



# STRATEGIC PLAN

## 2020-2024

Ambitions inspired and achieved  
through education and skills



# 1. FOREWORD



**As a family of colleges, business units and schools, EKC Group has a unique opportunity to revolutionise the way in which education is delivered for the communities which we serve.**

This new Strategic Plan reflects our significant recent growth, with Ashford College and other additional land-based provision at Spring Lane in Canterbury joining our Group, as well as our new sister organisation the EKC Schools Trust. It also reflects the current context, with COVID-19 reshaping not only our narrative, but the narrative of the whole world right now. The plan helps set clear priorities and exactly how we will deliver our mission and vision in the coming years. This has never been more necessary against the backdrop of a global pandemic that will see many within our society needing education more than ever before as they retrain and upskill to find new careers. Alongside other technical and vocational educators, EKC Group will play a primary role in helping to reskill our society and support business and the communities we serve in their recovery from COVID-19. In line with this, we have articulated some very clear goals and objectives, supported by our stakeholders, which we believe will help deliver this recovery and sustainable growth.

We have always been passionate about promoting the benefits of technical and vocational pathways, and this Strategic Plan will enable our organisation to systematically plan skills provision better than ever before. That's excellent news for employers, young people, communities and wider stakeholders, as it will enable them to unlock greater social and economic prosperity across the whole of East Kent.

As a Group, our Colleges and Business Units have always worked to tailor their provision to local skills needs, and this plan continues to develop that theme. Working closely with stakeholders we will deliver a pipeline of skilled employees,

helping develop districts and boroughs where business can rely on skills gaps being plugged through our delivery of highly relevant education provision.

Continuing that theme of developing opportunities for the communities we serve, our Group is committed to helping create places that are great for people to live, work and develop themselves. This plan will assist in 'place making' across East Kent, helping to build communities our 13,000 students want to live and thrive in.

As a major employer, we know our people are at the heart of the work we do. That's why this plan commits us to developing an exceptional environment for them, supporting their wellbeing whilst opening up opportunities for progression, growth and continued upskilling as they move forward in their careers.

Whilst we can be clear that our whole nation currently faces tremendous challenges, there is also reason to be optimistic. I believe that it remains an exciting time not only for EKC Group, but also for the wider East Kent area as a whole. There's a tremendous amount of potential for growth and prosperity across the districts and boroughs which we operate in, and we believe this ambitious Strategic Plan will help to maximise the benefits we can achieve for the communities we serve.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Grazey', written in a cursive style.

