

SWC

SOUTH WEST COLLEGE

PEOPLE PLAN

2025 - 2029

Inspiring Learning – Empowering People

Evolve – Embed – Empower – Excel



Our College Values

Committed, Accountable, Respectful and Engaging, guide how we work, lead and support one another across TeamSWC.

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1. Purpose and Vision

South West College is committed to sustaining a thriving, values-led organisation where every member of staff is respected, supported and empowered to contribute to an outstanding learner experience. Our people remain central to delivering our mission of Inspiring Learning – Empowering People, and to ensuring that the College continues to be an employer of choice across the region.

This People Plan reflects the College's strategic shift towards a Steady State (2025/26), focusing on fewer priorities, delivered better, embedding consistency, strengthening accountability, and consolidating progress made through cultural development, organisational stabilisation, and enhanced communication and leadership visibility.



It sets out a strategic framework to:

01

Embed a consistent and mature organisational culture grounded in the College's values and expected behaviours.

02

Build leadership capability at all levels, strengthening coaching, visibility, confidence and compassionate accountability.

03

Ensure the College has the right skills, capacity and agility to meet current and future needs through proactive workforce planning and development.

04

Strengthen performance, professionalism and consistency through high-quality induction, appraisal and values-aligned expectations.

05

Promote transparency, staff engagement and voice, including a clear "You Said, We Did" feedback loop and visible leadership presence across all campuses.



Values are lived daily across behaviours, decisions and interactions.

Our Vision: A College where—

- Values are lived daily across behaviours, decisions and interactions.
- Leadership is visible, compassionate and accountable at all levels.
- Staff are empowered through meaningful development, coaching and communication.
- Workforce planning is strategic, proactive and aligned to curriculum and regional needs.
- Performance is fair, consistent and focused on delivering the best experience for learners and communities.
- Identity and belonging are strengthened through TeamSWC, shared purpose and collegiate practice.

This People Plan supports the Minister for the Economy's priorities of Good Jobs, Raising Productivity and Regional Balance through a values-led approach to culture, capability and leadership. The Plan also supports the College's Strategic Plan 2025–2029, particularly the priority theme of Governance & Culture, and builds on the lessons from recent cultural review activity, engagement surveys and the work of the Culture & Engagement Team. It reflects the College's evolution from recovery and realignment toward embedding, empowering and excelling, ensuring sustained cultural maturity and long-term organisational strength.

2. Introduction and Context

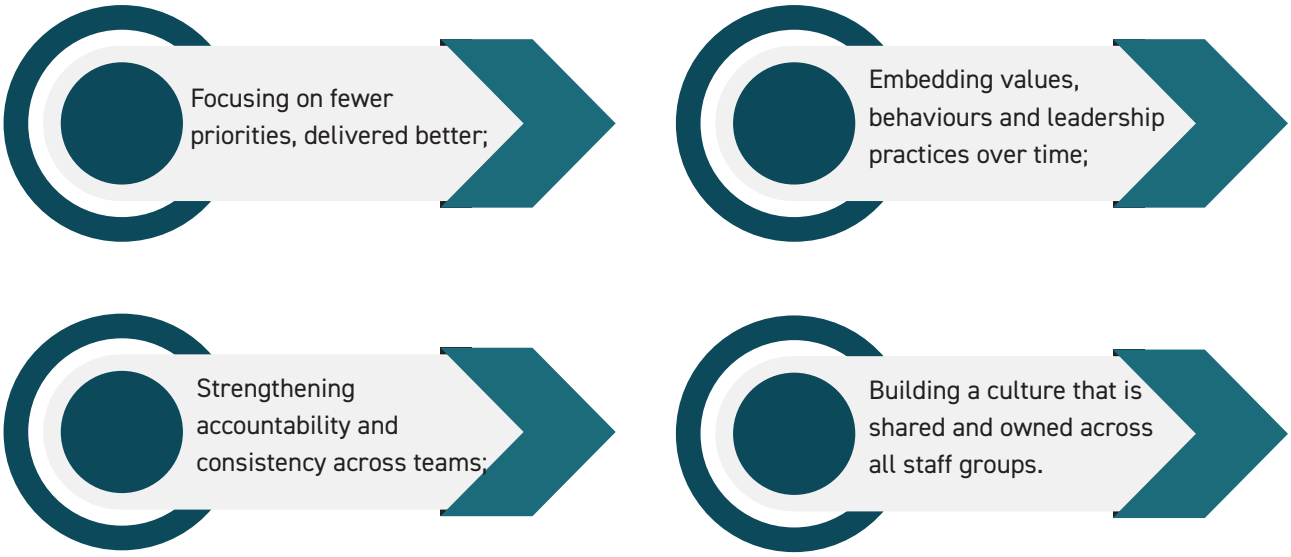
The previous People Plan (2022–2025) was developed during a period of significant transformation, including organisational realignment, revised policies, updated values, and strengthened engagement mechanisms. These changes were essential to stabilising the organisation and rebuilding trust.

