



College Development Plan

2025-2026

V4 – September 2025

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1. Executive Summary

The Further Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1997, Section 20 sets out the requirement for the college to prepare a development plan.

This College Development Plan (CDP) sets out the activity to be undertaken by South Eastern Regional College (SERC) for the 2025-2026 Academic Year and has been endorsed by the SERC Governing Body.

The activities in the CDP demonstrate the College's contribution to fulfilling the DfE Minister's priorities outlined in 'Delivering the Economic Vision and the Departments Business Plan for 25/26.

SERC is a high achieving college, supporting staff, students, partners, businesses and our community to access quality education that propels them on their journey to employment, a better job, increased productivity and a better standard of living. Our exceptional staff have consistently delivered the highest achievement levels for students in exam results over the past six years.

In order to meet the current budgetary challenges, reductions in non-staff spend have been identified alongside a consolidation of academic delivery in order to create efficiencies. Over the last three years full-time provision increased by nearly 16%, with full-time numbers rising from 4079 in 22/23 to over 4700 in 24/25.

However, with ongoing cuts the College will find it challenging to increase full time numbers much further due to the confines of workshop space and limits on staff headcount. Through leveraging additional income which will support more part-time learners, overall numbers in 25/26, are estimated to reach 11,268.

The Governing Body (GB) monitors progress against the performance metrics included in the College Development Plan through detailed reports provided to GB meetings. The Department also reviews progress against the performance metrics through regular returns as agreed with the Department.

In response to changing circumstances and to ensure college activities remain focussed on proactively meeting the needs of the communities we serve, SERC's vision, mission, priorities and values have been revised. In consultation with SERC staff and Governing Body, our revised vision, mission and priorities will enable us to be forward looking and dynamic, enabling the college to better meet the DfE Minister's aspirations.

Revised Vision

We empower individuals, strengthen communities, and drive economic prosperity.

Revised Mission

As an innovative and inclusive College we provide transformative education and training that meets the evolving needs of our students, community and economy, fostering a culture of excellence, collaboration and sustainability.

Revised Priorities

- **Drive Curriculum Innovation**
- **Focus on Student Success and Wellbeing**
- **Enable Engagement, Business and Partnerships**
- **Promote Staff Development and Empowerment**
- **Achieve Operational Excellence and Sustainability**

Revised articulation of our culture and values:

Our core values and culture reflect the college's commitment to community, inclusivity, and excellence.

Our culture and values reflect our aspiration of linking to and supporting the communities within which we operate alongside empowering our community of staff, students and friends.

Our values and culture support us in:

- Supporting our Community
- Empowering our Community
- Respecting our Community
- Caring for our Community

The College will continue to support and develop provision and suitable support arrangements, to ensure that those with additional educational needs who can progress to higher levels of qualification are facilitated to do so. We will also support those who are unable to progress to higher levels of qualification to develop the skills required to personally develop, live as independently as possible and contribute in whatever way they can to their community.

The College welcomes the Minister's new proposals to support school leavers with special educational needs.

2. Strategic Context

Programme for Government 2024-2027: Doing What Matters Most

Grow a Globally Competitive Economy

Proposed Action: Through a series of multi-million-pound committed investments, we will make this a more vibrant and inclusive place to live, work, invest and visit. Central to every part of our plan for a globally competitive and sustainable economy will be employers and workers. Supporting them to build the skills needed both now, and in the future, will be vital if we are to harness our economic potential.

Better Support for Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs

Proposed Action: We will work to transform the Education system to provide high quality, efficient and sustainable services for children with SEN and disability. Systemic transformation will take time and will require significant investment but it is vital that we respond meaningfully to make sure our education system works for all learners.

Minister's Economic Vision

The College is a key delivery partner in taking forward the Minister's priorities set out in his Economic Vision to:

- Increase the proportion of working-age people in **Good Jobs**;
- Promote a more **Regionally Balanced** economy;
- **Raise Productivity** of businesses; and
- **Reduce Carbon Emissions** in the transition to a greener and more sustainable economy.

Strategies / Priorities

- Skills Strategy for Northern Ireland
- Trade and Investment Strategic Priorities
- Climate Change Act (NI) 2022 and The Climate Change (Reporting Bodies) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2024
- FE Transformation

- [Developing a More Strategic Approach to 14-19 Education and Training - a Framework to Transform 14-19 Education and Training Provision](#)
- [Skills Barometer 2023 - 2033](#)
- [Business Plan for 2025/26](#)
- [DfE Sectoral Action Plans](#)
- [DfE Sub Regional Economic Plans](#)
- [DfE Digital Skills Action Plan 2024 - 2034](#)
- [Tourism Vision & Action Plan – 10 Year Plan](#)
- [Review of Post School Education, Skills and Training Provision, and associated legislative protections, for Young People with Special Educational Needs – Summary Report](#)

3. Financial Performance / Position

2025/26 Forecast Position

The tables below set out the College **resource and capital requirements of £47,393k** for 2025/26.

	PROGRAMME / ACTIVITY					
	A	B	C	D	E	F
	Further Education	Higher Education	Apprenticeships / Traineeships	Business Development	Social Inclusion	Other
	EL - Level 3 (not under B – F)	Level 4+	Programmes up to Level 3 including AppsNI; Traineeships; Skills for Life and Work	InnovateUs; Skills Focus; Assured Skills Academies; Flexible Skills; International Programmes; Innovation Voucher Scheme	Access NI; Essential Skills; ESOL; College Connect; NI Prisons Service; VEP; Princes Trust; UK Shared Prosperity Fund, Step Up	Other Grants, Catering & Outlets.
Direct Teaching Costs - Pay	10,720	2,756	13,721	2,353	2,396	745
Direct Teaching Costs - Non Pay	1,286	352	1,645	84	287	560
Non-Direct Costs*	8,431	2,168	10,792	551	1,884	588
Total Delivery Cost	20,437	5,276	26,158	2,988	4,567	1,893
Non-Grant in Aid Income	629	2,360	6,710	1,140	1,314	2,273
271	19,808	2,916	19,448	1,848	3,253	-380

* Includes total support service/non-front-line activity overheads apportioned based on delivery hours.

TOTAL RESOURCE REQUIREMENT (£000's)	£46,893k
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Capital Expenditure – Major capital projects	-
Capital Expenditure – Minor Works	£500k
Capital Expenditure – DfE Energy – Invest to Save	-
Capital Receipts	-
Net DfE Capital Requirement (£000's)	£500k
City Deals Capital Expenditure	-

Reform to Save

Staff numbers FTE	Staff Type	FTE Average 31 July 2023	RtS Leavers (for reference)	FTE Average 31 July 2024	FTE Target 31 July 2025	Actual 31 July 2025
	Teaching	380	7.6	349	361	326
	Non-Teaching	396	21.71	374	377	377
	Total	776	29.31	723	738	703
Externally funded posts		2		2	2	2
Vacant posts		0		23.69	8.69	42.5
DfE funded posts		774		744.69	744.69	743.5

4. 2025/26 College Planned Delivery

The College takes into account the College profile and Sub-regional Operating Context to prioritise resource utilisation to areas of greatest need, aligned to the Strategic Context.

a. College Profile for 2025/26

SERC covers the South Eastern region of Northern Ireland drawing 80% of its students from this geography, as shown in the Annex. The College has campuses located in the south eastern area of Northern Ireland (NI) in Ballynahinch, Bangor, Downpatrick, Hollywood, Lisburn, Newcastle and Newtownards plus a Professional Skills Centre (PSC) at Nutts Corner County Antrim. We draw students from across NI and engage with businesses, both north and south of the border.



- 4 Main Campuses and 4 smaller campuses throughout South East of Northern Ireland
- Approximately 900 expert and professional staff
- Approximately 20,000 enrolments per annum
- Over 7,000 business clients
- Partnering with 22 local schools
- 35 professional and technical areas
- Courses from Entry level 0 through level 6 (BA/BSc) to level 7 (Masters)
- Each year around 11,000 students study with SERC

Budget Restrictions

In order to meet the ongoing budgetary challenges reductions in non-staff spend have been identified, however the college is also consolidating academic delivery in order to create efficiencies. This will ensure the college can still offer relevant curriculum pathways to students within a more limited budget.

The college was able to accommodate an increase in full time students over the last three years, which saw full-time provision increase by nearly 16% from 22/23, with full-time numbers rising from 4079 in 22/23 to over 4700 in 24/25. With ongoing cuts the College will find it challenging to increase full time numbers much further due to the confines of workshop space and limits on staff headcount.

It should be noted, that while we support the change of measurement to measure 'individual' students, part-time and full-time students are not directly comparable and the resource demand of full-time students is greater than the resource demand of part-time students. Other funding streams will be identified and utilised to provide more part-time learning options to address the cost of living issues which we feel are impacting part-time numbers and allow the college to continue to be responsive to changing economic and social need.

The College therefore estimates that due to additional income such as Peace Plus, overall numbers in 25/26, estimated at 11,268 will be above the numbers currently enrolled in 24/25 at 10,678.

A robust analysis of workforce capacity has been undertaken as part of our curriculum planning for 25/26. This has shown that, while we have accommodated a 16% increase in full-time student numbers, increasing average class sizes and cohorts, almost all College schools are operating above 100% of the contracted lecturer student contact time which has also led to a reliance on both Part Time Lecturing Staff and Additional hours.

(Further details of actions being taken by the college to meet the challenges of budgetary cuts are outlined in the Annex.)

Although budgetary restrictions will limit the activities the college can undertake, the College aims to ensure it remains relevant to the communities it serves, both learners and employers, through refining its vision, mission and priorities, and refocussing effort.

The SERC Governing Body and College Management Team met in May 2025 to review the strategic direction of the college and to revise the vision, mission and strategic priorities for the College in response to changing circumstances and ensure college activities remain focussed on proactively meeting the needs of the communities we serve.

The following revised vision, mission and priorities have been agreed in the SERC Strategy: Transforming Education, Transforming Lives -

Our revised vision:

We empower individuals, strengthen communities, and drive economic prosperity.

Our revised mission:

As an innovative and inclusive College we provide transformative education and training that meets the evolving needs of our students, community and economy, fostering a culture of excellence, collaboration and sustainability.

Strategic Priorities

Our five priority areas outline how we will meet the challenges of a changing economic, social and environmental operating environment and lead organisational transformation over the next five year.



- **Drive Curriculum Innovation**
- **Focus on Student Success and Wellbeing**
- **Enable Engagement, Business and Partnerships**
- **Promote Staff Development and Empowerment**
- **Achieve Operational Excellence and Sustainability**

The Governing Body has been mindful to ensure that College operational plans align with and contribute to the fulfilment of the strategic priorities. Table one below demonstrates the mapping of College plans, including the CDP, to the priorities. Successful achievement of the performance metrics outlined in the CDP will therefore directly contribute to the achievement of the strategic priorities.

