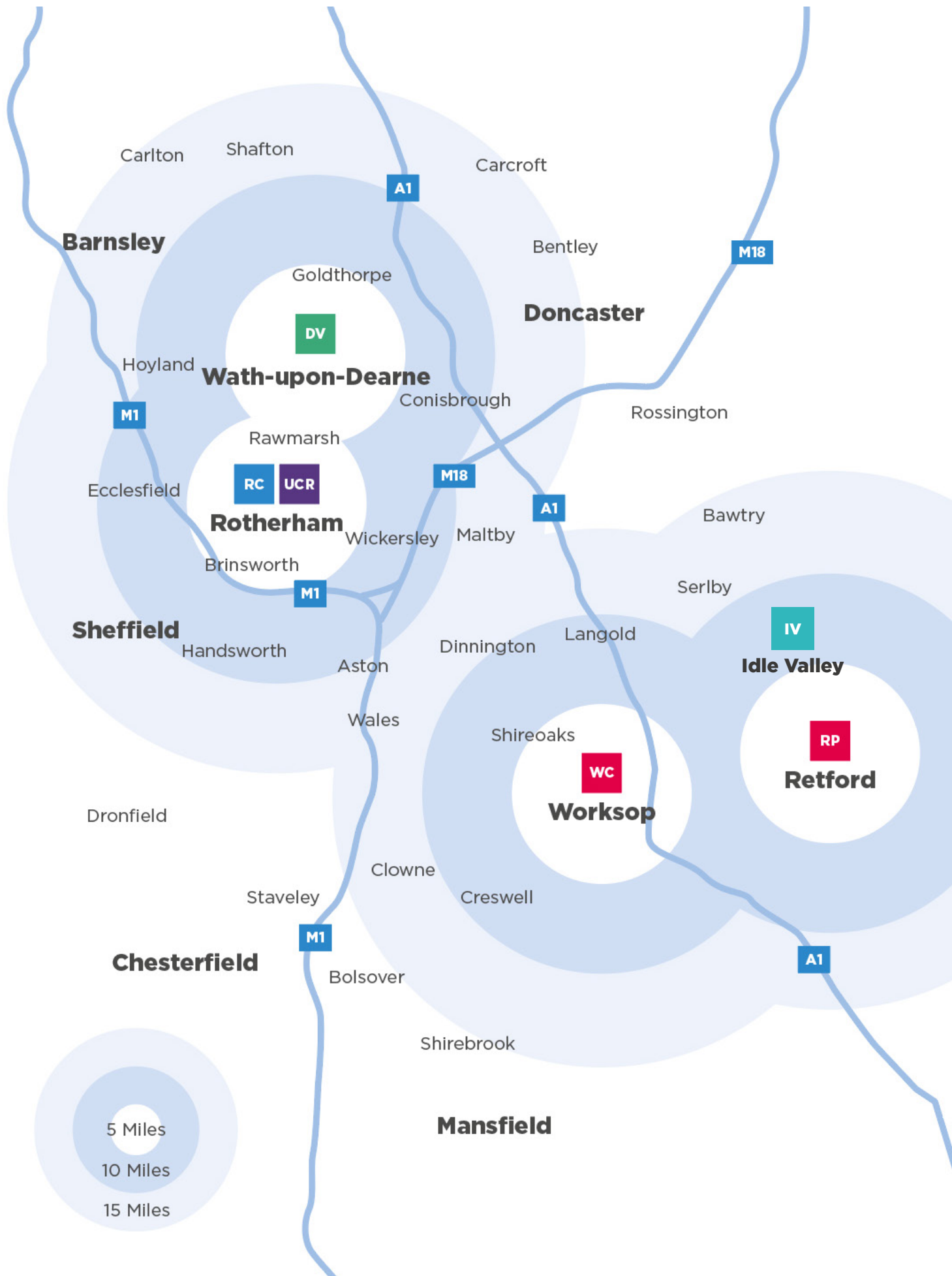
## 2 Context and Place

# Our Strategic Vision

2022 - 2025



# Our Sites



### 3 Communities we serve

**The Group primarily services the geographic communities of Rotherham (Central and surrounding regions), the Dearne Valley (comprised of North Rotherham and outlying areas of East Barnsley and West Doncaster) and Bassetlaw (comprised of Worksop, Retford and surrounding areas).**

**The Group operates out of 6 primary venues:**

- Rotherham College (RC)
- Dearne Valley College (DVC)
- North Notts College (NNC)
- Retford Education Centre (REC)
- University Centre Rotherham (UCR)
- National Fluid Power Centre (NFPC)

The Group also delivers at point of need in over 60 community venues including community resource centres, libraries, care homes and other sites attended by specific profiles of local communities.

