

## 1. Purpose

### Our Vision

We aim to provide excellent learning opportunities to serve the needs of Birmingham and the City Region.

### Curriculum Intent

As a regional College, Birmingham Metropolitan College (BMet) is anchored in the communities that it serves. We serve a range of stakeholders, demographics, and industries, predominately and proudly. BMet does this by raising aspirations of young people and adults enabling them to develop skills and behaviours empowering them to progress in education and training as well as enter, upskill and reskill into jobs enhancing their life-time earnings. BMet brings value to the economy and local, regional, and national businesses by providing resilient, qualified and trained people into the workforce who make a positive contribution to society in modern Britain.

## 2. Context and Place/Communities we serve

### Birmingham Metropolitan College Learner Profile

In 2021-22, BMet supported over 10,000 learners and worked in partnership with approximately 1,000 employers. Our learner population is broken down into the following:

16-18	Adults	Apprentices hips	Community	Higher Education
4,128*	4,751**	802	184	279

- \*Inc. 166 learners with EHCPs of which 88 have High Needs
- \*\*Inc. 1,297 learners are with subcontracted provision

The BMet learner population is made up of a majority minority, with 63% Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) learners, with 37% White with the majority being White British and 1% Irish. Of the BAME learners, Pakistani learners are consistently the single largest group (15% of overall learner population) followed by African learners at 13%. The population of African learners has increased by 65pp compared to 2020-21 and Pakistani learners' population has increased by 14pp. There is a steady representation of BAME apprentices (29% in 2021-22 with a target of 40% by 2024).

Birmingham's population is estimated at 1,144,900. In the 2021 census the population of the region is recorded to have grown by 6.8pp to 4.3m, with Birmingham remaining the youngest city with 46% of Birmingham residents aged between 0 and 29 and one in three born outside the UK. There remains however a predicted population increase for Birmingham of 5.4pp by 2025 (EMSI Q2 2021 data set). This predicted population growth for Birmingham is said to be equivalent to adding the population of Oxford to the city by 2031.

At BMet 70% of 16-18-year olds live in postcode areas that are in the top 30% most deprived (based on IMD, this is 10% points (pp) higher than last academic year), and of these 49% live in the most deprived 10% of postcodes nationally (9pp higher than last academic year). For our adults the figure of deprivation has risen from 60% in 2020-21 to 66% in 2021-22 with 41% living in the most deprived 10% of postcodes nationally. Approximately 30% of our full-time 16-18-year olds have GCSE English below a grade 4 when starting at the college and 35% have GCSE Maths below a grade 4.

The 2021 school census reported, in Birmingham, there are 500 state-funded schools with over 66% of those learners from ethnic minority backgrounds and 40.6% having English as a second language (EAL). These numbers are higher than the England averages of 26.5% and 19.3%, respectively. Birmingham also had a higher level of children with special educational needs (SEN) compared to England (17.3% compared to 15.6%).

The percentage of KS4 pupils achieving 9-4 passes in English and Maths in Birmingham (21/22) has dropped by 17.4pp from 67.1% to 49.7% this is slightly lower than the national rate of 51.9%.

Qualifications	Birmingham	National		Unemployment	Birmingham	National
Level 4	40.4%	43.6%		Economically active	70.8%	78.4%
Level 3	57.8%	61.5%		Claimant unemployment rate	8.3% Out of Work Benefits	3.7%
Level 2	72.6%	78.1%		Workless households	18.4%	14%
Level 1	81.7%	87.5%		Economic Inactivity	29.2%	21.6%
No qualifications	10.9%	6.6%		Deprivation	7 <sup>th</sup> (IMD)	

(ONS 2021).

In comparison, of the total adult enrolments at the college during 2021-22, 82% were not in paid employment, of which 78% were looking for paid employment in the future. After successful completion, 88% of these learners, for whom we have successfully collected a known destination, have progressed into paid employment or further or higher education.

### 3. Approach to developing the plan/Key Stakeholders

BMet has a stakeholder strategy that focuses on building strong and effective relationships to plan our curriculum offer to meet regional and national skills needs.

The strategy focuses on key stakeholder groups employers (including business representative bodies) Political, Civic, Community, Education Partners (including schools, other FE providers and HEI's) and Alumni.

Our business planning cycle always takes into account demographic, local and regional labour market intelligence via EMSI, Vector, Chambers as well as from the WMCA and BCC. Senior Leaders and now Directors have specific responsibilities for a sector/s across BMet. This is a transparent process enabling BMet to consider where provision is best placed to meet local needs.