Table 1: Mapping SERC delivery plans to Strategic Priorities

Strategic Priority	Drive Curriculum Innovation	Promote Staff Development and Empowerment	Focus on Student Success and Wellbeing	Enable Engagement, Business and Partnerships	Achieve Operational Excellence and Sustainability
Monitoring and review of progress against strategic priorities will be undertaken through monitoring delivery and reporting on SERC plans.	College Development Plan				
	Whole College Self Evaluation and Quality Improvement Plan				
	Curriculum Plan		Curriculum Plan		
	AI/Digital Plan				AI/Digital Plan
	Business Innovation Plan	HR Strategic Priorities and Delivery Plan	Quality Improvement Plan	Business Innovation Plan	Annual Report and Financial Statements
	ETI Evaluations	Staff Development Annual Report	Safeguarding, Care and Welfare Report	Engagement and Social Inclusion Plan	Resource Accounts
			Wellbeing Framework	Marketing Plan	Internal Audit Report
					Finance Operational Report
					Estates Strategy

Awards and Achievements

Multiple awards are achieved annually by SERC staff and students and we are delighted to be able to enhance the learning experience for students through providing additional opportunities to compete regionally, nationally and internationally. Likewise, we are proud to support staff development and ensure their efforts are recognised beyond the college. A full list of award winners is included in the Annex.

Safeguarding & Wellbeing

In 2024/25, the Learner Welfare team continued to develop and deliver a programme of Safeguarding, Care and Welfare activity through its pastoral provision. A key success of 2024/25 was the delivery of Department for the Economy's cost of living support to students from January to March 2025, with over 25,000 free meals provided to SERC students. As part of this initiative, staff from SERCs student support services used the opportunity to provide additional advice and guidance to students which was supplemented by a short online welfare and support services training module.

The Student Welfare Team has been proactive in providing Learning Support to over 1200 students in 24/25 and dealing with the ongoing issues of limited budgets. The highly experienced SERC team has provided an empowering service, enabling independence for learners through in-class support, use of assistive technologies and collective support through the new drop-in 'hubs', which has propelled learners on their journey to qualification success and employment. The success of this service is reflected in the results of the Big 14 Student Survey outlined below.

Student Feedback

The feedback from students in the Big 14 Student Survey 2025, showed that 94% of students are satisfied with the standard of delivery in the College as shown in the table below.

Table: SERC Big 14 Survey Results 2025

Student Voice	% Str Agree & Agree
The facilities and resources provided by the college helped me learn	92.7%
I am aware of who I could talk to about safe guarding (e.g. child protection, bullying, self-harm, mental health)	92.3%
The online resources are useful e.g. Moodle, MS Teams, e Portfolio, Class Notebook	91.9%
I am learning new skills that will help me in real life (Practical skills, interview skills, presentation skills, study skills)	93.0%
The projects that I have worked on have helped me develop skills and knowledge that will be useful in the work place	94.2%
I was clear about the support I can get from the college e.g. student support services	94.6%
The expected standards of work are made clear to me	95.5%
I have been given clear guidance and support to prepare for assignments	93.1%
I am enjoying my course	93.1%
Overall I am satisfied with my course	94.7%
I have good support to help me learn and progress e.g. tutorial/teaching team	95.0%
My tutors encourage me to work to the best of my ability	96.6%
The college ensures all students are treated equally and with respect and is committed to promoting inclusive learning	95.6%
Total	94.0%

Source: Big 14

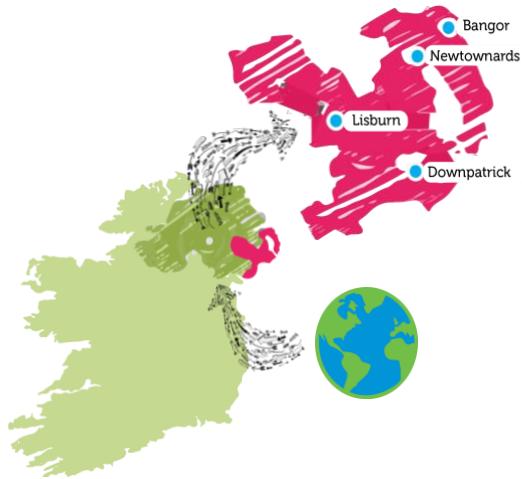
Our Strategic Priorities will allow us to focus actions over the next five years of our strategy on maintaining our high levels of achievement and student satisfaction, improving student retention and satisfaction where levels are lower than other curriculum areas; improving staff satisfaction rates; reduce staff absence; increase the number of businesses supported by the College through collaboration with partners; increase cost recovery income; introduce the use of AI tools to reduce burden on staff; and become a more energy efficient and sustainable organisation.

b. Sub-regional Operating Context

Population Profile

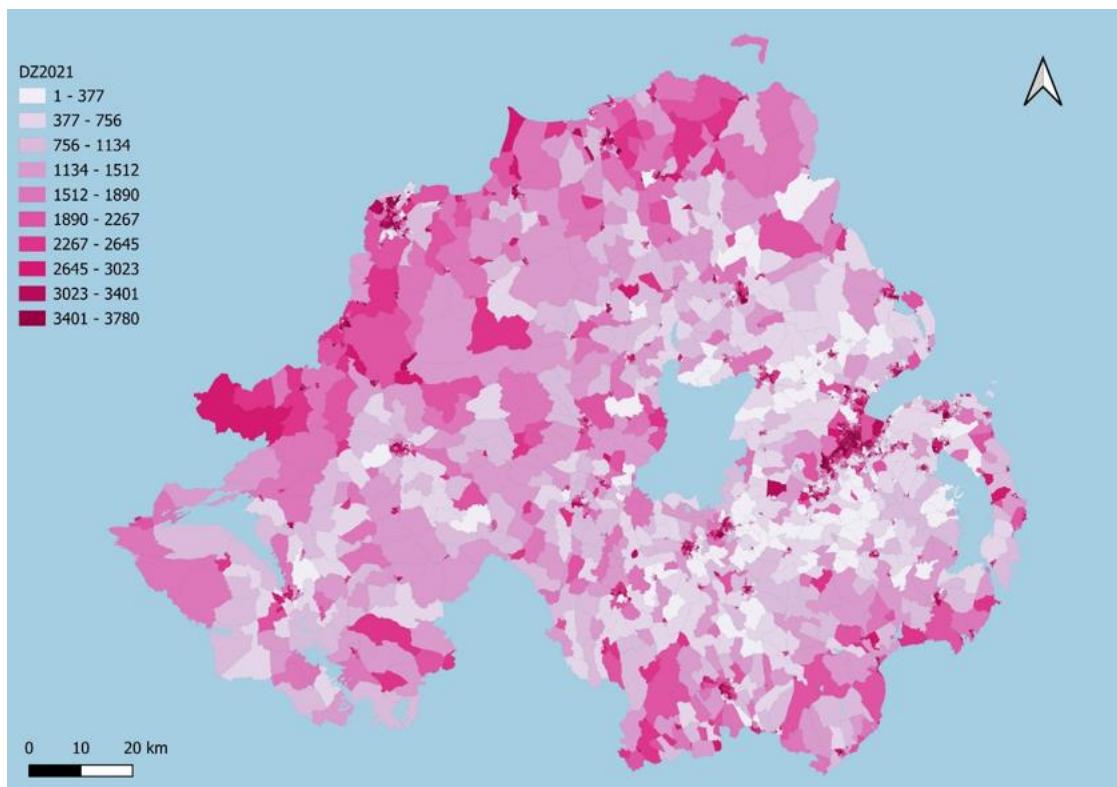
South Eastern Regional College (SERC) covers the south eastern geography of Northern Ireland (NI) serving a large population of nearly 500k and 200k households.

Analysis of the population in the SERC catchment shows a diverse population with areas of affluence and high economic activity juxtaposed with areas of deprivation, displaying low levels of educational attainment.



The high levels of affluence have often masked or caused factors evidencing extreme levels of deprivation to be hidden, particularly when viewing Northern Ireland using data at a local government or District Electoral Area (DEA) level. A research project funded by the Nuffield Foundation, 'Trajectories of Deprivation in the UK', assesses how deprivation levels have changed in neighbourhoods across the UK. It notes that education deprivation in Northern Ireland at 27%, is the highest of all UK regions. The report highlights "micro-scale pockets of deprivation" which have not always been 'visible' for intervention and as can be seen from the map below, a significant number of these pockets are within the south eastern region.

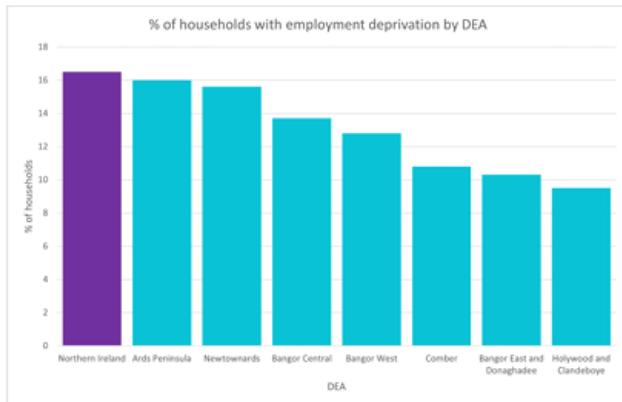
Map: NI deprivation index for Data Zones - 1 = least deprived and 3780 = most deprived



SERC's engagement strategy aims to address this as outlined in more detail below.

Industry Profile

The college covers the geographical areas of Ards & North Down (AND), Lisburn & Castlereagh (LCCC) and Newry, Mourne and Down (NMD) Councils. The College assesses data at Local Government District (LGD) and below to ensure we understand and are addressing the issues at a sub-regional level.



Census 2021 uses Super Data Zones to show how statistics vary across areas. Within Ards and North Down, **NEWTOWNARDS DEA (62.9%) AND ARDS PENINSULA DEA (63.3%) HAVE A HIGHER PROPORTION OF HOUSEHOLDS WITH DEPRIVATION** in at least one of education, employment, health and housing. Employment deprivation is shown in the chart to the left.

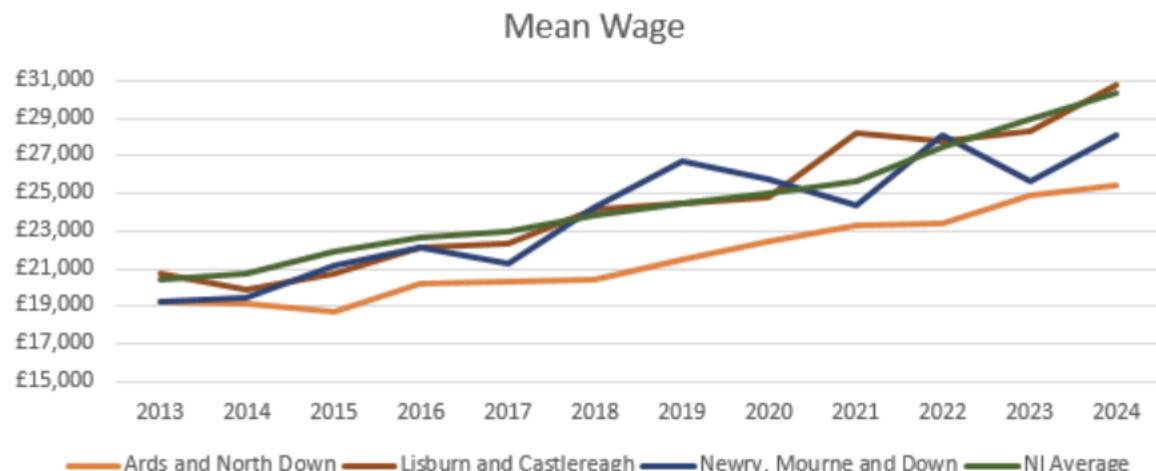
It is noted that unemployment levels across AND, LCCC, NMD have risen slightly in the last year. While, the claimant count fell steadily from 2020 until 2023, there has been an increase in claimant count in 2024 across all Council areas as shown in the table in the Annex.

