GMCOLLEGES
LOCAL SKILLS IMPROVEMENT FUND 2023-2025

ACHIEVEMENTS

GMColleges Local Skills Improvement Fund

GREATER MANCHESTER COLLEGES

STRATEGIC IMPACT

Through £8.4 million of investment from the Local Skills Improvement Fund (LSIF), Greater Manchester's nine Further Education colleges have successfully collaborated to drive targeted skills development across five priority sectors: construction and sustainable practice, health, engineering & manufacturing, digital, and the education workforce.

Running from November 2023 to March 2025, the LSIF programme has acted as a catalyst for innovation across Greater Manchester's FE sector, driving new curriculum design, investment in industry-standard facilities, and facilitating deeper collaboration between colleges and employers. Collectively, the nine colleges have tackled critical skills shortages, responded to local labour market intelligence, and aligned delivery with the priorities of the Greater Manchester Local Skills Improvement Plan (GM LSIP).

Through coordinated action across five sector projects, the programme has enhanced the resilience and adaptability of the GM skills system, ensuring provision remains responsive to employer demand and agile in meeting future workforce needs.

Collectively, LSIF projects have advanced the following GM LSIP priority themes:

- **Digitalisation and Innovation**
  a. Mainstreaming immersive learning (CAVEs, VR, AR, digital twins, Anatomage) across sectors.
  b. Expanding advanced digital skills in AI, cybersecurity, cloud computing, and Industry 4.0 technologies.
  c. Embedding digital tools in construction, engineering, and health curricula to modernise delivery.

- **Net Zero and Green Skills**
  a. Retrofit and low-carbon construction training (solar PV, heat pumps, sustainable plumbing, green brick).
  b. Engineering programmes in hydrogen, electric vehicles, and sustainable manufacturing.
  c. Clear pathways aligned with GM's 2038 carbon neutrality target.

STRATEGIC IMPACT

- **Health and Social Care Workforce Transformation**
  - Directly tackling NHS and care sector workforce shortages through new qualifications, bridging courses, and rapid upskilling.
  - Embedding digital and immersive technologies (Anatomage, CAVEs, simulation wards) in health education.
  - Strengthening progression into higher-level nursing, therapies, and social care roles, ensuring a sustainable talent pipeline for critical public services.

- **Employer-Led Workforce Development and Progression Pathways**
  - Co-designed curricula with employers across health, construction, engineering, and digital.
  - Flexible routes from entry level to higher technical qualifications (T Levels, HTQs, microcredentials).
  - Bespoke CPD and short courses to meet immediate employer workforce needs.