Our 2030 Strategic Plan and this Plan benefit from a wide range of engagement with the following stakeholders and organisations including the WMCA, BCC and employers through the Greater Birmingham and Solihull Chambers, BMet employer boards and our business development activities. BMet has introduced two new employer boards in 22/23 (construction, digital) with further expansion in 23/24 to include Health and Engineering). BMet already has the Greater Birmingham Professional Services Academy and Sports Employer Board.

BMet is an active member of the College West Midlands Group through which the FE Colleges liaise strategically with the WMCA as well as individually, engage in activities to develop and share innovation, for example, SWAPs, NEETs, sector innovation (green skills), sustainability, staff shortages and EDI. Most recently, colleges have been working on SDF projects to strengthen engagement and impact for sector employers including in FinTech led by BMet.

Essential to our planning is the opportunity to work closely with Birmingham City Council. Currently, BMet is part of the Steering Group on the future Youth Service offer in Birmingham, and we are helping to shape SEN

inclusive apprenticeship provision and investigating the development of disability sports as part of the wider offer for LLDD young people in Birmingham as part of our legacy response to the Commonwealth Games.

BMet works closely with South and City College Birmingham and Solihull College. Our colleges are members of the GBS Chambers and Greater Birmingham and Solihull Institute of Technology alongside local universities and collectively provide a range of programmes for engineering and digital sectors. Most recently we have successfully won grant funding across a range of HTQs that we will co-design. Where there is an offer that is the same the local demographics and employer demand supports this duplication, for example, nursing and associated health professional roles. Indeed, our three colleges will now sit on the Education Group of the Integrated Care Board alongside universities which will greatly aid our strategic planning for Birmingham.

Outside of the IoT collaboration, BMet is either delivering or planning with local universities a range of level 4 and 5 programmes with progression to level 6 or employment. These programmes are designed to meet regional as well as national priorities. For example, in teacher training, health sciences and engineering.

BMet is not able to plan curriculum with schools and sixth forms, though we take an active interest in the introduction of new post-16 academies and free schools to understand the impact on an annual basis. However, the work of the Schools Liaison Team does inform our curriculum planning.

#### **4. Contribution to National, Regional, Local Priorities**

**The draft 2030 Strategic Plan** has been developed in consultation with our stakeholders, and we have ensured that the aims and objectives in this Plan align with our Strategic Plan. The longer-term priorities include the sustainability of BMet by meeting national, regional and local priorities, improving quality and being an inspiring place to work and study/train for our staff, young people and adults through a focus on technical and essential skills development. The Plan recognises the need to collaborate and innovate with partners in areas such as sustainability and digital requiring both investment in the physical infrastructure and specialist equipment as well as developing staff and learner skills. It also acknowledges BMet needs to do more from level 1 and above ensuring suitable progression routes for adults leading to higher level skills in line with employer demand. Below is a brief overview of local, regional and national key areas of focus for BMet. A key challenge for the College is the recruitment and retention of staff expertise particularly in hard to recruit areas such as construction and engineering. We will seek innovative approaches with employers and/or other providers in these sectors but this is only part of the solution.

#### **West Midlands and Warwickshire Local Skills Improvement Plan (WMW LSIP)**

The WMW LSIP *draft* focusses on the cross-cutting themes of digital and green skills and associated leadership and management capabilities in the region, and aims to build on existing research and meaningful collaboration with partners to:

- develop understanding of the immediate and future skills needs of employers
- facilitate an agile and responsive skills system
- help stimulate investment in skills, creating meaningful employment and in-work progression opportunities for local residents

The LSIP plan has much overlap with the WMCA plans (see below) re priority sectors and provides the employer voices, particularly SMEs. It includes better signposting of providers and local offer and development of advanced, and generic essential digital skills inside and outside of work. For example, a focus on green skills including retrofit (which also aligns with the WMCA enhanced devolution deal) and associated skills in AI,

automation and software engineering as well as data analysis with homes becoming “smart”. Research also shows a majority of adults surveyed do not know what green jobs/skills are and work needs to be done to raise awareness.

The development of essential skills is seen as critical including communication, collaboration, problem solving, innovation and commercialisation in employability and practical application of technical skills. There is recognition that these are being embedded in colleges and ITPs but more needs to be done.

BMet along with other FE colleges as part of the Colleges West Midlands Group (CWG) have put forward pilots to the WMCA to consider the financial costs of wraparound support for adults which aligns with the WMW LSIP’s third focus.

BMet has recently developed its digital strategic plan and we consider it aligns well with the LSIP objective both as an employer and deliverer of skills. Our approach will be an incremental one in line with our financial capacity, the upskilling of existing workforce and staff recruitment.