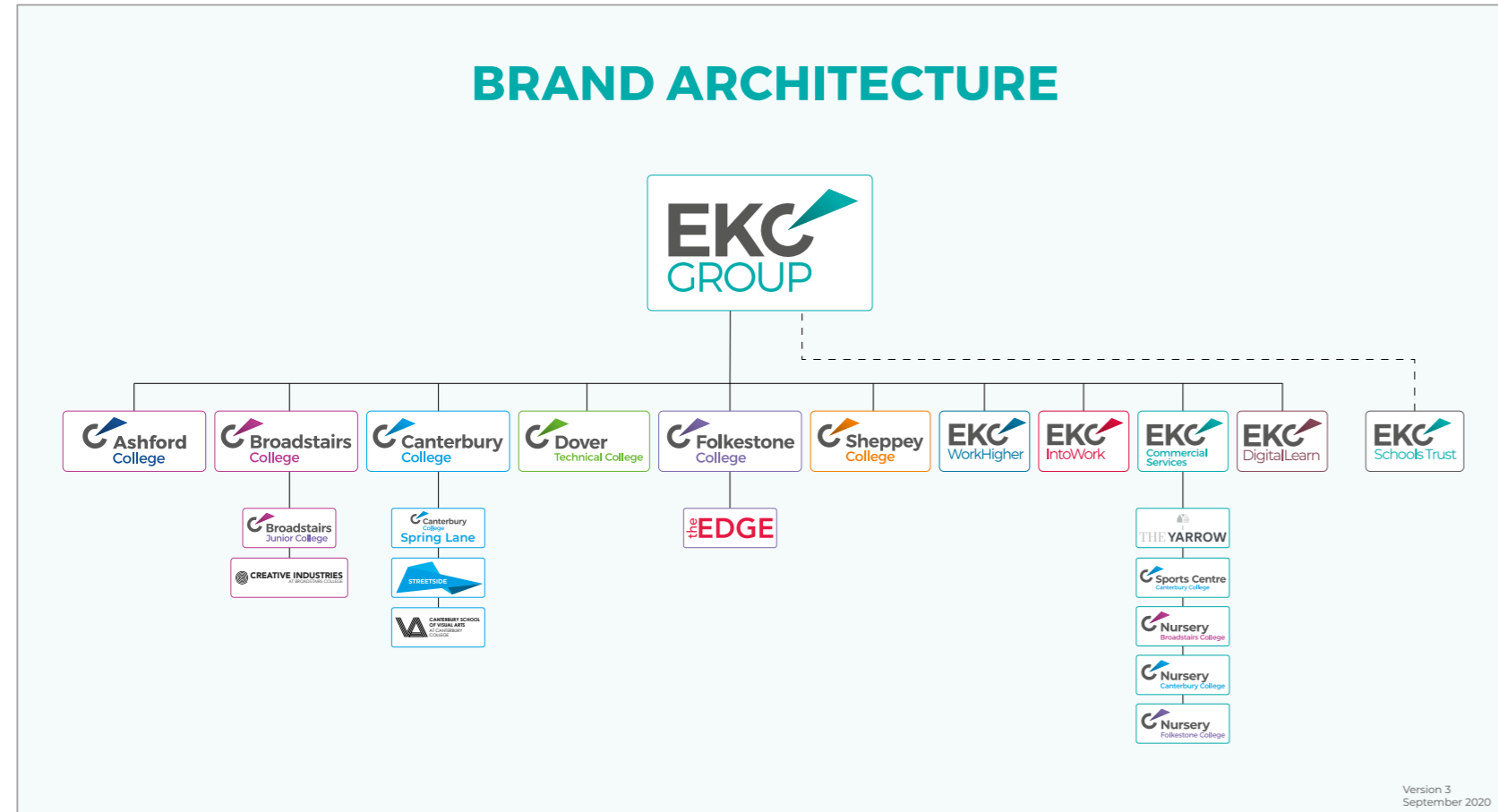
**Graham Razey**  
Chief Executive Officer

## 2. OUR GROUP

EKC Group is one of the largest education providers in the South East, with 1,400 staff delivering education to 13,000 students.

We are relentless in our drive to deliver an inspirational education experience for young people and adults across our family of six Colleges, three Business Units and our sister Multi Academy Trust, the EKC Schools Trust.

At the heart of who we are is community. Ensuring we play a leading role in contributing to the economic and social prosperity for the communities which we serve is core to our collective mission. In order to connect the Group more fully with the localities we're based in, Local Boards made up of key stakeholders from the community have been created. These ensure our Colleges deliver for their localities, firmly embedding them within the community.



## OUR MISSION AND VISION

### MISSION

To play a leading role for East Kent in developing the economic and social prosperity of the diverse communities we serve.

### VISION

For ambitions in life and work to be achieved through outstanding and inclusive education and skills.

### OUR CULTURE AND VALUES

Our culture is one of collaboration and community. We are strong believers in putting community first, with our colleges and business units working in partnership with residents, employers, charities, community groups, councils and a range of other key stakeholders to deliver learning opportunities for all and to support the transformation their locality wants and needs.

Our corporate values which are espoused by our Group's staff and students alike are underpinned by the word **CAREER**.