69 new level 3-5 courses developed

932 staff CPD activities completed

62 teaching facilities created or enhanced

94 employers introduced to new equipment or technology

23 employers co-designing or delivering new provision

£2 million + in collaborative efficiency savings

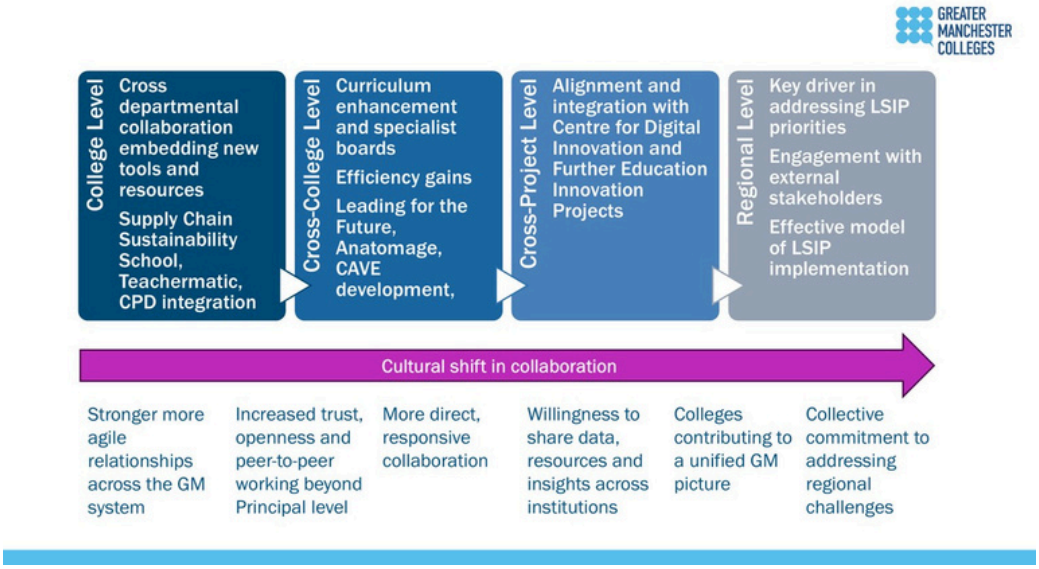
STRATEGIC IMPACT

Collaboration

A defining feature of the Greater Manchester LSIF programme has been the depth of collaboration between GMColleges, employers, and sector bodies. GMColleges has emerged as a stronger, more integrated network — one that can respond collectively to sector-wide challenges, co-develop innovative solutions, and ensure Greater Manchester's workforce remains competitive in a fast-changing economy. We have achieve this in several ways:

- Pooled resources for equipment procurement and CPD, leading to significant efficiencies and cost savings.
- Cross-college curriculum development has allowed resources, learning materials, and specialist equipment to be shared region-wide, maximising investment impact.
- Employer panels, curriculum boards, and industry forums have ensured training provision stays aligned with real-world practices and emerging technologies.
- Joint CPD programmes have upskilled hundreds of teaching staff in specialist areas such as retrofit, immersive learning, digitalisation, and low-carbon technologies.

STRATEGIC IMPACT



This cultural shift has enabled us to harness collaborative advantage across the region. This has been realised in a number of ways: working in a more agile and responsive way, benefitting from cost and efficiency savings, accessing more resources and perhaps most significantly responding collectively to regional challenges within the sector.

This is clearly demonstrated in our significant contribution to the Greater Manchester Local Skills Improvement Plan Progress Report July 2025.

In response to the success of LSIF, in May 2024, ten Greater Manchester **Curriculum Specialist Boards** (CSBs) have been established, bringing together Curriculum Specialist Leads from across the nine GMColleges to take a strategic, region-wide approach to sector-specific challenges. Their impact includes driving collaborative CPD, responding collectively to sector policy, and raising the quality of teaching through shared resources such as CAVEs and immersive learning. The CSBs have also strengthened engagement with external stakeholders including Skills for Care, GM NHS Integrated Care Partnership, awarding bodies and universities and building stronger FE–HE links in areas such as health and engineering.

STRATEGIC IMPACT

The creation of these Boards provides a robust mechanism for sustaining LSIF impact beyond the funding period. By embedding permanent sector-specific structures, the CSBs ensure that collaboration, shared resources, and employer engagement remain central to FE delivery in Greater Manchester. They enable colleges to respond collectively to policy changes, secure stronger partnerships with employers and HEIs, and embed a culture of continuous improvement through shared practice and cross-college CPD. In doing so, the CSBs lock in a self-sustaining infrastructure that will continue to drive innovation, strengthen workforce capacity, and ensure ongoing alignment with LSIP priorities.

CONSTRUCTION & SUSTAINABLE PRACTICE

Led by **Oldham College**, eight Greater Manchester colleges successfully delivered the **LSIF construction project**, achieving the core objectives of upskilling and attracting new entrants into the construction workforce whilst addressing the key priorities identified in the GM LSIP. Delivery has enhanced provision for 16–19 learners while developing flexible micro courses and full qualifications to meet both immediate employer needs and longer-term workforce capacity.

LSIP Priority	Contribution through the LSIF Construction Project
Digitalisation of construction	CAVE installations enabling immersive AR/VR training across the GM college network. VR training modules, BIM integration, immersive assessments. Significant technology adoption by employers.
Net-zero / retrofit skills	Workforce upskilled in low-carbon technologies. Delivery of retrofit courses, renewable tech training (solar PV, heat pumps, rainwater harvesting) and partnership with Daikin.
Employer-led provision	Enhanced employer engagement via curriculum co-design, employer boards, sector-specific consultations, collaborative course development and apprenticeships.
Progression pathways	Increased learner progression routes to higher technical qualifications and employment. Clear routes from micro courses → L3–5 qualifications → employment/apprenticeships.
Sector capacity building	Staff CPD in retrofit, hydrogen safety, low-carbon construction; shared learning resources across GM.

CONSTRUCTION & SUSTAINABLE PRACTICE

Highlights

Bury College

- Developed “Initial Periodic Inspection of Electrical Installations” from a one-week qualification into flexible microlearning sessions based on employer feedback.
- Embedded CPD across the construction teaching team and completed refurbishment works to enhance learning spaces.
- Full commercial course launch planned for next academic year as part of Adult Learning provision.