It is therefore key that SERC continues to support businesses to increase productivity and grow jobs and this will be undertaken, mainly through the SERC Business Services team supported by our Curriculum teams. The College Engagement team now also collaborate closely with the Business Services team to ensure we are developing robust education-employment pathways for those furthest away from education and employment opportunities.

Business Services is an income generating, target-focused unit which provides practical, effective training and innovation support to businesses and individuals. Support provided enables client businesses to upskill and reskill their staff and develop new products, processes, and services. The unit supports SMEs to achieve growth through job creation, job safeguarding, improved efficiencies, increased productivity and increased turnover with a particular focus on addressing priority skills areas at levels 3-5.

The College will also work with Council colleagues to address their strategic priorities including increasing the mean wage. The disparity in mean wage across Council areas is shown in the graph below with Ards & North Down consistently below the NI average. This is reflective of the industry mix, being predominantly hospitality related compared to its neighbouring Councils. Further data is available in the Annex.

Mean Wage by LGD 2013-2024



Source NISRA

The College is working closely with Ards & North Down Council in its efforts to regenerate the Bangor Seafront and develop an Innovation centre in Holywood to attract more businesses and employment to the Borough.

c. College Engagement/Collaboration

The College is actively engaging a wide range of community stakeholders to adapt, develop and align provision, utilising robust evidence to support resource allocation and targeting of activity.

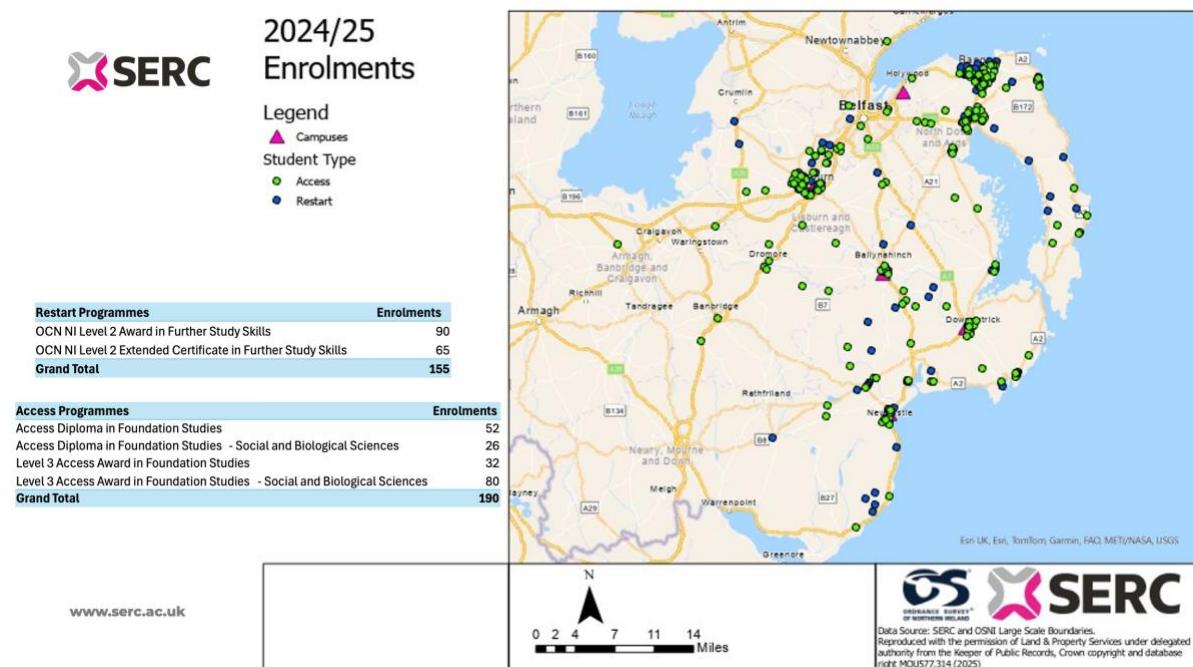
The Nuffield Foundation, 'Trajectories of Deprivation in the UK' report notes persistent pockets of social and educational deprivation across the south eastern region. Using the transformative power of education the College has addressed poverty, low skills and inequalities. We have successfully grown the 'Restart' program, leading to increased enrolments, better community relationships and transformed the lives of local people. The success of these efforts was recognised with the prestigious AoC Beacon Award for Widening Participation in June 2022.

Through implementation of the College's strategic engagement plan, we endeavour to continue to address educational and economic challenges through targeted initiatives and engagement that will foster improved skills, workforce reintegration, and promote societal wellbeing, turning the curve across two key areas:

1. Increasing Educational Attainment
2. Reducing Economic Inactivity.

Information in the Annex highlights the specific issues across our geography, such as fluctuating levels of educational attainment and pockets of economic inactivity and provides a baseline against which we can assess population impact.

Analysis of our own student population shows concentrations of enrolments onto 'social inclusion programmes' from mainly urban areas and highlights the challenges of addressing rural deprivation.



The map illustrates the geographies from which we have recruited Restart and Access enrolments in 2023-2025. A growth in Restart enrolments from the Peninsula has been achieved through targeted engagement and the development of strategic partnerships.

Strategic actions to address engagement challenges, will focus on the delivery of two distinctive pathways to deepen existing collaboration and increase the impact of engagement.

1. A Social Inclusion Pathway: Targeting adults and young people with significant barriers.
2. An Access Pathway: Targeting adult returners in partnership with SERC teams, including those in employment who wish to upskill/reskill.

In addition, a range of actions will be planned to increase engagement and these will include new strategic collaborations and targeted engagement.

- Work with health partners and Invest NI to diversify the workforce.
- Focus on reskilling for over 50s and upskilling women.

Partnership working

Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD)

As the college covers the South Eastern region, college activity contributes to supporting the BRCD projects within the Ards and North Down, Lisburn and Castlereagh and Newry, Mourne and Down areas as well as contributing to the achievement of regional projects.

Specific BRCD projects include Bangor Waterfront, Newry City Centre Regeneration and tourism projects such as Mourne Mountain Gateway and Destination Royal Hillsborough.

The college curriculum aligns with the skills identified in the BRCD skills assessments and supports upskilling and reskilling in:

- Digital skills
- Creative industries
- Construction
- Tourism
- Hospitality

The College will continue to contribute to the BRCD Employability and Skills Group and provide input to the delivery of city and growth deal skills analysis. The College will meet with local Council Economic Development Officers to ensure curriculum alignment with BRCD skills needs as projects develop.

Local Economic Partnerships, Labour Market Partnerships, Peace Plus Partnerships and Strategic Community Planning Partnerships.

SERC is an active partner on the above partnerships, contributing to working groups, action planning and delivery of partnerships outcomes across the AND, LCCC, and NMD areas. The College also collaborates with neighbouring colleges as appropriate to coordinate delivery and reduce duplication.

The College has also successfully established strong working relationships with community and voluntary partners across AND, LCCC, and NMD and will continue to build on this throughout the 2025/2026 academic year.

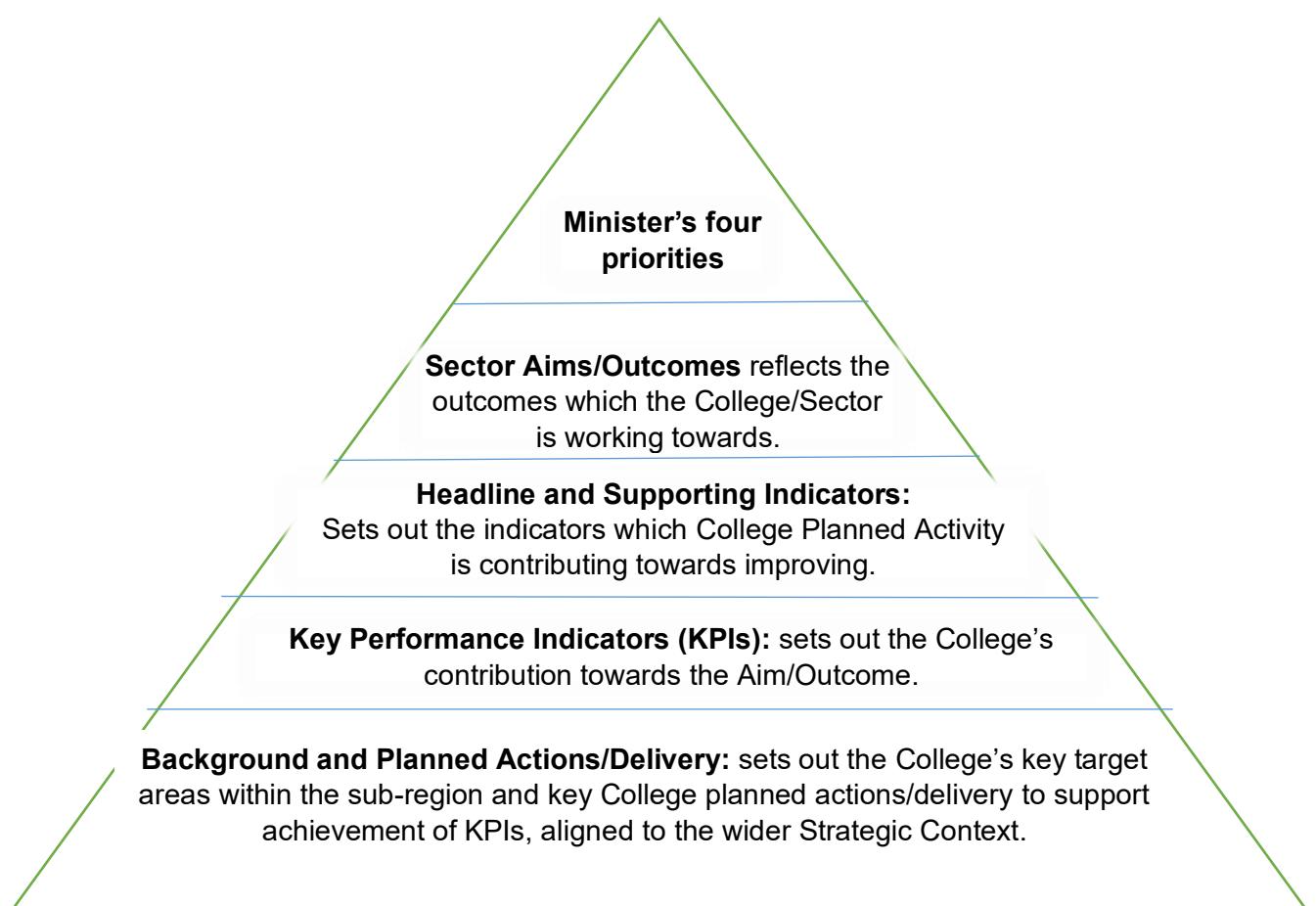
SERC leads the Construction Hub and also supports the other Hubs in the FE Sector; Digital IT, Engineering, Health & Social Care, Life Sciences, Hospitality & Tourism and Entrepreneurship. The College is committed to driving curriculum development through the aggregate of increased employer engagement and stronger collaboration between NI Colleges. The College supports the other college Hub Managers across a broad range of work including the review of apprenticeship

qualifications and cross-referencing to the out workings of future scoping carried out in conjunction with the Business Services unit.