### 4 Employers we serve

**The Group serves the needs of employers within South Yorkshire and North Nottinghamshire.**

Organisations vary in size from regional branches of national providers, locally headquartered multinational organisations and local Small to Medium sized Enterprise (SME) organisations.

**The primary local sectors of employers for South Yorkshire and North Nottinghamshire (Bassetlaw) are:**

- Warehousing & Logistics
- Customer Services (e.g. Call Centre Operations)

- Construction
- Engineering
- Motor Vehicle
- Health & Social Care
- Hospitality
- Digital.

### 5 Civic Organisations

**The Group operates in both Devolved and Non-Devolved regions of the UK:**

- South Yorkshire Combined Mayoral Authority (SYMCA) - Devolved
- Derbyshire & Nottinghamshire Economic Area (D2N2) - Non-devolved

**Within respective Geographic areas the Group operates closely with:**

- Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council (RMBC)

- Bassetlaw District Council (BDC)
- Nottingham City Council (NCC)

**The Group also works closely with local branches of Government including:**

- Department of Work and Pensions (DWP);
- Jobcentre Plus Centres - Rotherham (Riverside / Chantry House), Mexborough, Worksop, Retford

### 6 D2N2 Strengths

**D2N2, has a diverse economy, with a mix of traditional and modern industries.**

Manufacturing is a significant sector in D2N2, with advanced engineering and automotive industries being important drivers of employment in the region. It has one of the highest number of manufacturing jobs compared to all Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) areas and has the largest cluster of transport manufacturing and research & development in the country.

The logistics and transportation sectors are also significant in the region, with East Midlands Airport and the M1 motorway providing excellent connectivity to the rest of the UK and Europe. The addition of East Midlands Freeport (EMF), announced in March 2021 will drive economic regeneration across the East Midlands.

The healthcare sector is a growing employer, with a number of large hospitals and care homes in the region. D2N2 has the third largest life sciences cluster in the UK.

In terms of employment, the four largest sectors in D2N2 are health, manufacturing, retail, and education. The visitor economy is an important contributor locally, particularly in the northwest of the area.

The unemployment rate in D2N2 was 3.1% as of December 2021, which is slightly lower than the national average of 3.7%. However, some areas within the region have higher levels of unemployment than others, particularly in the more urban areas such as Nottingham and Derby.

The D2N2 area benefits from the presence of eight further education colleges and three universities, each with their own specialisms. There is also a wide range of independent training providers, and industrial academies at Rolls Royce, Toyota and Uniper. Combined, over 60,000 qualifications per year are gained at the FE Colleges, and the universities award 29,000 qualifications. In response to employer demand, there has been significant sector-related capital and resource investment in both FE and HE over the past five years. The two successful Strategic Development Fund Pilots included all FE colleges in the area.

Implementation of a new £3.5million Skills Hub in Worksop, opened fully in September 2022, has created additional higher-level education opportunities for the Bassetlaw community to meet the emerging needs of local and regional employers.

## 7 D2N2 Challenges

**The numbers of people in D2N2 qualified to Levels 2 and 3 are above the England average, but those qualified to Level 4+ are below the national average.**

Following graduation, 35%-37% of graduates from the area's three universities remain in the East Midlands. No region has lower levels of graduate retention than the East Midlands. The D2N2 workforce is more concentrated in lower skilled occupations than the national average. There is a 13% productivity gap and a 7%-8% earnings gap compared to England as a whole.

Across the D2N2 districts there are significant place-based variations in skills and productivity.

For example, the South Derbyshire Gross Value Added (GVA) of £49.18 per hour worked is more than double than the GVA of Bassetlaw.

There is a need to improve Digital skills at all levels to ensure that individuals and businesses can access services and compete in the global marketplace and there needs to be an increased uptake of Higher and Degree level apprenticeships.

Further Education Colleges in the region need an increased supply of industrially competent tutors in key disciplines, such as construction, digital, engineering, and low carbon.

## 8 SYMCA Strengths

**South Yorkshire (SY) has two world-class Universities and eight Industry leading Further Education and specialist colleges that are leading the Technical Education and Apprenticeship agenda.**

The University Centre Rotherham offers high-quality higher education, skills and training that meets the skills needs of the local area. Post 16 provision is very strong in Rotherham, with two colleges and one sixth form college.