Hopwood Hall College

- Pioneered VR-integrated retrofit training aligned to GM’s 2038 net-zero target.
- Developed new HTQ in Construction Management (delivery from September 2025).
- Created filmed retrofit assessment scenarios for industry-relevant competencies.

Oldham College

- Developed nine micro taster courses in sustainable construction trends and technologies with clear progression to BPEC, HNC(HTQ), and HND(HTQ).
- Developed controlled environment teaching spaces with state-of-the-art tech.
- Completed CAVE installation and hosted GM-wide CPD event: “Shaping Excellence – A Quality First Approach to Technology for Learning”.

Salford City College

- Created low-carbon courses: Electrical Energy Storage, Solar PV Systems.
- In partnership with local BSE employers, created an "Introduction to Building Services Engineering Systems and Low Carbon Technologies" two-day course for support service personnel.
- Developed Highways Academy delivering the Highways Maintenance Operative Apprenticeship – SCC now recognised as the Northern Centre for this apprenticeship.
- Installed VR-enabled classrooms for up to 60 learners.

CONSTRUCTION & SUSTAINABLE PRACTICE

Tameside College

- Created Green Skills Short Course Programme (five short courses: green brick applications, sustainable plumbing, heating, and decorating) providing pathways to higher level courses leading to industry placements and employment opportunities
- Installed CAVE immersive environment for employer engagement and learner training.

Trafford & Stockport College Group

- Expanded T Level and HE routes across electrical engineering, plumbing, solar PV, civil engineering, Modern Methods of Construction.
- Introduced property maintenance/retrofit apprentice routes.
- Installed state-of-the-art technology in training workshops.

UCEN Manchester

- Expanded “Introduction to Retrofit Roles” into Level 3 & 4 technical pathways.
- Added HTQs in Construction Management and Civil Engineering, with Architectural Technology launching 2026.
- Employer engagement via site visits and industry guest speakers.

Wigan & Leigh College

- Delivered Level 3 & 4 courses in Solar PV, Electrical Energy Storage, Rainwater Harvesting.
- Developed joint employer–academic committees to co-develop content.
- Delivering Level 3 & 4 courses with 71 enrolments, ensuring that academic courses have practical bolt on, to enhance employability and fill industry gaps in the borough for retrofit.
  - Solar Photovoltaic Systems NOS Mapped
  - Introduction to Electrical Energy Storage Systems (EESS)
  - Rainwater Harvesting and Grey Water Reuse.
  - Solar Thermal Domestic Hot Water Systems.
  - Air Source and Ground Source Heat Pump Systems. Single and three phase safe isolation
  - Level 3 Domestic Electrical Apprenticeship standard.
- Expanded current T level civil engineering to electrotechnical offer in line with future energy zone links through stakeholders.
- Developed Business breakfasts and workshops to support the end user to break down barriers with new technologies.

DIGITAL

Led by **The Manchester College**, through the **LSIF digital project**, eight GMColleges responded to LSIP priorities by expanding digital skills provision across the region, focusing on:

- Equipping learners with industry-standard technical skills in areas such as AI, cybersecurity, cloud computing, and data analytics, strengthening progression into digital apprenticeships and higher education.
- Addressing digital transformation needs of employers.
- Creating flexible, accessible learning pathways from entry level through to higher technical qualifications, offering advanced digital specialisms aligned with LSIP digital transformation priorities.

LSIP Priority	Contribution though the LSIF Digital Project
Digital transformation	GMColleges now offer advanced digital specialisms aligned with LSIP digital transformation priorities. Rapid upskilling in AI, cloud, cybersecurity and data analytics tailored to organisational needs.
Progression pathways	New courses launched from entry level to HTQs in Digital Technologies. T Level in Cyber security alongside expanded L3-5 digital pathways including AI essentials, Cybersecurity Essentials, Python, Cloud Infrastructure, Data Analytics, Digital Project Management. Increased attainment of industry-recognised digital certifications; stronger progression into digital apprenticeships and higher education.
Employer-led training	Co-designed modules with tech employers and SMEs. Collaboration with Microsoft, AWS, Cisco, and local tech SMEs to co-design curriculum and provide real-world project opportunities. Digital Skills Advisory Panels established to shape provision in response to evolving business needs.

DIGITAL

LSIP Priority	Contribution though the LSIF Digital Project
Cross-sector digital skills	Application of digital tools in construction, engineering, health.
Innovation in delivery	Creation of immersive technology labs, cybersecurity simulation suites, digital twins and cloud computing environments. Investment in CISCO equipment with 3 new CISCO Academies created. Comprehensive training for digital teaching teams in emerging technologies and teaching strategies.