<b>C</b>	<b>CREATIVITY</b>	Adapting to change through innovation
<b>A</b>	<b>AMBITION</b>	Empowering our students and staff to achieve their potential
<b>R</b>	<b>RESPECT</b>	Welcoming everyone and celebrating difference and diversity
<b>E</b>	<b>EXCELLENCE</b>	Placing our students and staff at the heart of everything that we do
<b>E</b>	<b>ENTERPRISE</b>	Turning our ideas into reality
<b>R</b>	<b>RESILIENCE</b>	Being determined to make a difference

“ Ensuring East Kent is well placed to recover from coronavirus will be critical for our continued growth. This Strategic Plan places further education at the heart of this recovery and will be key to ensuring that the communities we all serve continue to flourish for the future. As Council Leaders we collectively endorse this work in helping East Kent as it begins to recover from coronavirus. ”

**Cllr Gerry Clarkson, Leader, Ashford Borough Council; Cllr Rob Thomas, Leader, Canterbury City Council; Cllr Trevor Bartlett, Leader, Dover District Council; Cllr David Monk, Leader, Folkestone and Hythe District Council; Cllr Rick Everitt, Leader, Thanet District Council; and Cllr Roger Truelove, Leader, Swale Borough Council**

### 3. STRATEGIC GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

**STRATEGIC GOAL 1:** Create a revolutionary model of education, delivering a new range of nationally recognised education solutions for the benefit of East Kent and beyond



“ At Kent County Council we’re committed to increasing opportunities and improving outcomes for the people of Kent. As the county’s, and country’s, economy begins to recover from the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown it is vital our residents, particularly our young people, are equipped with the right skills to aid with this recovery and that they have access to good quality education and training opportunities here in Kent. This new Strategic Plan will help us to achieve our ambitious goals, delivering better results for the county’s residents, communities and businesses. ”

**Cllr Roger Gough, Leader, Kent County Council**

Objective	Why do we want this?	What does success look like?	KPIs / Outcomes
1.1 Create a model that links nursery, primary and secondary education with our colleges, providing inspirational academic and technical education opportunities for children and young people.	<p>To bridge the gap between academic and technical education, so that local communities view them on a par with each other.</p> <p>To create opportunities for children to experience technical education.</p> <p>To truly tailor education to the talents and skills of young people and help them to make the right choices for their future careers.</p>	<p>Working with the EKC Schools Trust, there will be five nurseries, eight primary schools, one secondary school, and colleges working closely in partnership to deliver broad-based academic and technical pathways to our East Kent communities, supported by truly independent careers advice and guidance.</p> <p>Children and young people will benefit from a wide range of learning experiences, designed to identify and develop their talents, create well-rounded, ambitious and resilient young people, with clear pathways that will provide them with a route to success.</p>	<p>Five nurseries established.</p> <p>Eight primary schools established.</p> <p>One secondary school established.</p>
1.2 Establish EKC Group as an education group, recognised nationally for innovative and outstanding education provision.	<p>To raise the profile of EKC Group and its brand, and the communities it serves.</p> <p>To celebrate educational excellence and to raise aspirations.</p>	EKC Group has a brand which is associated with high quality education, breaking new ground in supporting the prosperity of its communities.	EKC Group, its students and staff are recognised and celebrated via awards and other achievements.
1.3 Develop the Group’s Higher Education offer, focused on technical and work-based routes that meet the current and future needs of employers and address higher level skills shortages.	<p>Whilst the recommendations from the Auger review of post-19 education may not be implemented, the current HE system is not sustainable. EKC Group has an opportunity to grow its market share, particularly in technical and work-based routes, which in turn will address a range of skills shortages.</p> <p>Whilst the number of Higher Apprenticeships has grown (17% of starts in East Kent in 2018/19), there is opportunity to grow this significantly.</p>	<p>EKC Group will seek to work in partnership with universities so that clear progression pathways can be developed, however the extent to which this can be achieved is likely to depend on Government-led market change.</p> <p>A new set of Higher Apprenticeship Standards delivered across a range of sectors that meet the needs of industry. Priority sectors will include engineering, digital, construction, health, education, and land-based.</p>	Increase Higher Apprenticeships starts from 25 to 120 by 2023/24, including 3 new programmes per year.
1.4 Develop the Group’s International provision, securing agreements to provide high-quality technical education opportunities for non-UK students, enhancing the international reputation of East Kent, whilst enriching the experiences of our British students.	<p>Post COVID-19, to positively respond to new international opportunities including the Government’s announcement that international graduate visas will be extended from four months to two years.</p> <p>Increase the financial contribution to the Group.</p> <p>To enhance the reputation of EKC Group as a UK market leader in technical education.</p>	Agreements in place to deliver provision to international students from a range of different countries.	<p>Eight agreements secured by 2023/24.</p> <p>£640,000 of additional total income by 2023/24.</p>