SY has a higher-than-average number of workers with NVQ qualifications across all levels and key sectors where there is likely to be exciting growth including digital, specialised construction, low carbon, advanced manufacturing and rail engineering.

Rotherham is located at the centre of the country, has good access to motorway networks and has a historical manufacturing and engineering base. Meadowhall is one of the largest retail centres in England. Rotherham is a good place to start a business, with strong incubation support and the Town has an ambitious regeneration plan. Rotherham has a vibrant voluntary and community sector with many hundreds of organisations, large and small, providing vital links with local communities.

The Advanced Manufacturing Innovation District (AMID) connects world-class capabilities and research and development assets in materials, clean energy, and advanced wellness.

The Construction sector has the most businesses in SYMCA (over 8,200) and there are several large companies and supply chains which link into this sector.

The SYMCA region helps tackle global health challenges with a strong background in healthcare technology, sport research and healthcare service design and hosts flagship research Institutes for Neuroscience. The health sector has over 4,000 employers in SYMCA and has established a reputation for excellence in the development of innovative healthcare technologies. The Region is host to many world-leading healthcare technology companies. The Region also has several large teaching hospitals, is the location for world leading clinical research and biomedical devices, and has several firms involved in diagnostic and interventional innovations (everything from surgical to artificial intelligence).

Digital technology is changing how education, engineering, and manufacturing operates. There is opportunity for specialist training to support growth in the sector and a thriving network of over 400 companies, incubators and organisations; all of which make up the digital media and technology ecosystem. Over 60% of the UK's educational technology capacity is in Sheffield, which is home of national and globally significant businesses like The Floom, Sumo Digital, Wandisco, Plusnet, and 3Squared.

## 9 SYMCA Challenges

**There are significant health inequalities within SYMCA when compared with the UK average. Increased investment is required to create the enabling conditions which will grow productivity and improve lives.**

With an economic activity rate of 77%, all four local authority areas are below the national average. The area is home to 267,000 economically inactive individuals (23%) ranking the 10th lowest performing area out of 38 LEP areas, with a high incidence of long-term health conditions.

Higher unemployment rates and higher levels of economic inactivity underpin poverty in the SYMCA Region. The rate of young people living in workless households stands at 5.7% above the national average. Employability skills are lacking in many roles and industries across SY. For example, communication, collaboration, problem solving, adaptability and resilience are some of the skills SY employers believe are important for their workforce to be effective today.

The available data and evidence indicate that on most measures of skills demand and supply SY is below the national average. Broadly, these relate to employability, technical, digital, and basic skills. A number of drivers are stimulating demand for technical skills including net zero and digital transformation.

Despite the prioritisation of adult basic skills through statutory entitlements, adult participation in basic skills is in decline. SY employers rated 50% of their workforce have a low level of basic skills and concern was raised that this lower level in basic skills was holding back the sub-region.

The growth in transport and logistics in SY has created a skills gap which will continue as the industry expands with the growth in internet commerce.

In construction there is an acute shortage of skilled workers across all site trades and in construction management, with a growing requirement for skills in low carbon manufacturing.

Despite examples of world-class teaching facilities and training, the quality of education varies widely across all levels. SYMCA lags the national averages across all levels of formal education for many indicators (e.g. English and Maths, Progress and Attainment).

Whilst SYMCA has a comparatively high level of Apprenticeships compared to other areas, and an economic base which could support further growth, there are constraints on the capacity to grow, and challenges with levels and subjects studied. For example, it is estimated that around 70% of apprentice starts in SYMCA are aligned to low pay sectors.

South Yorkshire is home to 49,020 local businesses, 90% of which are micro businesses (employing fewer than 9 people). It has a lower-than-average business start-up rate.

A large proportion of SYMCA's 52,000 SMEs are not actively improving their energy efficiency.

There is a lack of electric vehicle charging and hydrogen refuelling stations. Yorkshire and Humber have only 5% of the UK's electric vehicle (EV) charging points and only one hydrogen refuelling point.

There is a need for full fibre and 5G coverage across the whole region, some areas of which still have inadequate 4G coverage. SYMCA is already lagging behind other city regions, with open access full fibre coverage only half the national average.

FE Colleges in the region need an increased supply of industrially competent tutors in key disciplines, such as construction, digital, engineering, and low carbon.