DIGITAL

Highlights

ADA

- Creation of a new networking lab providing hands-on learning for apprentices as part of their level 4 and level 6 apprenticeships.

Bolton College

- Became a CISCO training Academy with an increased curriculum offer of part time courses for adult learners along with training to be integrated into existing 16-19 courses.

Bolton Sixth Form College

- Training for 120 staff on digital transformation, use of Showbie, EdPuzzle, AI and Teachermatic.
- 60 learners have undertaken professional MOS or Adobe qualifications to get them ready for the professional world of work whilst assisting them in their current studies.

Oldham College

- Creation of new CISCO learning facilities through the acquisition of CISCO bundles.

UCEN Manchester

- Arduino and small robots are being used by LTE to enhance the programming skills of students and allow them to put on new activities through the tech society.
- Investment by LTE Group in hacking labs has given students real world systems to practice theory in live systems but in a safe environment.
- Delivering HTQs in Digital Technologies specialising in cyber, software development, and data analytics.
- Partnered with Manchester Digital to provide live employer briefs to learners.

Wigan and Leigh College

- Utilising and delivering CISCO across T Level and HND programmes for two cohorts of learners.

HEALTH & SOCIAL CARE

Led by **Bolton College** through the **LSIF health and social care project**, eight GMColleges worked collaboratively to address urgent skills gaps in health and social care, aligned to the GM LSIP priorities of:

- Workforce development for NHS and care providers
- Digital and immersive technology integration in health training
- Progression pathways from entry-level to higher technical qualifications and employment

The project has delivered new qualifications, expanded employer-responsive training, and upgraded facilities across the region, ensuring learners gain industry-relevant competencies and experience with cutting-edge technologies.

LSIP Priority	Contribution through the LSIF Health Project
Workforce shortages	Direct training for NHS and care staff; bridging qualifications for rapid upskilling.
Digital innovation	Digital and immersive technologies mainstreamed into health curriculum delivery, with staff across all GMColleges achieving gold 'train the trainer' Anatomgage accreditation as well as investment in CAVEs and VR simulations for anatomy, emergency care, and clinical skills.
Employer-led delivery	Enhanced employer engagement leading to co-designed curricula and job offers. Curriculum shaped by NHS trusts, local authorities, and care providers.

HEALTH & SOCIAL CARE

LSIP Priority	Contribution through the LSIF Health Project
Progression pathways	Improved learner progression into employment and higher education. New qualifications develoed across all levels, from entry-level to HTQ and degree-level routes, including microcredentials and employer led CPD.
Sector capacity building	Development of regional centre of excellence for Anatomage based training, creating the largest FE Anatomage user group in the world. Shared resources (Anatomage content) and CPD across GMColleges. Creation of inclusive, flexible learning environments supporting a diverse workforce pipeline.

Highlights

Bolton College

- Developed 10 new Level 3 OCN-accredited microcredentials in anatomy & physiology, embedded in T Levels and apprenticeships.
- Developed healthcare digital assessment tools in partnership with Bolton NHS and Christie's to improve learner evaluation and workforce diagnostic training.
- Led development of regional centre of excellence for Anatomage-based training.

Bury College

- Integration of an Anatomage table and anatomy and physiology micro-credentials into curriculum delivery, enabling immersive anatomy and physiology learning and addressing identified NHS and care sector skills gaps.
- Creation of a short course 'Bridging Anatomy Theory and Practical Skills for Care Home Staff, delivered interactively using the Anatomage table.
- Expanded CPD for teaching staff on new digital health tools and simulated learning methods.

HEALTH & SOCIAL CARE

Hopwood Hall College

- Created a Foundation Degree in Health and Social Care allowing progression to Level 6 BA or employment in roles such as Care Managers and Youth Workers.
- Investment in simulation-based facilities (hospital ward and training flat) and delivered specialist training in anatomy and physiology using immersive 3D tools.

UCEN Manchester

- Installed CAVE immersive environment to simulate healthcare settings.
- Developed new T Level and bridging courses in mental health support, therapies, and adult nursing.
- Created higher technical qualifications in Healthcare Professions and created the Bridging the Gap Maths and English course which will be embedded into their Access to HE level 3 courses

Salford City College

- Advanced digital and immersive technologies, including the CAVE, Anatomage Table and JUNO dolls, have enhanced curriculum delivery, contributing to a 70-learner increase in 2024/25 intake and new staff recruitment
- Expanded employer partnerships with NHS trusts and care providers to co-develop course content.