Today, the context has evolved. Through cultural review activity, survey insights and engagement structures, the College has seen:

- Greater leadership visibility and improved trust indicators.
- Clearer and more consistent communication, including StaffHub, Leadership Brief and College Conversations.
- Stronger staff voice mechanisms, such as pulse surveys, engagement surveys and College Conversations.
- A more stable organisational structure, supporting more effective workforce planning.
- A shift of focus from short-term stabilisation to long-term embedding and sustainability

Steady State

Establishing a Steady State has been introduced as a guiding principle in 2025, and the College is beginning to transition towards greater focus, consistency and consolidation as this approach becomes established. To date, experiences of Steady State vary across teams, with some areas already seeing positive impact while others are at an earlier stage of adoption. The intention is to create a more stable operating environment over time, with clearer priorities, improved consistency and strengthened cultural alignment as the approach embeds, namely:



Strategic Workforce Planning Project

A Strategic Workforce Planning project is currently being explored to strengthen the College's longer-term planning around workforce capacity, capability and affordability. This work would provide deeper baseline insights, future workforce modelling and a more structured, evidence-informed approach to skills, deployment, succession and workforce options. Any emerging findings would complement the workforce planning priorities within this People Plan and support clearer alignment between curriculum requirements, resource planning and organisational resilience.

This People Plan, therefore, moves beyond resetting and restoring, and focuses on embedding, empowering and excelling. We continue to apply a people-centred, trauma-informed approach to leadership and communication.

Trauma-informed Practice

South West College is committed to working toward the creation of a trauma-informed, psychologically safe and relationally consistent environment for all staff and learners, recognising the increasingly complex needs many learners present with and the lived experiences and pressures staff bring to the workplace. In line with the Department for the Economy's ambition for trauma-informed Further Education, the College views this approach as both a cultural commitment and an operational necessity that strengthens outcomes, inclusion, engagement and staff wellbeing. Accordingly, our People Plan positions Trauma-Informed Practice not as a standalone initiative but as a principle embedded throughout leadership, communication, workforce planning, wellbeing and organisational culture.

Trauma-Informed Practice directly supports the aims and workstreams of the People Plan as follows:

- Culture & Values: Reinforces a compassionate, relational and values-aligned culture.
- Coaching and Leadership: Strengthens reflective practice, calm leadership, and clarity of expectations.
- Workforce Planning & Capability: Ensures staff possess the skills and resilience to support increasingly complex learner needs.
- Performance & Development: Supports fair, consistent, compassionate accountability and psychologically safe performance conversations.

This approach strengthens the College's commitment to becoming a stable, mature, values-led organisation where people feel safe, supported and able to excel.



3. People Plan Model

3.1 Why:"Reset – Restore – Refresh – Retain" no longer fits

The original framing captured where the College stood between 2022 and 2024. However, as the organisation has matured, it has moved:

From resetting	▸	to embedding and sustaining;
From restoring trust	▸	to strengthening accountability, consistency and visibility;
From refreshing systems	▸	to maturing them and ensuring follow-through; and
From retaining strengths	▸	to leveraging strengths for strategic delivery.



3.2 Evolve – Embed – Empower – Excel

This model underpins the entire People Plan and describes the behaviours and priorities needed to deliver sustainable excellence.

Evolve

Building and adapting workforce and leadership capability to meet future needs.
This includes:

- Conducting annual skills audits to shape CPD and workforce planning;
- Strengthening digital capability and future skills readiness;
- Enhancing recruitment strategies for hard-to-fill roles;
- Supporting innovation and curriculum development with targeted learning; and
- Developing succession plans for critical roles.

Empower

Strengthening staff voice, visibility of leadership, wellbeing and accountability.
This means:

- Providing structured opportunities for staff to influence decisions;
- Increasing leadership presence (walk-and-talks, drop-ins, College Conversations);
- Reinforcing compassionate accountability in performance management;
- Supporting wellbeing and inclusion through targeted programmes; and
- Maintaining open, two-way communication that builds trust and belonging.

Embed

Making values, coaching behaviours and leadership standards a consistent part of everyday College life.
This involves:

- Embedding values in recruitment, induction, appraisal and leadership practice;
- Strengthening the induction experience for all new staff;
- Ensuring communication is clear, timely and consistent across campuses;
- Making coaching the default approach to management; and
- Ensuring new policies and processes are lived - not just launched.

Excel

Driving strategic alignment, quality and high performance across all roles.
This includes:

- Ensuring values-led and consistent performance management;
- Strengthening the quality of appraisal, probation, and continuing professional development processes;
- Aligning team and individual objectives to the Strategic Plan;
- Supporting leaders to drive quality improvement; and
- Using workforce and engagement data to monitor impact.