**STRATEGIC GOAL 2:** Deliver inspirational, inclusive and purposeful education that enables young people and adults to achieve their ambitions and meet the needs of East Kent



“ Getting people back to work is about giving them the skills they need to secure employment. EKC Group’s model delivers this, and we’re excited to work in partnership with them through this new Strategic Plan to help deliver even more community training that supports a greater number of our customers back into continued work. ”

**Sarah Kennett, Service Leader,  
Department for Work and Pensions Kent**

Objective	Why do we want this?	What does success look like?	KPIs / Outcomes
2.1 Develop and deliver technical and vocational study programmes that enable our students to succeed, meet the current and future needs of East Kent, and support increased inward investment in our communities.	To raise the aspirations of our students and enable them to succeed.  To address skills shortages.  Support greater productivity and community prosperity, including supporting the career progression of low skilled workers.  Strong relationships with employers and partners to ensure industry-relevance, responsiveness to skills needs, and to create the best opportunities for our students.	EKC Group will have a national reputation for developing and delivering the very best technical and vocational education, focused on meeting the different needs of the East Kent communities.  Every EKC Group department will be sponsored by a partner employer, with industry-led approaches to developing and delivering study programmes.	Employer sponsorship secured for every technical pathway.  Increase in student positive destinations from 90% to 93%. *  Increase in internal student progression from 54% to 60%. **
2.2 Deliver exceptional community-based adult employability programmes across East Kent with new centres in Sheppey, Ashford and Canterbury.	We want EKC IntoWork’s provision, highly valued by Jobcentre Plus, to be available to all our East Kent communities, enabling adults to build sustainable and successful careers.  This provision will be crucial to supporting the post COVID-19 economic recovery through retraining and upskilling adults in our communities.	New centres established in Sheppey, Ashford and Canterbury which meet the needs of these communities.	Three new centres established.  Number of Employability learners receiving job offers increases from 42% to 50%.
2.3 Develop a reputation for being the most inclusive education group in the UK, providing access and opportunity for all.	The Group has a passion for supporting all individuals to access education and thrive in their community.	There is no differential in the access, achievement, and progression of different groups and types of learners across our communities (e.g. looked after children, SEND, ethnicity).  Gaps in provision for vulnerable learners are identified and addressed.  All study programmes embed diversity and inclusivity as a core part of the curriculum.	Zero differential in access, achievement and progression measures.
2.4 Secure a reputation with Kent employers for outstanding Apprenticeship provision that adds value to their business and enables apprentices to develop successful careers in their chosen industry.	Delivering an outstanding Apprenticeships programme will enable our business to recruit and develop talent that will address skills shortages, create long term benefits for the East Kent economy, and enable apprentices to develop successful and fulfilling careers.	An excellent recruitment service for employers, and careers advice for candidates.  Apprenticeship achievement rates well above national benchmarks.  Outstanding feedback from employers on our service, how it adds value to business, and helps to address skills shortages.	Achievement rates 3% above national benchmarks.  Employer satisfaction is >93% (Ipsos / MORI national survey).
2.5 Explore further opportunities to develop Commercial Services that enhance our education delivery and provide authentic commercial opportunities for our students.	We want to build further on our successful model of Commercial Services (e.g. The Yarrow hotel) which provide real world opportunities for our students to gain commercial experience and apply their technical skills and knowledge.	Additional commercial services that enhance our educational delivery and the student experience.	An additional £500,000 invested in commercial services developments / acquisitions that enhance our educational delivery and the student experience.