SERC continues to provide Secretariat duties for the Civil Engineering Sectoral Partnership and secured an extension to the L3 Civil Engineering AppNI qualification, due to expire in 2026. This will provide uninterrupted L3 AppNI Civil Engineering provision until the English Curriculum & Assessment Review concludes

d. 2025/26 Planned Activity

The College Planned Delivery has been set out to show the College contributes to the Minister's four priorities as follows:



In-year College Development Plan Progress Reports tracking '**how well**' the College is performing will be provided to the Department for the Economy. The Department for the Economy will publish reports on performance against Headline and Supporting Indicators to show if actions are 'moving the dial' on the Minister's priorities i.e. '**anyone is better off**', along with progress reports on the Department's Delivery Plan 2024/25.

The below table provides a summary of the Aims/Outcomes and associated KPIs included in the proceeding tables.

Aim/Outcome	KPI
1 To increase regional business productivity/growth through the delivery of tailored/bespoke training programmes.	1.1 To deliver 70 innovation-based projects in SMEs in 2025/26 financial year. 194 delivered in 2024/25 financial year.
	1.2 To deliver 20 tailored training programmes in 2025/26 financial year. 15 delivered in 2024/25 financial year.
	1.3 To support 650 individuals via Skill Up in the 2025/26 financial year. 907 individuals supported in 2024/25.
2 To upskill/reskill individuals with the knowledge and skills necessary to secure employment, meet employer needs for today and the future and support economic growth of the region.	2.1 To increase the total number of individuals enrolled in the College from 11,155 individuals in 2023/24 to 11,268 individuals in 2025/26 academic year.
	2.2 To equip 190 individuals participating in international programmes with key employability skills necessary through participation in Turing and Skills Competitions in the 2025/26 academic year.
	2.3 To support 7,261 individuals who are furthest away from the labour market and with low or no formal qualifications in the 2025/26 academic year.
	2.4 To increase the retention rate within the College from 90.9% in 2023/24 to 91.5% in 2025/26 academic year.

- 2.5 To maintain the achievement rate within the College of 91% in 2023/24 to the same level for the 2025/26 academic year.
- 2.6 To enrol 4,000 individuals in the 2025/26 academic year, who are between 25 and 64 years old to participate in education and training.
- 3 To address the skills needs of the future workforce in green industries through upskilling and reskilling individuals in support of a net zero economy in Northern Ireland.
- 4 To deliver against the Public Body reporting duties of the Climate Change legislation delivering an energy efficient and sustainable estate.
- 3.1 To train 50% of College staff in delivery of green sustainable skills in the 2025/26 academic year.
- 3.2 120 individuals participating on green/sustainable courses in the 2025/26 academic year.
- 4.1 To establish the key actions to improve/maintain energy efficiency in the College in the 2025/26 academic year.

Raise Productivity/Promote Regional Balance	
Aim/Outcome - 1	To increase regional business productivity/growth through the delivery of tailored/bespoke training programmes.
Headline Indicator	Output per hour worked Regional Employment Rate
Supporting Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Innovative active businesses (including number of Innovation Recognitions) • Business Support offered by colleges to businesses
Background	<p>The College closely monitors "how well we did" through a number of measures, including the InnovateUs Delivery and Evaluation report. In 2024/25 the results of the InnovateUs evaluation report provides a clear indication of how well we have performed, as detailed in the following points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 100% of businesses engaged felt the programme provided 'very good' or 'excellent' value for money. ▪ 100% of participants were 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with the delivery of their project. ▪ 97% of businesses engaged noted that greater innovation had been achieved within their business as a result of their project. ▪ 100% of the businesses engaged indicated that they felt they had an 'excellent' or 'very good' relationship with the College as a result of participation on the InnovateUs programme. ▪ 100% of businesses engaged said they would use the services of the College again.
KPI 1.1	To deliver 70 innovation-based projects in SMEs in 2025/26 financial year. 194 delivered in 2024/25 financial year.
Planned Activity:	
With an available budget of £276,000 for InnovateUs	Complete 50 projects

	6 Innovation Boost
	4 Innovation Vouchers

10 Productivity Booster

KPI 1.2	To deliver 20 tailored training programmes in 2025/26 financial year. 15 delivered in 2024/25 financial year.
Planned Activity:	
With an available budget of £277,000 for Skills Focus	Support 110 projects.
	Deliver 1 Assured Skills Academy
	Deliver the Breaking Barriers Programme to 48 participants
	Deliver LMP projects to 200 participants
	Deliver Commercial Courses and bespoke programmes to 200 participants
KPI 1.3	To support 650 individuals via Skill Up in the 2025/26 financial year. 907 individuals supported in 2024/25.

Good Jobs/Promote Regional Balance/Raise Productivity	
Aim/Outcome - 2	To upskill/reskill individuals with the knowledge and skills necessary to secure employment, meet employer needs for today and the future and support economic growth of the region.
Headline Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good jobs measure based on earning, permanent contracts and guaranteed hours. • Regional Employment Rate • Output per hour worked
Supporting Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work Quality Indicators • Proportion leaving NI HEIs with narrow STEM qualifications • Qualifications by Level of Study • Economic Inactivity Rate
Background	<p>Full time Mainstream</p> <p>Fulltime provision has increased by nearly 16% since 22/23, with full time numbers rising from 4079 in 22/23 to 4732 ytd in 24/25.</p> <p>The College has specifically focused many of its efforts on growing its core, full-time student numbers in recent years. Unfortunately, due to budget cuts the College has had to review the extent of its curriculum delivery.</p> <p>Programme delivery efficiency is at the core of curriculum planning. This is a continual process throughout the academic year. The process is wide ranging and multifaceted incorporating areas such as, course consolidation, class sizes, timetabling efficiency, staff utilisation and programme design. Full details of Programme Efficiency Planning are included in the Annex.</p> <p>Part time</p> <p>Part-time evening class numbers have steadily decreased and this is likely related to cost of living challenges. The college is therefore striving to engage those furthest from education to encourage an uptake in free courses including Step Up, Peace Plus Provision, and Labour Market Partnership options. Employers are also being encouraged to utilise funded programmes delivered by our Business Services Team, to upskill their employees.</p>

To address cost of living challenges and attractiveness of part-time learning, and whilst further analysis is needed to identify the change in demand and learner needs, there will be a number of pilot areas for Micro-Qualifications / Micro-Credentials introduced in 25/26 including:

1. Green Skills
2. Leadership & Management
3. Early Years

“Micro-Credentials are bite-sized, accredited courses designed to fit seamlessly into your busy life”. [\[www.microcreds.ie\]](http://www.microcreds.ie). Whilst Micro-credentials are generally related to higher level study at level 4 and above, Micro-qualifications provide an opportunity to adopt a similar approach for qualifications at level 3 and below.

This pilot will provide more insight into patterns of part-time learning preferences.

App NI

Learner demand for AppNI provision continues to be strong. This provision has seen significant growth over a number of years to the extent that staffing in a range of areas is now at a critical level, these include:

- Apprenticeship in Refrigeration & Air Conditioning (Level 2)
- Apprenticeship in Refrigeration (Level 3)
- Apprenticeship in Engineering (Level 2)

Projected enrolments for all AppNI provision for the academic year 2025/26 would be **1420**, compared to 1457 enrolments in 2024/25. Class sizes are maximized and constrained by health and safety requirements in our workshops. This reduction is attributed to the continuing staff resource issues highlighted above.

The introduction of the All Age Apprenticeship has allowed us to provide Work Based Training to more mature learners, particularly in the health and social care arena. Recruitment of additional staff will be required to expand this provision.

Traineeships

Following publication of the ETI evaluation of Traineeships SERC will develop an action plan to address the findings in the report. SERC will also contribute to a sectoral action plan.

Higher Education

The College had a MaSN allocation of 386 for 2024/25. The College did not recruit to its full-time MaSN and reached 351, approximately 91% of its allocation.

The College has reviewed its returning learners for year two and three of programmes. Coupled with activity through the UCAS Pilot and current application trends the College has predicted a **conservative growth** of approximately **8% to 380** from 351 in 2024/25.

The current application trends to date, directly through the College website and through UCAS, support this modest increase in target with Priority 1 applications up by 110% for HE FT provision from the same point as last year (Priority 1 Applications compared WC 24.03.25). Full details are in the accompanying HE Curriculum Plan.

Student Feedback

Student satisfaction with College delivery remains high with responses to the Big 14 Survey showing an overall satisfaction rating of 94%.

Big 14 Survey Results | All Students



Turing Scheme

Student placements will encompass sustainability, community, inclusive education, ethical and environmental practices developing skills, cultural awareness and working in diverse teams. Our vision for this project is to provide 90 students (55% disadvantaged and 11% SEND) with a unique international work experience offering invaluable opportunities for personal and professional growth. Students

	<p>will be exposed to diverse perspectives and approaches, enhance their problem-solving skills and cultural competency, fostering adaptability, cross-cultural communication skills, and a global perspective which many employers value. This experience will push students out of their comfort zone, boost employability, foster social mobility and cultural awareness enabling them to enhance their CV whilst positioning them as work ready global citizens for 21st Century employment.</p> <p>Competitions</p> <p>Due to budget cuts SERC will not be able to continue the anticipated increase in student competitor numbers for the 2025/2026 academic year.</p> <p>During 2024/2025 SERC offered Level 2 to Level 6 students, across its four Schools, the opportunity to participate in internal competitions. Taking part in these competitions allowed students to not only enhance their technical skills but also develop essential Transversal, all of which contribute to improved employability.</p> <p>Step Up</p> <p>A much reduced budget for Step Up has now been confirmed by DfE. Learner numbers are provided based on this reduced level of funding.</p>	
KPI 2.1	<p>To increase the total number of individuals enrolled in the College from 11,155 individuals in 23/24 to 11,268 individuals in 2025/26 academic year.</p>	
Plans to achieve in the 2025/26 academic year:		
Level 0 - 3	No. of individuals on PT FE	1569
	No. of individuals on FT FE	1950
	No. of individuals on Skills for Life and Work programme	148
	No. of individuals on Traineeships programme	1050
	No. of individuals on Apprenticeships NI programme	1420
	No. of individuals on Essential Skills programme	173¹

¹ This figure includes the number of individuals on Essential Skills as a standalone qualification and does not include those individuals undertaking Essential Skills as part of a vocational qualification

Level 4+	No. of individuals on PT HE in FE	340
	No. of individuals on FT HE in FE	419
	No. of individuals on High Level Apprenticeship programme	268
KPI 2.2		To equip 190 individuals participating in international programmes with key employability skills necessary through participation in Turing and Skills Competitions in the 2025/26 academic year.
Planned Activity:		
		90 students to participate in Turing programme
		100 students to participate in Skills Competitions
KPI 2.3		To support 7,261 individuals who are furthest away from the labour market and with low or no formal qualifications in the 2025/26 academic year.
Planned Activity:		
No. of individuals Quintile 1 and 2		2600
No. of individuals declaring a disability/long term health problem		1900
No. of individuals on ESOL programmes		280
No. of individuals on SfLW		148
No. of individuals Step Up		104
No. of individuals on WAPP		1123
No. of individuals Peace Plus		816
No of individuals on Restart		80
No of individuals on Access to HE		175
KPI 2.4		To increase the retention rate within the College from 90.9% in 2023/24 to 91.5% in 2025/26 academic year.
Planned Activity: The analysis in Annex 1 shows the consistent high retention rate from 2018/19 to 23/24.		
Following publication of the ETI evaluation of the Traineeship Programme, College Action Plans for Improvement (API) for Traineeships to be submitted by 26 August 2025 and Whole Sector API to be provided by 23 September 2025. APIs to be submitted to ACVED. Regular implementation and impact updates against APIs to be provided to the Traineeship Project Board and progress checks sought as part of CDP updates.		