The College's transition into Steady State

4. Strategic Aims

Guided by our values and informed by the College's transition into Steady State, the refreshed People Plan aims to:



Prepare the workforce for the future through targeted skills development, succession planning, and adaptive workforce planning.



Embed and sustain a thriving organisational culture rooted in College values.



Develop a coaching and learning culture that enhances leadership capability at all levels.



Strengthen performance management and accountability through compassionate, values-based leadership.

These strategic aims are to be delivered through four priority workstreams: Culture & Values, Coaching and Leadership, Workforce Planning & Capability, and Performance & Development. Section 6 outlines the key actions in each workstream that will drive the delivery of this Plan.

5. Priority Workstreams (2025–2029)

5.1 Workforce Planning & Capability

Support the development of a workforce with the people and skills needed for the right roles at the right time.

Key Objectives:

1. Conduct an annual skills audit and annual curriculum alignment review to inform CPD priorities in line with curriculum delivery, innovation, trauma-informed practice and industry-aligned CPD needs.

2. Develop targeted recruitment campaigns in line with resourcing priorities identified through curriculum alignment review meetings and for roles that are historically difficult to fill, improving attraction, reach and long-term pipeline capacity.

3. Strengthen induction and probation support by improving processes, feedback loops and early support mechanisms to ensure new staff integrate well and understand expectations.

4. Support flexible and adaptive working practices, support career progression pathways, and strengthen staff wellbeing through responsive workforce planning approaches.

5. Develop succession plans for all critical roles, ensuring leadership and specialist continuity across the organisation.



5.2 Culture & Values

Create a consistent, inclusive, values-led culture across all campuses and roles.

Key Objectives:

1. Review College values and the associated behaviours framework, and embed them consistently across internal communications and core HR processes (recruitment, selection, appraisal) so that expected behaviours are clearly defined and reinforced in day-to-day practice.

2. Refresh and further develop values-based recognition schemes, including Living Our Values, Inspirational Staff, and long-service awards, promoting a culture where positive contribution and commitment are celebrated.

3. Deliver annual rotating team-building initiatives, ensuring that at least one College team each year participates in a structured team-building event to strengthen cohesion and cultural alignment.

4. Support the Culture & Engagement Team and Social & Wellbeing Team to strengthen TeamSWC and promote shared identity and belonging.

5. Improve cultural cohesion through stronger induction, Governor visibility and enhanced clarity of roles and expectations across teams.

5.3 Coaching and Leadership

Build strong, confident and compassionate leaders at all levels.

Key Objectives:

1. Reinforce leadership at all levels through structured development, leadership communities of practice and regular opportunities for reflection, learning and peer support.

2. Strengthen leadership pathways and progression, supporting career conversations, talent development and leadership visibility across teams and campuses.

3. Expand development opportunities through acting-up and industry experience to broaden knowledge and skills and build organisational capability.

4. Equip managers with the tools, confidence and capability needed for effective people management, change leadership and values-led, trauma-informed decision-making.

5. Embed the Coaching for Growth programme across one-to-one conversations, performance reviews, career development and leadership practice, ensuring coaching becomes a consistent and values-aligned approach to people management.

5.4 Performance & Development

Deliver a consistent, values-aligned approach to performance and development that supports high-quality, day-to-day practice.

Key Objectives:

1. Revise and strengthen the appraisal process to improve consistency, clarity and values alignment.

2. Align CPD programmes to team, curriculum and organisational priorities, ensuring staff have the skills needed to deliver high-quality learning and services.

3. Equip managers with the tools, training, and guidance to deliver high-quality, values-aligned probation and performance conversations, strengthening capability in early resolution, constructive feedback and conflict management.

4. Continue workload review activity (academic and support) to ensure fair, transparent and sustainable expectations across roles.