\* A positive destination includes progression to further learning, employment, or employment with training (e.g. Apprenticeships)  
\*\* Internal progression is defined as the % of students progressing to a higher level of study with EKC Group

**STRATEGIC GOAL 3:** Successfully integrate Ashford College and Spring Lane into the EKC Group family, developing the provision to enable the Group to truly meet the needs of the whole of East Kent



Objective	Why do we want this?	What does success look like?	KPIs / Outcomes
3.1 Develop Ashford College to meet the needs of its local community, including the creation of specialisations in priority sectors.	To make EKC Group an education group for the whole of East Kent.  To pilot a model of specialisation at Level 3 and above that will establish Ashford College as a national centre for excellence that can be rolled out to our other Colleges.	Ashford College will deliver a curriculum that is closely aligned to the needs of the local community, and that complements the Group's existing provision.  Specialisms will be developed in partnership with local stakeholders, but could include advanced manufacturing, creative and media production (linked to the Newtown Works development), and business and computing (with a particular focus on advanced manufacturing and logistics).	Student progression is on a par with other EKC Group Colleges at 93%.  Two specialisms established with a strong local reputation.
3.2 Establish Spring Lane as the catalyst for the development of a land-based / food skills provision for East Kent, based on strong partnerships with key employers and partners.	The land-based / food sector is under-served in East Kent, is a sector that is growing strategic importance, and the local skills base will need to increase. There were 48,065 food sector jobs in East Kent in 2016 and this is set to increase further.	New provision and facilities dedicated to meeting the needs of the land-based / food sector in East Kent.	Capital developments delivered on time and to budget.  New programmes established in partnership with key land-based employers.

“ This new Strategic Plan will help to ensure that further education is the golden thread which runs through Ashford's regeneration. The plan places the local communities EKC Group serves at its heart, empowering them to grow and flourish in the future. We are very pleased to see Ashford College mentioned in the plan as it will be core to our borough's growth in the future. ”

**Cllr Gerry Clarkson, Leader, Ashford Borough Council**

“ Education is critical to supporting the continued development of business throughout Kent. With Apprenticeships and key sectors prioritised this Strategic Plan places a sharp focus on delivering the workplace talent that our county's employers need to remain on their growth trajectory. ”

**Jo James OBE, Chief Executive Officer, Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce**

**STRATEGIC GOAL 4:** Continue to invest in industry-standard facilities and first class Group services that support our business units to deliver aspirational, relevant and high quality learning experiences



“ Ensuring that skills gaps are being filled is key to our county’s continued growth. EKC Group’s plan will support this, acting to build the next generation of talented professionals through exceptional educational experiences and high-quality Apprenticeship provision that will be critical for businesses across Kent. ”