Tameside College

- The Anatomage Table supports accessible and inclusive learning, helping learners develop both technical and employability skills.
- Enhanced a state-of-the-art skills lab for health and social care learners.
- Partnered with local authorities for adult care workforce upskilling programmes.
- Introduced new progression pathways into higher-level nursing and therapy qualifications.

HEALTH & SOCIAL CARE

Trafford & Stockport College Group

- Delivered bespoke CPD for NHS partners. NHS partners are delivering placement training directly in the CAVE and simulated ward environments, enriching the learner experience with real employer input.
- Introduced digital assessment tools for healthcare competency evaluation.
- Engaged with Manchester Foundation Trust (MFT), Stepping Hill NHS, and Trafford Local Authority to support learner progression and workforce alignment.

Wigan & Leigh College

- Cutting-edge technology in teaching: Investment in Anatomage Table, BodySwaps, Labster, and VR headsets has transformed curriculum delivery, giving students immersive, hands-on learning experiences that strengthen both practical and soft skills.
- Accredited and enriched pathways: Over 100 learners on OCN-accredited Level 3 courses, alongside expanded T Level and BTEC Health and Social Care pathways, benefit from simulation-based teaching and specialist units (e.g. Mental Health, Dementia), aligned with industry needs.
- Industry-responsive training: New short courses in nutrition, healthy eating, and manual handling directly address local workforce skills gaps, ensuring students are employment-ready and employers benefit from tailored provision.
- Bespoke workforce development: The college now offers customised training for the local NHS, council staff, and Occupational therapy degree students, utilising VR technology and the Anatomage Table to deliver advanced, sector-specific upskilling.

ENGINEERING & MANUFACTURING

The Greater Manchester **Engineering & Manufacturing LSIF project**, led by **Wigan & Leigh College** in collaboration with eight FE Colleges has responded directly to key LSIP priorities including green skills, lean manufacturing, automation, and digital innovation. The programme combined capital investment, curriculum innovation, and employer collaboration to produce work-ready graduates with advanced technical skills aligned to Industry 4.0 technologies.

LSIP Priority	Contribution through the LSIF Engineering Project
Industry 4.0 adoption	Training in automation, robotics, and digital manufacturing tools. Workforce training aligned to specific company technologies, significantly improving learner confidence, engagement and employability
Progression pathways	Clear pathways into Higher Technical Qualifications, degree-level study, and apprenticeships with new Level 2 to Level 5 qualifications, apprenticeships and HTQs. Development of Level 3, Level 4, and L5 immersive short course in lean manufacturing, robotics, CNC machining, additive manufacturing, and sustainable engineering practices.
Employer-led skills development	Created employer forums and employer partnerships: Co-design of curricula with with input from leading engineering and manufacturing companies such as Sellafield Ltd, Nippon Electric Glass, Jacobs, and Cavendish Nuclear, Schneider Electric, Danish Crown and Hanson Springs.

ENGINEERING & MANUFACTURING

LSIP Priority	Contribution through the LSIF Engineering Project
Green technologies	Courses in sustainable engineering and energy-efficient manufacturing methods. Integration of immersive simulations into engineering problem solving modules. Electric and hydrogen vehicle technologies: embedded across Level 1–Level 4 automotive / electric vehicle provision and launched enhanced T-Level pathways in Maintenance & Operations Engineering.
Specialist facilities	Installation of advanced CNC machinery, robotics training cells, 3D printing suites, and CAD/CAM laboratories. Digital integration: Simulation software, virtual commissioning tools, and CAD platforms integrated into teaching.

Highlights

Hopwood Hall College

- Employer-driven development of new degree-level pathway in Engineering & Manufacturing
- Introduction of the Engineering T Level and improvements to Level 2 and 3 pathways have provided learners with clearer routes into apprenticeships, HNCs, and employment.
- Partnerships with local and regional employers have deepened in both scale and substance—transitioning from occasional consultation to meaningful, ongoing collaboration.

UCEN Manchester

- Bridging the gap between Level 3 qualifications and Higher Education (HE) in the automotive sector through the development of a L4 HNC Engineering for England.