Following publication of the ETI evaluation of the Traineeship Programme, College Action Plans for Improvement (API) for Essential Skills to be submitted by 26 August 2025 and Whole Sector API to be provided by 23 September 2025. APIs to be submitted to Quality Improvement Team. Regular implementation and impact updates against APIs to be provided to QIT against which updates will be provided to the Traineeship Project Board and progress checks sought as part of CDP updates.

To improve retention on a number of full-time programmes	<p>The two-year Traineeships in Electrical (61%), Professional Chef (64%), Engineering (56%), Motor Vehicle (60%), Hospitality & Tourism Team Member (60%), Wet Trades (56%), and Woodworking Skills (63%) to 65% or better.</p> <p>The one-year Traineeships in Hairdressing (75%) and Science (82%) to 85% or better;</p> <p>The National Foundation Diploma and the and National Extended Certificate in Information Technology from 84% (2024/25) to 88% or better;</p> <p>The AppNI Level 2 Wet Trades (2022–2024) frameworks from 52% to 65% or better for apprentices starting their programmes in 2024/25 and 2025/26.</p> <p>The AppNI Level 3 Wet Trades (2022–2024) frameworks from 56% to 75% or better for apprentices starting their programmes in 2024/25 and 2025/26.</p> <p>The AppNI Level 3 Work-Based Learning (2022–2024) frameworks in Hospitality & Catering and Health & Social Care from 59% to 75% or higher for apprentices starting in 2024/25 and 2025/26.</p> <p><i>*2024/25 retention figures are based on 11 May 2025</i></p>
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KPI 2.5	To maintain the achievement rate within the College of 91% in 2023/24 to the same level for the 2025/26 academic year.
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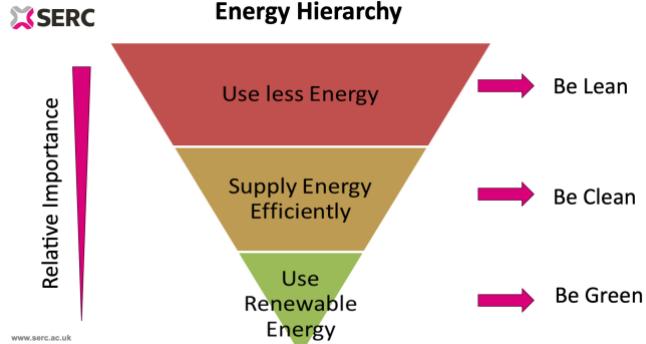
Planned Activity: The analysis in Annex 1 shows the consistent high achievement rates from 2018/19 to 23/24. The College aims to maintain this level of achievement.

To improve achievement for learners in a number of programmes	<p>Traineeship Programmes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> To review all 2024/25 Traineeship programme outcomes, by the end of August 2025, and to identify any 1-year programmes with fewer than 70% of retained learners achieving a Certificate or Diploma, and any 2-year programmes with fewer than 80% achieving the same.
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	<p>b. To develop and implement individual action plans, by the end of August 2025, to support Traineeship programmes identified as not having met the College Certificate and Diploma classification targets.</p> <p>The Level 3 IT programmes (National, Foundation, Extended Certificate) from 71% (2023/24) to 85% or better.</p> <p>The EAL Level 3 Electrotechnical qualification from 76% (2023/24) to 90% or better.</p> <p>The Level 3 Access Award in Foundation studies from 70% to 85% or better.</p> <p>The Level 3 National Extended Certificate in Health and Social Care from 79% to 85% or better.</p> <p>The OCN NI Level 1 Certificate in Application of Number (63% - 2023/24) and the OCN NI Level 2 Certificate in Application of Number (47% - 2023/24) to meet or exceed agreed sector targets.</p>
KPI 2.6	<p>To enrol 4,000 individuals in the 2025/26 academic year, who are between 25 and 64 years old to participate in education and training.</p>
Planned Activity:	<p>Implement one community delivery project in the Ards Peninsula.</p> <p>Develop two strategic collaborations in 25/26</p> <p>Recruit one additional Work Based Apprenticeship Training Consultant to deliver Health and Social Care due to increased demand linked to the All Age Apprenticeship.</p>

Reduce Carbon Emissions	
Aim/Outcome - 3	To address the skills needs of the future workforce in green industries through upskilling and reskilling individuals in support of a net zero economy in Northern Ireland.
Headline Indicator	CO² Emissions per Capita
Supporting Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proportion of electricity consumption generated from renewable sources • Energy Intensity • Energy Efficiency • Circular economy material and carbon footprint
Background	<p>The College developed an online training module for staff in 2023/2024 to raise awareness of carbon emissions and green sustainability and built further on this by developing a module more specifically about sustainability.</p> <p>In addition, SERC leads the Construction Hub and is actively working with the sector to help employers meet Decarbonization Targets. Developing a Zero Carbon Centre at the Holywood Campus with an innovative training programme positions the college as a key actor in delivering the Minister's priorities for reducing carbon emissions.</p> <p>A list of specific green technology courses developed and delivered by the college are listed below.</p>
KPI 3.1	To train 50% of College staff in delivery of green sustainable skills in the 2025/26 academic year.
Planned Activity:	
In 25/26 SERC will improve the baseline position of 30% staff being trained to 50%	SERC will deliver an online module raising awareness of green sustainable skills.
KPI 3.2	120 individuals participating on green/sustainable courses in the 2025/26 academic year.
Planned Activity:	
SERC will deliver a range of new courses.	Battery Storage – Level 3 Heat Pumps – Level 3

Electric Vehicle Storage – Level 3
Low Energy Building – Level 2
Hydrogen – Level 2
Heat Pump Design – Level 3
Water Regulations – Level 3
Retrofit Level 2
Retrofit Level 5
Green Technologies Level 5
Solar PV – Level 3
Unvented – Level 3
CMI Level 3 Principles of Sustainability
CMI Level 5 Sustainability Leadership & Management
CMI Level 7 Strategic Sustainability Management
Embodied Carbon – Level 2

Reduce Carbon Emissions	
Aim/Outcome - 4	To deliver against the Public Body reporting duties of the Climate Change legislation delivering an energy efficient and sustainable estate.
Headline Indicator	CO² Emissions per Capita
Supporting Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proportion of electricity consumption generated from renewable sources Energy Intensity Energy Efficiency Circular economy material and carbon footprint
Background	<p>The College is continuing to prepare to meet its responsibilities around Climate Change Reporting due in 2025/2026.</p> <p>The college uses the Energy Hierarchy as the basis for an efficient and sustainable estate:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use less energy – BE LEAN 2. Supply energy efficiently – BE CLEAN 3. Use renewable energy – BE GREEN. 
KPI 4.1	To establish the key actions to improve/maintain energy efficiency in the College in the 2025/26 academic year.

Planned Activity:	
In 2025/26 financial year, top five Minor Works projects ² , pending funding allocation, that contribute towards a sustainable College estate.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Newtownards – replacing current biomass boiler which is at the end of its operational life with ASHP £300,000. 2. Bangor – infill glass rooflights and improve insulation properties £150,000. 3. Ballynahinch – install P.V. system to complement ASHP hybrid heating system - £150,000. 4. Newtownards – commence environmental roofing scheme to include upgraded insulation and additional p.v. arrangement - £150,000. 5. Downpatrick - Carryout further investigation into the potential for p.v. panels £250,000.
In 2025/26 academic year, to establish key actions to improve/maintain energy efficiency of College campuses.	<p>Action 1 – Continue to improve monitoring of energy consumption across the estate and identify trends contributing to higher than expected energy consumption.</p> <p>Action 2 – Continue to investigate potential additional p.v. schemes.</p> <p>Action 3 – Liaise with NIFRS to establish if a joint geotherm scheme is possible.</p>
In 2025/26 academic year, improve carbon emissions baseline position for each College campus.	<p>Baseline established for 2023/24 academic year. Final 24/25 data has not yet been received to enable trending analysis or establish targets.</p> <p>Work will continue to monitor emissions.</p> <p>Scope 1 Emissions: Newtownards – 111.05 tCO2e Bangor – 231.72 tCO2e SPACE – 47.29 tCO2e Holywood – 3.02 tCO2e</p>

² Includes Energy Branch Invest to Save Funded projects.

<p>Lisburn – 161.06 tCO2e Castle House – 15.25 tCO2e Ballynahinch – 2.54 tCO2e Downpatrick – 221.42 tCO2e Newcastle – 0.31 tCO2e</p> <p>Scope 1 Total – 793.65 tCO2e Scope 2 total – 0.00 tCO2e Scope 3 Total – 166.24 tCO2e</p> <p>Carbon Emissions Grand Total – 959.89 tCO2e</p> <p>Once data compiled and analysed, a reduction plan for 2025/26 academic year will be established.</p> <p>The College will submit relevant Climate Change Reports for 31 October 2025 and 31 March 2026 deadlines.</p>
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5. Key Challenges/Constraints

The below table sets out the top five corporate challenges/constraints towards achievement of planned delivery set out in section 4 above.