**Jo Wright, HR Manager, Eurotunnel**

Objective	Why do we want this?	What does success look like?	KPIs / Outcomes
4.1 Complete the reconfiguration and renewal of Folkestone College, including the creation of a new campus frontage and state of the art facilities.	To make Folkestone College more visible and accessible to the local community and create high quality space for administration and curriculum areas.  To remove functionally unsuitable, low quality and inefficient space.	Folkestone College has high quality, fit-for-purpose facilities that support outstanding technical and vocational education, and that is recognised as such by the local community.	Project delivered on time, on budget, to the agreed specification.
4.2 Reconfigure Dover Technical College to create a new frontage, new nursery, and upgrade learning environments.	To make Dover Technical College more visible and accessible to the local community and create high quality learning environments.  To support the delivery of the Group’s plans for nursery provision to meet community needs.	Dover Technical College has high quality, fit-for-purpose facilities that support outstanding technical and vocational education, and that is recognised as such by the local community.	Project delivered on time, on budget, to the agreed specification.
4.3 Deliver the second phase of Ashford College’s development to create facilities that support the delivery of provision that meets local needs.	To ensure there is capacity to meet the planned population growth in Ashford. The 16-18 population is forecast to increase by 12% between 2019 and 2024.  To relocate offsite provision at Cummings House to Ashford College, replace aging equipment, enhance the student experience and deliver operating efficiencies.	Ashford College has high quality, fit-for-purpose facilities that support outstanding technical and vocational education, and that is recognised as such by the local community.	Project delivered on time, on budget, to the agreed specification.
4.4 Deliver high-performing services, underpinned by robust systems, that enable our business units to succeed.	To ensure that our services are further developed to meet the current and future needs of an organisation that has achieved rapid growth.	Professional and user-centred services that enable our staff to self-manage and self-serve.  Digital systems solutions to deliver services across a large and diverse organisation.	>90% user satisfaction with services and systems.
4.5 Deliver a step change in digital connectivity and capability across the Group, including greater capacity for digital learning, with a new digital entitlement for students and investment in staff devices.	To unlock educational opportunity for our communities, particularly those unable to access provision in our facilities for any reason. This has been made particularly relevant in light of COVID-19.  To deliver greater resilience in connectivity, productivity, and staff wellbeing across our Group.  To enable the creation and delivery of more digital learning and resources.	All students can access a digital device and broadband connection, with access to high quality digital learning content.  All staff have their own device with connectivity options, enabling them to work flexibly, including remotely where appropriate.  An enhanced curriculum that enriches our students’ experience through digital learning.	100% of students have access to high quality EKC Group digital learning and resources via a device and broadband connection.  100% of staff have their own device which enables them to work flexibly according to the needs of their role.  Student satisfaction increases from 82% to 88%.

**STRATEGIC GOAL 5:** Ensure that EKC Group is an employer of choice and responds appropriately to the social, ethical and moral issues of its communities, supporting the development of well-rounded and responsible young people



“ EKC Group has shown its commitment to growing the power of youth for many years. They have played a pioneering role as a key partner of the #iwill campaign and have always shared ideas for innovative practice with leaders across the education sector. This plan continues that theme, highlighting the importance of engaging young people in their communities and making them the key stakeholders of their own future. It has been a privilege to see the social action programme at EKC Group grow across the past decade, and I look forward to seeing them continue to lead the way with their plans and actions. ”

**Rania Marandos, Chief Executive Officer, Step Up To Serve**

Objective	Why do we want this?	What does success look like?	KPIs / Outcomes
5.1 Embed purposeful and relevant social action in all 16-19 study programmes that is nationally recognised for its positive impact on young people and their communities.	To enable students to practice their technical skills in projects that make a positive impact on their community, and that develop their confidence and resilience.  To give all staff the opportunity to take part in social action projects alongside our students, embedding it as a key part of EKC Group's culture.	A student-led social action programme that is highly valued and that our communities recognise as having a positive impact on them and young people.	All social action projects are student-led, purposeful, and provide tangible benefits to our local communities.
5.2 Develop an EKC Group environmental strategy, involving staff and students in projects that have a positive impact to reduce our impact on the environment and promote sustainability.	As one of the largest employers in Kent that educates thousands of people, we have a responsibility to show community leadership and respond to critical environmental issues such as climate change.	A strategy that invests in projects and actions that will have a positive impact in our environment, including energy, recycling and waste, and promoting and embedding sustainability in what we do.	Clear baseline / KPIs to be determined in the environmental strategy by 31st December 2020.
5.3 Recruit and develop outstanding teachers and assessors, with expert industry knowledge, that inspire and energise our students to become the next generation of highly-skilled professionals.	We need talented teachers and assessors to deliver exceptional learning programmes for our students and enable them to succeed in their chosen careers.	Expert teachers and assessors in all curriculum departments, with up to date industry knowledge, who are passionate about their profession and can inspire our students.  Working in partnership with industry, a recruitment and development strategy that enables us to recruit the very best teachers and assessors and continually develop their skills and knowledge. This will include ensuring curriculum staff are able to expertly design and deliver digital learning, which is likely to be increasingly important in a post COVID-19 environment.	Student satisfaction increases from 82% to 88%.
5.4 Develop a thriving staff community, being recognised as an employer of choice.	It is vital that the potential and talents of our staff are developed, that they are empowered and enabled to succeed in their careers, whilst ensuring that workloads are manageable, and wellbeing is prioritised.  It is important that EKC Group promotes equality, diversity, and inclusivity, ensuring that culturally and practically we demonstrate our commitment to these principles.	Thriving staff that are committed and enabled to deliver the best for our communities.  There is equality of opportunity for all staff. EKC Group is an organisation that has a strong sense of cohesiveness and where all staff feel valued and fairly treated, regardless of their race, gender, disability, religion/belief, sexual orientation or age. A staff Organisation and Culture Development Group will lead this work, ensuring equality and diversity is embedded in all that we do.	Employees that are proud to be a member of staff at EKC Group increases from 79% to 85%.