## 10 Responding to Local/Regional Skills Needs

### **RNN Group will use the SYMCA and D2N2 Local Skills Improvement Plan's (LSIPs) to inform and help shape curriculum planning, working closely with employers and stakeholders.**

We will build on the strong partnerships with employers and local providers supporting collaboration and continue to deliver the Strategic Development Fund (SDF) outcomes which support local/regional training opportunities, skills development and business hubs.

RNN Group will carry out a refresh of the local curriculum strategy in line with the emerging LSIPs by engaging with local stakeholders in order that we can meet National, Regional and Local Priorities as outlined in the Skills for Jobs act and the national levelling up agenda.

### **The D2N2 LSIP, has identified themes that were highlighted as particularly important in Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire:**

- Digitalisation
- Net Zero
- Essential and transferable skills (Work Readiness)
- Local Skills System
- Local socio-economic conditions

South Yorkshire's Local Skills Improvement Plan has a focus on digital skills, an area identified as offering significant potential to deliver high economic growth for the region, and in response to the findings of the South Yorkshire Trailblazer Skills Accelerator. The interim findings of the consultation indicate that the most important current digital skills to South Yorkshire businesses are data skills and general office software skills. The highest share of businesses identify data skills as a current digital skills gap.

RNN Group will develop an innovative and sustainable curriculum and continue to develop curriculum specialisms at each RNN Group College site, that meet national, regional and local needs.

### **The Group will invest in Specialist provision at different sites:**

- Dearne Valley College – Animal Care / Land Based / Sport / Outdoor Education / E-Sports / Electric & Hybrid vehicles technology / commercial provision
- Rotherham College – Visual & Performing Arts / Media / Hair & Beauty / Media Make-up / Digital / Games Animation / Construction / STEAM / Health & Social Care
- North Notts College – Electrical / Plumbing / Electric & Hybrid Vehicle technology / Digital / Renewable Energy
- Retford Education Centre - Media Make up / Sport
- University Centre Rotherham – Teacher Education / Performing Arts / Digital / Higher Level Apprenticeships in Construction and Engineering.

RNN Group works with our partners to meet local employer skills needs and have successfully secured funding to adapt and grow our provision, for example:

- Through the Strategic Development we have enable accessible STEM training at the National Fluid Power Centre, NNC and DVC
- To support the high number of SMEs in our community we have enabled work experience, Internships and Apprenticeships and have provided digital skills for employers.

We have Introduced Online and Hybrid programme delivery to enable access by individuals with barriers to onsite training and have enhanced our responsive Adult Education curriculum model enabling us to provide a range of programmes that meet local needs, for example:

- Welding (Mig / Tig / Mixed Methods)
- Dog Grooming
- Development of a suite of Hair and Beauty Professional Development Qualifications
- Information, Advice and Guidance at Level 3
- Non-Medical Procedure programmes
- Principles of Cleaning programmes
- Principles of Team Leading programmes
- ACCA Level 3 Accounting programmes
- Awards in Plumbing
- ESOL
- English & Maths
- Business Improvement techniques
- Mental Health Awareness/First Aid

Skills needs analysis is a key part of the Group's curriculum planning process. Curriculum Managers plan their curriculum offer in-line with current and future skills needs alongside learner and employer feedback to inform future plans. The Employer Partnerships Team collaborates effectively with Curriculum Managers and local employers through Advisory Boards to review curriculum plans, the sequencing of curriculum and assessment activities. This ensures they link with local skills needs, the technical skills needed in industry and the available labour market information.

In 2022/23 over 90 employers contributed to Advisory Boards including: AESSEAL; Equans; Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council; Bassetlaw District Council; Woodhead Construction and Nexus Multi Academy Trust. This ensures the curriculum provides learners with the knowledge and skills that reflect local, regional and national skills needs supporting learners to be successful.

Our excellent facilities and expertise enable us to play an even greater role in developing healthy and connected communities. We improve people's life chances through the development of curriculum specialisms within our local communities and improve community prosperity.

Senior leaders, leaders and managers contribute at advisory boards across both the SYMCA and D2N2 regions to influence policy, collaborate with stakeholders and participate in projects.

The Group recognises that public funds are intended to be used locally hence, we commit to providing education and training to support the skills needs of local people. We continue to be an active member of key groups that support economic generation such as the North Notts Business Improvement District (BID) Board, UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) Investment Plan for Bassetlaw and for South Yorkshire, Rotherham Town Deal Board, Rotherham Together Partnership, Rotherham Pioneers and Rotherham Business Growth Board.