Challenge	Potential Impact	Mitigating Actions
Industrial Relations Landscape – Comparisons to teaching profession for parity in respect of pay aligned to contractual arrangements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action short of strike, withholding of grades impacting on students' ability to complete qualifications and progress Continuous negative impact on FE activities which acts as a potential recruitment drive for post primary schools Uncertainty leads to parents and students taking alternative pathways not within FE 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two year pay deal accepted by lecturing trade unions Employer commitment to workload review in 2024/25 Employer commitment to pay parity review in 2025/26 Employer commitment to take forward FE transformation
Economic Planning Complexity – Pace of change of the key drivers for education and skills in FE Sector with new economic priorities and target actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Challenges in aligning College Development Plans to evolving indicators. Staff resources committed to existing curriculum delivery with limited flexibility. Work underway with Councils to integrate local College curriculum plans with regional LEP plans. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing engagement to refine performance indicators from FE programmes to link to Minister economic priorities. More clarity required on the approach to regional planning and LEPs and alignment with Council and InvestNI roles. Formal re-engagement with InvestNI commenced and ongoing via representations at LSPs
Uncertainty and Complexity Around Funding Streams and Delays in LOOs – impacts on ability of Colleges to include planned delivery in curriculum build and associated targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uncertainty on budgets, downward pressures coupled with a 3 year budget settlement with further savings anticipated. Late approval or visibility of additional funding streams becoming available can 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More visibility through NIFON and Curriculum Directors on scale of opportunities. Holding back on recruitment and utilising full-time staff whilst

	<p>make it difficult to build into delivery planning which starts at different time-frames compared to the commencement of the academic year in September whilst requiring full-spend by March.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Range and variety of funding pots and compliance and eligibility issues takes time to put in place and test learner eligibility. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> supplementing with part-time lectures as required Explore the opportunity to pull a number of separate programmes in over a central theme : Business and Innovation, Support for Inclusion Wider consideration of the funding model requires NIFON input in terms of different rates to ensure consistency and viability. Work with funders for release of LoOs earlier in the year to enable full integration into curriculum planning and delivery Identification earlier from funders of new or additional in-year allocations to enable building of capacity
<p>Recruitment challenges Impacting on Enrolment – Colleges not being able to attract lecturers/trainers in traditional trade and STEM areas.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trend for last 5 years of significant interest in trade and STEM areas which cannot be accommodated due to recruitment challenges. Aging profile of the workforce may have longer term impact in key sectors with significant critical skills gaps. Negative impact on curriculum offer, quality of service provision and learner success. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initiate review through HR sector working group of trends in applications and enrolments in last 3 years Implement pay parity to increase salary levels and consideration of specialist lecture grades Understand the opportunity for more flexible approach in terms of recruitment premium for agreed occupational areas Secure pay remit approval to progress towards salary expectations Industrial Relations review to commence, focusing on pay parity and terms and conditions
<p>Investment in facilities (including IT and AI) and infrastructure to ensure</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inability to be at the forefront of new advances 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Further in-year bids to be placed to DfE to secure

<p>competitiveness and to support action towards net zero targets in context of one year budgetary landscape</p>	<p>in technology developments.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Failure to implement full obligations under the Climate Change Act and impact on net/zero/sustainability targets 	<p>funding to deliver new initiatives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Progress commenced with establishment of baselines and initial progress towards targets
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The College has a Risk Management Framework in place including Corporate and Operational Risk Registers from which key risks are reflected.

Annex 1

College Data Analysis

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Workforce Capacity Analysis

Staff utilisation analysis is included in Table 1 below with an associated financial breakdown included in Table 2 (figures correct as of 12 June 2025).

School	% Total	SCT Fulfilled
Arts & Sport	98.86%	
Built Environment	114.64%	
Business, Health & Hospitality	111.41%	
Engineering & Science	109.06%	

Table 1 2024/25 SCT Fulfilment Overview

School	Additional Hours	Part-time Lecturers	Total
Arts & Sport	£81,734	£265,445	£347,179
Built Environment	£135,510	£277,651	£413,161
Business, Health & Hospitality	£129,619	£499,437	£629,056
Engineering & Science	£93,144	£216,470	£309,614
Total	£440,007	£1,259,003	£1,699,010

Table 2 2024/25 Additional Hours and Part-time Lecturer Actual – Period 12 (excluding Business Services provision)

Planned efficiencies for delivery in 2025/26:

1. Programme Curriculum Setup Simplification (MOA22)
2. Computing Higher Education Course Consolidation
3. Engineering Higher Education Course Consolidation
4. The Traineeship in Electrical Installation will move to a one year fast-track model
5. Transitioning Advanced Technical Awards to Level 3 FE
6. Standardised timetabling system for better workforce planning

Foundation Learning (FL) and Skills for Life & Work (SFLW)

The 2025/26 academic year will see the introduction of a revised curriculum offer for Foundation Learning (FL) and Skills for Life & Work (SFLW) provision. This new structure aims to maintain the majority of the existing range of learner opportunities under the Skills for Life & Work contract whilst introducing two new strands titled, FL SkillsLink and FE SkillsLink. SkillsLink provision will act as a platform for learners to accelerate progression onto either SFLW or further education provision.

The revised structure represents 24 cohorts per week all undertaking Duke of Edinburgh / Gaisce Award with a total weekly delivery commitment of 492.4 hours. When compared to 2024/25 academic year this represents a reduction of 53.4 delivery hours per week and a reduction of 4 cohorts.

Student Data

How Much - SERC student count by LGD

Table 1: SERC student counts 2017/18 to 2023/24

Over the last 3 years, 80% of SERC students have come from Ards & North Down, Lisburn & Castlereagh, Newry, Mourne & Down

LGD Area	SERC Student Count							Percentage Analysis								
	17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24	Total	17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24	Average
Artrrim and Newtownabbey	367	390	362	312	448	355	306	2,540	3%	3%	3%	3%	4%	4%	3%	3%
Ards and North Down	4,327	4,323	4,251	3,397	3,605	3,444	3,482	26,829	36%	35%	36%	35%	34%	34%	35%	35%
Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon	782	835	798	744	815	828	812	5,614	6%	7%	7%	8%	8%	8%	8%	7%
Belfast	1,196	1,262	1,300	1,026	1,208	1,136	1,053	8,181	10%	10%	11%	11%	11%	11%	10%	11%
Causeway Coast and Glens	69	86	68	90	122	103	138	676	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%
Derry City and Strabane	69	66	45	100	100	92	82	554	1%	1%	0%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%
Fermanagh and Omagh	43	68	48	65	69	59	75	427	0%	1%	0%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%
Lisburn and Castlereagh	2,396	2,451	2,288	1,850	1,978	1,894	1,871	14,728	20%	20%	20%	19%	19%	19%	19%	19%
Mid and East Antrim	216	178	178	214	277	217	209	1,489	2%	1%	2%	2%	3%	2%	2%	2%
Mid Ulster	102	120	100	109	159	154	137	881	1%	1%	1%	1%	2%	2%	1%	1%
Newry, Mourne and Down	2,518	2,467	2,293	1,808	1,794	1,793	1,895	14,568	21%	20%	20%	19%	17%	18%	19%	19%
Total	12,085	12,246	11,731	9,715	10,575	10,075	10,060	76,487	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

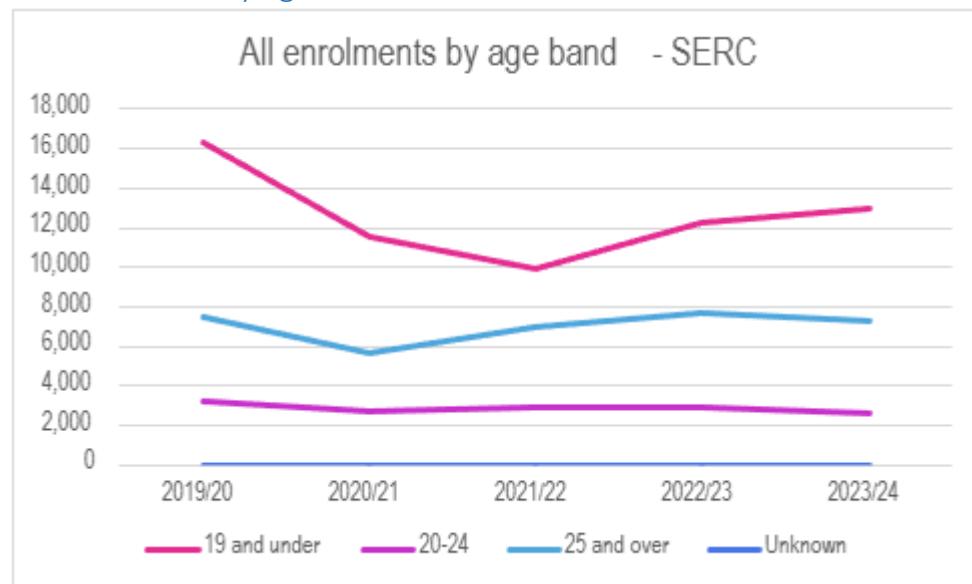
Source NISRA

How Much - All students enrolled by age band (2018/19 to 2023/24)

FE College	Age Band	Academic Year				
		2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
South Eastern Regional College	19 and under	16,320	11,540	9,870	12,225	12,975
	20-24	3,170	2,730	2,910	2,895	2,575
	25 and over	7,525	5,685	7,025	7,695	7,315
	Unknown	0	0	0	0	0
	Total	27,020	19,950	19,810	22,810	22,870

Source: DfE CDR data

All enrolments by age band - SERC



Source: DfE CDR

The data above shows a gradual increase in learners aged 25 from 2020/2021 to 22/23 when numbers started to reduce. While the causes for this are unknown, the

high cost of living may be affecting those wishing to undertake part time courses due to the rise in course fees. However, the college is continuing to promote free opportunities under Skill Up for those in employment, Step Up and Restart for those furthest away from education as well as opportunities identified through the Labour Market Partnerships and Peace Plus funding streams.

Competitions

In 2024/2025 SERC reported a 38% increase in students participation compared to 2023/2024, with a total of 607 participants taking part. This growth reflects a continued interest in academic and skills-based competitions, highlighting both the enthusiasm of students and staff dedication in supporting these opportunities.

In 2024/2025 the college planned to offer 17 competitions in total: 3 Campus, 12 Intercampus and 2 Northern Ireland competitions.

Academic Year	Planned and Held Competitions	Student Numbers
2024 2025	12 Campus 12 Intercampus 2 NI Competitions	Confirmed 607 Students in 27 Skills Areas
2023 2024	6 Campus 11 Intercampus 2 NI Competitions	437 Students 21 Skills Areas
2022 2023	3 Campus 13 Intercampus 3 NI Competitions Masterclass – Sugar and Pastry	403 Students 27 Skills areas

Students also competed in national and international competitions; 22 students registered to compete in the WorldSkills National competitions in 2025. Eight students competed in Birmingham in the Fire & Security competitions, and 1 student represented SERC and NI competing in Young Chef Olympian Goa, India.

How Well - Performance rates of final year regulated enrolments SERC 2018/19 to 2023/24

Academic Year	Final Year enrolments	Final Year Completers	Retention Rate	Achievements	Achievement Rate	Success Rate
2019/20	18,605	16,925	91%	15,330	91%	82%
2020/21	15,010	13,270	88%	12,260	92%	82%
2021/22	13,055	11,340	87%	10,470	92%	80%
2022/23	16,255	14,690	90%	13,340	91%	82%
2023/24	15,535	14,430	93%	13,030	90%	84%

Source: DfE CDR data

SERC retention and achievement rates continue to be outstanding as shown in the table above. Maintaining these high rates will be a key focus for the college.

As the number of students with special educational needs grows, meeting this need effectively will be a challenge.