The LSIP also references the concern regarding staff recruitment and retention in educational and training establishments and the need for employers and providers to work more closely to find solutions. This for BMet is an issue in areas of growth including engineering and construction. The College has taken part in considering different approaches with other colleges and we will pursue this through our employer boards.

Finally, the focus on providing training to upskill/reskill with a more flexible and modular offer also comes through but overarchingly knowing what is available is a key ask by employers. It is concerning to read that 50% of businesses surveyed identified barriers to increasing investment in skills and training, and uncertainty was a significant barrier identified by these respondents. BMet is committed to working with other providers to promote our collective offer, for example, the CWM monthly brochure for DWP, putting forward innovative programmes for employers using WMCA flexibilities, Free Skills for Jobs and where appropriate bootcamps.

### **Birmingham City Council Plan (BCC)**

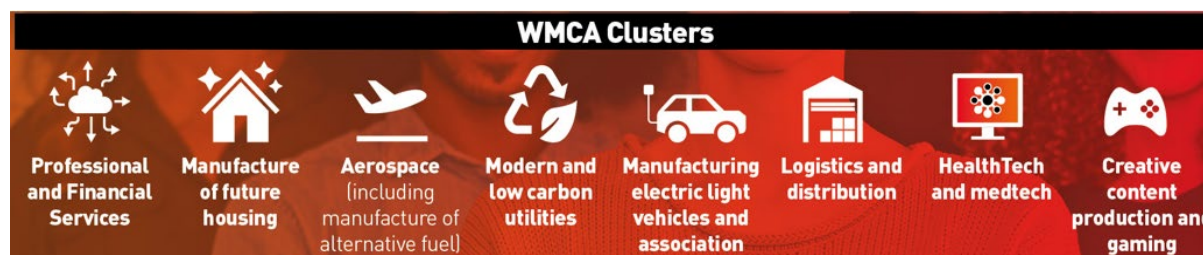
- A Prosperous Birmingham: through a focus on inclusive economic growth, tackling unemployment, attracting inward investment, and maximising the benefits of the Commonwealth Games.
- An Inclusive Birmingham: through a focus on tackling poverty and inequality, empowering citizens, promoting diversity and civic pride, and supporting and enabling all children and young people to thrive.
- A Safe Birmingham: through a focus on making the city safer, safeguarding vulnerable citizens, increasing affordable housing, and tackling homelessness.
- A Healthy Birmingham: through a focus on tackling health inequalities, encouraging physical activity and healthy living, supporting mental health, and improving outcomes for adults with disabilities and older people.
- A Green Birmingham: through a focus on street cleanliness, improving air quality, continuing the route to net zero, and becoming a city of nature.

BMet has been establishing stronger links with BCC. We have been engaged in NEET projects and the Birmingham Careers Hub over the last year, and this work has now expanded into SEN (supported internship and inclusive apprenticeship pilots). BMet is a member of the North Birmingham Recovery Taskforce which has provided opportunities to widen our adult education offer providing CPD for community organisations as well as working directly with adults on their next steps at community venues. This is alongside the programmes for the unemployed we deliver.

### West Midlands Combined Authority Plan (WMCA)

The [Local Skills Report](#) focuses on:

- Securing stronger and more inclusive regional growth that supports the most disadvantaged residents with no qualifications/low-level qualifications and the long-term unemployed.
- The creation of skills pathways for skilled new entrants and upskill current employees to transition to the new challenges and opportunities.
- Delivering a better match between the skills of the people in our region and the current and future needs of our businesses to accelerate productivity and deliver economic growth.
- Making sure more people have the skills they need to enter and progress in work.



Out of the WMCA Clusters ([WMCA AEB 2022-25 Strategy](#)) BMet is developing its offer in Professional and Financial Services, Manufacture of future housing, HealthTech and MedTech and Creative content production and gaming and to a much lesser extent modern and low carbon utilities.

### National Priorities

The White Paper 'Skills for jobs: Lifelong learning for opportunity and growth' underpins BMet's commitment to expand and grow Level 4 and 5 programmes in line with regional skills needs. Alongside our membership and programme offer through the Greater Birmingham and Solihull IoT, BMet will continue to build sustainable relationships with the universities serving Birmingham seeking progression agreements as well as delivery of programmes and opportunities to enhance BMet level 3 curriculum through university outreach work and intends to also deliver Higher Technical Qualifications or equivalent qualifications such as the HN Flex offering a more modular approach.