## 4. PARTNERSHIPS

From its formation EKC Group has worked in a highly collaborative and innovative manner with its network of partners for the benefit of our communities. This has remained a core strength of the Group, with the development and consolidation of strategic partnerships with a large number of organisations from a wide range of sectors and areas. The Group will continue to work closely with a range of key stakeholders to achieve our strategic objectives. These include:

- National funding bodies and policymakers;
- National organisations and networks;
- Regional and Kent-wide organisations and networks;
- District, Borough and City Councils in East Kent;
- Strategically important employers;
- Business representative groups and networks;
- Media;
- Other education providers and networks;
- Internal stakeholders;
- Local and national politicians.

This Strategic Plan will see the Group continue to forge ahead with the partnership element of our identity, with a wealth of new and exciting developments which we will need to play a leading part in, such as Discovery Park's master planning process, the Newtown Works development that promises to bring growth to media production and associated services to Ashford, the redevelopment of Manston Airport into an international freight hub, and the new Garden Village at Otterpool Park.

We have a long history of working collaboratively with employers, community groups, networks and councils, and will continue to play a leading role in ensuring every community we serve has access to high quality technical and vocational education in the future. This will include working alongside partners within the Local Authority, and District and Borough Councils to identify opportunities for additional further education provision where there will be a clear need for it in the future. Whilst our Group is focussed on East Kent, we are also believers that we must feed into wider strategies.

That's why we are committed to working as close partners with Kent County Council to feed into the development and delivery of its Strategic Statement, as well as an emerging Enterprise and Productivity Strategy. Our technical and vocational education will help to underpin both of these key strategies, empowering the next generation of skilled workers to boost growth across the county, supercharging Kent for its future success. As a key education provider within the South East Local Enterprise Partnership area, we will also work to assist in the delivery of its strategic priorities for growth and the skills agenda, in line with its strategic direction setting and investment for our whole region. As one of the largest Education Groups in the country, we will also continue to seek to influence national policy for the benefit of our East Kent communities.

Whilst we view student progression into employment as a positive destination, we also encourage our learners to aspire to higher levels of study. That is why we are committed to working alongside our university partners, including Canterbury Christ Church University and the University of Kent, to develop clear progression pathways. Our Group is also passionate about breaking down societal prejudices towards technical and vocational pathways, so we will actively work with our partners to promote the huge range of opportunities available through further education and Apprenticeships.

As one of the largest employers in East Kent, our Group also has a number of responsibilities. Chief amongst these is our responsibility to the communities we proudly serve. As the country begins its recovery from coronavirus, we will ensure that we work alongside local employers to meet their skills requirements, whilst also working in partnership with local authorities and organisations such as Jobcentre Plus, to ensure that we are providing the best training opportunities that build resilience in our local economies.

We are bear a significant responsibility for the environment. As a consequence, we have made a pledge to ensure that we behave in a sustainable manner in the future. However, more than that, we are committed to acting as leaders in this area, encouraging our partners to also act in line with the clear agenda which we have set down. We will support our partners in following our lead in adopting their own low carbon solutions and embedding this throughout their organisations.



“ The South East Local Enterprise Partnership is highly supportive of this new Strategic Plan which will help to boost our priority sectors, delivering a pipeline of skilled employees to supercharge growth in the future. We will work in partnership with the Group to ensure the plan's delivery. ”

**Adam Bryan, Chief Executive Officer of the South East LEP**





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