2025/26 Programme Delivery Efficiency

Programme delivery efficiency is at the core of curriculum planning. This is a continual process throughout the academic year. The process is wide ranging and multifaceted incorporating areas such as, course consolidation, class sizes, timetabling efficiency, staff utilisation and programme design. Planned efficiencies for delivery in 2025/26 include:

[Programme Curriculum Setup Simplification \(MOA22\)](#)

2025/26 will see the removal of programme additionality in the form of MOA22 qualifications unless there is a distinct vocational need for these to be retained. This removal presents an opportunity to refocus delivery hours to the vocational programme and thus reduce the administrative requirements for registration, assessment and verification.

Additionally, this change will deliver a financial saving in the region of £30,000 / annum due to reduced registration and examination fees.

[Computing Higher Education Course Consolidation](#)

There has been consolidation of higher education Computing provision for 2025/25. This has seen the removal of the Ulster University Foundation Degree in Computing. This decision is based on reduced enrolment numbers and the impact that the increased course offering is have on similar higher education Computing programmes. Through this consolidation there will be no detrimental impact on learners, and it is envisaged that this will have a positive impact on cohort sizes on the following programmes:

- Higher National Certificate in Computing (Software & Games Development)
- Foundation Degree in Cloud Computing Technologies (Validated by the Open University)
- Foundation Degree in Cyber Security and Digital Forensics (Validated by the Open University)

Additionally this will increase efficiency within the programme area by removing duplication of administration duties required to meet the differing demands of validating partners and awarding organisations.

[Traineeship in Electrical Installation](#)

The Traineeship in Electrical Installation will move to a one year fast-track model for September 2025. To ensure operational efficiency this programme will be jointly taught with year 2 learners on the existing model.

This model is based upon a review of the learner profile upon entry, where the vast majority enter having achieved a GCSE grade C (or above) in English and Mathematics. This model will provide accelerated progression opportunities to Level 3 AppNI provision as there is no linked Level 2 AppNI framework. Additionally, it will deliver an operational efficiency of circa 30 hours / week in required delivery hours.

[Transitioning Advanced Technical Awards to Level 3 FE](#)

The delivery of Advanced Technical Awards for 2025/26 will be paused with provision transitioned to Level 3 FE provision. This will have no detrimental impact upon learners and will have a net reduction in terms of programme delivery hours.

[Timetabling Project](#)

Historically there has been significant variance in relation to the production of draft programme timetables. The approach adopted is based upon custom and practice from previous years with no standardisation between Schools.

This project commenced in November 2024 and whilst full implementation has been impacted by industrial action, progress has been made in relating to the development of an online timetabling platform and associated guidance documentation.

The objective of this project will be to develop and implement a standardised timetabling system for the production of School level draft timetables. This will deliver organisational efficiencies in a range of areas including:

- Increased operational efficiency
- Standardisation for programme level timetables
- Better workforce planning

- Reduction in emergency appointments

Full development and adoption will be in place for December 2025.

SERC Awards

Podium Places for SERC Apprentices at the SkillBuild NI Regional Qualifier Competition 2025

Competing at 'home' helped boost the spirits of the SERC team who took three 1st, two 2nd and three 3rd places across five of the eleven competition areas at the SkillBuild NI Regional Qualifier Competition 2025:

In the Fire Security Installation competition, team SERC lifted all podium places, led by 1st place, Rebecca Wilson, 2nd place, Alex Punyer and 3rd place, Owen Brady. All three apprentices are completing Level 3 Apprenticeship NI Fire & Security.

In Furniture & Cabinet Making, 1st place went to David Magee and 3rd place went to Taylor Simpson. Both are completing Level 3 Apprenticeship NI in Carpentry & Joinery.

Another 1st place, this time in Plastering, went to David Johnston from the Level 3 Apprenticeship NI in Plastering.

2nd place in Electrical went to Matthew Drysdale, Level 3 Apprenticeship NI in Electrical.

3rd place in Carpentry went to Matthew Rutherford, from Level 2 Apprenticeship NI in Carpentry & Joinery.

News Story

Matthew Takes On Riso Gallo Young Risotto Chef of the Year Competition Finals

Level 3 Professional Chef student Matthew Beech has won through to the final of the Riso Gallo Young Risotto Chef of the Year Competition, after competing in the regional heat at the University of Ulster on Friday 16 May.

SERC Shortlisted for OCN NI Learner Endeavour Awards

SERC representatives are finalists in six of the nine award categories in the Open College Network Northern Ireland (OCN) Learning Endeavour Awards 2025.

Students Mykhailo Chernenko and Samantha McCauley in the Further Education Learner of the Year Award category, student Zarifa Asghari in the Essential Skills Learner of the Year category, student Eugene Prunty in the Traineeship/Apprenticeship Learner of the Year category, lecturer Pauline Blair in the Inspiring Tutor/Teacher of the Year category, Foundation Skills Academy students who run the student company Truffle Shop in the Advancing Learning Through Innovation category, and SERC is a finalist in the Provider of the Year category.

Chartered Institute of Horticulture Award for SERC Student - 21/05/25

SERC horticulture student Eileen Sung won the 2024 Norah Stucken Award from the Chartered Institute of Horticulture (CIH) for her impactful work in conservation and sustainability. [News Story](#).

Marathon Success for SERC Staff - 21/05/25

Mary Gillies, Lecturer in Travel & Tourism, recently completed the Boston Marathon, having completed the Tokyo Marathon just six weeks previously. These two marathons put Mary into an elite group of people, who have completed Abbott World Marathon Majors and therefore a winner of a coveted Abbott World Marathon Major Six Star Medal - a rare accolade held by very few female runners in Northern Ireland. [News Story](#).

SERC Dance Student Represents NI in LA Dance Festival 2025 - 19/05/25

SERC Level 3 National Extended Diploma in Performing Arts Practice (Dance) student Lexie Galbraith represented team Northern Ireland at the Dance Excellence Festival 2025, which took place in Los Angeles, USA in April. The NI team won a Global Arts Award, DEX Showcase Award of Excellence Award, and Universal Star Award. [News Story](#).

SERC Apprentice Shortlisted for Craft Guild of Chefs Award - 07/05/25

Level 3 Apprenticeship NI in Professional Cookery student Gabby Harrison was shortlisted for the Apprentice Chef Award, sponsored by Compass Group – Foodbuy. Often dubbed the chefs' Oscars, the Craft Guild of Chefs Awards celebrate the very best talent across the UK culinary scene. [News Story](#).

SERC Celebrates Pearson Teaching Awards - 06/04/25

SERC Lecturer Pauline Blair was awarded the Bronze Award in the FE Lecturer of the Year category; the SERC Animal Management, Careers and the Fire & Security teams

were Highly Commended, with the SERC Carers Team awarded a Certificate of Excellence - all in the FE Team of the Year category. [News Story](#).

SERC Fire and Security Apprentices Take on WorldSkills National Qualifiers - 10/04/25

Six level 3 Apprenticeship NI in Fire and Security Systems apprentices from South Eastern Regional College (SERC) are on their way to Birmingham this week, to compete in the WorldSkills UK national qualifiers being held at the Security Event 2025 at the NEC. [News Story](#).

Duke of Edinburgh's Awards Presented to SERC Students - 31/03/25

Students from SERC were presented with their Bronze and Silver Duke of Edinburgh's Awards/Gaisce – The President's Award, and Certificates of Achievement at the College's Lisburn Campus recently. [News Story](#).

Competition Heats Up for Generation Chef 2025 - 12/03/25

A team of culinary arts students from South Eastern Regional College (SERC) have won the opportunity to represent the College in the inaugural Generation Chef competition organised by the Rotary Clubs Northern Ireland in partnership with all six further education colleges. [News Story](#).

Podium places for SERC at the Inter College Light Vehicle Competition - 03/03/25

Apprentices from across Northern Ireland have put their skills to the test at the annual Auto Light Vehicle Inter-college competition, hosted at South Eastern Regional College's Newtownards Campus. [News Story](#).

SERC Student Wins Young Carer of the Year Award - 24/02/25

South Eastern Regional College (SERC) Level 2 Health and Social Care Apprentice Taylor Watson (20), from Ballywalter, has won the 'Young Carer of the Year' Award, at the Heart of Peninsula Care Awards Ceremony, organised by Peninsula Care Services. [News Story](#).

SERC Lecturer Wins Great British Businesswoman Award - 19/02/25

Aine McGreeghan, from Newtownards, scooped the Engineering & Manufacturing category Award from a shortlist of six women from across the United Kingdom. The Award was presented at a glittering event in London on 30 January. [News Story](#).

Gymnastic Competition Win for Michelle - 14/01/25

SERC student Michelle Allen has been placed first in a NI Regional Schools Gymnastic Qualifier competition for her trampoline skills. [News Story](#).

SERC Apprentice Set for Young Chefs Olympiad in India - 10/01/25

A culinary arts apprentice at SERC has secured a place in the final of the International Institute of Hotel Management (IIHM) Young Chef Olympiad which takes place in Goa, India on 2 February 2025. [News Story](#).

SERC Success Celebrated at Prestigious FE Awards - 13/12/24

South Eastern Regional College (SERC) has been celebrating the success of Roger Duncan, SERC Lisburn Campus Manager, who was named as a winner at the second annual Good for Me Good for FE Awards. [News Story](#).

SERC Support for Carers Recognised in UK Awards Finals - 02/12/24

Congratulations and good luck wishes to SERC's student carer support team, whose Partnerships, Education, App, Recharge room (PEAR) project has been announced as a finalist in the Good for Me Good for FE Awards 2024. [News Story](#).

Beacon Shortlist for SERC Engineering Project - 22/11/24

A student-centred engineering project at SERC has been shortlisted for an Association of Colleges (AoC) Beacon Award 2024/2025. [News Story](#).

Luke Set for SkillBuild National Final - 11/11/24

A SERC apprentice is set to compete in the SkillBuild National Final in Milton Keynes, 20 – 21 November 2024. [News Story](#).

SERC Lecturer Ross Harvey Honoured at The Security Institute's Annual Conference - 01/11/24

SERC Fire & Security Lecturer Ross Harvey has recently been honoured at the Security Institute's prestigious annual conference, where he had the privilege of meeting The Princess Royal, due to his contributions to the security sector. [News Story](#).

SERC Lecturer Shortlisted for Institute of Hospitality Award - 05/09/24

A SERC lecturer has been shortlisted for an Institute of Hospitality Northern Ireland Award. [News Story](#).