Apprenticeships remain an area for growth in the West Midlands. Like other providers, the pandemic did challenge the growth and quality of our apprenticeship offer. However, BMet has seen growth in new areas such the Food and Drink sector and the continuation of apprenticeships with a new 5-year contract with BMW and a renewed increasing interest in dental.

Challenges in the immediate future for BMet are the introduction of T Levels starting in 2023/24 with the associated transition programmes at level 2 and then potential rollout across all relevant curriculum areas at level 3 from 2024/25 onwards. BMet will continue to consolidate its A' level provision and its focus on English, Maths, Digital, 'Work Ready' and 'Work Real' activities as central planks for our 16-18 programmes. The key challenge will be to ensure we can still provide appropriate education and training to individuals who cannot do T' Levels, A 'levels or apprenticeships.

In line with the government's 'Careers Strategy' BMet is in a good position regarding its career support offer to 16-18 year olds against Gatsby Benchmarks. It has one of the largest cohort of FE learners who apply and are accepted for university progression through UCAS. Next year the College's focus will be to develop a more integrated careers approach that will continue to enhance careers support for adults and SEN learners with our partnership with the National Careers Service.

Aim/Action	Outcome/Impact
Introduce T levels in Education, Health & Science, Digital, Construction and associated transition programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enrol 40 T level learners</li> <li>• At least 60%of learners progress from transition programmes into T levels for 2024/25</li> <li>• 70%+ lecturers to undertake Industry updating</li> </ul>
SEN delivery and progression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 10 supported internships (3 in 22/23) and&lt;5 pilot inclusive apprentices</li> <li>• develop master plan for Inclusive sports centre and seek funding</li> </ul>
Develop and recruit to HE provisions inc. HTQs in priority sectors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enrol 90 additional HE learners across priority sectors including HTQs</li> </ul>
Develop innovative approaches for adult provision above entry level in priority sectors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 120 additional adults (including NFCJ)</li> <li>• Develop and pilot innovative approaches to deliver level 3 training to adults, that are flexible, modular, stackable to meet employer and adult needs</li> <li>• Pilot wraparound support for Adults studying maths and on Access programmes.</li> </ul> <p>Impact: positive learner feedback and 65%+ positive destinations.</p>
Implement BMet sustainability plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Achieve ‘Leading’ status on the FE Sustainability Roadmap including modifying our Estates Strategy in-line with a net zero target, implementing methods to reduce gas by 40% and electricity by 35% when compared to 2018/19 levels.</li> <li>• Promote sustainability across our campuses by engaging students and staff in various eco-friendly initiatives.</li> </ul>
Increase level of digital skills across BMet for staff, learners and employers	<p>Through our Digital and Tech Employer and Stakeholder board:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop, implement and pilot programmes, co-designed with employers to improve female representation within Digital courses and careers.</li> <li>• Launch and implement an employer-led digital essential skills programme within 3 curriculum areas</li> </ul> <p>Impact: Increase female enrolments and positive destinations</p> <p>Implement digital strategy staff and learner projects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Microsoft Office Specialist Certificate for 500 learners and staff to upskill</li> </ul> <p>Impact: Teaching and Learning Survey – Digital skills improved 90%+</p>
Promote and collaborate with employers to support workforce and essential skills development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seek and pilot different delivery models to meet demand for apprenticeships in niche areas.</li> <li>• New Engineering and Health employer boards established</li> <li>• Pilot SME focussed further education package and solution looking at branding, messaging and delivery to support SME business objectives.</li> <li>• Increase the number of level 6 careers advisors funded by BMet Levy to 16 to enhance adult and SEN IAG.</li> <li>• Explore the development of a Careers Hub for adults signposting to BMet partners and building on our existing links with employers.</li> </ul>
Meet Ofsted recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ofsted Grade 2</li> </ul>

### 5. Corporate statement

On behalf of the BMet corporation, it is hereby confirmed that the plan as set out above reflects an agreed statement of purpose, aims and objectives as approved by the corporation at their meeting on 9th of May 2023.

The plan will be published on the college's website within three months of the start of the new academic year and can be accessed from the following link:



Signed: Dexter Hutt  
Chair of Corporation



Pat Carvalho  
Principal and CEO

### Links

Draft Strategic Plan 2030 (attached)

Stakeholder Map 202223.docx (attached)

BMet Self-Assessment 21/22 (attached)

[Local Skills Plan 2022 – West Midlands Combined Authority](#)

West Midlands and Warwickshire Local Skills Improvement Plan Draft March 2023 (attached)

[Birmingham City Council – Corporate Plan 2022-2026](#)