We work in partnership with local schools, including specialist schools for students with learning difficulties and disabilities to support successful transition to vocational further education and we are expanding the number and range of employability programmes aimed at those not in work or economically inactive. We continue to develop our Adult Education and community learning programmes and ensure that the facilities we develop at the Group are accessible to our local communities.

## 11 Key Stakeholders

### The Group has had strategic input to the Local Skills Improvement Plan Pilot in the SYMCA region, and has been successful in four Strategic Development Fund Bids (SDF) in both the SYMCA and D2N2 regions to support skills development and training.

The Group has adopted a highly responsive approach to working with local stakeholders. Close integration of sector priorities identified via the regional Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) for the SYMCA region and Local Economic Partnership Strategic Skills Plans for the D2N2 region has influenced responsive and stakeholder focused provision which prepares learners for progression into employment.

For example, as a result of an identified lack of digital skills within the SYMCA region, the Group has a key role in the SYMCA advancing digital project. Group Leaders make strategic input to UK Shared Prosperity Fund bids in both SYMCA and D2N2, influencing and shaping priorities.

The Group supports the communities it serves well by providing access to opportunities, facilities, resources and expertise. Senior leaders have forged strong relationships with local MPs to ensure constituents' interests and concerns are raised and to raise the profile of the good work the Group does.

For example, the Rt Hon John Healey MP for Wentworth & Dearne officially opened the "College Retail Outlet" at Dearne Valley College, raising the profile of the Group across the region.

The Group offers local employers, charities and civic organisations access to resources and facilities at the same time as offering learners the opportunity to access volunteering opportunities and job vacancies.

## 12 Engagement with Other Providers in the Area

### Learning Providers

The Group works in close collaboration & partnership with:

- South Yorkshire College Partnership (SYCP)
- South Yorkshire Provider Network (SYPN)
- Derbyshire & Nottinghamshire College Group (NCG).

The Group works with and services the needs of:

- Local schools
- Local IAG services (e.g. QDOS Careers Hub).

Very strong partnerships exist between Further Education Colleges in both the SYMCA area through the South Yorkshire College

Partnership (SYCP) of which the Group CEO is currently Chair, and in the D2N2 region where the CEO is the Group representative on the D2N2 People and Skills Advisory Board.

We also have partnership arrangements with three Higher Education Institutions - Sheffield Hallam University, University of Hull and the University of Huddersfield.

RNN Group is a member of both the South Yorkshire UK Shared Prosperity Fund Advisory Group, and the Bassetlaw UK Shared Prosperity fund Advisory Group, which direct the UKSPF investment required on improving communities and place, people and skills and supporting local business. Collectively, both groups have shared ambitions to address challenges and opportunities in the regions.

## 13 Contribution to National, Regional and Local priorities

	Aims and Objectives	Contribution towards National, Regional and Local Priorities for Learning and Skills
1	Integrate a digital component into priority occupations Study Programmes, AEB programmes and Apprenticeships where not already present.	<p>The curriculum intent is aligned to SYMCA / D2N2 priorities, in terms of meeting current and future skills gaps in Digital skills and Digitalisation. The interim findings of the SYMCA LSIP indicate that the most important current digital skills to South Yorkshire businesses are data skills and general office software skills, these are followed by other software tools skills, security, privacy, and GDPR skills, and social media/digital marketing skills. The highest share of businesses identify data skills as a current digital skills gap, measured by their assessment of current workforce meeting the business need for that skill. This is followed by social media/digital marketing skills and web content management skills.</p> <p>RNN Group will support the development of skills needed for the digitalisation of different industries.</p>
2	Supporting Skills for Green Jobs	<p>Future employees will have a better understanding of the need for a sectoral shift towards a Green economy and will have the skills that help meet local employment needs with Green jobs. The Group will develop a curriculum that supports skills for green jobs.</p> <p>RNN Group will focus on the development, delivery and monitoring of a number of sustainability projects focused on environmental management, energy reduction, active travel, student and staff engagement.</p> <p>Students and Staff will have the opportunity to complete Carbon Literacy programmes/modules and the Group Environment and Sustainability Manager will help embed sustainability into the curriculum and engage with and respond to employer needs in the Green Skills space.</p> <p>The Group will develop a range of introductory programmes that enable employers to embrace net zero objectives whilst at the same time delivering specialist skills for low carbon careers in priority sectors.</p> <p>The Group will collaborate with other providers to develop a series of short modular programmes that contribute to a net zero road map.</p>