ENGINEERING & MANUFACTURING

Trafford and Stockport College Group

- Creating a pipeline of skilled learners in areas such as CNC machining, fabrication, and electrical maintenance - where there are known shortages.
- Employer feedback, particularly from organisations like Geff Gosling, confirms that upskilled staff are more employable and eligible for promotion, aiding retention and easing recruitment pressures.
- The introduction of immersive technology has captured employer interest during events such as TEC Fest, curriculum advisory boards, and national forums (e.g., NSAN), becoming a key driver of new industry partnerships

Wigan & Leigh College

- Designed bespoke training packages for regional employers, improving workforce adaptability to new technologies.
- In collaboration with organisations such as North West Ambulance Service, Alpha Motors, Wigan Council, and commercial operators like Mount Auto Repairs has enabled the College to offer highly relevant Electric and Hybrid Vehicle training, tailored to current and future needs. This sector has also guided investment decisions on equipment procurement and training platforms.
- Implemented simulation-based learning allowing students to practice in an innovative and safe, virtual environment.
- Developed a short course in the area of Lean Manufacturing at L5. Enabling students to fully understand concepts and create a true experiential problem-based learning environment, creating a tailored virtual immersive workshop which included:
  - 3D movable models (lathes, CNC machines, etc).
  - A virtual workshop 'sandbox' to allow students and apprentices to position equipment in the workshop using a laptop as the interface.
  - These workshops could then be saved to the CAVE server and the students could immerse themselves in the workshop they created to identify opportunities for more efficient workshop arrangements without significant energy cost and waste material that would result from a physical workshop change.

EDUCATION & WORKFORCE

Led by **Wigan & Leigh College**, the **LSIF education workforce project** has delivered system-wide improvements in teaching capacity, staff development, and digital innovation across all nine FE Colleges. The project has established a shared infrastructure for collaboration, addressed workforce sustainability needs, and developed new pathways for leadership, digital skills, and teaching capacity.

Collectively, these interventions ensure that FE colleges in GM can respond to LSIP priorities by strengthening the quality of teaching, embedding innovation, and developing a workforce equipped to address skills shortages in key sectors.

LSIP Priority	Contribution through the Education Workforce Project
Employer-responsive workforce development	Integration of employer-led sustainability and digital resources into FE delivery. Strengthened collaboration with Manchester Digital, Supply Chain Sustainability School and local employers to ensure curricula reflect live sector needs in digital, cyber, AI, and emerging technologies.
Digitalisation and Innovation	Embedding AI (Teachermatic), immersive technologies, and digital CPD; conferences upskilling staff in AI and CAVE integration. Large-scale deployment of Teachermatic, AI tools, immersive technologies and digital CPD; conferences upskilling staff in AI and CAVE integration has improved teaching efficiency, reduced staff turnover, and supported curriculum modernisation.

EDUCATION & WORKFORCE

LSIP Priority	Contribution through the Education Workforce Project
Net Zero and Sustainability	Embedding Supply Chain Sustainability School resources into teaching, enabling colleges, staff, students and employers to access 4,500+ industry-led materials enabling CPD, supply chain management, and sustainability learning pathways across curriculum areas.
Leadership and Workforce Capacity	"Leading for the Future" programme has developed cross-college leaders capable of responding to LSIP challenges through innovation and system-wide collaboration. Collaboration with HEIs exploring PhD researchers in FE teaching to fill STEM shortages and enhance sector links. Creation of the GM CPD Hub as a permanent resource bank, supporting cross-college collaboration and reducing duplication.
Progression Pathways and Social Mobility	Interactive pathway tools developed by GMLPN; strengthened FE–HE links; enhanced learner journeys into higher technical skills.

THE FUTURE

The delivery of LSIF between 2023 and 2025 has been integral to how we operate as GMColleges and as a collective voice for the FE sector in Greater Manchester and ensuring we meet the needs of our learners, our employers and our communities. With the revenue and capital investment, and a strong, responsive and agile strategic infrastructure, we are now better placed to boost skills provision in direct response to local needs, shape Greater Manchester's innovation and skills agenda, and co-create curriculum with HEIs, businesses and innovation partners. Looking ahead, we will continue to deliver high-quality teaching practice, champion FE innovation, strengthen talent pipelines and influence investment flows. The legacy of LSIF is therefore not only in what has been achieved, but in the momentum it has created - ensuring that Greater Manchester remains at the forefront of skills development and innovation for years to come.

For further information go to **www.gmcg.ac.uk** or email Ruth Turner (GMColleges) at **r.turner@wigan-leigh.ac.uk**

GREATER MANCHESTER COLLEGES

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