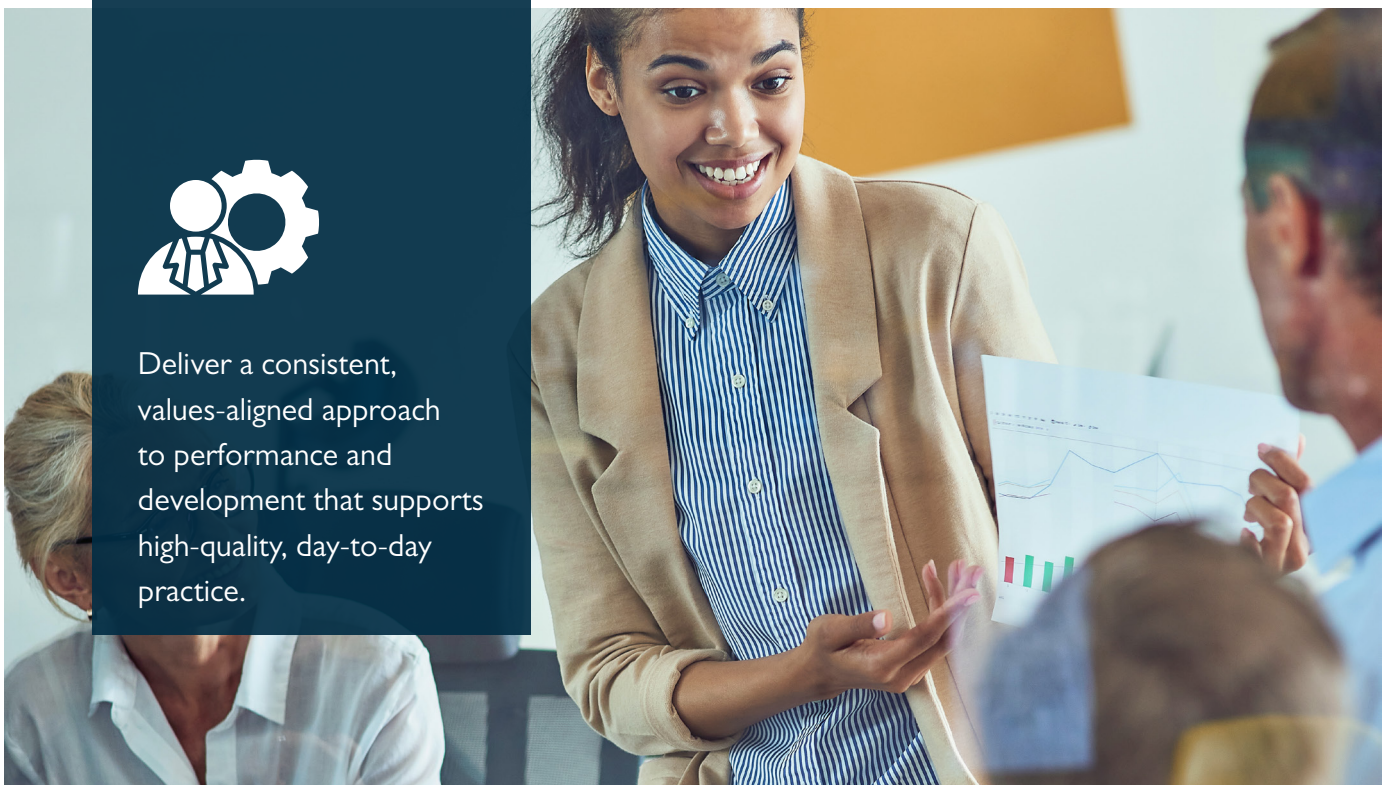
5. Ensure staff resources are appropriately deployed to meet delivery needs and service demands.











6. Crosscutting Themes

These themes cut across all four workstreams and are essential to embedding consistent practice and delivering this People Plan.

Employee Voice, Communication & Engagement

- Deliver consistent two way engagement:
  - Leadership Brief
  - CE updates
  - Staff Express
  - College Conversations
- Strengthen You Said, We Did
- Reduce survey fatigue through balanced scheduling
- Maintain StaffHub as the single source of information

Our Meeting Framework underpins transparent decision-making and consistent information flow across teams and campuses.

Governance & Culture

- Reinforce governance, accountability, transparency and trust.
- Improve clarity of roles, responsibilities and decision pathways.
- Align with compliance, safeguarding, equality and regulatory requirements.

7. Carry Forward Objectives

The following objectives are carried forward from the 2022–2025 People Plan and are now fully integrated within the workstreams of this refreshed Plan:

- Further develop succession planning for critical roles.
- Continue strengthening appraisal quality and consistency.
- Embed a coaching culture across leadership and management practice.
- Ensure consistent induction experiences for all staff.
- Continue to develop hybrid and flexible working practices where appropriate.
- Enhance internal communication and leadership visibility.
- Promote continuous improvement and psychological safety across teams.



8. Monitoring and Review

The Plan will be monitored by the Head of People & Culture, reporting to SLT and the Staffing Committee.
Monitoring mechanisms include:

- Quarterly RAG rated progress tracking
- Annual refresh of actions
- Culture & Engagement Team updates
- Evaluation through:
    - staff engagement surveys
    - CPD participation
    - induction/probation data
    - workforce planning outcomes
    - succession planning progress

9. Expected Outcomes (by 2028/29)

By the end of the Plan period, South West College will have:

- A stronger, consistent values-led culture;
- Embedded coaching leadership across all levels;
- A clear, effective succession pipeline;
- A compassionate, modern approach to performance management;
- Enhanced communication, trust and staff voice;
- Higher engagement and alignment to College priorities; and
- A resilient, future ready workforce equipped to deliver outstanding learning and service.

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