Sub Regional Baseline Population Data for targeted engagement

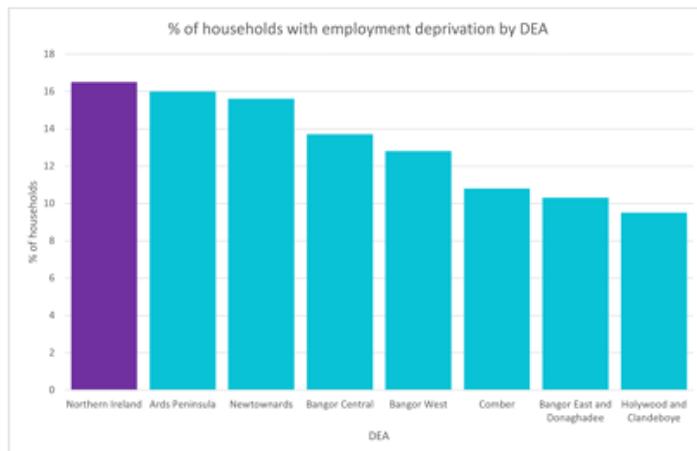
Educational Attainment:

{NISRA Census Tables 2021- SOA area Educational Attainment}

Town	No Quals {16+}	Level 1	Level 2	App NI	Level 3	Level 4
Downpatrick	22.00%	5.00%	15.00%	7.00%	17.00%	31.00%
Newcastle	21.64%	5.71%	13.22%	6.98%	14.86%	35.05%
Ballynahinch	29.00%	4.00%	14.00%	8.00%	24.00%	16.00%
Lisburn North	20.00%	7.00%	13.00%	6.00%	16.00%	36.00%
Bangor	17.16%	6.59%	14.79%	6.07%	16.73%	36.09%
Kircubbin	29.97%	8.19%	17.06%	9.88%	16.16%	16.05%
Newtownards	23.21%	7.77%	15.98%	7.13%	16.51%	26.90%
Portaferry	23.38%	7.18%	16.66%	10.95%	14.72%	25.37%
Portavogie	29.07%	8.54%	17.02%	7.31%	17.80%	17.97%

This table identifies the 'pockets across the SERC catchment with persistent levels of no *and* low qualifications. Significant gaps between the lowest qualifications to Level 4 and above highlights that the 'missing middle' and local skills gaps, remains a challenge impacting on good jobs, economic growth and wellbeing.

The Ards Peninsula towns of Kircubbin and Portaferry evidence the lowest levels of achievement. The Peninsula DEA has a higher proportion of households with deprivation which may be a contributing factor.



Census 2021 uses Super Data Zones to show how statistics vary across areas. Within Ards and North Down, **NEWTOWNARDS DEA (62.9%) AND ARDS PENINSULA DEA (63.3%) HAVE A HIGHER PROPORTION OF HOUSEHOLDS WITH DEPRIVATION** in at least one of education, employment, health and housing. Employment deprivation is shown in the chart to the left.

Access to transport across the Peninsula also presents a barrier to engagement in skills with 63% {2021 Census} of people relying on cars to travel to work or school. Those without access to affordable transport experience inequality and exclusion from health and education services.

Claimant Count Annual Averages 2011-2024 by LGD boundary

Area	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Antrim and Newtownabbey	3,445	3,654	3,521	2,920	2,330	2,160	1,875	1,730	1,805	3,315	3,200	2,205	2,200	2,310
Ards and North Down	3,824	4,029	3,978	3,533	2,965	2,558	2,250	2,090	2,160	3,960	4,935	2,665	2,625	2,790
Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon	6,138	6,415	6,194	5,159	3,825	3,041	2,465	2,460	2,720	5,120	12,650	3,460	3,690	4,035
Belfast	14,281	15,484	15,685	13,866	10,852	9,035	7,675	6,855	6,470	12,575	3,710	9,365	9,200	9,600
Causeway Coast and Glens	4,974	5,074	5,030	4,110	3,373	2,976	2,515	2,620	2,695	4,205	5,835	2,735	2,715	2,895
Derry City and Strabane	7,447	7,871	8,027	7,687	6,720	5,672	4,820	4,535	4,485	6,100	2,400	4,605	4,625	4,870
Fermanagh and Omagh	3,589	3,753	3,727	3,164	2,490	2,030	1,565	1,530	1,660	2,605	2,725	1,725	1,670	1,945
Lisburn and Castlereagh	2,671	2,925	2,849	2,376	1,969	1,708	1,395	1,265	1,355	2,815	3,580	1,835	1,750	1,905
Mid and East Antrim	3,463	3,764	3,843	3,159	2,489	2,291	2,055	1,955	2,150	3,580	2,995	2,675	2,560	2,680
Mid Ulster	3,899	3,888	3,809	3,078	2,244	1,703	1,430	1,495	1,590	3,305	4,675	2,070	2,010	2,385
Newry, Mourne and Down	6,179	6,194	5,959	5,050	3,769	2,934	2,430	2,305	2,510	5,105	3,805	3,260	3,220	3,410
Northern Ireland	59,910	63,030	62,624	54,101	43,024	36,108	30,475	28,840	29,595	52,685	50,510	36,600	36,265	38,825

Source NISRA

Area Profile Information

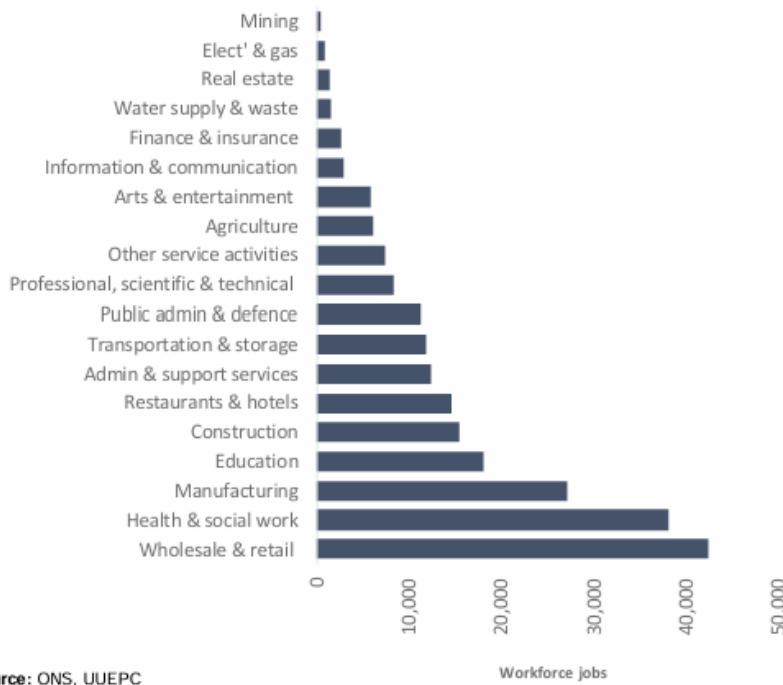
Sub Regional Skills Barometers

The Sub Regional Skills Barometers have been produced based on local government geographies. The 'South' geographical area is defined by the Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon and Newry, Mourne and Down Local Government Areas. The 'East' geographical area is defined by the Mid and East Antrim, Antrim and Newtownabbey, Ards and North Down and Lisburn and Castlereagh local Government areas.

The Sub Regional Skills Barometers for East and South show that retail and health sectors are the largest employers in both the South and East.

East

Workforce jobs by sector (1-digit), East (2017)

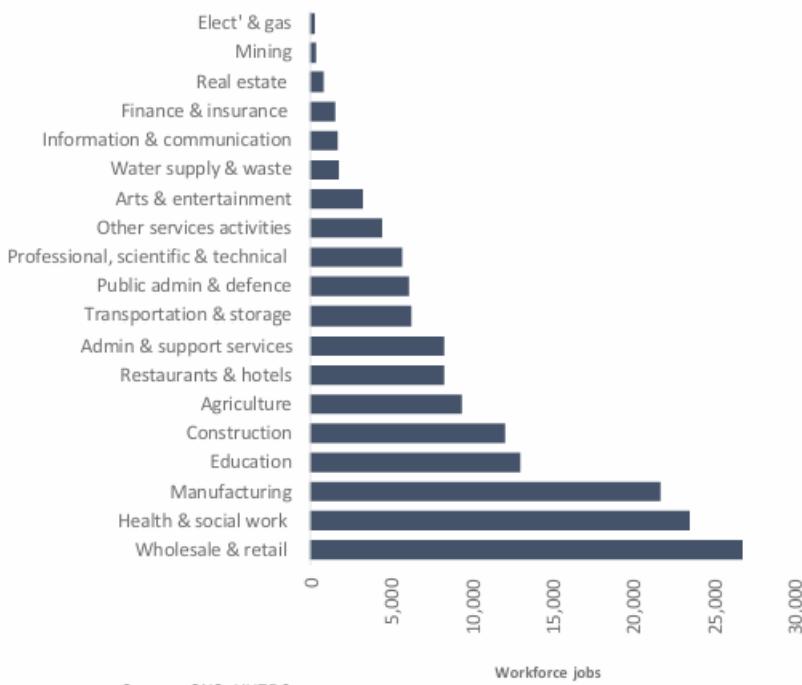


Source: ONS, UUEPC

The largest employment sector in East is wholesale and retail employing 42,500 workers. This accounts for 19% of the East total and 31% of all jobs in this sector in NI.

The second largest employment sector in East is health and social work which accounts for 38,200 workers. This translates to 17% of the East total and 29% of all jobs in this sector in NI.

Workforce jobs by sector (1-digit), South (2017)



Source: ONS, UUEPC

Other large employment sectors include manufacturing (27,100 workers, 12% of East's total), education (18,100 workers, 8% of East's total) and construction (15,400, 7% of East's total).

The largest employment sector in South is wholesale and retail employing 26,800 workers. This accounts for 17% of the South total and 19% of all jobs in this

sector in NI. Water supply & waste Arts & entertainment

The second largest employment sector in South is health and social work employing 23,500 workers. This translates to 15% of the South total and 18% of all jobs in this sector in NI.

Other large employment sectors include manufacturing (21,700 workers, 14% of South's total), education (13,000 workers, 8% of Workforce jobs South's total) and construction (12,000 workers, 8% of South's total).

Relative to the NI average, South has a higher concentration of jobs in a number of sectors including manufacturing, agriculture, wholesale and retail and construction. High growth sectors such as IT or finance and insurance are less concentrated in South, relative to the NI average.



Top 15 detailed occupations in NI (forecasts)

Sales and retail assistants are forecast to remain the largest detailed (4-digit) occupation in 2033, however their share of total employment is expected to decline from 5.5% to 4.9%.

Other nursing professionals are expected to increase employment by 3.6k over the 10-year period to 2033. That is the second largest absolute increase across all detailed (4-digit) occupations.

Northern Ireland's Top 15 occupations, 2023 vs 2033
Rank based on absolute size of occupation.



Care workers and home carers are expected to increase employment by 4.1k over the 10-year period to 2033. That is the largest absolute increase across all detailed (4-digit) occupations.

Programmers & software developers are expected to increase by 3.4% per annum over the coming decade to account for a total of 11.4k individuals by 2033.

Source: UUEPC

21

NISRA census data shows percentage for industry of employment for the three Local Government area within the SERC geography as shown below.

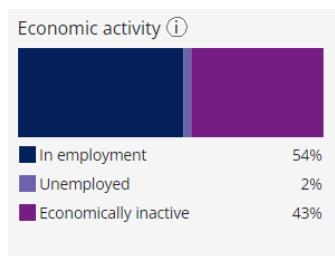
Industry of Employment	Average Percentage for AND, LCCC and NMD
	From NISRA Census Data 2021
Agriculture, energy and water	3
Manufacturing	7
Construction	8
Distribution, hotels and restaurants	20
Transport and communication	7

Financial, real estate, professional and administration	15
Public administration, education and health	35
Other	4

Source: Census 2021, NISRA

Economic Activity Rate

Ards & North Down



Newry, Mourne and Down



Lisburn & Castlereagh



Source: Census 2021, NISRA

Ards and North Down has the highest percentage of economically inactive individuals in the South Eastern Region.