3	Increasing Adult Participation	<p>RNN Group aims to increase adult participation to meet the priorities of the SYMCA and D2N2 regions. SYMCA and D2N2 and employers have specific priorities to increase Adult participation in key sectors.</p> <p>Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support people into employment which provides opportunities for in-work health, wellbeing, skills progression and a decent level of pay</li> <li>• Ensure that those excluded from the labour market are able to overcome barriers to training and employment</li> <li>• Ensure that businesses are actively engaged in delivering training opportunities and recognise the benefits of investing in their workforce.</li> </ul> <p>Bassetlaw Council priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve and maintain high skills levels of the area's workforce</li> <li>• Provide a good supply of local workforce.</li> </ul>
4	Create a common framework for transferable skills that applies to young people, adults entering the work place and existing employees.	<p>The Group will work with other Colleges to develop and implement a common framework for transferable skills at various levels and applied to different sectors. This will include the exploration of digital solutions such as "Skill Builder".</p>
5	Introducing a broader range of Apprenticeship Standards	<p>As a key Government priority, Apprenticeships are a way for people to learn on the job, both for new starters and for existing members of staff, allowing learners the opportunity to gain a qualification and apply their learning while continuing to earn a salary.</p> <p>The Group engages with employers to continue the progression of the apprenticeship agenda locally and regionally. This includes the introduction of New Standards.</p> <p>RNN Group will expand the range of Apprenticeship Standards.</p>
6	Aligning and Expanding Higher Technical Skills	<p>RNN Group will explore opportunities to develop strategic partnerships with Higher Education partners to deliver programmes that complement the RNN offer.</p> <p>We will strategically coordinate our Higher Technical Qualifications offer so that we can better provide and articulate the pathways, support, and options available to learners across a range of different subjects. We will consider and address regional skills needs collectively, and work more collaboratively with employers rather than potentially competing for their engagement.</p>
7	Increasing the Range of Supported Internships	<p>RNN Group will contribute further to social and economic inclusivity by supporting SEND learners into fulfilling careers, whilst meeting skills needs. The Group aims to increase the range of supported Internship Provision.</p>
8	<p>To Introduce T-Levels across the RNN Group Colleges from September 2023:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Health (RC, NNC)</li> <li>• Construction (RC, NNC)</li> <li>• Digital (RC, NNC).</li> </ul>	<p>Created as an alternative to A levels for 16 to 19-year-olds, T Levels are a two-year qualification focused on developing the practical skills employers look for. These are ideal for those who benefit from both academic and hands-on, experience-based learning, one T Level is equivalent to three A levels.</p> <p>There will be a Joined-up T-Level offer across RNN Group Colleges that provides students with qualifications and skills to meet local skills needs. Health (delivered at Rotherham and North Notts Colleges), Construction (delivered at Rotherham and North Notts Colleges), Digital (delivered at Rotherham and North Notts Colleges).</p>
9	To improve the Progression rates for learners from Level 1,2, and 3 in the RNN Group Colleges.	<p>Through Improved CEIAG the Group will provide clear progression routes to higher level skills.</p> <p>Learners will develop strong skills and have the opportunity to progress to relevant high-quality programmes, supporting the skills needs of the region.</p> <p>The Group is reviewing procedures post application and interview to ensure learners have appropriate CEIAG at all stages of the learner journey.</p> <p>Robust curriculum mapping will strengthen intent, underpinned by promoting CEIAG to improve student commitment, the learner journey and retention for 2-year programmes identified as having a high risk of attrition, such as T-Levels.</p>



## **14 Duty to review provision in relation to local needs**

**RNN Group is committed to complying with our duty under a new section 52B of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 to review provision in relation to local needs, as proposed in the Skills and Post-16 Education Bill 2022.**

We will look to hold a review at least every three years to identify how well we are meeting local needs associated with securing suitable employment. We will publish a report on our main website following this review. We will factor in any actions from this report into our Accountability Agreement plan.

## **15 Reference to Relevant Supporting Documentation**

**RNN Group-Year-End-Accounts-2021-2022**

**RNN Group Strategic Plan 2022-2025**

## **16 RNN Board sign off**

**Annual  
Accountability  
Statement**

**2023/2024**

